## Tuesday, 7 November 2023

| (10.00 am) | 2 |
| :--- | ---: |
| MR BEER: Good morning, sir, can you see and hear | 3 |
| me? | 4 |
| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, I can, Mr Beer. | 5 |
| I understand that there's been a flurry of | 6 |
| correspondence from those acting for the Post | 7 |
| Office in relation to documentation but that | 8 |
| doesn't necessarily affect the questions you | 9 |
| wish to put to Ms Cottam; is that correct, | 10 |
| Mr Beer? | 11 |
| MR BEER: Sir, that's right. We've been told by the | 12 |
| Post Office's representatives that the recent | 13 |
| discoveries that they have made do not reveal | 14 |
| documents that concern Mrs Elaine Cottam and so, | 15 |
| although we plan to discuss the recent | 16 |
| revelations today, we would propose that we hear | 17 |
| from Mrs Cottam first and then deal with the | 18 |
| disclosure issues. | 19 |
| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, that sounds fine to me. So | 20 |
| unless someone in the room is trying to attract | 21 |
| my attention to say something different, that's | 22 |
| what we'll do, Mr Beer. | 23 |
| MR BEER: Thank you, nobody is saying otherwise. | 24 |
| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Fine. Thank you. | 25 |

witness statement to be displayed -- the URN is WITN09530100

Mrs Cottam, you were asked by the Inquiry on
12 July 2023 to provide a witness statement and accompanying that request was a large volume of documents that were relevant to the questions that we were asking of you, which documents dated from your time in the Post Office, and you've provided us, we've just established, with a witness statement that's two and a half pages long, which contains next to no information. Is there a reason for that?
A. I don't know what sort of information you wanted me to put in it.
Q. Well, by way of example, the first question we asked you was to set out your professional background. You've not answered that at all. Is there a reason for that?
A. No, no, it's just a misunderstanding. I can give you that now.
Q. I'm asking you why you didn't include it in your witness statement when we were asking you to.
A. I don't know. I can't remember being asked to do it because I would have done it because I have it here.

MR BEER: May Mrs Cottam swear or affirm, please.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes.

## ELAINE MARY COTTAM (affirmed)

 Questioned by MR BEERMR BEER: Thank you very much, Mrs Cottam, can you see and hear me?
A. Yes, I can.
Q. Thank you very much, my name is Jason Beer and I ask questions on behalf of the Inquiry. Can you please give us your full name?
A. My name is Elaine Mary Cottam.
Q. Thank you very much for attending remotely to give evidence to the Inquiry, we're very grateful. You should have in front of you a hard copy of your witness statement which --
A. I have
Q. -- is two and a half pages in length and dated 31 July 2023; is that right?
A. It is.
Q. On the third page of it, is that your signature?
A. It is.
Q. Are the contents of the witness statement true to the best of your knowledge and belief?
A. They are.
Q. For the transcript -- there's no need for the

## 2

Q. The request of 12 July says, "Please set out your professional background", and you haven't: why not?
A. It's just a misunderstanding, I didn't know

I had to do it because -- I actually have it here.
Q. What are you saying you "have it here"?
A. Well, I have it written down.
Q. Your professional background?
A. Yeah, within the Post Office, yes.
Q. So what was the nature of the misunderstanding? You receive a letter which says "Please" --
A. Which letter was it? Because I have my letters here.
Q. 12 July 2023 and it says, "Please set out your professional background". What was the nature of the misunderstanding, between whom?
A. Just between myself and what I was asked for.

What date was the letter?
Q. What didn't you understand when --
A. Well, if you can let me find the letter. What was the date of the letter, please?
Q. 12 July 2023.
A. 12 July 2023. August ... well, I've got everything in my file in order and I don't have
it. The first letter l've got is just about this bundle. I'm sorry, there was no intention to mislead but I haven't got it. I'll just have a look in the -- l've got three different files here, the one from Ashfords --
Q. They're your solicitors.
A. Oh, right, so you won't need that one. The other one is the same. That's just the same as this huge thing l've got here.
Q. Okay, don't trouble yourself with the bundles. I'm telling you, you were sent a letter on 12 July 2023, which led to this witness statement being created. The first question said, "Please set out a summary of your professional background". You appear to have ignored that: why?
A. I've got -- well, I've just put I was employed as a Retail Line Manager, Post Office Counters. I don't remember the date I took up this post or the date I left. I put that I was responsible for 27 post offices, I have that here.
Q. Is that a full and complete statement of your professional background?
A. With the Post Office, yes.
Q. Does it say when you joined the Post Office? 5
A. 1979, as a postal officer.
Q. Which branch?
A. Cleveleys branch but it was a directly controlled branch then. It wasn't a modified Post Office, as it is now.
Q. What's the significance of that?
A. I was directly employed by the Post Office, not like with the modified office, as a subpostmaster.
Q. How long did you work at Cleveleys?
A. I worked there until 1981, when I transferred to Blackpool branch office as an Assistant Manager.
Q. What did you do in Blackpool branch office?
A. Well, I managed the staff that were there. It was basically the counter duties, making sure everybody was there on time. Just general day-to-day working of the office to make sure there was enough cash for everybody, to make sure that everybody was balancing correctly, to make sure the counters were tidy, clean.

I was the assistant manager, so the manager would have done a lot of the direct transferring of cash to them in the morning. I would have done a lot of checking their balance sheets. Certainly with pension dockets that were then,
A. No.
Q. Does it say when you left the Post Office?
A. This is --
Q. Hold on, hold on.
A. Sorry.
Q. It doesn't say when you joined the Post Office. It doesn't say when you left the Post Office. Why not?
A. No. Because I didn't know that that was asked for. I've got that information here and I would have included it if I'd have known that's what it was. I thought we were talking just about the Retail Line Manager's job that I did. I didn't know it was from when I first joined the Post Office.
Q. So when you received --
A. It --
Q. When you received a question that said, "Please set out your professional background", you understood that only to relate to your job as a Retail Line Manager?
A. Yes, yes, I did. I've written the rest of it down because I thought I'd be asked about it today, how I got to be this.
Q. Okay, when did you join the Post Office? 6

I would sometimes -- I'd list all those for them to help them, just generally managing the day-to-day running of it.
Q. When did you leave the Blackpool office?
A. I transferred to Poulton-le-Fylde as a manager in 1981.
Q. How long did you stay there?
A. I'm not sure when I left there. I went to South Shore as a manager. But I'm -- I really can't remember the dates after that. I wasn't -I was the manager at Poulton, then I went to another branch office but I really don't know when the dates were.
Q. What was your next job after that?
A. After Poulton, I went to South Shore, which is a bigger branch, and then from South Shore, I moved to Preston as the Assistant Manager because that was a much bigger office.
Q. Then after Preston?
A. After Preston I joined the Retail Line as a Retail Network Manager.
Q. When did you become a Retail Line Manager?
A. Not sure. I don't know the date.
Q. Can you remember the decade?
A. Well, if that was ... I think it was the '90s.

Let me think. Yeah, it would have been late '90s.
Q. Late '90s and how long were you --
A. Yeah --
Q. How long were you a Retail Line Manager for?
A. From I think it was 1979 until I retired when I was -- was I 40 or 50 ? I was 50 , I think --
Q. What's the date of your retirement?
A. I don't know. Can't remember.
Q. What was your job as a Retail Line Manager? What did it involve?
A. It involved overseeing the running of 27 post offices. Originally it was 27 and then they did some sort of shuffling about, where they took the smaller one -- the smaller offices off, and I ended up with about 12, I think, of the larger offices.
Q. What does "overseeing" mean?
A. Well, not managing, because they all had their own -- there were subpostmasters, so they ran their own office, but overseeing that everything was being done correctly, making sure they were adhering to all the standards that were laid down in the contracts, helping them if they'd got any trouble with anything. If they were
A. Yes.
Q. If we scroll down to paragraphs 1 and 2 ., there's an introduction there where you say then, that's October 2003 --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- you were employed by the Post Office as a Retail Line Manager. You were previously called a Retail Network Manager.
A. Yeah.
Q. There was a title change but not a job change --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- and you'd been employed in the Post Office since June 1980. Then if we go over the page, please, you told the court in this witness statement that your responsibilities include the monitoring of the overall performance of subpostmasters against their contracts and business standards that are laid down --
A. Where am I looking? Yeah, okay. Business standards laid down, yeah, okay.
Q. You told the court that you also monitor their yearly sales and financial performance, together with gains and losses.
A. Mm-hm.
Q. You say:

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having a bad balancing time or they were short of staff, did I know anybody who could help them with the staffing issues?
Q. Could we look, please, at POL00118219.
A. Sorry, what am I looking at?
Q. It's going to come up on the screen.
A. Oh.
Q. Look at page 5, please.
A. Page 5. Do I scroll it or will it just move?
Q. If you just wait a moment, the right page will be displayed for you. If we scroll down, please. Can you see this is a witness statement in your name?
A. Yes, yeah.
Q. This is one --
A. I think --
Q. -- of the documents we provided you back in July to help you make a full and helpful witness statement. If we scroll up, please, a little bit more. Thank you. We can see it's dated 16 October 2003?
A. Yeah.
Q. This is the first witness statement you provided in the Post Office's claim against Julie Wolstenholme of the Cleveleys post office, yes? 10
"I am responsible for a total of 112 post offices throughout the North West area of England."

Just breaking that down, what you told the court back in October 2003, is it right that your responsibilities as a Retail Line Manager included the monitoring of the performance of subpostmasters as against their contracts and business standards?
A. Yes.
Q. And you monitored their yearly sales and financial performance, together with monitoring their gains and losses?
A. Yes.
Q. So is that a fair summary of your responsibilities as a Retail Line Manager at this time?
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. You told the court in this statement that you were responsible for 112 post offices.
A. Mm. They did change that at a later date. They took the small -- sorry.
Q. Who is the "they" in that sentence?
A. Well, the senior management.
Q. Okay.
A. They decided that the larger offices perhaps needed more attention. So the smaller offices were given to another Retail Line Manager. Because they were smaller, they didn't need as many visits, they didn't need as much attention and I think it was that the larger offices just needed a firmer hand than perhaps the smaller offices.
Q. So the number after this time, after October 2003 came down from 112; is that right?
A. Yeah, most definitely. I don't want to swear to it but I think my recollection was I had about 27. I've tried to work through them but I really can't remember how many there were exactly.
Q. You told us in your witness statement for these Inquiry proceedings, and you've mentioned it this morning, that you were responsible for 27 post offices.
A. Yeah, that's probably about right.
Q. But when are you talking about then?
A. Um, when am I talking about then?
Q. le what date?
A. I can't remember. I can't remember.
Q. You see in this witness statement here, 13
A. And what date was that? What date was that?
Q. 16 October 2003, as I told you and as we looked.
A. I'm sorry, I can't remember.
Q. You think this might be inaccurate, what you told the court, then?
A. We had that many. I remember, when they divvied everything up and there were Retail Line Managers and then there were -- I worked closely with another -- a young man and he had the smaller offices; I had the larger offices. But, as to the exact number, it's so long ago I just can't remember.
Q. I'll ask one last time. If you made a statement to the court swearing it to be true in October --
A. I would have thought that was true at the time.
Q. Hold on, if you wouldn't mind. If you let me finish the question then I'll respect you by letting you give a full answer.

If you made a witness statement to the court saying that you were responsible in October 2003 for 112 post offices, would that be likely to be accurate?
A. I can't remember.
Q. So you may have written something down that was

Mrs Cottam, made much closer to the time, in October 2003 and speaking about your time as a Retail Line Manager managing the Cleveleys post office, you told the court that you were responsible for 112 post offices; is that right?
A. It was at one time but they changed it and they just left us with -- the more senior ones had the bigger post offices.
Q. I'm only interested in what happened in the period between 2000 and 2003. Does it follow that if we were looking at that period of time, ie before this witness statement was made, the accurate position was you were responsible for 112 post offices?
A. I really can't remember the dates, I really can't.
Q. If you were responsible only for 27 post offices in October 2003, you presumably wouldn't have told the court that you were responsible for 112 of them, would you?
A. I really don't remember.
Q. That's not a question about memory; that's asking if you made a sworn statement to the court, which said, "I am responsible for 112 post offices", in 2003, that's likely to be -14
inaccurate to the court?
A. I would have believed it to be true when I wrote it.
Q. Good. What was the nature -- that can come down, thank you -- of your dealings or interactions with the 112-odd post offices that you were responsible for?
A. I don't know what you mean. What was the dealings? It was just day to day.
Q. Would you go into the post offices?
A. Yes.
Q. It wasn't just phone contact?
A. No.
Q. How frequently would you go in to the post offices?
A. Depending on the size of the office, it would depend on that and it would depend on which area. I covered quite a few areas. I went as far as Southport. So I would go into Southport for a day and -- or even a week, depending how many there were, to try to get to see them all. You didn't really need -- well, I didn't really need to get to see them all because I could speak to a lot of them on the telephone.

They didn't really want you there if they
were performing correctly but it was my job to visit them all, as and when I could. Some needed more visits than others.
Q. Averaging things out, how regularly would you be in contact with each branch?
A. Some of them weekly. Some of them monthly.
Q. Thank you. As a Retail Line Manager, to whom did you report?
A. Tony Bialchi, he was the -- he was my manager.
Q. Where was he based?
A. He was based in Preston.
Q. Did you have an office in Preston or a base in Preston or did you work remotely?
A. We worked remotely.
Q. Were you responsible for managing anyone other than the subpostmasters?
A. No.
Q. So the "Manager" part of your title Retail Line Manager refers to the management of the 112 subpostmasters?
A. They split it. They weren't 112 in the end because it was too many and the smaller offices were given to another Retail Line Manager.
Q. I was working on the basis of the answer you gave earlier, that this figure of 112 in your 17
told the court back in 2003:
"I first met the defendant, Julie
Wolstenholme ... through her father, Mr Jackson as Mr Jackson was formerly the subpostmaster at Cleveleys modified sub post office.
Mrs Wolstenholme worked for her father for a period whilst he was the subpostmaster at Cleveleys post office."

Is all of that accurate?
A. Yes.
Q. In paragraph 5 you told the court:
"In 1999, I became aware that Mr Jackson was
ill and that had been trying to sell his post
office. During my discussions with him regarding the possible sale, we discussed the possibility of a family transfer being made to Mrs Wolstenholme. In or about September 1999, I met with Mrs Wolstenholme, Mr and Mrs Jackson and Mrs Wolstenholme's former partner, Roger Harrison at the flat above the post office premises where we had a general chat about the possible family transfer of the post office to Mrs Wolstenholme."

