

File name: Hughie Noel THOMAS - Hughie Noel Thomas Tape No.37924.mp3

Audio quality: Good

Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: **Unable to decipher** = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** = (ph + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

(TC: 00:00:05)

Moderator: Okay, this interview is being tape recorded in an interview room at Holyhead Police Station. It may be given in evidence if your case is brought to trial. At the conclusion of the interview, I will give you a notice explaining what will happen to the tapes. The date is 13th October 2005 and the time is 7:52. I am Diane Matthews, I am an investigation manager for Post Office Ltd. The other officer present is-

(TC: 00:00:30)

Moderator: Steven Bradshaw, investigation manager.

(TC: 00:00:32)

Moderator: Err, please state your full name and date of birth.

(TC: 00:00:35)

M: Hughie Noel Thomas, date of birth: GRO

(TC: 00:00:43)

Moderator: Okay, also present is.

(TC: 00:00:44)

M: My name is Alun (ph 00.46) Williams, I'm a solicitor, I am here to advise and assist Hughie Noel Thomas during the course of this interview.

(TC: 00:00:51)

Moderator: Okay, I'll just remind you Mr Thomas that you are under caution. Err, that caution is you do not have to say anything but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. Do you understand the caution?

(TC: 00:01:04)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:01:05)

Moderator: Are you happy, Mr Williams, that your client understands the meaning of the caution?

(TC: 00:01:09)

M: I am.

(TC: 00:01:10)

Moderator: Okay. Okay. Right, um, the reason we're doing the interview today is, err, an audit was performed at your office, um, at Gowing? (mw 01.26).

(TC: 00:01:26)

M: Gaerwen, yes.

(TC: 00:01:27)

Moderator: Gaerwen.

(TC: 00:01:27)

M: G-A-E-R-W-E-N.

(TC: 00:01:30)

Moderator: Right. Um, and the result of that audit was a shortage of £48,454.87p. Um. We were obviously informed of that shortage by the auditors, and I've made a note of, um, what's happened during the course of this day. So, if I just read out to you what notes I've made and just check that you agree. Um.

(TC: 00:01:56)

M: Okay.

(TC: 00:01:57)

Moderator: With my account. Um. '13th October 2005, 12:42 hours. I arrived at the office at Gaerwen-, ' sorry if I don't pronounce that correctly.

(TC: 00:02:07)

M: It's alright.

(TC: 00:02:07)

Moderator: 'Accompanied by my colleague, Steve Bradshaw, sub-postmaster.' I've got you down as Noel Thomas. Is Noel-

(TC: 00:02:12)

M: It's Hughie Noel Thomas.

(TC: 00:02:14)

Moderator: Is that what-, is Noel what you're known as?

(TC: 00:02:15)

M: Yeah, everybody calls me Noel.

(TC: 00:02:17)

Moderator: Right, 'Was invited to attend a tape recorded interview and to discuss an audit shortage of £48,454.87p. Mr Thomas stated that he would like to attend an interview but wants his solicitor present. He has contacted his solicitor but he is away 'til Monday 17th October 2005. At 2-, 14:00 hours, accompanied by Mr Bradshaw, we attended Gaerwen Police Station to explain the loss, Um, at the post office. Err. We spoke to PC I-'

(TC: 00:02:48)

Moderator: Iwan.

(TC: 00:02:49)

Moderator: 'Iwan-, Iwan Jones, err, badge number 2208, Um, who contacted his superintendent and a decision was made to arrest Mr Thomas at 2:20 hour-, sorry, 14:20 hours. PC Jones accompanied myself and Mr Bradshaw to Gaerwen Post Office where Mr Thomas was arrested on the allegation of theft of £48,454.87p of Post Office funds. Mr Thomas was taken to Holyhead Police Station where he was taken into custody with an interview to take place once a duty solicitor was present.' Is that an accurate account of what's happened this afternoon?

(TC: 00:03:24)

Moderator: Yes.

(TC: 00:03:25)

Moderator: Okay.

(TC: 00:03:25)

Moderator: Err, the only comment I'll make is that, Um, I was prepared to make an interview at home.

(TC: 00:03:33)

Moderator: Mmhmm.

(TC: 00:03:33)

Moderator: But, Um, from what I understood, and you may correct me, that's-, err, you went and phoned somebody to ask that and, err, I wanted Jim Evans, who's the federation representative, and who's taken over the office.

(TC: 00:03:50)

Moderator: Yep.

(TC: 00:03:50)

Moderator: In my absence, Um, and from what I understood, maybe you, you can correct me on this, that, Um, you, you weren't happy to do that.

(TC: 00:04:04)

Moderator: What happened was, Um, like we explained to you when we arrived at your office, there were several, Um, avenues open to us. Um.

(TC: 00:04:13)

Moderator: Yeah.

(TC: 00:04:13)

Moderator: One was a voluntary taped interview, the other one was to actually-, because of the allegations and the amount involved was to involve the police. You know, and obviously we, we had to take one of them options 'cause we'd rather sort this out sooner rather than later.

(TC: 00:04:29)

Moderator: I agree with you.

(TC: 00:04:30)

Moderator: Okay. So, do you want to-, if you're happy with what I've put, if you just want to put your signature on there.

(TC: 00:04:38)

M: We'll consider that in the end.

(TC: 00:04:39)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:04:39)

Moderator: You want to consider that at the end?

(TC: 00:04:41)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:04:41)

M: Yes, please.

