

Bond Pearce

# Note

Client: Royal Mail Group PLC Sub Postmaster Litigation

Matter: Mr Lee Castleton

Matter no: 348035.134

Attending: Interview with Gregory John Booth

Name: Stephen Dilley

Location: N/A

Date: 30 August 2006

Start time:

Units:

Mr Booth has worked for eight years in the Post Office business. Before he was an Accountant at Coopers & Lybrand.

Whilst in the Post Office he spent five years as Sub-Postmaster of Edgehill Branch from October 1998 to September 2003. He was then Sub-Postmaster for Southcliff for six months from September 2003 to February 2004 as a temporary Sub-Postmaster. He then had a break for 6-7 weeks before being the relief Sub-Postmaster at Marine Drive. After working at Marine Drive, he has done various other relief work. He is currently Manager (a permanent position) and has been for six months, although he has been effectively doing the job for one year because six months previously were as a relief at Newby Post Office 401 Scalby Road, Scarborough YO12 6TQ.

Greg was approached by Kath Oversby to take over as relief at the Marine Drive Branch. He was the relief from 21 April – 28 May 2004 and stayed there five weeks. He employed Joan Train (Christine Train's mother-in-law) to assist him during that time behind the Post Office Counter. Joan Train had not worked at Marine Drive Branch before but she had just at that time left another Post Office in Bridlington, 1 On Quay Road (which has since closed). He does not think Joan Train carried on working at the Branch after then. The way it works with employees is that effectively the Sub-Postmaster has a contract to provide services for the Post Office and then whoever he employs is his responsibility. They are employed by him.

At the time Christine Train was employed in the shop but not behind the Post Office counter, because Cath Oglesby would not let her do this.

Running through with him the suspense account exercise that Cath Oglesby asked him to do and just going through the figures with him to check that he was happy with them.

Then asking whether he used two machines. He said that he did. He used one and Joan used another, but Joan worked two or three days per week part time. When she wasn't working part time he was still running both machines because he'd use one to do some things and one to do other things.

I asked him specifically whether he had any of the following problems :-

1. Non-communication between PC's. He didn't come across that.
2. Screen freezing. He cannot remember coming across that.

He said that it is not uncommon for the screen to freeze but even it does, you can still use the key-pad to complete a transaction.

3. Blank Screen. He can't remember seeing a blank screen.

The card-swipe not working. He said that if a card-swipe wasn't working it was usually because a card was defective. He would just physically key in the card number instead. The card's details wouldn't be misread if the swipe wasn't working, just not record any of the information at all. This can happen at any time. He said that even wrong information will not be recorded if it is not working it just won't record any information.

5. ONCH doubling up figures. He wasn't aware of that.

6. Transactions being entered but being lost. He can't remember that.

He has been trying to think what might possibly have caused the errors at the Branch. This is his hypothesis (and it is only that):-

There was a car auction in Bridlington, every week, sometimes once a week, sometimes twice. It deposited approximately £15-20,000 of cash in a bag or boxes. The car auctions paying in book was retained behind the counter. It should have been with the customer and this was against protocol. The car auction didn't leave a record of the amount they were depositing and left the Branch to count that. Often the car auction would just drop the money off with Lee Castleton in the Post Office Shop before the Post Office opened. It was money that was paid into a Girobank account. He wonders whether the car auction money deposited was mixed with the cash in the Post Office till before it was counted with the result that the auction was credited with some of the money from the till i.e. more than it had actually paid in and consequently the till would lose cash.

The other point he wants to make was that Mr Castleton was inexperienced and he didn't feel Mr Castleton necessarily got the help he needed with the till or that it wasn't investigated until after he was suspended.

He understands that Mr Castleton previously worked at a Merchant Bank in London and would be going back to it afterwards. He also believes that the Marine Drive Branch is currently for sale.

He wouldn't say that Marine Drive Branch had experienced any problems that you wouldn't routinely get in any other Branch and the problems that it did experience would not leave to financial difficulties.

He said in relation to lottery, all that was entered the next day except on Wednesdays when the Post Master would have to ensure that it was entered before he opened for business on Thursday.

He also thinks that somebody else may have worked behind the Post Office or Shop counter that Lee Castleton didn't keep on after he was suspended.

The only other thing he wanted to mention was that in October 2004 he was approached by Cath Oglesby to take over from Dorothy Day. Lee Castleton called Greg Booth on the phone two or three times and threatened him that if he took over, there might be some damage to his car. He wanted to make life difficult for him. This is because Lee Castleton wanted to maintain the same Sub-Postmaster. He told Cath Oglesby that was why he could not get involved.

He left me take a copy of a letter he sent to Cath Oglesby in this regard.

He also confirmed that he didn't recall any IT equipment being changed whilst he worked there.

Explained to him about the conference with Counsel and he will see whether he can make it due to other commitments.