Is that all accurate?
A. Yes.
statement was likely to be correct. We're not interested in anything that happened, in fact, after the end of 2003 with you as a witness. So I'm not asking about how things developed.
A. I really don't remember. I mean, if I've put that in the statement then I must have thought that at the time but I don't remember having 112.
Q. Can you recall being part of the team that recruited Mrs Wolstenholme, Julie Wolstenholme, to the position of subpostmaster at Cleveleys post office and the transfer of the Post Office from her sick father to her?
A. The team? I don't know what you mean about the team.
Q. Were you one of a number of other people that were involved in the process of transferring the branch from Mrs Wolstenholme's father to her?
A. Yes, I was.
Q. Can we look back at your civil statement, please. It'll come up on the screen. There's no need to say anything until it does. POL00118219. Can we go to page 6, please, and can we -- I think that's page 7. Thank you.

Can we look at paragraph 4, please. You 18
Q. In paragraph 6, if we scroll down, please, you say after the meeting you received a letter from Mr Jackson dated 21 September 1999, and we've got that, resigning from the post office at Cleveleys modified sub post office:
"... and requesting that the office be transferred to Mrs Wolstenholme. A letter was then sent to Mrs Wolstenholme on 12 October 1999 enclosing an official application form for her to complete."

You produced those and we've got those:
"In view of the fact that the transfer was a family transfer, I did not need to have sight of a business plan nor was there a formal interview which was again due to the fact that it was a family transfer and also because Mrs Wolstenholme had worked at the post office."

Then you set out some other information we needn't go into. Is all of that accurate that I've just read to you?
A. Yes.
Q. Now, I think as part of this process, you completed an assessment for the post office of Mrs Wolstenholme's suitability to be a subpostmaster; is that right?

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A. Yes.
Q. Can we look, please, within the same package of documents at page 39. Do you recognise the handwriting?
A. No.
Q. Can we look, please, at page 43. Do you recognise the handwriting there?
A. Yes, yeah.
Q. Whose handwriting is that?
A. That's mine.
Q. If we scroll down please, we see that you signed
it. Your actual signature is underneath those words "GRO" -- we're not displaying those so people will know what your signature is -saying that Mrs Wolstenholme should be accepted as a subpostmaster, and you signed it at the bottom, as well, as the authoriser. Can you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. Go back, please, to page 39. Can you see the answers to the questions there? Is that you writing those in?
A. Yes, I think it must have been.
Q. So the document's title is "Report on Candidates for Subpostmastership"?
and personal circumstances. Can we go to page 41, please, question 4 :
"Consider the applicant's knowledge, experience and achievements, both inside and outside of work.
"4a. Suitability for counter work
"Clerical/Accounting/Recordkeeping aspects of the work. Give evidence."

You wrote:
"Julie's experience as a counter clerk and her substitution when her father is on leave is evidence that she has the skills needed for this work."

Then under "Customer Service", you said:
"Again, Julie is dealing with customers and enjoys working at the counter."

Yes?
A. Mm. Yeah.
Q. Then over the page to page 42, please. If we look at the bottom half of the page, please. Question 5c:
"Is the candidate likely to be responsible in the job? Have you any reason to doubt the candidate's honesty? Look at previous jobs to see if responsibility was given/taken. Give
A. Mm .
Q. Does this document set out your assessment of the suitability of an applicant or candidate for the position of subpostmaster?
A. Yes, it was something we would do, for a new candidate.
Q. If we go to page 41, please. Let's look at page 40, so we can just see the kind of things written out by you:
"Origins of plans to be a subpostmaster
"Why did the applicant first think of becoming a subpostmaster? Whose idea was it? How well researched is it?" et cetera.

You wrote:
"The applicant currently works part time in her father's office. His ill health is forcing his retirement", et cetera.
A. Yeah.
Q. So that's the way it works?
A. Yeah.
Q. There's some pre-printed questions and then you write the text?
A. Yes.
Q. On these pages, it's essentially an assessment of the candidate's, here Mrs Wolstenholme, plans 22
evidence."
You wrote:
"Julie shows a keen sense of responsibility on my evidence of having seen her at work. I have no reason to doubt her honesty."

It looks like you originally wrote "I have no doubt of her honesty" but changed that to "I have no reason to doubt her honesty".
A. Mm .
Q. Yes? Is that right: you had no reason to doubt Mrs Wolstenholme's honesty?
A. That was correct at the time, yeah.
Q. No doubt that's a very important assessment when considering whether to recommend a candidate for appointment?
A. Yes.
Q. And no doubt a very important consideration when deciding whether to take the candidate on?
A. It is but it's very difficult, if you haven't worked with them for very long. I mean, you know, any time when you're interviewing a subpostmaster, you have to take a lot of what -- you can't test their honesty in an interview. You can only go off -- I mean it's different in Julie's case because she'd
been working with her parents.
Q. It was on the basis of that evidence that you had no reason to doubt her honesty, presumably?
A. Yes.
Q. When, a few months later, you're deciding whether to suspend and then terminate Mrs Wolstenholme, do you bring this information into account: that you spoke to her honesty just a few months before?
A. Yes. I had to -- as it was later, Julie was the subpostmistress and she worked very closely -which I wasn't aware of at the time but I soon picked up on when I was going to the office -she worked very closely with her husband and he was heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the office. And that was not taken into consideration because I wasn't aware that that was going to be the case when Julie was appointed.
Q. Why are you telling us this?
A. Because it's -- I think it's relevant.
Q. Why do you think it's relevant?
A. Because -- well, I'd rather not say. I've no proof of what I want to say.
Q. What do you want to say? Go on, tell us? 25
"I feel Julie will be successful in this venture. She has had a good grounding having worked in the office and also drawing on her father's experiences. She sees the need to move forward towards a better retail environment in the office. She is already considering streamlining the staff as she identified excessive hours being used. Long term I feel she will make a good office better."

Then:
"Julie is committed to becoming a subpostmaster. She enjoys the work. She has the full support of all her family which will help her thorough her difficult induction as a subpostmaster. She has shown a great enthusiasm for Horizon and is keen to take the office forward and make a successful business for her and her family."

That was your overall assessment of
Mrs Julie Wolstenholme, yes?
A. Yes. Yeah.
Q. So you were positively and rather strongly recommending her for appointment; is that right?
A. I recommended her, yes.
Q. We can see that an offer was made -- if we go to
A. No. I would rather not.
Q. Are you hinting that you think he was the dishonest one, not her?
A. I'd rather not say.
Q. Was that --
A. I've no proof at all of that. But he was heavily, heavily involved in the day-to-day running and the financial aspects of that office.
Q. Did you have this suspicion without proof at the time?
A. Yeah, I still have no proof of it.
Q. But did you have the suspicion without proof back in 2000 --
A. Yes.
Q. -- when you terminated her contract?
A. I didn't terminate her contract on that;

I terminated her on the balance of the evidence that I had.
Q. Was that in your mind when you terminated?
A. No. It was on the evidence that the office wasn't being run properly but I had no evidence of who was not running it.
Q. Can we go to page 43, please. Your "Overall Assessment". You said:
page 44 -- to Mrs Wolstenholme for the subpostmastership of Cleveleys on 9 November 1999, yes?
A. Yes, I can't see that far down there. Oh, yeah 9 November.
Q. First sentence:
"I am delighted to inform you that your application ... has been successful."
A. Yeah.
Q. The date is in the top right, 9 November 1999?
A. Yeah.
Q. Then within a couple of months after that, is it right that the Horizon system was installed into this branch?
A. I don't remember the date.
Q. Can we look, please, at page 7 of this bundle.

This is your statement to the civil court back in 2003.
A. I didn't know there was a civil court. The first I knew that there'd been a court case was when I got this bundle of documents.
Q. You provided this witness statement to the civil court?
A. I don't remember doing that.
Q. It's got your name and your signature on it.
A. It may have but I don't remember doing it.
Q. Let's see whether what you're recorded as having written is accurate. Paragraph 8, you deal with the report we've just looked at. I've actually looked at some of the things you've said, whereas this statement doesn't include anything about your positive recommendation but let's go to paragraph 9. Thank you.

There's the letter that we've just looked at, the 9 November -- it says 2003 here, it's 1999 in fact -- letter, yes?
A. Yeah.
Q. Then paragraph 10, you said:
"In the early part of 2000, the Post Office installed the Horizon computer equipment at its post offices and sub post offices. The installation of Mrs Wolstenholme's post office was completed on or about 9 February 2000."

If you told the civil court that in this witness statement, is that likely to have been accurate?
A. It's likely to have been, yes.
Q. You continue:
"The original installation had been aborted on the day of installation due to problems with 29

Is that all accurate?
A. Yeah. Two helplines, the staff had two helplines: Horizon Helpdesks and the other one was the Network Business Support Centre. Yeah, yeah.
Q. Okay can we go over the page, please, to paragraph 12. You told the court:
"Mrs Wolstenholme persisted in telephoning the Horizon ... Helpdesk in relation to any problems which she had with the system and generally, these problems related to the use and general operation of the system and were not technical problems relating to the system.
Copies of the call logs for the period 10 January 2000 to 30 November 2000 together with a brief analysis of the calls to the Horizon System Helpdesk which I prepared following Mrs Wolstenholme's suspension are at pages [then you give some pages to an exhibit]. Whilst there were some problems at other branches, they were not insurmountable and were often due to the system crashing or were general teething problems."

Just dealing with problems at the Cleveleys post office with Horizon first and then turning
the ISDN line."
So was it right that there were problems
with Horizon at Cleveleys from the very first day?
A. You can't say that. You can say there were problems with the ISDN line.
Q. So you --
A. It's the installation of the line. I can't say there were problems with the Horizon from that day. It says there it was due to problems with the ISDN line.
Q. Let's scroll down, then. Paragraph 11, you told the court that:
"Following the installation of [Horizon], postmasters, subpostmasters and their staff had two helplines which they could call in the event of any problems. One was the Horizon System Helpdesk [which I'm going to call HSD], which dealt with technical problems encountered with for example the system crashing or in relation to the hardware or software. The other helpline was the Network Business Support Centre [which I'm going to call NBSC] which was run by the Post Office which dealt with the general use and working of the system."

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to the last sentence there, problems at other branches, in a moment. You, in this statement, exhibited, attached to this witness statement, call logs from the Horizon helps for a period of 10 January 2000 until November 2000, 30 November 2000, yes?
A. I don't remember getting these call logs.

I think I've got them in the bundle now. But
I don't remember asking for the call logs.
Q. It seems that you had them by the time you made this witness statement in October 2003 because you attached them to your witness statement and said, "They're my exhibit EMT1", "M" being your middle name or the first letter of your middle name, yes?
A. Yeah, I don't remember them. I've got them in the bundle now but I don't know why I would need them, really.
Q. You mean you --
A. I wouldn't really understand them.
Q. In any event --
A. They were -- they were technical issues, I mean, you know, due to the system crashing or general teething problems. But I couldn't do anything with that.
Q. Mrs Cottam, you're getting a bit ahead of where we want to go. At the moment, I'm just asking you the question that you appear, is this right, in a statement made to the court in October 2003 to have exhibited some Horizon Helpdesk call logs as your exhibit EMT1, and --
A. Which court was this? I haven't been to court.
Q. No, it never reached court. Post Office settled.
A. Oh, right, well -- I didn't even know there'd been any sort of court case until I got this bundle of documents.
Q. We've got a witness statement from you signed with a witness statement of truth, which says, "I attached to this witness statement 84 pages of call logs and my analysis of them". Okay? Let's start on the basis that that is what this document shows. So these 84 pages of Helpdesk records and your analysis of them are just --
A. I do not remember that at all.
Q. Maybe I wouldn't blame you because it's 20 years ago, almost to the day.
A. Yeah, right. I don't remember. I don't remember that at all. I mean I'm sure -28 pages? I just --
why were you telling court what the Helpdesk's records showed when you --
A. Because that's what the Helpdesk would have shown me.
Q. Let's just --
A. I don't understand these. Don't understand them. I don't know what it's saying, "Gateway is now stuck at $3 \%$ ". That means nothing to me.
Q. As I said, in about half an hour or so, I'm going to be asking you some questions about that?
A. Oh, right.
Q. Let's just look at what the documents are to start with, if we can, Mrs Cottam. You see, the first one on this page, 9 February, over the page, please, another call on 9 February. Over to the next page, please, another call on 9 February. Page 161. Sorry, page 51 --
A. What --
Q. -- another call on 9 February, yes? The date of installation. Over the page.
A. What am I looking at the -- what am I supposed to be looking at these?
Q. All I'm doing at the moment is reminding you of the number and nature of the Horizon Helpdesk 35
Q. No, it's 84 pages --
A. No.
Q. -- between pages 28 and 112 , and I'm going to look at them, if we may. So if we turn to page 48 in this bundle, this is the first page of that exhibit, EMT1. Okay?
A. The first I've seen of these is when I got this bundle of papers. I haven't seen these before.
Q. You didn't see them back in 2003 when you were making this witness statement to the court?
A. Not that I remember.
Q. In any event, they're attached to your witness statement made to the court, and the first of them is dated 9 February 2000; can you see that?
A. Yes, I can see that.
Q. Basically, over the next 84 pages there are further call logs and then an analysis of them had you prepared, according to your witness statement at the time?
A. I don't remember making any analysis of this at all, I just don't remember having to analyse these at all. I don't think I would really understand it.
Q. That's one of the things I'm going to be asking you about in probably about half an hour's time:
call logs that you exhibited to your witness statement on 16 October 2003.
A. Well, I would have requested these. I wouldn't have seen them. I don't remember these at all.
Q. Let's carry on. 10 February, so we've got a handful on the day of installation, the 9th, and then more on 10 February and then, over the page, another call on 10 February.

Over the page, another call on 10 February. Over the page, another call on 10 February. Over the page, another call on 10 February. Over the page, another call on 10 February. Over the page, another call on 10 February.