(TC: 00:04:41)

Moderator: Okay. I'll leave that.

(TC: 00:04:45)

Moderator: Are you happy for the reason why you're out of there (ph 04.48) today and the reason we're in Holyhead Police Station?

(TC: 00:04:51)

M: I understand.

(TC: 00:04:54)

Moderator: Okay, so, the audit took place and it produced the shortage, like, we said of, of just over £48,000. Um. Do you want to give an explanation as to why there is that much short in your accounts?

(TC: 00:05:09)

M: Well, at the moment, err, I'm not commenting. No comment.

(TC: 00:05:14)

Moderator: Okay.

(TC: 00:05:19)

Moderator: Do you know when you first-, your account was first short, first noticed any shortage?

(TC: 00:05:24)

M: Without looking at the papers, I don't, I'm sorry.

(TC: 00:05:28)

Moderator: Right, without looking at what papers?

(TC: 00:05:30)

M: Well, you know, my-,

(TC: 00:05:31)

Moderator: I, I, I understand that-,

(TC: 00:05:33)

M: The accounting papers.

(TC: 00:05:33)

Moderator: You have your right to no comment but we have some cash accounts.

(TC: 00:05:38)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:05:38)

Moderator: Now-,

(TC: 00:05:39)

M: Well, you know, that-, not, not saying it-, I'm finding it-, I've explained it to Mr Williams, I'm finding

it very difficult to remember what's, you know, really went on fortnight ago let alone, you know, 20-, well, it's 29 weeks gone in this year. And without having the evidence in front of me and looking at it in, in bare figures, I'm an old-fashioned chap. I'm used to figures on paper, Um, not on a screen.

(TC: 00:06:07)

Moderator: Did you keep any other paperwork at home then, to do with-

(TC: 00:06:10)

M: No.

(TC: 00:06:10)

Moderator: These losses.

(TC: 00:06:11)

M: Everything is there.

(TC: 00:06:12)

Moderator: Everything is-

(TC: 00:06:13)

M: Everything you've got, or what's within the office, is in the office.

(TC: 00:06:18)

Moderator: Right, 'cause alls we've taken from the office at this point is all your cash accounts, so, is it-

(TC: 00:06:23)

M: All the paperwork is there, everything is there with the-, with the weeks on, everything. I wrap them up and I put-, I put the weeks down.

(TC: 00:06:31)

Moderator: (Inaudible 06.31).

(TC: 00:06:32)

M: And what I can't keep in the office, I've got them on the shelf in the shed.

(TC: 00:06:36)

Moderator: Right, that's your daily and your weekly-,

(TC: 00:06:38)

M: That's my daily-, yes.

(TC: 00:06:39)

Moderator: Your weekly work.

(TC: 00:06:39)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:06:40)

Moderator: Right. Err, but with regard to, to this loss, Um, was this money, Um, if we say that it built up over a period of time.

(TC: 00:06:50)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:06:52)

Moderator: I understand that you can't say to us, 'Well, Um, twelve months ago it was £200 short and I know there was £21,000 locked up in the safe.' Fully understand you're not gonna remember that, but did you keep any record of your own to say, 'Well, this week I'm £200-,'

(TC: 00:07:10)

M: No.

(TC: 00:07:11)

Moderator: Right, so, the only records you've got are, 1) in your daily and weekly envelope, and 2) the records that have been made on your cash account.

(TC: 00:07:19)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:07:20)

Moderator: Right.

(TC: 00:07:20)

M: I've got no hidden agenda.

(TC: 00:07:22)

Moderator: Right. So, when, when we look at your, your cash account, do you declare, Um, or do you show on your cash accounts accurately the state of your office in any particular week?

(TC: 00:07:35)

M: Um. Well, I can't comment, really, on that.

(TC: 00:07:39)

Moderator: Right.

(TC: 00:07:39)

Moderator: Do you understand your obligations as the postmaster regarding office balance surpluses and shortages?

(TC: 00:07:46)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:07:47)

Moderator: Would you like to explain what that obligation is?

(TC: 00:07:50)

M: To make good any loss, and to take out any extra.

(TC: 00:07:55)

Moderator: Okay, and when is that loss to be made good?

(TC: 00:08:00)

M: Err, sorry?

(TC: 00:08:01)

Moderator: Well, well, can you-,

(TC: 00:08:03)

M: The loss you're talking about now?

(TC: 00:08:04)

Moderator: Yeah-, no, no. Any, any loss. Any, any-,

(TC: 00:08:06)

M: Oh, within the week or on that day, as far as I can think of.

(TC: 00:08:11)

Moderator: So, so, so, when you balance, for the benefit of Mr Williams, now (inaudible 08.17), your cash account may close Thursday to a Wednesday, you would balance on a Wednesday.

(TC: 00:08:21)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:08:21)

Moderator: And we show the shortage of £10, you're obliged under the terms of your contract to make good that shortage.

(TC: 00:08:28)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:08:30)

Moderator: When you've been doing these-, your cash accounts over the period that'd be, kinda, six months, twelve, eighteen, two years.

(TC: 00:08:37)

M: Mmm.

(TC: 00:08:37)

Moderator: Is there any times when you have not made good them shortages?

(TC: 00:08:42)

M: Um. No comment.

(TC: 00:08:47)

Moderator: Do you know when you started having shortages within the hospital-, um, the hospital, sorry, within the, the Post Office?