And so it goes on, do you see?
A. Yeah.
Q. Then if we go forwards to the --
A. Who's the caller on this? Mr Harrison. But he's not the postmaster, is he?
Q. What's your point?
A. Well, he doesn't feature very heavily anywhere, does he? And yet his name's on all these now.
Q. What's your point?
A. Well, it says, "Title: Postmaster", and he wasn't, was he?
Q. What's your point?
A. Well, he's not the postmaster. So is that correct?
Q. What do you mean: is it correct?
A. Well -- well, nothing. It doesn't matter.
Q. Is this the suspicion without proof issue raising its head again?
A. I'm not going down that line at all.
Q. I thought you just did?
A. Well, I'm just saying here it says that the caller was Mr Harrison and he's the postmaster and he wasn't.
Q. If we go to the last of the documents in your exhibit, if we look at page 115, please. You'll see this is dated 21 June 2000 and the caller is Julie, the postmaster. Yeah?
A. Yeah
Q. In your witness statement, you said that you were exhibiting the calls, if you remember.
A. No, I don't remember.
Q. All right, well, I'll read it out to you.
A. Okay.
Q. Between the period 10 January 2000 until 30 November 2000 -- in fact, the calls that were exhibited are between 9 February 2000, the day of installation, and the last one is on 21 June
witness statement start at page 48.
A. I'm sorry, I'm lost.
Q. That's why I haven't asked you to look at any documents in a pack in front of you because people tend to get lost and, instead, I've displayed them on the screen.
A. Page 48 of what am I looking at? Because my page 48 is just about general subpostmasters. It's not -- I don't know what I'm looking at.
Q. Shall we just stick to the documents I'm displaying on the screen, then.
A. Yeah, but -- yeah, yeah.
Q. Good. Where might you have gone in October 2003 -- I'm sorry if you find this uncomfortable.
A. I'm sorry. Can I just have a break at the moment here because I don't -- I'm not remembering any of this. Can you just give me five minutes, please?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, of course.
MR BEER: Of course.
I wonder whether we might take a 15 -minute break now.

Ah, sir, you're back. I wonder if we might take a 15-minute break now.

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2000. Do you understand the point I'm making at the moment? Your witness statement said calls are between 10 January to 30 November and the calls that you've, in fact, exhibited are between 9 February and 21 June.
A. I don't remember.
Q. Where would you have got these documents from?
A. I don't know. I don't know. I don't remember this at all.
Q. If you were approached in 2003 to make a witness statement, and we know that you did, and one of the things that you did was attach to your witness statement a series of calls and call logs, how would you have got those?
A. I don't know.
Q. Can you try and help us as to --
A. I will try and help but I don't -- I just don't know. Is that -- is this -- are these things in this bundle that I was sent?
Q. Yes, both the witness statement I'm quoting from and your exhibit to it.
A. What page is that, please?
Q. It's in tab D7. The bit of your witness statement I'm reading from is at page 8 of tab D7 and the call logs that you exhibited to your 38

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, by all means.
MR BEER: Thank you, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: It's not normally something that
I would say openly at this stage but this is
a very unusual situation. It's certainly in my mind that the most likely explanation for this witness statement is that the documents that you've just been looking at were obtained for the lady and it may perhaps be fruitful, I'm only making a suggestion, to take her directly to her analysis to see if, in fact, at some stage she did analyse the documents.
MR BEER: Yes. That was the next series of questions --
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I'm sure they were but she's becoming so confused about things, I think, Mr Beer, that your methodical approach may be -it may be more easily achieved by just asking her directly about the analysis because, if she acknowledges that she did make an analysis, at least we've got that. If she doesn't acknowledge that, then I don't know where we go from there.
MR BEER: Sir, just so you know where this is going, we're in possession of some significant call
logs that weren't exhibited that involve
Ms Tagg, as she then was, Mrs Cottam now, in liaison with the Helpdesk complaining over problems with the Horizon and the issue to be explored is why wasn't that revealed to the civil court.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, all right. Well, then I'll, as they say, butt out.

Mrs Cottam, we've decided we're going to
have a 15 -minute break now --
MR BEER: I think she's gone already, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: No, no, she's back on my screen.
THE WITNESS: No, I'm here.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So we normally have a break at about now, so we're going to have a 15 -minute break now and you compose yourself, all right. I know this is difficult for you. But we'll come back again in 15 minutes and Mr Beer will ask you some more questions then, all right?
THE WITNESS: Right. Thank you.
(10.57 am)

## (A short break)

(11.14 am)

MR BEER: Sir, good morning, can you continue to see and hear me?
involved in -- if I had to write to any Post
Office, because I wasn't, like -- I didn't have
any in-depth knowledge of the contract between subpostmasters and the Post Office, you know, the contractual, legally-binding stuff, I always got them to draft the letter for me. So I may well have signed it but the content would have been through the Contracts Manager.
Q. Okay, this isn't a letter written by you; this is a witness statement made by you to the court.
A. Yeah. I don't remember this at all. I don't remember it.
Q. Do you remember seeing a solicitor?
A. No. I went to -- the only time I've been to see a solicitor was about a couple of months ago and that was only on -- I don't remember seeing a solicitor at all.
Q. So you think somebody else may have written this statement and you signed it?
A. If it's about contracts and things like that, they would have drafted it for me, definitely.
Q. The "they" is Paul or Rebecca; is that right?
A. Yeah, well, it may have been but it would have
been through the area -- the area office, the
district office, because I -- any letter that

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, I can, thank you.
MR BEER: Mrs Cottam can you see and hear me?
A. Yes, I can.

MR BEER: Thank you, can we have on the screen, please, POL00118219, and look at page 8, please, and highlight paragraph 12 , please. This was the paragraph that we looked at earlier of your civil statement to the court and, in the fourth line, you said:
"Copies of the call logs for [those dates] together with a brief analysis of the calls ... which I prepared ... are at", then you give some page numbers.

Do you see that?
A. I do, but I didn't write all this.
Q. Who wrote it?
A. I know I was heavily involved with the Contracts Manager, who was called Paul, but I didn't write all this.
Q. You said you were heavily involved with the Contracts Manager, Paul?
A. Yeah.
Q. What was Paul's surname?
A. I think it was Paul Williams. There was also somebody called Rebecca Robinson. She was 42
was like that, I would have always put through them first, because they would know the technicalities of it, "Oh you can't say that", or "You've got to quote this", or "You've got to quote the other". So I may well have signed lots of letters.
Q. Again, just to be clear, this isn't a letter; this is a witness statement to the civil court with your name on it and you --
A. The civil court?
Q. Yes, the Blackpool County Court.
A. I don't remember that. I don't remember that at all. The first I knew that there'd been any sort of court case was when I got this bundle of documents.
Q. Well, in this document, which has got your name at the beginning of it, your name at the end of it and your signature on it, it says, "I prepared an analysis of the call logs"; can you see that?
A. Yeah.
Q. It's the bit that's highlighted.
A. I would not -- I would not have prepared -I may well have signed it and not really understood what I was signing it, but I wouldn't 44
understand the analysis of the call logs.
Q. Let's just look at the analysis of the call logs. They start at page 118. It's going to come up on the screen for you.
A. Yeah, I've got them all here.
Q. Can you see a reference number is given in the first column; the status of the call, whether it's closed or open, is given?
A. Yeah
Q. Priority and severity is rated; when the call was opened and closed is given?
A. Yes.
Q. Which FAD, which branch or site --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- et cetera. Then, on the right-hand side, two columns in, is the problem --
A. Problem.
Q. -- text and then the closure text; can you see that?
A. Yeah.
Q. Did you remember this?
A. No, I would never see these. No. Never seen them until I got this bundle.
Q. Can you help us as to how it came about that there's a witness statement to the Blackpool 45
A. I don't think it was the kind of thing I would have got involved in because l'd never used Horizon. So I didn't know how to use it. So, if they were asking questions about it, I wouldn't have been able to answer.
Q. Okay. Can we just look at some documents, then, some underlying material, to see what the position was back in 2000, and the purpose of me asking you these questions, just so that you know in advance, is when we come to the suspension and termination decisions, I want to ask you some questions about your own personal knowledge of problems with Horizon and the extent to which that was brought into account in decision making. Okay? That's why I'm asking you about these issues.

Can we start, please, with FUJ00121246.
I'm sorry, Mrs Cottam, there's just a delay in this end in displaying the document.
A. Okay
Q. Thank you. Can we expand the top part. Can you see this is a record of a call, it's to the Horizon Helpdesk, opened on 24 February 2000 and closed on 1 March 2000. Can you see that at the top there?
A. Yeah.
Q. Can you see the caller is shown as Ms Tagg?
A. It is, yeah.
Q. That's you and your maiden name; is that right?
A. It is, yeah. I don't remember making that call, obviously. It's so long ago.
Q. The problem text that's recorded is:
"Couldn't print due to a session being suspended last night, has rolled [stock unit] and the office into the next week. Rebooted to clear the problem."
A. Yeah.
Q. Then --
A. I wouldn't have done that, though. Because I wouldn't have known how to reboot or roll or ... that's probably what happened but I personally would not have done that.
Q. So why would you be calling in the Helpdesk?
A. Why would I be calling them? To ask them how to do whatever it was they were doing. But I would get the subpostmaster to do it.
Q. But this is you calling in. Why would you be calling --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- the Helpdesk?

County Court in your name and signed by you as true, which says, "I prepared this analysis"?
A. No. No, I can't because I don't ever remember seeing it. I mean, it was a long time ago. I may well have done it but I really don't, I just wouldn't understand it.
Q. Okay l'll take those down, then, please. Can we go back to the statement that you provided to this Inquiry -- it'll come up on the screen for you -- WITN09530100, and it's the second paragraph from the bottom.

Against "Para (4)", that's paragraph 4 of our questions to you, where we'd asked you whether you had any direct involvement with the Helpdesk, you said:
"I don't remember having any direct involvement with the Helpdesk."
A. No.
Q. By that, did you mean that you may have had involvement with the Helpdesk but just because of the passage of time you may not now remember, or --
A. Yeah, I don't remember.
Q. -- you don't think it's the kind of thing you would have got involved in? 46
A. Because I would have been at the office trying to help them sort out whatever it was.
Q. Why wouldn't the subpostmaster call in?
A. Well, she probably did --
Q. No, she didn't. You did.
A. -- or he did. We were looking for some advice from somebody.
Q. Sorry, did you say "or he did"?
A. I don't know, I can't remember.
Q. Was that slipping into the suspicion without proof thing again.
A. Well, I wouldn't like to say.
Q. Well, but you just did.
A. Well, I'm sorry I did.
Q. Anyway, this is a record of a call made at 8.05 in the morning by you, and I'm asking why would you be calling in?
A. Because they probably would have rung me and said that "We've not been able to roll over and what can we do?" So I only lived locally, so I went. I must have gone.
Q. Okay. If we look at under all of that black and grey text into the call activity log, I wonder if it can be highlighted. First line:
"New call taken by Andrew Abernethy. 49
for them but I can't say I remember that on 24 February in the year 2000, no, I can't.
Q. Okay, let's go to FUJ00121296. Again, there's a problem displaying the document, so we may have to wait a little bit.

If we can expand that a little bit, please. Can you see this is a record of a call made on Friday, 31 March 2000 at 5.35 in the evening and the caller is Elaine Tagg, the RNM, the Retail Network Manager; can you see that?
A. Yeah, I can.
Q. The problem is recorded as:
"The system keeps crashing and IS DOING 3 or 4 times a day and is getting worse. They have had several base units installed but the problem persists."

Yes?
A. Yeah, I don't remember making this call. I don't remember making this call. I might well have done and, if that's what they said and my name's on it, fine. But I don't remember it.
Q. That can come down, thank you.

The first call record we looked at was very shortly after the system was installed, a fortnight or so, and then this one was a month

Couldn't print due to a session being suspended last night, has rolled the [stock unit] and the office into the next week. Rebooted to clear the problem."

Then three lines on, four lines on:
"She would like this investigated as the gateway needs rebooting about 3 or 4 times a week as it keeps freezing ... can't touch anything on the screen (no hourglass spinning)."
A. Are they saying I said that, because I don't remember saying that.
Q. I wouldn't expect you to remember 23 years on. You --
A. But I don't think I would do that. I don't think I knew how to reboot, or ... but if that's what they say, that's what they say. I can't
Q. So this is the first record that I can see of you being recorded as calling in and raising an issue or complaining about a Horizon system fault or problem. Your present recollection is that you don't remember ever doing that; is that right?
A. If -- I don't remember it. But it's likely that would have gone and tried to sort something out 50
later, with, on both occasions, you being recorded as "system crashing three or four times a week, gateway needing rebooted".
A. I don't remember that. I wouldn't know what gateway rebooting meant.
Q. When you came to make decisions about suspension of Mrs Wolstenholme in November, would you have taken into account your knowledge of problems with the system that you yourself had reported?
A. I think we would have taken into account that the system -- you know, they were saying the system wasn't right and this wasn't working but that was not the basis. The basis -- if I recall correctly, the basis of why the contract was terminated is that they refused to use the Horizon system and they refused to repay the losses.
Q. They refused to use the Horizon system because I kept crashing and needed rebooting and it was giving them problems with balancing and shortfalls, correct?
A. I don't know if that's correct or not. That's what they said but I don't know that what they said was correct.
Q. If we just go back to your civil statement,

POL00118219, at page 8 and paragraph 12. You said:
"Mrs Wolstenholme persisted in telephoning
the [HSD] ..."
Yes?
A. Yes.
Q. You don't refer in this statement to any of the calls that you made to the Horizon Helpdesk and instead seem to give the impression that this is Mrs Wolstenholme persisting, ie perhaps unnecessarily bothering, the Horizon Helpdesk; is that correct, that that was the impression you were trying to convey?
A. I wasn't trying to convey any. That's what she did.
Q. You only speak in this statement about

Mrs Wolstenholme phoning in and you use the word "persisting" or "she persisted"?
A. Mm .
Q. You don't refer to you calling in identifying problems?
A. Well, I wouldn't have been there every time the problems occurred.
Q. Would there be any reason why you didn't refer in this witness statement to you reporting 53

These have not been transferred across to [stock unit] RJ but are showing on the adjust stock screen. Balance snapshot correct."

Then a couple of lines on "Advice": "[Postmaster] advised that this is an intermittent problem occurring since the counters were upgraded on 23 October."

Then over the page, please, third line.
"Repeat Call":
"[Postmaster] phoned back and still has not heard from anyone. Voiced Phil at SMC ..." Do you remember what the SMC was?
A. No.
Q. The second line of support:
"... as soon as he can. Advised
[postmaster] of this."
Then two lines on:
"Repeat Call: still awaiting a reply --
getting very upset -- waiting to balance and get to family, etc."

Two lines on:
"Information: HSH contacted SMC for update, advised call is with SSC ..."

Do you remember what the SSC was?
A. No.
problems about Horizon to the Helpdesk?
A. No.
Q. Can we look, please, at FUJ00055145.

Display problem again, we'll be back with you shortly.

This is a PinICL, as it's called, opened on 2 November 2000 and closed on 7 November 2000. Do you know what a PinICL is? Do you recall what a PinICL is?
A. No.
Q. Had you ever heard the phrase before?
A. No.
Q. You'll see it's dated 2 to 7 November 2000, so two or three weeks before Mrs Wolstenholme was suspended on 30 November 2000. You understand?
A. Yeah.
Q. Let's look at what it records by looking at activities. In the third line:
"PM has noticed that the adjust stock figures from shared [stock unit] AA are showing in shared [stock unit] RJ and vice versa. [Postmaster] viewed the adjust stock figures in [stock unit] RJ and it showed 20 [times] £20 smartcreds, that were remmed into [stock unit] AA on [a time and date with a session ID]. 54
Q. We know it as the third line of support:
"... will be dealt with [as soon as possible]."

Then three lines on:
"Follow Up: RNM Elaine Tagg [that's you] called re the call she is on her way to the office and wants updating on the situation.
"Spoke to [reference] Cath on third line [I think that's the third line of support] who [advised] she will check who is working on the call and get them to ring the office [as soon as possible] message relayed back to the [Retail Network Manager].
[Retail Network Manager] not very happy with response."

Do you recall this kind of event where there would be a problem at the Cleveleys branch, you would go round to the branch -- recorded here you're on your way to the office -- and you would be calling in complaining about the response of the Helpdesks?
A. No.
Q. Would you accept that --
A. I wouldn't really have known unless they told me when I got there. If the helpline hadn't called 56
me, which I don't think they would have done, I wouldn't have known until I got to the office. They would've had to tell me that they'd been on to the call line -- the helpline.
Q. Okay, this has got you calling in to the third line of support.
A. Yeah, so I must have called them because -well, I don't -- well, they must have asked me to go to the office and wanted an update.
Q. Anyway, you're recorded as not being very happy with the response of the Helpdesk; do you see that?
A. Yeah. Well, I can't remember why now, it's that long ago.
Q. No. If we go over the page, please. At the top of the page, first line, halfway through
"Advised [postmaster] needs to contact NBSC and let them know of the situation as they will probably not be able to do a cash account."
A. I don't know what that means.
Q. Can you recall what the NBSC was?
A. No.
Q. Can you recall what doing a cash account was?
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. What was doing a cash account? 57
final balance is showing to be correct.
"One of the [stock units] had something
added to it, whilst rolling over."
Can you remember what rolling over was?
A. Yeah.
Q. What was rolling over?
A. You would balance on the Wednesday night and then you rolled it over to the Thursday to start afresh. So that was like -- say that was
Week 1, Week 1 would be ended, you'd roll it over into Week 2.
Q. This is a Thursday morning -- take it from me that 2 November 2000 was a Thursday.
A. Yeah, sometimes they did it on a Wednesday night.
Q. If, when rolling over, the system added something to a stock unit whilst rolling over, that would be a problem, wouldn't it?
A. Well, l've never come across that.
Q. Do you accept that's what this is recording?
A. The system couldn't add something to it.
Q. It just couldn't?
A. Someone or something must have added something to it. You know, you're just rolling it over.
You know, you're rolling $£ 100$ over, it should
A. It was doing the weekly balance.
Q. Reading on:
"Repeat Call: RNM calling they have called a few times now ..."
A. Hang on. I can't find that, where is that?
Q. Just after the passage that's highlighted, the next line, that's it:
"RNM calling [that's you] they have called a few times now expecting a call back with info and no one has called them, the office is closed but they're waiting for a call."

Reading on:
"Repeat Call: voiced EDSC, while speaking to them PM terminated call.
"The call summary has been changed ...
"[Postmaster] has noticed that the adjust stock figures from [has been changed to] adjust stock figures from shared."

Then reading on, so five lines on:
"Contacted the RNM [that's you] for this office as she has now made a complaint regarding this issue.
"Elaine [Retail Network Manager] advised that all [stock units] have now been rolled over and they are now checking them to see if the 58
show $£ 100$ in the next week that you're starting with, it's --
Q. This is recording you lodging a complaint at a failure of the Helpdesk to deal with the issue and you telling the Helpdesk that one of the stock units had something added to it whilst rolling over.
A. Mm .
Q. That's not Mrs Wolstenholme or Mr Harrison adding something to the stock unit, somebody adding something. You're telling the Helpdesk here that there's a problem with the system, aren't you? A stock unit has had something added to it.
A. Well, yeah. How it was added to it is another matter.
Q. No, and that's what you're -- if we continue:
"Elaine [that's you] was very annoyed that no one from 3rd line had called her back, as she has been promised number of callbacks."

Then over the page, please:
"Apologised for her not receiving any callbacks and advised that I would escalate the fact that the agents she has spoken to have promised callbacks within the hour, as they
should not be making promises like these.
"Advised her that 3rd line are very busy with their investigations and sometimes do not have time to call back.
"They may call back sometimes if they require additional information/actions ...
"Advised that I would monitor the call, and if any updates occurred, I would notify them."

Then there's some information about assigning it to a team member. Then, if we read on a little bit, four lines, under "Response", can you see that?
A. Yeah.
Q. It says:
"There is a KEL for this problem ..."
Did you know what KELs were?
A. No.
Q. Had you ever heard of something called a Known Error Log?
A. No.
Q. Anyway, it says:
"There is a KEL for this problem [and the reference is given] LKiang351M.
"The KEL explains that it is currently being investigated by development. I have not spoken

Then RJ it showed all [negative] figures but the [negative] value reflects AA stock value but in [negative] format."

Then an example is given.
Then, at the foot of the page, four lines up:
"More information has been received with regard to this problem. Is the KEL available as I am unable to locate it? Please can this be investigated further."

Then over the page, five lines in:
"See KEL [then that number is given] already specified.
"[Postmaster] has not been contacted, closing as published known error."

Then the call is closed.
So you didn't know about the known error $\log$ ?
A. No. Never heard of it.
Q. There's no record on here or indeed elsewhere of you or the subpostmaster being told that a known error in the system occurred, which was affecting the balancing process? Do you see, there's no record on this PinICL?
A. No, no, no, I didn't know about it.

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to the customer."
Had you been told that there was a system maintained by Fujitsu, who operated Horizon, that recorded known errors, known problems with the Horizon system?
A. Had I been told?
Q. Yeah.
A. No, no.
Q. There's a record here that one of those known problems, known errors, is seemingly afflicting the Cleveleys branch, ie there is a KEL for this problem.
A. No, I didn't know that.
Q. Then there's nothing relevant on the remainder of that page. Go over the page:
"... contacted PM [this is three lines in] on 6 November.
"Further [information] requested on the [Known Error Log] ...

Adjusted ...
"Everything was okay all stock showed correct value."

Reading on:
"Showed all AA figures [stock units] so subpostmaster had adjusted back to RJ value. 62
Q. Instead, the Service Desk closed the call, don't contact the subpostmaster and they close it because it's a known error with Horizon; can you see that?
A. I didn't know -- yeah, I can. I didn't even know there was such a thing.
Q. Would this be important information that you would want to take into account or ensure that decision makers took into account when coming to decide, three weeks later, to suspend Mrs Wolstenholme and then terminate her contract?
A. If there were known errors and this was the first time l'd heard about it, you'd have to take that into account. I'd never -- this is the very first time l've known about a known error. So, you know, you don't know how many times it would have been. You couldn't just say on that one statement that it would have altered any decision but, certainly, if it had been an ongoing thing, and there was a lot of published known errors and you would have known about it, you'd have had to take that into account.
Q. That can come down from the screen. Thank you.

Do you remember in your civil statement you said, "l'm giving the court the call records between January and November 2000"?
A. No, I don't remember that.
Q. Let me just outline where I'm going. In your statement you said, "l'm giving you the call records between January and November 2000, exhibited" --
A. I'm giving the calls? Me?
Q. Yeah, "in annex to my witness statement". Then we looked and we saw that they were, in fact, only between February and June 2000 and, therefore, they didn't --
A. I gave them? When did I give them the ... why would I have --
Q. Let's go back to your witness statement, POL00118219-- it's going to come up on the screen -- and look at page 8, paragraph 12. In the fourth line you say "Copies of the call logs for the period between 10 January 2000 and 30 November 2000", are essentially exhibited by you, yes, are at page 28 to 112 of your exhibit. Can you see that? It's on the screen, Mrs Cottam.
A. Yeah, yeah.

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statement are true" and sign it with a pen underneath it, that indicates that you've written it. No?
A. Well, when am I supposed to have signed this?
Q. 16 October 2003.
A. I don't remember it. I don't remember it and the very first time I knew there'd been a court case about this was when this has just been raised again, when they sent me this bundle of papers. I didn't even know there'd been a court case before that.
Q. So you can't help us why the call log recording you on two occasions assisting Mrs Wolstenholme, complaining about the service offered by the Horizon Helpdesk, about a balancing issue and the system adding sums on rollover was not included in the documents exhibited to your witness statement? You can't help us there?
A. No, no, I can't see it.
Q. Three weeks before she was suspended?
A. Am I supposed to be looking at this now? Is this on here?
Q. I simply don't understand what you're asking now.
A. Well, I don't understand what you're asking me. and say, "I believe the contents of this 66
Q. I'm asking --
A. Are you saying that l've got copies of calls logs and that's what I based the suspension on?
Q. No, l've not asked that question so far. I'm asking you whether you can explain why the call log that we just looked at, which records you joining in Mrs Wolstenholme complaining about Horizon and, on that occasion, 2 November, complaining about Horizon adding sums on rollover to a balance --
A. I don't --
Q. -- was not included in the information that you gave to the court?
A. I didn't give any information to the court. I wasn't called at the court case.
Q. Do you think somebody has fabricated your signature on this witness statement?
A. Well, I don't know if that's the case or not but I didn't know anything about the court case and I wasn't called to the court case.
Q. As I said, it didn't reach court because the Post Office settled.
A. Oh. But I didn't know anything about it. You would have thought that they would have at least approached me about it. They must have wanted
some input from me at that stage.
Q. Yes, you -- this is a 15 -page witness statement signed by you
A. No, this long -- this statement of truth, yeah?
Q. Yes.
A. August 2004. I just don't really understand what it is I'm supposed to be doing here, really. What -- I haven't got copies of the call logs, so -- other than in this bundle. I don't understand.
Q. If you had called in about a problem with the Horizon system -- that can come down, thank you -- if you had called in about a problem with Horizon, about it adding sums on rollover on 2 November 2000, you would want to take that into account, wouldn't you, when deciding whether to suspend Mrs Wolstenholme three or so weeks later?
A. Well, she was only suspended -- it might have been that we suspended her while we looked at the whole thing. I really can't remember.
Q. Well, that was my next question.
A. I would've taken advice before suspending her I wouldn't have done that often my own bat. I would have gone to the -- talked it through

Manager about this letter.
Q. It was your decision to suspend her, wasn't it?
A. Yes, but I wanted to make sure that it was contractually correct, as I signed the letter, and that was the case with most of these letters.
Q. I think we've agreed that it was you that suspended her, yes?
A. Oh yeah, it would have had to be me.
Q. What investigations did you carry out before suspending her?
A. Well, it was an ongoing investigation, really. It was to do -- I'd been in the office quite a lot, we were looking at all the different things that were happening and there was lots of cash losses and gains. The Bureau de Change was overstated or understated. Lots of things were taken into account.
Q. She was saying, in broad terms, it's the Horizon system that's the problem with this?
A. Yeah, she was.
Q. She was saying, "And I have raised these issues with the Helpdesk persistently over the last nine months", wasn't she?
A. Yes.
A. Not only mine and I wouldn't have drafted this letter. I would have gone to the Contracts 70
Q. So did you check the call logs to see whether what she was saying was true and what had been done about her complaints?
A. No, I didn't even really know about -- call logs existed at that time.
Q. But three or four weeks before you suspended her on 30 November, you yourself had been complaining to the Helpdesk about Horizon adding a sum on rolling over. So you knew --
A. Well --
Q. -- that what she was saying was true, didn't you?
A. Well, I didn't know it was true. How would

I have known it was true? I just said that that's what had happened. I didn't see it happen.
Q. So what investigation did you carry out to see whether it was true?
A. I can't -- I couldn't have investigated that.

That was, like, a technical issue.
Q. In any event, as we can see here, you say you wrote on 30 November confirming suspension
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. "I have now reviewed papers", you're reviewing them:

|  | "I am ... considering the termination of your contract ..." | 2 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| A. | Yeah. | 3 |
|  | In the fourth line of the next paragraph, you | 4 |
|  | say: | 5 |
|  | "The excessive number of error notices | 6 |
|  | is unacceptable ..." | 7 |
| A. | Yeah. | 8 |
|  | During final audit, there were four error | 9 |
|  | notices. | 10 |
| A. | Yeah. | 11 |
|  | Next paragraph: | 12 |
|  | "Your failure to account for official cash | 13 |
|  | and stock properly, ie your refusal to operate | 14 |
|  | the Horizon system ... is you clear breach of | 15 |
|  | ... your contract." | 16 |
| A. | Yeah, and it was -- that letter was drafted for | 17 |
|  | me -- well, the basis of it was drafted for me | 18 |
|  | by the Contracts Manager because I wouldn't have | 19 |
|  | known which -- what to say, the "section, para | 20 |
|  | this, this, and the other". | 21 |
|  | So when Mrs Wolstenholme was saying, "The reason | 22 |
|  | why I am now refusing to use the Horizon system | 23 |
|  | is because it is riddled with faults which are | 24 |
|  | causing the very problems that you are accusing | 25 |

A. It was all blamed on the Horizon system but the error notices that were coming back were error notices where pension dockets were overstated. The Foreign Exchange wasn't done correctly. That was nothing to do with Horizon. That was false accounting.
Q. She was false accounting, was she?
A. Well, I don't know who was false accounting but it's what it was.
Q. So her raising the Horizon system in her defence was an irrelevant consideration to you?
A. No, it wasn't irrelevant. But it was not the only thing.
Q. What was the reason for the termination of her contract?
A. I can't remember: failure to account for official cash and stock properly and the refusal to operate the Horizon system, and it was a clear breach of section 12, para 4 of the contract.
Q. That relies on what Horizon was telling you, doesn't it?
A. Not the failure to account for official cash and stock.
Q. How was the official cash and stock position
me of", what did you do to investigate at this stage, post-suspension?
A. Well, we'd been to the -- we were backwards and forwards to the helpline with it but we didn't then, and it -- that was not the only reason she was suspended.
Q. I'm talking about post-suspension now; I'm talking about termination now.
A. Yeah
Q. What investigation did you carry out to judge the accuracy or reliability of the things that Mrs Wolstenholme was saying in her defence?
A. Well, it wasn't the Horizon system. That wasn't the only reason that she was suspended. It was about the error notices that weren't being brought to account. There was a lot of that. Despite letters, and I remember hand delivering these letters saying, "You need to bring these to account", and that was not done
Q. Would the calls made by a subpostmaster to the NBSC, the two forms of Helpdesk, be taken into account in making a decision on termination?
A. Yes, yes, they would. But it wasn't all down to the Horizon system.
Q. What do you mean --

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recorded?
A. The auditors would have gone in and done that, the final audit, and they've said -- they've said on here --
Q. Did auditors go in?
A. Yeah, of course they did. Final audit. I didn't do the audits. The auditors went in.
Q. Do the auditors rely on what the cash and stock position is shown by Horizon in order to reach their conclusions?
A. They -- I can't say what the auditors did. They would have -- they would have looked at everything. They did a final audit and they would go back and see about error notices that were issued and making sure pensions were brought to account correctly and not overstated, all that. But that was to do with the auditors.
Q. Can we move forward, please, and look at POL00118242.