(TC: 00:08:55)

M: Without looking back, I'm not quite sure.

(TC: 00:09:00)

Moderator: Have you ever made any of them shortages good?

(TC: 00:09:05)

M: I have tried to.

(TC: 00:09:08)

Moderator: What do you mean by you have tried to?

(TC: 00:09:11)

M: Whenever possible, yes.

(TC: 00:09:13)

Moderator: Do you know which losses you made good?

(TC: 00:09:17)

M: Without looking back at the papers, no.

(TC: 00:09:21)

Moderator: Any losses that you haven't made good, did you know it was wrong to do that?

(TC: 00:09:27)

M: No.

(TC: 00:09:27)

Moderator: Would you like to explain why you didn't think it was wrong not to make good a loss

when you-, and I just remind you that you have-, or they've explained to me that you understood the terms of your contract that you had to make good-,

(TC: 00:09:36)

M: Yes, I know.

(TC: 00:09:39)

Moderator: That loss for that week.

(TC: 00:09:41)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:09:46)

Moderator: So, you're declining to comment on why-,

(TC: 00:09:48)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:09:50)

Moderator: You, you thought it was okay not to make good the shortages.

(TC: 00:09:54)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:09:56)

Moderator: The, the loss is £48,000 in cash (TC 00:10:00) and if we just use your last balance, which would have been completed yesterday, which is Wednesday 12th October.

(TC: 00:10:07)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:10:07)

Moderator: There was a shortage of £48,000 in cash and a couple of hundred pound, I think it was. The rest of that loss was made up of discrepancies within the stock.

(TC: 00:10:17)

M: Mmm.

(TC: 00:10:18)

Moderator: Which is your stamps, post (mw 10.19), etc. When that loss-, when that shortage was discovered, did you make up that shortage?

(TC: 00:10:30)

M: No.

(TC: 00:10:32)

Moderator: What did you do with the cash figure for that, that particular week, week 29?

(TC: 00:10:37)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:10:37)

Moderator: Did you inflate the cash for that?

(TC: 00:10:41)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:10:46)

Moderator: If, as it's transpired from the audit today, there was-, you, you said that there was 69,000-, in excess of 69,000 in the safe when in fact there was only 21,000. Do you have an explanation of why 48,000 is short?

(TC: 00:11:02)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:11:03)

Moderator: The previous week was it £48,000 short?

(TC: 00:11:07)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:11:09)

Moderator: If you go through weeks one to 29 of the current cash account year 05-06, are any of them cash accounts a true record of the cash declared when you balanced the office accounts each and every week?

(TC: 00:11:25)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:11:28)

Moderator: For cash account year 04-05, which would be 52 cash accounts, on each and every Wednesday when you would balance the office accounts, is the-, is that a true record of the cash locked up?

(TC: 00:11:42)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:11:44)

Moderator: Who is responsible for doing the cash accounts?

(TC: 00:11:46)

M: I am.

(TC: 00:11:47)

Moderator: Who signs the cash accounts?

(TC: 00:11:48)

M: I do.

(TC: 00:11:50)

Moderator: So, if the cash locked up is not a true record, you would be responsible.

(TC: 00:11:58)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:12:01)

Moderator: Who else works in the Post Office?

(TC: 00:12:06)

M: I'm not going to-, myself.

(TC: 00:12:09)

Moderator: No, you've just said, 'I'm not going to-, ' and then, 'Myself.'

(TC: 00:12:12)

M: Yes, myself, yes.

(TC: 00:12:13)

Moderator: Does anybody else work in the Post Office?

(TC: 00:12:15)

M: Just myself.

(TC: 00:12:16)

Moderator: Does anybody have access to the Horizon machines? The Horizon machines being-,

(TC: 00:12:20)

M: Just my wife.

(TC: 00:12:22)

Moderator: Is anybody else on the-, have, um, a password or a, a user identity?

(TC: 00:12:27)

M: No. No.

(TC: 00:12:28)

Moderator: Does your son or daughter have a user identity?

(TC: 00:12:30)

M: No.

(TC: 00:12:31)

Moderator: So, if I-, if I took a user summary of that Horizon data-, off that Horizon machine, I will only find yourself, your wife-,

(TC: 00:12:38)

M: And my wife.

(TC: 00:12:41)

Moderator: I'll not find your son or your daughter on there.

(TC: 00:12:42)

M: No. No.

(TC: 00:12:47)

Moderator: Has your son and daughter ever worked behind the counter?

(TC: 00:12:50)

M: No.

(TC: 00:12:52)

Moderator: Do they have access to the counter?

(TC: 00:12:54)

M: Only when they bring me a cup of tea.

(TC: 00:12:59)

Moderator: Who secures the money of a night?

(TC: 00:13:01)

M: I do.

(TC: 00:13:02)

Moderator: Who declares the money of a night? Do you declare your overnight cash holdings, is it just coming in always as a ONCH figure?

(TC: 00:13:10)
M: Uh, I don't.

(TC: 00:13:12)
Moderator: I need to know (mw 13.13) have you sent off a true record?

(TC: 00:13:15)
M: Sorry?

(TC: 00:13:15)
Moderator: Each night when you declare your figures, do you send a true record?

(TC: 00:13:19)
M: No comment.

(TC: 00:13:20)
Moderator: On the Wednesday when you declare-, did you have to-, correct me if I'm wrong but on a Wednesday you have to declare your ONCH figure, which is overnight cash holdings, and your balance figure. Are they always the same figure?