Look at second page, please, and scroll down, please. You're not included on this email chain. It's from Jim Cruise, a Post Office lawyer, to Mandy Talbot, another Post Office lawyer, and it's about the Cleveleys post office and Mrs Wolstenholme. To give you some context, 76

| Mr Cruise's email says: | 1 |
| :--- | :--- |
| "This case started back on 17/1/01 with | 2 |
| an email query from the then Personnel | 3 |
| Department ... about the above office when the | 4 |
| [subpostmaster's] contract was suspended on | 5 |
| 30 November 2000 as there were a large number of | 6 |
| error notices and losses and gains. At that | 7 |
| time the losses were $£ 14,000$ and the | 8 |
| [subpostmaster] was refusing to make them good | 9 |
| blaming the losses on the Horizon system which | 10 |
| had been introduced on February 2000 at her | 11 |
| office." | 12 |
| That all seems accurate so far: | 13 |
| "She was given 3 months notice and her | 14 |
| remuneration for the 3 months came to about | 15 |
| $£ 19,300$ which was set against losses. An | 16 |
| attempt was made to install a temporary | 17 |
| [subpostmaster] at the premises but negotiations | 18 |
| eventually broke down but [Mrs Wolstenholme] had | 19 |
| by then made a claim for rent for [Post Office] | 20 |
| equipment remaining at the premises after | 21 |
| 30 November. The claim was not accepted as it | 22 |
| was felt to be in both side's interests for the | 23 |
| equipment to stay while there was a chance of | 24 |
| a temporary SPM being installed. | 25 | 77

this Post Office lawyer to obtain a full audit trail for this post office and you replied that you had got the call logs for the office?
A. That letter, I wouldn't have written that letter. It was -- if it's come from Jim Cruise to Mandy Talbot that would have been drafted for me. Now, I wouldn't have had --
Q. Just to be clear --
A. I don't know why --
Q. Just to be clear, sorry to speak over you, this isn't a letter written by you or suggested to be written by you; this is an email between two people referring to something that one of them says he did with you, namely asking you to get a full audit trail, and you replying, saying you had got the call logs for the office, yes?
A. He said that, did he?
Q. Yes. You can see it on the screen.
A. Who said I had them? Roger Harrison said I had the call logs, did he?
Q. No. Mr Cruise said to Ms Talbot that you had got the call logs.
A. Well, I don't remember that. If I had the call logs, they would have been in the Cleveleys file that was delivered to Leeds area office by 79
"On 7 February 2001 the [subpostmaster's]
partner, Roger Harrison, asked if ICL [that's
Fujitsu] could look at the computer system as he
believed that there were problems with it. On
23/2/01, RH [I think that's Roger Harrison]
refused to allow the safes and Horizon equipment
to be removed from the [Post Office] which [Post
Office Limited] wished to do as the claim for
rent had been made. The refusal was because of
the dispute with [Post Office].
[Mrs Wolstenholme] asked for proof that the
losses were her fault and caused [I think that
should be 'and not caused'] by computer failure.
She also asked for copies of all error notices
but Chesterfield said that these were not
available."
Then this:
"On 27 February 2001 I advised Elaine Tagg
.. that because of the allegation of computer
failure the printouts should be obtained from
the National Audit Team showing a full audit
trail at this Post Office. On $28 / 2 / 01$ Elaine
Tagg told me that she had the call logs for the
office."
Is that correct, that you were tasked by
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myself. Because everything that I had following this case, I personally took to Leeds in the file.
Q. Would the audit trail or the call logs for this branch only have been obtained after suspension and after termination?
A. I don't know. I can't remember that.
Q. In the absence of audit data or call logs, what was the evidential basis for the suspension and then termination of Mrs Wolstenholme's contract?
A. I'm looking for the official wording for this because I don't want to get this wrong. I think it was -- I can't -- I don't know where it is but somewhere it was about refusal -- within it, was about refusal to bring -- and I can't quote this and say absolutely, but it was refusal to bring error notices to account, false accounting and -- oh, what's the other thing? Refusal to use the Horizon system, did I say that? There were several things.
Q. What I'm essentially asking is, by the time that those several things were decided upon, had you obtained a full audit trail for the post office concerned?
A. I wouldn't have done that. The Audit Team would 80
have gone in and they would have done all that, the full audit trail.
Q. What did auditors do? Did they just check stock and balance on the day that they went in and --
A. They did everything. They checked everything.
Q. What does everything mean?
A. Well, everything that they would need to do. I don't know what an Audit Team did when it went in. I know it checked cash and stock, it used to go back through to -- in some cases, they would recall pension documents to make sure that they were listed correctly, they weren't overstated or understated. What else would they go to? They would look at all remittances in, remittances out. So that's what the full audit trail would do.
Q. What product did you get from the Audit Team when you were deciding whether to suspend or to terminate?
A. I can't remember.
Q. Was it done by way of conversation?
A. It was -- um, I can't remember. The Audit Team might have a record of it. It would have been done over the telephone originally and I would have gone to the Contracts Manager and said
implement the checking procedures we discussed during my recent visits ie the manual recording of data you feel has been miscalculated by your Horizon system and the recording of all error notices received (using the pro forma I left with you ...). Can I also take this opportunity to advise you that accurate accounting within the office is your responsibility and whilst I can advise you on best practice the introduction of such practices lies with you." So it seems like you did tell her manually to record data that she felt had been miscalculated by the Horizon system, doesn't it?
A. It would appear so but I think that was an -- if I -- I don't remember it, but if it -- that would have been a good -- a good way of sort of double checking what was going wrong and what -what she thought was going wrong and what wasn't. But I -- manual recording of data.

Yeah, so where she felt it had been miscalculated by Horizon system, she should have been recording it and recording all error notices received because I left her a pro forma for that because they weren't bringing error notices to account.

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they'd had the audit or whatever.
Q. Do you remember being concerned about what Mrs Wolstenholme was telling you at the branch, to an extent that you suggested that she maintained a mirror system, a manual record, of transactions that she believed was being miscalculated by the Horizon system?
A. No, I don't remember that.
Q. She -- Mrs Wolstenholme, that is -- has given evidence to the Inquiry that you told her that you need to maintain, essentially, a side record in writing, handwritten record, of transactions, in particular the transactions that you feel have been miscalculated by the Horizon system. Do you remember that?
A. I do not.
Q. Can we look, please, at POL00118219, at page 165. This is a letter to her dated 3 November 2000 and if we look at the second page over the page, we can see it's your letter, yes? Go back to the first page, please. So this is two days after you've been phoning the Helpdesk. If we go to the foot of the page, please, in the last paragraph, you said:
"I must strongly advise you to immediately 82
Q. Was it usual to tell postmasters to maintain a manual side record?
A. In this case, it certainly was.
Q. So it was usual or was not usual?
A. It wasn't usual but it was a double check to make sure everything was going correctly, that was being recorded correctly.
Q. Did you obtain a copy of such a manual record from her?
A. I can't remember. I haven't got anything in the files, so I can't remember.
Q. There's certainly nothing exhibited to your October 2003 witness statement concerning it.

Can we go back to your witness statement, please, at the same volume, page 8. In paragraph 12, you told the court that Mrs Wolstenholme persisted in calling the Helpdesk but these problems related to the use and general operation of the system and were not technical problems relating to the system.

How were you able to say that the problems of which she was complaining were not technical problems relating to the system?
A. I would have asked the helpline what sort of problems were they.
Q. How would you have asked? Who would you have asked?
A. I would have asked one of the managers.
Q. This is you telling the court that it shouldn't be concerned with any problems with Horizon, isn't it?
A. Is it? Where's the interpretation of that?
Q. I'm sorry?
A. I don't understand what you're saying. Are you saying that I'm telling them that --
Q. "Court, don't worry about Horizon in Mrs Wolstenholme's case. All of her calls are about her use and operation of the system. They're not technical problems concerned with the system itself."
A. Oh, yeah so --
Q. I'm asking you what evidence you had for that?
A. Because of the number of error notices that were coming back.
Q. How does the number of error notices demonstrate that the dozens and dozens and dozens of calls that she made to the Horizon Helpdesk did not concern technical problems?
A. Because they were like overstating of pensions or understating of pensions or dockets were 85
Q. -- the latter of which was about the system adding a figure on rollover. Why did you tell the court that Mrs Wolstenholme's calls were not technical problems relating to the system?
A. I don't know. I don't even remember that.
Q. In the last paragraph --
A. I'm sorry. I can only surmise because of the number of error notices we were getting.
Q. Okay. Last sentence in that paragraph, you move to problems at other branches --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- and you say:
"Whilst there were some problems at other branches, they were not insurmountable and were often due to the system crashing or general teething problems."
A. Yeah.
Q. Where did you get the information from to make that statement in your witness statement?
A. Because I was visiting other offices to see how they were going on and I was assessing it against that.
Q. So that last sentence is based on your experience of the other 111 branches?
A. I didn't -- at that time, I didn't have 111
missing or -- they were -- it --
Q. She wasn't calling Helpdesk about those, was she?
A. No.
Q. She was calling the Helpdesk about problems with Horizon. We've seen three calls today already, where you joined in on the call, complaining about problems with Horizon?
A. Well, I took her word for it at the time.
Q. So why did you tell the court that the problems of which she was complaining were not technical problems relating to the system?
A. Where is this? Which court? I've not been to court?
Q. It's on the screen.
A. I haven't been to court.
Q. Tell the court in a witness statement, this witness statement that we're staring at.
A. I'm sorry, you'll have to explain to me what I'm -- what -- I'm lost now. You'll have to explain to me what I'm supposed to be seeing.
Q. We've seen three call logs this morning where you yourself joined in the calls to the Helpdesk concerning problems with the Horizon system -A. Yeah. 86
branches. I think I only had 27.
MR BEER: I'm not going to go back over that old ground. I'm very grateful to you for the help you've given us. They're all the questions I ask.

Sir, I don't think there are any questions from anyone else?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Is that correct?
MR BEER: It is.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Very well, then, that's the end of your session, Mrs Cottam. Thank you for coming to give evidence to the Inquiry, I'm grateful to you.
THE WITNESS: Thank you.
MR BEER: Sir, we now turn to the disclosure issue. I don't know whether it will be convenient to you to take a short break now.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, by all means. What do you suggest, Mr Beer?
MR BEER: Just 15 minutes so we can all reorientate ourselves in time and place --
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Fine.
MR BEER: -- and deal with disclosure.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: $\quad$ So that means we return at 12.40, is that it?

need to raise bere we ..... 19
Core Participants are aware of the issue because ..... 21
esterday afternoon of the issue and received ..... 23
yesterday afternoon, and correspondence that was ..... 25
$\begin{array}{ll}\text { MR BEER: Yes. Thank you, sir. } & 1 \\ \text { SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Okay, fine. } & 2\end{array}$
( 12.25 pm )
(12.42 pm)

## Submissions re disclosure

R BEER: Sir, good morning. Can you continue to WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you. Did you catch BEER: Yes, thank you. I was just waiting for

## Statement by MR BEER


received overnight, they received this morning.
They are all aware that the Inquiry has, in the time permitted, been considering it on an urgent basis.

On Thursday afternoon of last week, the Inquiry received a five-page letter from the Post Office's recognised legal representative, Mr Chris Jackson of Burges Salmon LLP. The letter was entitled "Post Office Horizon IT, Post Office disclosure, structural update as incoming RLR", ie recognised legal representative.

It discussed a number of matters and in particular the letter addressed an issue that I'm going to refer to the Microsoft Exchange/365 issue, a copy of the letter you have, sir, and has been provided to all Core Participants, so I'm not going to read it all to you now.

In summary, it stated that the Post Office had been undertaking what was described as "a structural review" and "related ongoing work" which had been referred to by Mrs Diane Wills, the Post Office's Inquiry Director, in her witness statement, given for the purposes of the disclosure hearing back on 5 September 2003. 90
platform called Mimecast. Proofpoint:
"... amongst other things, created
an archive of all emails sent from or to postoffice.co.uk email addresses, sometimes known as journalling."

The platform was:
"... intended and presumably believed to capture all emails sent and received along with attachments during its period of operation."

He continued:
"The technology behind the interaction of these email systems is complex and is still being investigated. However, Post Office's current understanding is that Microsoft Exchange and, before that, Lotus Notes, is the enterprise mail server that serves individual mail boxes as accessed by users through email applications, such as Microsoft Outlook."

Mimecast and, before that, Proofpoint, operates as an additional gateway between Microsoft Exchange and the onward and inward transmission of emails and, in doing so, performs various functions, including the journalling of all inbound and outbound emails.

As a result, the Post Office explain that:
"Conceptually, platforms, such as Mimecast, should contain the fullest possible record of inbound and outbound emails, particularly given that they have much longer retention periods than Microsoft Exchange."

In around 2016, Microsoft was -- sorry,
Mimecast was introduced and the Post Office understands that Proofpoint was migrated into Mimecast. On that logic, he continues:
"There should have been continuity of email data in Mimecast from 2012 onwards."

The Post Office understands, he said:
"... that Mimecast was used as the source
for email harvesting for the Inquiry and also for the Group Litigation."

The Post Office understands that 300 plus email accounts have been harvested from Mimecast into the various parts of the Post Office
Relativity database for the various phases of the Inquiry.

However -- and it's a significant
"however" -- first, queries by Herbert Smith
Freehills relating to the account of Andrew
Wise, which relates, we understand, to our
initial inquiries about Appendix 6, which you'll

Microsoft Exchange.
However, as an indication of the scale, KPMG
carried out an analysis at the instruction of
Burges Salmon and Fieldfisher and the Post
Office against:
"... 13 of the 19 individuals named in
a Section 21 notice from the Inquiry sent in July."

This is relevant to upcoming phases of the
Inquiry, sir, Phases 5 and 6 for next year and
the Post Office gave us information in this
letter that the remaining six of the 19
individuals were said not to have had Microsoft
Exchange accounts.
So using that forward-looking scoping,
Mr Jackson said:
"The latest analysis indicates that there
are approximately 363,000 parent emails that are not held in Mimecast."

That's after deduplication following a standard forensic deduplication approach. It does not indicate the number of documents that are potentially responsive to that Section 21 notice or which require review.

He says:
remember from the spring, and, secondly, in parallel with queries from Burges Salmon and Fieldfisher, the new RLR, in relation to a Section 21 notice concerning Phases 5 and 6, have led to investigations by Post Office by and with KPMG.

Those investigations, he says:
"... have now established that there are material volumes of email data that are in Microsoft Exchange but that are not in Mimecast."

Therefore, they are said to have been not available for search by the Post Office.

Furthermore, he says:
"The Post Office has not been able to establish why the Proofpoint to Mimecast transfer did not provide the assumed continuity and/or completeness."

Sir, the letter then explains that the total scale of the issue is not known by the Post Office because the email boxes harvested for all phases to date have been taken from Mimecast, and that the Post Office is currently investigating the number of custodians in respect of whom any emails are available on 94
"In the light of these findings, the relevant 13 email accounts are being reviewed by the Post Office."

The Post Office is due to provide its response to our Section 21 notice by 8 November this year.

That notice, as I've said, was sent in July this year and the deadline has been extended twice.

Sir, members of your Inquiry Team met with members of the Post Office and their legal teams on Friday, 3 November, Friday last week, the day after this update was received, and the Microsoft Exchange/365 issue was discussed.

Myself and another member of the counsel team stressed that the Inquiry needed more information on an urgent basis to know if there were further documents from the Microsoft Exchange/365 platform that related to this week's witnesses. So never mind looking at 13 of the 19 individuals that are relevant to a Section 21 notice that concerns Phase 5 and 6, what about documents that may be relevant to the witnesses we were about to call in this phase, Phase 4?
Post Office informed the Inquiry by 5.00 pm on Friday the extent to which the Microsoft 365 issue may affect or afflict this week's witnesses.
At 5.19 on Friday, the Post Office, via Herbert Smith Freehills, wrote to the Inquiry, and noted:
"We have run address book searches on Microsoft Exchange/365 for all of the witnesses giving evidence in the week commencing 7 November. These searches will run for the individual's email addresses and any aliases within the address book on Exchange/365. No Exchange data has been located for the witnesses scheduled to give evidence next week other than Stephen Bradshaw and Dave Posnett.
"Peters \& Peters have completed their review of the material identified using these searches for Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett and they are working with KPMG to produce these documents today if possible or as soon as possible thereafter. We understand from Peters \& Peters that production is currently expected to comprise of approximately 500 documents. 97

Sir, those documents that were received, were received late. They are said to respond to Rule 9 notices made by the Inquiry on 3 December 2021, 15 June 2022 and 17 August 2022, with a small number of documents said to be otherwise of interest.

It goes without saying that those documents were extremely late, in some cases responsive to requests for disclosure made by the Inquiry nearly two years ago.

It also appears that some of them may be materially similar, however, to other documents already disclosed by the Post Office.

Sir, members of your legal team worked over the weekend to review those 421 documents ahead of this week's witnesses. That's part of a pattern of work to try to ensure that these Phase 4 hearings can go ahead as planned and, in Mr Blake's case, who had the lion's share of the 421 to read, tireless work.

The position yesterday afternoon was that the Inquiry was proposing to proceed with all of the witnesses listed to be heard this week. Mr Blake and I had got on top of this new material, the 421 documents.
"The Post Office is urgently running further searches for the witnesses for whom no material could be found via an alternative mechanism, namely party-based searches, ie searches based on who was a party to an email. Out of an abundance of caution, this secondary mechanism will also be run in relation to Mr Bradshaw and Mr Posnett. No data was found using this search for Mrs Cottam.
"The Post Office is still testing whether other search mechanisms might yield further documents, eg proximity searches based on the name which appears in a person's email address.
"This work is being conducted urgently. We will provide a further update and any documents that have been identified on Monday, 6 November."

At 8.24 pm on Friday, the Inquiry received 421 documents from the Post Office and at 9.01 pm the Post Office provided a cover letter to the production of those 421 documents explaining that these documents were identified as a result of address book searches on Exchange/365 relating to Stephen Bradshaw and Mr David Posnett.

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At 8.29 pm last night, the Post Office sent a further letter to the Inquiry. Given its significance, I'm going to read the relevant parts of it into the record.

If you've got it, sir, it's letter 8.29 pm last night, from paragraph 2 onwards:
"In our email of 3 November 2023, we provided an update on the production of documents from Exchange/365 in relation to the witnesses who were giving evidence in the week commencing 7 November. We explained that the Post Office had conducted address book searches, ie searches run for individual email addresses and any aliases within the address book on Exchange/365, and was urgently running additional party-based searches, ie searches based on who was a party to an email, in relation to this week's witnesses. We're writing to provide a further update in relation to the witnesses giving evidence this week.
"The Post Office does not currently anticipate producing any additional documents from Exchange/365 in relation to Elaine Cottam, Teresa Williamson or Natasha Bernard. However, for the reasons outlined below the Post Office 100
is unable to provide the same reassurance in respect of Stephen Bradshaw and Dave Posnett."
The letter then addresses the position of Elaine Cottam in its paragraph 4. As we've heard from Mrs Cottam, I'm not going to read it.
Moving on to paragraph 5 under the heading, "Stephen Bradshaw, Tuesday, 7 November 2023":
"On Friday, 3 November 2023, the Post Office produced 382 documents."
Just stopping there for your note, that's the part of the 421:
"Documents tagged as relating to Mr Bradshaw as a result of the review of the material identified following address book searches for Mr Bradshaw.
"Over the weekend, the Post Office conducted
further party-based searches to seek reassurance that no additional material was captured by these searches. Unfortunately, the party-based searches have returned a very significant volume of material apparently relating to Mr Bradshaw. It has not been possible to process the data so it has not yet been possible to ascertain the level of internal duplication, the extent to which the material might overlap with documents 101
prioritising this as a matter of urgency.
"Teresa Williamson.
"The Post Office has not identified any
Exchange/365 material relating to Teresa
Williamson as a result of the address book or party-based searches.
"David Posnett.
"On Friday, 3 November, the Post Office
produced five documents relating to David
Posnett following the address book searches.
The party-based searches run over the weekend have resulted in the identification, harvesting and processing of 22,000 parent emails after deduplication at MD5\# level. It's likely that some of this material will be new and POL is working to identify the extent of any new material it will be necessary to review.
"Regretfully, the Post Office anticipates it will not be possible to review and produce any new material resulting from the party-based searches sufficiently in advance of Mr Posnett giving evidence on 9 November. As with the data for Mr Bradshaw, the Post Office is prioritising this as a matter of urgency.
"Natasha Bernard.
already harvested by address book searches and data otherwise available in POL's Relativity databases.
"However, it is anticipated that there may be new material within that data. Work is being urgently undertaken to conduct further analysis of that data, in order that the position can be established.
"Further, given it has not been possible to process the data, the Post Office has not been able to run search terms or conduct analysis to identify the volume of new material.
"Regretfully, there is no prospect of the Post Office being in a position to review or produce any relevant material as a result of party-based searches before Mr Bradshaw is scheduled to give evidence tomorrow. Further, the Post Office is not in a position to provide any reassurance to the Inquiry that no additional relevant material exists.
"As soon as the Post Office can provide the likely volume of additional material that needs to be reviewed, it will provide the Inquiry with a time frame within which the material can be reviewed and produced. The Post Office is 102
"The Post Office did not identify any material following the address book searches in respect of Ms Bernard. Party-based searches run over the weekend resulted in the identification of approximately 640 parent emails. Search terms applied to this material resulted in no relevant material being identified. A manual search is being completed overnight however the Post Office does not expect the position to change in relation to Ms Bernard.
"Lastly, we will update the Inquiry further, including in relation to the witnesses giving evidence next week, as soon as possible."

Lastly, at 11.14 pm last night -- the letter I've just read was from Herbert Smith Freehills, the letter I'm about to quote from was from Burges Salmon and Fieldfisher. They wrote to us at 11.14 pm last night, albeit the letter is dated 7 November, today.

They write further to the Herbert Smith Freehills letter and advance of the hearing today:
"The Inquiry's most pressing concern will of course be Phase 4 hearings currently under way."

Under the heading "Microsoft Exchange", they 104

## say:

"The current knowledge in respect of the data held on the Post Office's Microsoft Exchange servers is addressed in the Herbert Smith Freehills letter [that l've just read].
"The Post Office apologises that it's only been able recently to provide a greater level of information about the impact of the data located on the Microsoft Exchange repository. As explained in our letter of 6 October and 20 October, whether or not the emails were new required complex technical knowledge and work. At the time of that correspondence and as is still the case, the extent of duplication is unclear. The Post Office and its external advisers are working on a proposed approach to address the issue in terms of impacts on disclosure and will update the Inquiry by the end of this week."

Then there is some information about still further other data sources.

The information given to the Inquiry at
8.29 pm last night is plainly very significant information. I'm going to invite you in a moment to hear from Ms Gallafent on behalf on 105
a significant witness who has a footprint against a large part of the Inquiry's relevant period and is involved in a number of important events of significant interest to the Inquiry.

Thirdly, there are a number of emails
already in possession of the Inquiry where we
would dearly like to have seen the replies or follow-on emails.

In relation to Mr Posnett, as I said, we thought over the weekend we had addressed the new material relating to Mr Posnett that came from this data source, but it seems that there is a pool of some 22,000 documents to be looked at. That's after duplication and it is parent emails. You'll note the significance of that, that a parent email can, itself, be the source to many, many more documents if those documents are attached to an email. That number, 22,000, is a very high number indeed.

Mr Posnett is a very significant witness, scheduled to give evidence for a day and a half, again involved in a series of significant events of interest to the Inquiry.

Both of the witnesses l've just mentioned
Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett, are witnesses whom 107
the Post Office and then from any other Core Participants who wish to make submissions and then, if I may, I'll reply. But, for now, I would note the following:

On the basis of what the Post Office, through its various lawyers, have said, there appears to be no reason why the Inquiry cannot proceed to call Teresa Williamson or Natasha Bernard. In the light of the information that I've just read, you will appreciate why we proceeded with Mrs Cottam just now.

In relation to Stephen Bradshaw, the letter of last night does not state how much material has been returned by these recent searches relating to Mr Bradshaw. It simply says there is "a very significant volume".

We understand that the work undertaken by the Post Office to date suggests there is a pool of documents which is very large indeed, ie a very high number of documents on which to conduct a deduplication and then a relevance exercise. I would invite Ms Gallafent to inform you of the Post Office's current understanding of how large the pool of material is.

Secondly, in relation to Mr Bradshaw, he is 106

I would have invited you to give the self-incrimination warning to on the basis of material already within our possession.

This material was not, on the face of it, disclosed in the course of the Group Litigation, despite, as we understand it, Mimecast being the source for the harvesting of emails in the Group Litigation. The non-disclosure of this material, if it turns out to be material non-disclosure, may be a matter to which we will have to return in Phases 5 and 6 of the Inquiry.

This material was not, on the face of it, disclosed in the course of the appeals to the Court of Appeal Criminal Division and the same point may apply.

As for the Post Office, I would invite them, in addition to the point I have made already, to explain firstly in clear terms their present understanding of what has gone wrong here.

Secondly, to give their assessment of the likely relevance of this material to Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett, not, of course, on the basis that they have read it and analysed it, they haven't got to that stage yet, but because they possess it, they know the date ranges 108
concerned, they know the probabilities of whether we have or have not seen this material before and they know the extent to which there are gaps in our disclosure from 2012 onwards.

Thirdly, to give their judgement, by way of submission to you, as to both the feasibility and the appropriateness of calling Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett without disclosure of this material. You will have seen that the letter of 8.29 last night said that the Post Office -- and I summarise -- can give the Inquiry no reassurances whatsoever.

I would invite them to assist you with the opposite issue, namely an assessment of the likelihood of these caches of documents containing material that is relevant to Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett.

Sir, that's all say for now. I would invite you to hear from Ms Gallafent first, then the subpostmaster representatives, then any other Core Participant who wishes to make submissions.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right. Well, Ms Gallafent, it does seem to me appropriate for me to invite you to respond to what Mr Beer has just said.

Statement by MS GALLAFENT 109
different in respect of Ms Cottam, who of course has already given evidence this morning, Ms Williamson and Ms Bernard. We agree with the analysis that there is no reason why their evidence should not continue to be heard in accordance with the schedule this week and, for the avoidance of any doubt, the additional checks that were indicated would be carried out overnight last night have been carried out and there are no documents to be produced from Exchange/365 in relation to either Ms Williamson or Ms Bernard.

I am not in a position, sir, to explain to you what has gone wrong. I can assure the Inquiry that many people have been seeking to ascertain why this apparently anomalous distinction between what is held on Exchange/365 and what is held on Mimecast has arisen. I am told that it is a deeply technical and complicated question for which there has yet not been identified a simple answer.

That is why, for the time being at least, while, obviously, enquiries continue into trying to work out what went wrong, we have focused in the short-term on trying to work out what we can

MS GALLAFENT: Thank you, sir, yes I intend to. Sir, I'm not going to go back over the correspondence which Mr Beer has very helpfully outlined and summarised for you, save to note one point, which is, as in a letter from Herbert Smith Freehills of 20 October of this year, it was a general catch-up letter in relation to a number of disclosure issues, at that time, initial sampling had indicated that there was significant overlap between data held on the Mimecast archive and that held on Microsoft Exchange or sometimes it's referred to as Exchange/365.

It wasn't until very recently that the differences and the potential for an absence of overlap was identified.