(TC: 00:13:34)
M: No comment.

(TC: 00:13:37)
Moderator: Is there any occasion over the last twelve months where, err, you've been on holiday?

(TC: 00:13:42)
M: I haven't had a holiday for twelve years.

(TC: 00:13:45)
Moderator: So, every Wednesday, if we just say for the last two years, every Wednesday, you personally have completed the cash account?

(TC: 00:13:53)
M: Yes.

(TC: 00:13:53)

Moderator: So, on every document, if we check for the last two years it'll always be your signature on them.

(TC: 00:13:58)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:13:59)

Moderator: Right. We haven't got two years here, by the way.

(TC: 00:14:00)

M: No.

(TC: 00:14:01)

Moderator: It's eighteen months, but if we went two years-,

(TC: 00:14:03)

M: I haven't had a holiday for twelve years.

(TC: 00:14:05)

Moderator: Right. And nobody else has worked in your office?

(TC: 00:14:09)

M: Only my wife.

(TC: 00:14:10)

Moderator: Okay. Has your wife ever completed the balance?

(TC: 00:14:13)

M: No. She can't. She can only do basic work.

(TC: 00:14:17)

Moderator: Right, so she's never-,

(TC: 00:14:18)

M: Just serve.

(TC: 00:14:18)

Moderator: Has she ever declared the cash?

(TC: 00:14:20)

M: No.

(TC: 00:14:22)

Moderator: Mmhm. Have you ever stolen money out of the Post Office?

(TC: 00:14:27)

M: No.

(TC: 00:14:29)

Moderator: So, you-, have you stolen £48,000 of Post Office funds?

(TC: 00:14:34)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:14:39)

Moderator: Okay. This £48,000, I believe you're, you're selling the office.

(TC: 00:14:47)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:14:48)

Moderator: So, if today was the transfer and not the audit, would the auditors have still found it £48,000 short?

(TC: 00:14:57)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:15:04)

Moderator: Have you got a buyer for the office?

(TC: 00:15:06)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:15:09)

Moderator: So, you've got a buyer, so you would expect to, to hand over within a relatively short period of time?

(TC: 00:15:16)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:15:20)

Moderator: What-, when the-, you know, it was checked and the £48,000 was missing, what would you say to the buyer? How, how could-, what's your explanation for the account being short?

(TC: 00:15:33)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:15:37)

Moderator: Were you hoping to repay that money prior to the transfer to new people?

(TC: 00:15:43)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:15:44)

Moderator: Are you aware that when your office transfers it will be subjected to a full cash and stock verification audit in order to transfer it over to the new people?

(TC: 00:15:56)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:15:58)

Moderator: So, were you making provision to put that money back prior to the transfer in order that that transaction and the sale of your business would go ahead?

(TC: 00:16:12)
M: No comment.

(TC: 00:16:13)
Moderator: Are you aware that the sale of the-, and the transfer of that business would not go ahead if the money wasn't there?

(TC: 00:16:21)
M: No.

(TC: 00:16:23)
Moderator: So, if you-, if you weren't aware that it'd go ahead, how-, what would you think would happen?

(TC: 00:16:29)
M: No idea.

(TC: 00:16:31)
Moderator: Had you thought about that or had you not considered that yet?

(TC: 00:16:34)
M: No. No.

(TC: 00:16:40)
Moderator: Before the, sort of-, you've already said to Diane that you haven't stolen the money, so therefore losses have occurred for whatever reason.

(TC: 00:16:50)
M: Mmm.

(TC: 00:16:50)
Moderator: Okay? I appreciate you can't tell me, you know, you know the first time, which was yesterday, and you, you can't tell-, but at this moment you say you can't remember when it-, when you first started having losses, which you didn't make good, or which ones you haven't made good, and that-, whether it was of the period (inaudible 17.09). Is there any reason why you think you may have had, had losses within the office?

(TC: 00:17:16)

M: Basic mistakes on the Horizon and not understanding it.

(TC: 00:17:20)

Moderator: Okay, now, you say basic mistakes on the Horizon-,

(TC: 00:17:24)

M: If you check my error notices, you'll find out.

(TC: 00:17:27)

Moderator: Okay.

(TC: 00:17:28)

M: That's all I can say at the moment.

(TC: 00:17:30)

Moderator: Okay, so why your error notices? Which type-, what was the last time you put errors through?

(TC: 00:17:35)

M: Last week or the week before.

(TC: 00:17:37)

Moderator: Okay, and what were they?

(TC: 00:17:41)

M: Um. Putting the wrong figures down.

(TC: 00:17:45)

Moderator: Okay, by putting the wrong figures down, how much for?

(TC: 00:17:49)

M: I think it was something like 1,500 going down as fifteen quid.

(TC: 00:17:57)

Moderator: And what was that in?

(TC: 00:17:58)

M: I'm not quite sure, to be quite honest, whether it was a payment for something, or was it a premium bond, I'm not sure. Can't remember.

(TC: 00:18:06)

Moderator: And how often did you-, did you do error notices?

(TC: 00:18:09)

M: Well, if-, I think if you look at my record you'll find-, I can't remember. You'll find quite a few.

(TC: 00:18:15)

Moderator: Quite a few each week or over the-,

(TC: 00:18:17)

M: Over a period.

(TC: 00:18:18)

Moderator: Yeah. Quite a few. Okay.

(TC: 00:18:24)

Moderator: Can I ask (mw 18.25).