Post Office fully recognises the importance of the Inquiry, of witnesses and other Core Participants having proper notice of new documents prior to a witness giving evidence. It deeply regrets that the finds itself in the position where its position is, in the case of Mr Bradshaw and Mr Posnett, that simply isn't possible to do this week.

The position, as Mr Beer has indicated, is 110
do to seek to put the Inquiry in a position to be able to continue with such witnesses as we are able either to produce relevant documents for in good time, before their scheduled evidence, or to confirm, as per Ms Williamson and Ms Bernard, that there are no such documents to be produced.

Can I start then with Mr Bradshaw. The number of emails identified from the party-based search, as distinct from the earlier search on an address book basis, in other words not looking for emails that are tethered to the address book which is contained within Microsoft Exchange but is simply a search for any person, in this case Mr Bradshaw, who was either the sender, the recipient, or copied into or blind copied into an email, it is indeed very extensive indeed. It is approximately 2 million documents.

It is important, however, for me to emphasise that that number in itself casts serious doubt on the extent to which this dataset contains duplicates and/or false positives, given the inherent unlikelihood that Mr Bradshaw would have sent, received or been 112
copied into that number of emails, even over the very significant number of years for which he has been employed by Post Office.

The sheer volume of emails identified have meant that it is not yet possible to process the data. The reason is a practically one: the amount of it is too large to transfer to Post Office's third-party disclosure specialists KPMG for processing. So it has not yet been possible to ascertain the level of internal deduplication that's required within those results nor whether there are false positives or other issues with that dataset.

Equally, it has not yet been possible to ascertain the extent to which those documents might overlap with documents already harvested by the address book searches, approximately 380 of those documents which were disclosed on Friday, or data otherwise available in Post Office's Relativity databases already disclosed. In all the circumstances, having regard to the sheer numbers involved, it is anticipated that there may very well be new and relevant material in the data.

What is required before that conclusion can 113
search approach and we note that that approach
obviously has its limitations. That's
demonstrated by the position in relation to
Ms Bernard, in which 640 emails were identified
through the party search and zero relevant documents identified from that dataset.

It may also assist the Inquiry to have
a sense of the delta between documents
identified using an initial search, in this case
the party-based search and subsequently
identified as being relevant and disclosable, by
comparison to the numbers involved in the address book search relating to Mr Bradshaw. By way of starting point, when that primary search was undertaken, around 23,000 documents were identified as relating to Mr Bradshaw. I'm instructed around half of those are parent emails, the rest attachments.

Search terms were then applied, resulting in approximately 600 documents for review and, after that review, as you've been informed already, 382 were produced as being relevant.

So that is less than 2.2 per cent, about
1.6 per cent, of the initial dataset. Now, I'm
not saying that the Inquiry can extrapolate from 115
be reached is that the data is migrated to Relativity for review, to seek to identify documents which fall within the relevant time period, relating to the criminal prosecution's case studies following the rollout of Horizon, and to remove those which fall either side of this period. We're very conscious, of course, that Mr Bradshaw was employed by Post Office both before and after the period in issue.

We will need to remove false positive results. We will need to deduplicate the internal duplicates and then, to the extent possible, deduplicate against documents that have been reviewed and/or produced to the Inquiry already. We will then need to run search terms and then review documents for disclosure. I emphasise that isn't set in stone in terms of the order of those factors. That may differ, depending upon the particular datasets and the size of them to come back, but all of those steps will be required.

We are confident that the total number of any new and relevant documents will be vastly smaller than the current dataset identified in relation to Mr Bradshaw using the party-based 114
that that that will be the same when it comes to going from the extremely large numbers identified in the party-based search, but it may provide a useful context to note that the numbers have, when they have started quite high, come down very markedly indeed.

The real question then becomes how long will this take? Mr Bradshaw's case is a particularly complicated one because, as I've said, we haven't yet been able to put it on to Relativity but, of course, all endeavours are being made to overcome that particular technological issue.

All work is being undertaken as fast as it can be in order to assess the position in relation to Mr Bradshaw. However, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to identify any new documents by the end of this week and certainly, of course, obviously, not in time for him to give evidence today or tomorrow. I can assure the Inquiry that Post Office will continue to work around the knock and through the weekend in order to resolve this issue as fast as possible.

The position with Mr Posnett is simpler in the sense that there is no problem with the data 116
being reviewed. It is already on the Relativity platform and, of course, the numbers are very, very considerably smaller. But again, it is not going to be possible to go through all the required steps to identify only those new and relevant documents before he is due to give evidence tomorrow.

We profoundly regret that that is the position.

I have been asked by Mr Beer, for understandable reasons, how likely it is, we say, that the relevant documents will be identified for Mr Bradshaw and Mr Posnett. It is very difficult, sir, to give an indication of the likelihood to that event but it does seem to us, simply as a matter of common sense, one certainly cannot rule out there being a significant number often potentially relevant documents in these cases.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: When you use the word "significant", Ms Gallafent, just so I get a feel for what we're talking about, are you there talking of upwards of 10, upwards of 100, upwards of 1,000 ? What sort of ballpark are we in?
getting Mr Bradshaw's documents on Relativity or
some other -- or in any other way being able to assess their relevance, can you give me a kind of timescale in the sense of are we talking about days or weeks or what?
MS GALLAFENT: Sir, I think it may be that we have to take this in stages because I'm sure we can tell you within couple of days whether or how we have managed to transport it to some other repository, such that it can be analysed, which it currently can't in the way that it is stored.

It may, depending on the numbers, then, after deduplication, that will be what tells us then how long it will take to go through those processes that I outlined, sir, to go through the deduplication, internal deduplication processes, to then go through search terms, to then go through deduplication against documents already produced to the Inquiry or otherwise held, and then to actually review the documents before working out what pool -- hopefully a pond rather than a pool at this point -- of documents are left.

So I would hope that we'll be able to update you at each stage of that, sir, but I think it

MS GALLAFENT: Well, if one looks at the way in which the searches have reduced to a relatively small number of documents, we would have thought it would be hundreds rather than anything more than that. But I am speculating --
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I'm not holding you to it.
MS GALLAFENT: No --
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I just wanted to know exactly what you meant by "significant", that's all.
MS GALLAFENT: Yes. So, you know, it will be more than ten, it seems to us inevitably.

But more than 100, probably; more than that, I really would be making it up as I go along, I'm afraid.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right.
MS GALLAFENT: But it does seem to us, as a matter of common sense, looking at the scale of numbers, the period of time covered, particularly in relation to Mr Bradshaw, it seems to us a matter of common sense tells us there are likely to be relevant documents as a result of these matters.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Although I appreciate your difficulties in making an assessment of the length of time which will elapse between you 118
would be remiss of me to overpromise and say it will be by $X$ date. We are doing it as quickly as we humanly can.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right.
MS GALLAFENT: I'm also invited by Mr Beer to indicate Post Office's judgement on the feasibility of calling Mr Bradshaw or Mr Posnett without the disclosure of this material. We, sir, respectfully agree that it wouldn't be appropriate, even if CTI had, as it were, advanced it as a possibility, it wouldn't be appropriate to proceed in the absence of this material having been provided to them and other Core Participants.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Ms Gallafent, although Mr Beer didn't say so expressly, I gained the strong impression from what he said that he didn't think it was appropriate that either of those witnesses should be called prior to further disclosure and everything you've said to me effectively suggests the same.
MS GALLAFENT: Exactly, sir. We too had understood that to be Mr Beer's position and it is our position as well and that's why I started by emphasising that we fully recognise the
importance of all people in this Inquiry -- the Inquiry Team primarily but also other Core Participants -- in having proper and full access to these documents as early as possible before giving evidence, and I should mention, of course, we recognise the inconvenience to witnesses themselves where late disclosure is made. That has happened on a regrettably large number of occasions and we apologise for each of those occasions.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: The last thing that I would like to ask you is that there are witnesses who are not too far down the line in terms of when they are due to give evidence --
MS GALLAFENT: Yes.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: -- who might fall into the same category, if I can try and put it as neutrally as possible, as Mr Bradshaw and Mr Posnett, ie having important evidence to provide to the Inquiry, but might also be discovered to be in a category of witness where disclosure is not yet complete. That's very convoluted but you know what I mean.

MS GALLAFENT: I do, sir. Can I start with next week's witnesses?
priority with a view to producing any relevant documents this week.

Mr Whitaker, we are still awaiting the urgent conclusion of an address book search, that's the primary search approach, for Mr Whitaker. But we have already requested the back-up, from an abundance of caution, party-based search as well. As with the other witnesses schedule for next week, any relevant documents identified as a result will be reviewed as a top priority.

The other witness next week is Mr Tatford, Warwick Tatford, who is independent counsel, not an employee of POL and therefore no address book search has been undertaken as he wouldn't have a postoffice.co.uk address.

Instead, a party-based search has been requested for which again Post Office is awaiting the results and, as with the others, we hope that those will be available tomorrow and we will be in a position to review them as a priority and disclose any documents this week.

So that is, as it were, the next stage, and I have spoken about this week's witnesses and next week's witnesses.

## SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes <br> MS GALLAFENT: First of all, Catherine Oglesby, who of course is another civil rather than a criminal case studies witness. Address book searches for her have returned nil hits. There are no hits for that. <br> Party-based searches have been conducted for the period 2003 to 2009. 724 documents have been identified. Those have all been reviewed and found not to be relevant. <br> We are an running additional party-based search, in other words the alternative, perceived to be back-up, search if you can't find documents on a -- sorry, the back-up additional searches in this case, for the latter period, which is 2009 to 2016. We will review any additional documents coming out of that time period as a top priority with a view to producing any relevant documents this week. <br> Mr Utting and Ms Stapel are procedurally in the same boat. Address book searches did not yield any returns. Party-based searches have been requested. We are awaiting the results of that search. We hope to have those tomorrow. It will review any documents identified as a top 122

Can I just, although I wasn't invited to do so, perhaps give you, sir, an indication of the question that I'm sure, sir, you will have in your mind, which is what happens then?

Can I just flag as Mr Beer has done, the letter from Burges Salmon from later last night, setting out some of the other potential -- and I emphasise the word "potential" -- disclosure matters in relation to the number of further potential repositories.

Post Office has always sought to be open and transparent with the Inquiry, as to potential further sources of relevant documents, as well as the difficulties associated with some of them. We cannot rule out the existence of some relevant documents in these repositories before harvesting and analysing them. That said, based on Post Office's experience in relation to the back-up tapes, which as you'll be well aware, sir, have been the subject of intense extensive and intensive review over the last month or so, it may well be that there are very few relevant documents ultimately found to be held on those repositories that have not already been harvested, reviewed and produced to the Inquiry.

The Post Office notes that when the issue of the back-up tapes arose shortly before the evidence of Ms Chambers on 26 September this year, you adopted, sir, what might fairly be described as a constructive and pragmatic approach by continuing to hear her evidence, subject to three points and, indeed, the evidence thereafter of other witnesses.

The first was the need for close monitoring of the disclosure process during the remainder of the Inquiry; the second was the potential for witness evidence in relation to the back-up tapes for the purpose of the disclosure hearing scheduled for January 2024; and the third was the potential for the Inquiry to request further witness statements or recall witnesses back to give further evidence in the vent that relevant material is disclosed after a witness has given evidence or, if disclosed beforehand, where the Inquiry has not had the opportunity to process it and I would respectfully add to that where also other Core Participants would not have had the opportunity to do so and the documents are of such relevance that they should have had that opportunity before the witness gives evidence. 125
potentially thereafter.
As we noted, in our view, it is possible
then to proceed with two more of this week's
witnesses without any issue arising and
potentially possible to continue with next
week's position of the witnesses proceeding. We
will confirm that as soon as possible.
The Inquiry may think, in these
circumstances, that that is the appropriate
point, when we have provided more information to
the Inquiry, dependent upon current searches,
and enquiries, at which to determine whether to
press on with such witnesses for whom there are
no relevant documents to be found on
Exchange/365 or for whom relevant documents have been identified and disclosed in adequate time, for the Inquiry and other Core Participants to process them, or to adjourn Phase 4 generally.
We submit that that -- the timing of that decision and the point is once the position is clearer in relation to next week's witnesses.

That is subject to two points. First, it
could be suggested that Mr Jenkins could give
his evidence in relation to Phase 3, as
currently scheduled. Post Office fully

Sir, it may be that you consider a similar approach would now be justified in all the circumstances. Post Office equally recognises that, given the particularly sensitive and important stage which the Inquiry has reached in Phase 4, and the potential significance of the data held on Exchange/365, for a number of witnesses who played a key role in a number of the criminal prosecution case studies, as well as issues potentially arising from further repositories, you may consider it would be more appropriate to adjourn the hearings more generally following hearing from such witnesses, as it appears to be at least common ground for this week, can be heard in the meantime.

We would respectfully suggest that any such decision is made in the light of the fullest information that Post Office can put before the Inquiry as to the scope of the work required to analyse the further repositories and the number of documents involved, as well as, of course, the matters in relation to the Exchange/365 issues, on which we are hoping to update the Inquiry as soon as possible this week, both in relation to next week's witnesses and 126
recognises any such decision would need to be informed by submissions from his representatives as to the desirability and/or practicability of splitting his evidence in this way.

The Inquiry may wish to note in this context that the Post Office is currently reviewing documents which have been found in Exchange/365 in relation to Mr Jenkins via the party-based searches, him obviously not having been an employee of the Post Office, and there may be a not insignificant number of documents, in the hundreds, I believe, to be disclosed before his evidence currently scheduled for the end of November/beginning of December.

Post Office should be in a position to produce any such documents next week but we can obviously provide updates this week in that respect.

Secondly, it may be that Mr Atkinson, King's Counsel could also give his evidence in relation to the criminal case studies, which we understand would be based on contemporaneous documents, rather than evidence to be heard in this second part of Phase 4.

However, I would emphasise that we consider 128
these to be very much matters for the Inquiry, rather than Post Office, to make any particular submission upon.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Post Office's profound regret that this situation has arisen and by apologising frankly to you, sir, the Inquiry Team, the witnesses affected by these issues and to the other Core Participants and their representatives for all the undoubted inconvenience caused.

## Thank you.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you. Now, it seems to me to be clear that both Mr Beer and Ms Gallafent provide strong reasons why Mr Bradshaw and Mr Posnett cannot give evidence this week and, therefore, my very strong preliminary view is that I should postpone their giving of evidence but if any Core Participant either present or represented wishes to argue against that and wishes to argue that either or both should give evidence, and then, if necessary, be recalled if further documentation comes to light, I would like to hear them articulate that now, so that, if my preliminary view is to be shifted, it is shifted sooner rather than later. 129

I do not expect anybody to respond with any definitive submissions because I want everybody to reflect upon how best we should proceed in these difficult circumstances.