(TC: 00:18:26)

Moderator: Mmm.

(TC: 00:18:27)

Moderator: Right. When you say you had a £1,500 error notice, which, you know, you think could be a payment of £15 that you've input incorrectly, when you got the error notice, did you have a corresponding loss or gain showing in your account for that?

(TC: 00:18:44)

M: No.

(TC: 00:18:46)

Moderator: Why wouldn't you have a corresponding loss or gain?

(TC: 00:18:50)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:18:52)

Moderator: Because if you've-, if you've taken a premium bond off somebody for £1,500, um, you, you-, in order to get the error notice you've put the transaction through incorrectly, is that right? Therefore you're gonna have a corresponding loss at that time of, what, £1,485. So, when you get the error notice back for that amount, they match up, is that how error notices work? You show-, you have a loss.

(TC: 00:19:28)

M: Hopefully, yes.

(TC: 00:19:28)

Moderator: The error-, or a gain.

(TC: 00:19:30)

M: Hopefully.

(TC: 00:19:31)

Moderator: And then somewhere down the line it's picked up and it's, it's brought to account and therefore your balance.

(TC: 00:19:37)

M: Hopefully.

(TC: 00:19:38)

Moderator: Do you agree that's how the system is set up to work? So, in-, if you've had these error notices, do you agree that you should have shown a loss or gain in your cash account in-, if that's the correct way of doing it?

(TC: 00:19:56)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:19:58)

Moderator: Is there any reason why (TC 00:20:00) as you brought up there, when you was asked about the error notice, you said you had one last week which is probably one, now, the error was a few weeks ago, the £1,500 that went in as 1,500-, 15. Diane asked you'd have-, you would have a corresponding surplus or shortage depending on whether you put £15, it should be £1,500, or the other way around. When asked did you have a corresponding shortage or surplus, you're going back to no comment. Now, I appreciate that you may not (mw 20.35)-, by all means, we've got 29 weeks there, you can look through if you-, if you want to.

(TC: 00:20:39)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:20:39)

Moderator: See if you can match that one up to that one.

(TC: 00:20:42)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:20:43)

Moderator: But as it's, sort of, you were asked again, 'Is that the way, um, error notices work?' And you said, 'Hopefully.' Now, what do you mean by hopefully?

(TC: 00:20:54)

M: All I'm gonna say is that, um, whatever I put in that machine, never seemed to come out the same way as it should.

(TC: 00:21:08)

Moderator: Okay. Now, again, just to go back to your 'hopefully'. If you-, if you put £1,500 and it's come up as 15, you, you would have that, that difference in the cash, wouldn't it?

(TC: 00:21:20)

M: Should do, yeah.

(TC: 00:21:20)

Moderator: And, and you're saying it's, you know, every time-, I appreciate that you may not be, um, the number one fan of the Horizon system. When was Horizon put into your office?

(TC: 00:21:33)
M: Can't remember.

(TC: 00:21:36)
Moderator: If I say about 2001, would that be about right?

(TC: 00:21:38)
M: You could be right, yes.

(TC: 00:21:40)
Moderator: 'Cause it was round about that period that-, the two-year period where it was-,

(TC: 00:21:43)
M: Yes.

(TC: 00:21:43)
Moderator: Started to be implemented, which leaves-,

(TC: 00:21:44)
M: Without looking at the paperwork, I can't tell you.

(TC: 00:21:46)
Moderator: Yeah, which would be (mw 21.48). So, you've had four, nearly five years maybe, with the Horizon system. Now, while you say whatever you put in didn't come out the same way, did you ever, like, in them days, did people call the retail line manager? Did you ever make any complaints to the retail line?

(TC: 00:22:11)
M: In the beginning, yes.

(TC: 00:22:12)
Moderator: Right, you say in the beginning, when was the beginning?

(TC: 00:22:14)
M: Round when, when they first came in.

(TC: 00:22:16)

Moderator: Okay. So, during 2001 you made some complaints about the Horizon system.

(TC: 00:22:22)

M: Yes. Yes.

(TC: 00:22:24)

Moderator: And what was done? Can you remember?

(TC: 00:22:26)

M: I had to pay nearly-, off the top of my head, I had to pay a certain sum, um, which was only half of the loss, um, the POLC took, um, the view that it was partly my fault and it was partly the Horizon fault at that time.

(TC: 00:22:50)

Moderator: Mmhhh.

(TC: 00:22:51)

M: But there was a line manager available to talk to then.

(TC: 00:22:54)

Moderator: Yes.

(TC: 00:22:54)

M: There isn't now.

(TC: 00:22:55)

Moderator: So, since then, with the, the teething problems with Horizon coming and changing from one system, 'cause before that it was a-, Echo, before that, and then Richard Jackson, or the other way around.

(TC: 00:23:06)

M: I had, err, I had my own. I can't remember what it was. My own-,

(TC: 00:23:12)

Moderator: Capture.

(TC: 00:23:13)
M: Capture.

(TC: 00:23:14)
Moderator: Capture.

(TC: 00:23:14)
Moderator: So, (mw 23.15) number of systems (mw 23.16) the old pen and paper is probably twenty years ago, isn't it?

(TC: 00:23:19)
M: Yes.

(TC: 00:23:19)
Moderator: When you used to balance that way. So, while you were unsure of the Horizon system, did you request or did you get any extra training?

(TC: 00:23:28)
M: Very little.