But all that said, if there are Core
Participants like Mr Jacobs -- or
representatives, I should say, of Core
Participants, like Mr Jacobs -- who wish to
make, and I stress the word, "short" submissions
about where we are, then now is the time for me to hear them.

I stress the word "short" not to in any way minimise the seriousness of the situation we find ourselves in but simply because I take the view that these issues are dealt with after reflection and not in the heat of the moment, so to speak. So that I will hear short submissions but I stress the word "short".

So first of all, Mr Jacobs, since you've already indicated a wish to make some submissions, over to you.

## Submissions by MR JACOBS

MR JACOBS: Thank you, sir. I act for Shazia Saddiq, who sits two to the right of me next to Mr Stein. Her case is affected by the actions 131

So does anybody wish to advance that possibility?
MR JACOBS: I have been asked to convey some instructions from my clients, sir, which doesn't relate to that issue but I don't know if you could hear me briefly on those points.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, we will come to any other points. I'm not shutting everyone up at this stage, I'm simply trying to deal with matters in a way that at least appears to me to be logical. So does anybody, in effect, wish to oppose me postponing the evidence of Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett?

Right, clearly no one does and so I say now formally that they will not give evidence this week. They will give evidence on dates to be fixed in the light of how we proceed with disclosure issues.

Now, so far as the general issues with have been raised by Mr Beer and Ms Gallafent, you will -- the Core Participants will have had some opportunity to grasp what is going on, just as I have, but, in respect of what Ms Gallafent has said and indeed some of the suggestions she has made as to the future conduct of the Inquiry, 130
of Mr Bradshaw and she travelled with her husband today to the Inquiry, leaving quite early this morning, both taking time off work to do so. We have also taken instructions from Joan Bailey, who can't be here today but is following remotely, and l've taken instructions from both of these clients on the documents that were available.

Yesterday, Howe+Co had a conference with 58 of our clients and their overriding concern in relation to the Phase 4 hearings is what they cries as "corporate amnesia". They are worried that witnesses are saying, "I had nothing to do with this case, I don't remember anything about it, it was a long time ago", and what has reassured them is that the documents that the Inquiry -- and we saw it this morning -- puts to such witnesses are able to assist greatly in establishing the facts.

So, in relation to what has been said by Ms Gallafent this morning, it's not a matter about Core Participants not receiving proper notice. We say we must have disclosure in good time in order to properly represent and act for our clients.
One of the concerns that our clients have in relation to these recent events is the timing. We heard from Mr Beer this morning that, in relation to Mr Bradshaw, the Inquiry was notified at 8.24 pm on Friday had there were 382 documents in relation to Mr Bradshaw. At 8.29 last night, the Inquiry was told that there are very significant -- there's a very -- there's a great volume of material in addition in respect of Mr Bradshaw and there was further communication at 11.14 pm last night.
Sir, we saw with Mr Jenkins in July that the
Post Office located large numbers of documents
and notified the Inquiry of this, practically
right before Mr Jenkins was due to give evidence. So this is the second time with Mr Bradshaw that this has happened.
Our clients are concerned. They do not want an adjournment but they accept that it is far better to prepare questions for witnesses and to have conferences and for them to give their instructions when we have all the material available. So they would prefer that matters are delayed so that we can have proper disclosure.
it can do to ensure that this doesn't happen again. Thank you, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, Mr Jacobs, there have been
occasions in this process when I have felt like
trying to rewrite some of the Inquiry Rules but
I am bound by them and it is not part of my
terms of reference to rewrite them, unfortunately.

All right. So does any other legal
representative wish to make similarly short
submissions even?
MR MOLONEY: Sir, yes please, but I assure you
they'll be very short.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: That's all right, Mr Moloney,
just wait until you're on camera with me, if you would, please.

Oh, you are, fine.

## Submissions by MR MOLONEY

MR MOLONEY: Thank you. Sir, once again, we're faced with disclosure failure by the Post Office and, as always, it impacts our Core Participants. We've also already met with Core Participants to receive their input into the anticipated evidence of the two witnesses most affected by this non-disclosure and it's

But another concern that they have is that they are worried that there seems to be a pattern emerging now, whereby the Post Office, very late in the day -- and this is the second time it has happened the day before a witness is due to give evidence -- informs the Inquiry that new disclosure is available or has become available. Our clients say this is simply good enough -- this is simply not good enough, I ought to say, and would ask whether the Inquiry can impose a mechanism on the Post Office to prevent what they see as abuses of the disclosure process by the Post Office in this Inquiry.

I conclude by saying that we have made representations on disclosure, dated 19 December 2013 and 2 February 2013, and one of the things that we said is that there is a perception from our client group that the Post Office is seeking to control these proceedings through frustrating the disclosure process and that is our client's concern and I am instructed to raise that with you.

Essentially, they say this isn't good enough and they would like the Inquiry to do whatever 134
obviously very frustrating for all of them.
Our primary concern on behalf of the Core Participants we represent is to ensure that the Inquiry fully investigates the issues before it, whilst maintaining momentum, so that our Core Participants receive the Inquiry's conclusions within a reasonable time. We're of the view that the course proposed by Counsel to the Inquiry is most likely to meet our concern and we therefore endorse it, but we have one request to add, sir, as you would expect.

As we go forward, we ask that any new material is provided to Core Participants in good time for them to assist the Inquiry with the relevant witnesses. That's all we wish to say, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr Moloney.
Ms Page, I can see you just beyond
Mr Moloney, as it happens. Do you wish to make submissions?

## Submissions by MS PAGE

MS PAGE: Also very briefly, sir, to say, first of all, that I support everything that has been said already by those acting for subpostmasters before me, but also to let you know, let the 136

Inquiry know, that Janet Skinner sets beside me. She travelled down yesterday. She has stayed overnight in a hotel. Travelling and moving around is not particularly easy for Mrs Skinner and it also takes a toll, emotionally, and it's draining.

So we ask, above all, that if this pattern continues, Post Office gives proper notice so that people know it's coming up and that they don't travel. It simply isn't fair.

Secondly, I would ask also that some consideration is given to past witnesses. In the scrabble to make sure that the Inquiry hearings are able to maintain some sort of momentum, it is important to remember that there's been quite a number of witnesses already in Phase 4, leave aside previous phases, and I'm thinking in particular of the case study of Lee Castleton, where nearly all of the witnesses have already given their testimony, and so it's important that we don't forget that there may be some very important and significant documents which weren't put to them.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes.
MS PAGE: Thank you. That's all I wish to add. 137
it's important that we make that clear on his behalf now, that this may have important consequences in relation to that. I'm grateful to you, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms Dobbin.
Anyone else before I ask Mr Beer whether he wishes to exercise the right he reserved to himself to reply.
MR BEER: Thank you, sir, can I now exercise not a right but a request to further address you?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes.
Reply by BEER
MR BEER: In relation to Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett
I had not set out the position of Counsel to the Inquiry clearly, and that was deliberately so. That's because it was not my application to adjourn these witnesses. We, as your counsel, want to get on with the business of calling witnesses. We, as your counsel, want to get on with the business of progress in this Inquiry. But the conduct of one of the Core Participants is presently standing in our way.

Accordingly, as has now occurred, it should be that Core Participant, who is standing in the way of the Inquiry, who is preventing progress

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SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you.
        Anyone else wish to make submissions? Yes?
        Submissions by MS DOBBIN
MS DOBBIN: May I say --
        (Unclear -- off microphone)
    As you know, sir, in a series of submissions
    to you, we set out our concern that he was being
    asked by the Inquiry to provide a witness
    statement and also to give evidence on oath
    before you when disclosure was an evolving
    picture. My learned friends may not know this,
    but you will, that a very detailed draft witness
    statement was submitted on Mr Jenkins' behalf
    only this week. We wrote to the Inquiry on
    26 October, prior to that submission, to try to
    ascertain what the position in respect of
    disclosure was and the extent to which there
    might be outstanding disclosure, which was
    relevant to his position.
    We can only say on his behalf that, having
    submitted that draft statement to the Inquiry,
    we are alarmed and profoundly concerned to find
    that, yet again, there may be another
    substantial body of material relevant to him
    that has not yet been disclosed, and I think
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in the Inquiry, who should come to the Inquiry and state plainly that its own conduct is preventing progress.

This is, of course, the latest in a series of disclosure failings by the Post Office. They may be forgotten to many. They're etched in the memory of those who sit on this side of the room:

Hard copy documents found in new Post Office locations; the use or misuse of search terms when conducting the disclosure exercise; an improper deduplication exercise; a failure to consider families of documents when giving disclosure; a failure to disclose blind copy-ees to emails; the failure to give disclosure of documents held on back-up tapes; the failure to give disclosure of native emails.

Looking at this latest disclosure failing, we say, having heard from all of the Core Participants, that the following factors confirm the preliminary indication that you gave, firstly the date range. It seems, on what we know now, this repository of material, to concern emails from 2012 onwards. What we have seen in the Inquiry so far, when we have been
allowed to see materials after 2012, is that 1 important material is generated in the years after 2012, not only about the reaction to the unfolding scandal described by some as a cover-up, but such material also relates to events before then. It's a reflection backwards to what people were saying and doing at the time, ie from 2000 to 2012.

Secondly, the means of communication here:
emails. We have found that some employees and staff of the Post Office speak rather frankly and openly when they communicate by email, not quite at the level of some WhatsApp communications, but approaching it.

It has been so far the email traffic, a rich seam of evidence with which to ask witnesses about their conduct and their state of knowledge. This is email communication and, therefore, we consider that it is likely to contain important data sources to be able to test if such witnesses adopt the position, their claims that they have no present recollection of the events about which they are being asked.

Thirdly, sir, the individuals concerned, as I said already, Messrs Bradshaw and Posnett, 141
big decisions as to the way forwards.
As to the immediate future after this week, ie next week's witnesses, you'll recall that the letters from the Post Office said that they would update us by the end of the week on the position in relation to next week's witnesses. The end of the week is frankly not good enough. We can't wait until the end of the week to know whether we're calling witnesses on the following Tuesday.

For next week's witnesses, I would invite you to direct that by 5.00 pm tomorrow, Wednesday, the Post Office must state in relation to each witness for the following week whether searches have been undertaken of either of the varieties mentioned by Ms Gallafent and, if there are documents to disclose, to disclose them by that date.

Sir, that's all I say for the moment.

## Decision

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you. Well, let me confirm that I propose to postpone the evidence of Mr Bradshaw and Mr Posnett. I cannot today fix any date or even likely period when that evidence will be given, since it's dependent
have a heavy footprint on important events that the Inquiry is considering.

For those three reasons taken together, we do submit that you should adjourn these witnesses' evidence.

So far as the past is concerned, we are completely aware -- this is a point made on behalf of the Hodge Jones \& Allen Core Participants -- we are completely alive to the point that this new discovery does not relate only to the present and the future; it relates to witnesses who have already passed in and out of the witness box, and we will be on top of the Post Office in ensuring that they give disclosure that relates to those who have already given evidence.

As to the future witnesses, we would counsel you against making any big decisions now. Nobody has asked you to do so. We were only told about the scale of the issue by the Post Office at 8.29 pm last night.

The information which the Post Office gave you in the letters, as supplemented by Ms Gallafent helpfully today, is still not sufficiently clear or complete in order to take 142
upon more detailed and up-to-date information from Post Office about the extent of the disclosure which may be relevant to those witnesses.

The other persons who are scheduled to give evidence this week will give evidence, so that means there will be a witness tomorrow and a witness on Friday.

I accept the good sense of Mr Beer's suggestion that I should not make any "big decisions", in quotes, today about the future conduct of Phase 4 or anything else. As I say, I need time to reflect upon all that has been said and all that is occurring in quite rapid sequences before I make any big decisions.

As to when the Post Office should provide the next update to the Inquiry, which is the last point touched upon by Mr Beer, the suggestion in correspondence, Ms Gallafent, was an update by the end of the week but I think Mr Beer has a point when he says that that's getting perilously close to when the evidence should start next week.

So, unless you seek to deflect me from it, I think you should update me at the latest by 144

| 12 noon on Thursday. That's giving you a little | 1 |
| :--- | :--- |
| more time than Mr Beer suggested was appropriate | 2 |
| but I think, in all the circumstances, that's | 3 |
| fair enough, so to speak, and gives us | 4 |
| sufficient time to know where we are going next | 5 |
| week or at least sufficient time for me to make | 6 |
| a sensible decision about where we're going next | 7 |
| week. | 8 |
| $\quad$ Is that acceptable to you? | 9 |
| GALLAFENT: Sir, l'm very grateful for that | 10 |
| extension to midday on Thursday. Can I just | 11 |
| flag up, Mr Beer asked for an update as well as | 12 |
| the documents themselves to be produced by his | 13 |
| deadline. I suspect there may be a tightness in | 14 |
| that timetable for the actual documents to be | 15 |
| produced. We will do everything that we can to | 16 |
| do that, but if we are able to offer an update | 17 |
| with an indication of when the documents be | 18 |
| produced, that may be what we have to do. But | 19 |
| I'm not -- I'm simply saying that from | 20 |
| an abundance of caution because it may be we can | 21 |
| tell you the position but we can't get you the | 22 |
| documents precisely to that time. | 23 |
| But we will strive to do what, sir, you've | 24 |
| asked us to do, both in terms of update and the | 25 |

    12 noon on Thursday. That's giving you a little
    documents in accordance with the time frame you've indicated.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right, thank you.
Then, finally, l'd like to extend my apologies to the two Core Participants, Mr Jacobs' client and Ms Page's client, who travelled quite some distance, I imagine, to be at the Inquiry today to hear the start of Mr Bradshaw's evidence. It is extremely frustrating for you both to find yourselves in this position and you have nothing but my sympathy in these circumstances.

I think that's all that I propose to say at the moment. So we'll start again at 10.00 tomorrow morning, Mr Beer?

## MR BEER: Yes, that's right.

Sir, we will make enquiries as to whether any of the three witnesses for this week can be now bunched up a little, so we can hear them on two days rather than three, and we'll let the Core Participants know if that's the case.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, I'm sure that everyone would think that a good idea, if you can bring it to fruition. So that's fine.
MR BEER: Thank you, sir, 10.00 tomorrow.
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