(TC: 00:23:31)
Moderator: Why very little? Again, I-, could I just ask you to expand?

(TC: 00:23:34)
M: Basically I-, for one account on a Wednesday.

(TC: 00:23:38)
Moderator: And is that when Horizon was first put in?

(TC: 00:23:40)
M: Yes.

(TC: 00:23:42)
Moderator: So, since 2001, what other complaints have you made, if any?

(TC: 00:23:47)

M: Um, I've rang up the helpline on quite a few occasions regarding, um, two or three small matters, really. Um. And that's all, but I've had to be rebooting, I've got a list at home how many times I've had to reboot the system over the last twelve months.

(TC: 00:24:12)

Moderator: So, if we-, if we checked with the helpline they'll have a, a list of complaints from-,

(TC: 00:24:15)

M: I hope so, yes. I hope so.

(TC: 00:24:15)

Moderator: From the office, yeah.

(TC: 00:24:17)

M: I hope so. I haven't got it. Yes, I haven't logged it myself.

(TC: 00:24:22)

Moderator: Okay. So, these cash accounts and your shortages each week, for, for whatever period of time it's gone on, which has accumulated to basically £48,000.

(TC: 00:24:36)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:24:41)

Moderator: Are you saying that the Horizon system has contributed or is responsible for this discrepancy of £48,000?

(TC: 00:24:49)

M: I've got my-, all I will say is I've got very, very big doubts about it.

(TC: 00:24:56)

Moderator: Why have you got your doubts about the Horizon system? Would, would you not agree, then, that-, or can offer an explanation-, any other explanation then why £48,000 may be short in the accounts if it's not the Horizon system?

(TC: 00:25:17)

M: No.

(TC: 00:25:19)

Moderator: Have you given £48,000 out over the counter (mw 25.25)?

(TC: 00:25:25)

M: Without checking, and just being a basic man, I don't know.

(TC: 00:25:31)

Moderator: Hmm. Maybe we'll use an-, we'll use an example of I come in to either get something off the-, well, my pension (inaudible 25.38), giro, pension which we don't know-,

(TC: 00:25:41)

M: Yeah, I have a pension book because I had the dockets. With the Horizon system, I got nothing until Wednesday. And maybe I'm talking too much now but we-, I looked that, um, well, I've looked at over the last few weeks actually and I've seen a lot of zeroes coming up on the card accounts. And nobody-, and the auditor this morning couldn't explain it to me. Well, I dunno what the zero means, whether I've paid out and it hasn't gone through the system, but that's all I'm prepared to say.

(TC: 00:26:15)

Moderator: Well, again, if you-, while you've brought that up, about the zeros, you, you may offer one or two explanations now. Um. What's the-, if I come in with my card, not the Post Office card but any bank, Barclays or whatever, how much can I get out? What can I draw out?

(TC: 00:26:33)

M: It all depends on the bank and I'm not quite sure, err, I'm not quite sure. Some of them allow £200. I know that Barclays do £300 'cause I've done quite a few and I think Lloyds do £250. Alliance & Leicester is al depends if that person's rang the bank up first and asked for a, a special, um, withdrawal.

(TC: 00:26:57)

Moderator: Yeah, (mw 26.57) special because it's-, you've gotta-, and then a phone order (mw 27.01).

(TC: 00:27:00)

M: That's within the accounts today, there was five transactions within the Lloyds bank transactions, it

showed zero.

(TC: 00:27:07)

Moderator: But that was not every transaction though, was it?

(TC: 00:27:10)

M: No. Some of them went through but, err, there was five there, it showed zero.

(TC: 00:27:14)

Moderator: And again, we will check that out with the people in Horizon and-,

(TC: 00:27:17)

M: I'd be very grateful.

(TC: 00:27:17)

Moderator: And the people to get the equipment in the office checked.

(TC: 00:27:20)

M: Yeah. I'd be very grateful.

(TC: 00:27:21)

Moderator: Just to ensure that it's not-, now, however, the explanation we think that the reason the zero's come up is if I come in and put my card in to the PIN pad and incorrectly enter my PIN number, it will tell you on the other side that I have incorrectly put my PIN number in, and I have to remove the card and redo it, which then will end that transaction. So, that's actually a transaction at zero money. Okay? The other one may be that I come in and ask to withdraw, if-, on the Post Office card, that I come in, put my card in the PIN pad, enter my PIN number correctly, and then ask to take out all the money that I have in. I may not have any money in. So, that would come back as a zero. That is-, and it's my opinion, and that's what I believe the zeros are. I do not think the zeros come to the, um, contribute to the loss of the 48,000. However, we will check that out to ensure that what, what I've said to you, it is correct.

(TC: 00:28:27)

M: Be very grateful.

(TC: 00:28:28)

Moderator: Okay. So, if you haven't give the money out over the counter to customers, do you not

agree then that for the money to go missing from the, the Post Office, there has to be somebody that has access to the counter?

(TC: 00:28:44)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:28:48)

Moderator: And if the money has been stolen from the Post Office, again, it's only yourself, your wife, who has the major access and your son and daughter bring-, you're the only four people with access to the counter. Did anybody else have any access whatsoever to the counter?

(TC: 00:29:10)

M: No. No.

(TC: 00:29:11)

Moderator: Does the postman come behind the counter?

(TC: 00:29:14)

M: Only to one side, right where the mail bag is. To sign.

(TC: 00:29:18)

Moderator: And not to the (mw 29.19).

(TC: 00:29:19)

M: No.

(TC: 00:29:19)

Moderator: Not to the back to where the drawer-, cash drawer's on.

(TC: 00:29:22)

M: No. Only to the (mw 29.25).

(TC: 00:29:25)

Moderator: And you're responsible for the cash figures, you're the one that locks the-,

(TC: 00:29:28)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:29:28)

Moderator: Locks the, the money away at night in the safe, puts the time locks on and stocks and everything.

(TC: 00:29:34)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:29:35)

Moderator: No other person.

(TC: 00:29:36)

M: No.

(TC: 00:29:38)

Moderator: Can I just ask, when did you take over as sub-postmaster of this office?

(TC: 00:29:43)

M: Um. When my wife GRO I ran it for a long time on my own because we couldn't get anybody to, to-, and she (inaudible 29.52 GRO I, I think I finished as a postman in 1991.

(TC: 00:29:59)

Moderator: Is that-, you were a postman (TC 00:30:00) before that?

(TC: 00:30:00)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:30:02)

Moderator: Okay. And, and was your wife, sort of, postmistress prior?

(TC: 00:30:05)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:30:06)

Moderator: So, when did she become, sort of, postmistress?

(TC: 00:30:11)

M: We've been in there since 25 years.

(TC: 00:30:14)

Moderator: 1980.

(TC: 00:30:14)

M: 1981.

(TC: 00:30:15)

Moderator: 1981.

(TC: 00:36:35)

Moderator: Right, can I just show you this docket then? Right, this is the cash account for week number 29 which is the week ending 12/10/2005, which is your final cash account.

(TC: 00:30:48)

Moderator: DM1.

(TC: 00:30:51)

Moderator: Whose signature is that, there, in the corner?

(TC: 00:30:52)

M: Mine (mw 30.53).

(TC: 00:30:53)

Moderator: So, that's your signature, so you prepared this cash account.

(TC: 00:30:54)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:30:57)

Moderator: And on the bottom of this cash account, on the left hand side, there is a lock (ph 31.01) that shows you what's to be declared as a surplus or shortage.

(TC: 00:31:04)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:31:05)

Moderator: Is there any amount declared?

(TC: 00:31:06)

M: None.

(TC: 00:31:09)

Moderator: On the next page it shows that the cash locked up, which is 69534.23. Which is what-, the same as that amount of cash was in the safe, is that a true record of the cash that was locked up in the safe last night?

(TC: 00:31:26)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:31:29)

Moderator: So, if I, I checked that safe last night I would have found £69,543.23p?

(TC: 00:31:34)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:31:36)

Moderator: Well, you just said to me, 'Yes,' and now you've gone back to, 'No comment.'

(TC: 00:31:39)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:31:42)

Moderator: Is that a true record of the cash locked up?

(TC: 00:31:45)
M: No comment.

(TC: 00:31:46)
Moderator: Did you inflate that cash?

(TC: 00:31:48)
M: No comment.

(TC: 00:31:50)
Moderator: Did you know it was wrong to inflate that cash?

(TC: 00:31:52)
M: No comment.

(TC: 00:31:53)
Moderator: And thereby inflating that cash, you've falsified the accounts for the Post Office for that week.

(TC: 00:31:57)
M: No comment.

(TC: 00:32:02)
M: Can you just tell me what's the date on that, please?

(TC: 00:32:04)
Moderator: Certainly. It's dated 12/10/2005. The cash account was prepared at 14:53. Are you half day closing on a Wednesday?

(TC: 00:32:13)
M: Yes.

(TC: 00:32:14)
Moderator: So, you would do the cash account in the afternoon (inaudible 32.17). Okay, we'll just-, cash account 28. Your signature in the corner.

(TC: 00:32:29)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:32:30)

Moderator: That-, that's your signature, and again, at the bottom left hand corner it shows a surplus or a shortage.

(TC: 00:32:37)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:32:37)

Moderator: That's 96 pence surplus. And again, the cash figure £70,596.77p. Is that a true record of the cash declared for that cash account week from 5/10/2005?

(TC: 00:32:57)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:32:59)

Moderator: Did you inflate that cash?

(TC: 00:33:00)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:33:04)

Moderator: Did you know it was wrong to inflate that cash?

(TC: 00:33:07)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:33:08)

Moderator: Thereby falsifying that document.

(TC: 00:33:10)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:33:13)

Moderator: Can we just-,

(TC: 00:33:14)

Moderator: DM2.

(TC: 00:33:15)

Moderator: Could you just flick through these and we-, I'll work-, it's working backwards. Week 27 shows no shortage. Week 26 shows a £4 surplus. Week 25 shows a £39.26 surplus. No shortage again. 24, a 20p shortage in 20-, in week 23. 10p shortage in week 22, no shortage again in week 21. No shortage again in week 20. And again-, we just read out one from 27 again, is that still your signature? Only 'cause it's slightly-,

(TC: 00:33:50)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:33:52)

Moderator: It looks similar but slightly different.

(TC: 00:33:54)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:33:54)

Moderator: In a contradictory way to week 20.

(TC: 00:33:56)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:33:58)

Moderator: Week 19 is a surplus of £31.99, 18 no shortage, surplus again of £59.39. Now, we've got a first shortage we come to is declared in week 16. Your signature again in the corner?

(TC: 00:34:17)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:34:18)

Moderator: And at the bottom you see the shortage of 126.59.

(TC: 00:34:21)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:34:22)

Moderator: Did you make good that shortage that week?

(TC: 00:34:24)

M: Um. I can't remember.

(TC: 00:34:31)

Moderator: And again, the cash locked up is 69,204.35. Is that a true record of the cash locked up for that week?

(TC: 00:34:38)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:34:40)

Moderator: Did you inflate the cash for that week?

(TC: 00:34:41)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:34:42)

Moderator: Did you know it was wrong to inflate the cash for that week?

(TC: 00:34:45)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:34:46)

Moderator: And thereby falsifying that document. Okay. For the further 1 to 15. Is there any of these that you will remember if I go through them-, I mean, I can go through them individually or-, the 1 to 15.

(TC: 00:35:04)

M: No, not really.

(TC: 00:35:05)

Moderator: Is there any that you will remember whether you've done or not done?

(TC: 00:35:07)

M: No. Not, not really, no.

(TC: 00:35:10)

Moderator: Is there any indication on any paperwork anywhere that will help us to help you to find out which ones you may or may not have made good?

(TC: 00:35:19)

M: No.

(TC: 00:35:22)

Moderator: Okay, and you can't remember when you first experienced, um, shortages within the office?

(TC: 00:35:28)

M: No.

(TC: 00:35:29)

Moderator: Did you tell anybody you were experiencing shortages in the office?

(TC: 00:35:31)

M: Nobody at all.

(TC: 00:35:33)

Moderator: You told-, you told nobody? Again, a reason why you told nobody?

(TC: 00:35:36)

M: 'Cause I was too worried.

(TC: 00:35:40)

Moderator: But if you're making mistakes, why would you be too worried?

(TC: 00:35:45)

M: I was.

(TC: 00:35:47)

Moderator: So, did this shortage-, is it one large shortage or is it an accumulation of shortages over a period of time?

(TC: 00:35:57)

M: I'll say no comment to that at the moment.

(TC: 00:36:03)

Moderator: So, you don't know whether it's accumulating over a period of time or one large shortage? 'Cause what I'm trying to get at to you, you're saying you told nobody 'cause you were too worried. If it's a build up of shortages after two or three, being an experienced sub-postmaster, as well as having previous experience as a postman, you understand the workings of the way the Post Office and all those guys as a consignia and Royal Mail and whatever (ph 36.30), the importance of keeping true and accurate records? So-, and you would know that you've got people there to help you, if you're experiencing difficulties when having shortages, 'cause, like, £100 one week, that becomes £200, that becomes £300 and snowballs.

(TC: 00:36:47)

M: If you call-, if you call the helpline helpful, well, I, I-, I'll keep my comments.

(TC: 00:36:55)

Moderator: I, I understand that, but if-, again, going back to the terms of your contract, all these shortages ultimately cost you.

(TC: 00:37:04)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:37:04)

Moderator: Even genuine shortages, because the balance is there to help you. It's your safeguard. If you're paying too much money out, it will show up, you've had that shortage. If that happens all-, too much, you know, you would go seek help. You are a member of the federation rep-, sorry, you are a member of the federation and your rep is the one who was working today as the interim. Did

you-, did you mention it to the federation? Did you speak to your union representative?

(TC: 00:37:33)

M: No.

(TC: 00:37:33)

Moderator: That you were having problems?

(TC: 00:37:34)

M: No.

(TC: 00:37:36)

Moderator: Do you not think that's the reason why you joined the federation?

(TC: 00:37:44)

M: Could be.

(TC: 00:37:49)

Moderator: Was it one large loss that somebody's stolen from the Post Office?

(TC: 00:37:54)

M: No.

(TC: 00:37:55)

Moderator: Do you suspect anybody else?

(TC: 00:37:57)

M: No.

(TC: 00:37:58)

Moderator: So, you don't suspect anybody else.

(TC: 00:38:00)

M: No.

(TC: 00:38:00)

Moderator: Whether it be a family member or not.

(TC: 00:38:01)

M: No.

(TC: 00:38:03)

Moderator: So, all these shortages and losses are all attributable to yourself.

(TC: 00:38:07)

M: If proven, yes.

(TC: 00:38:11)

Moderator: What do you mean by if proven? We, we know the office has got a £48,000 loss that was there yesterday. That's fact. And the last audit that was counted up, £69,000 was not in the safe. So, is that loss, shortage, discrepancy, down to you?

(TC: 00:38:30)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:38:37)

Moderator: Okay. At the moment, I think we've covered most of what we can of what you've got here. And we will go away and take on board the commented part of the interview, when you've mentioned about Horizon and whatever other paperwork may be in the office. Now, would that paperwork be behind the counter or would you have that separate?

(TC: 00:39:06)

M: All the paperwork is related to the office, up to week 14, is behind the counter. The rest is on the shelf in the shed. Wrapped up weekly. All the cash accounts you've got there are in a drawer in the Post Office. They're-, that-, those documents are not outside. It's only the weekly dockets that are in-, wrapped up.

(TC: 00:39:34)

Moderator: Have you got any paperwork that would be of use to prove or disprove the discrepancy of 40-, £48,000? Could that be in the shed? And we would need, you know, your permission to-,

(TC: 00:39:53)

M: You're welcome to the access to them.

(TC: 00:39:55)

Moderator: So, any paperwork that's required that you may have in your safekeeping, is not a problem if we take that?

(TC: 00:40:00)

M: (TC 00:40:00) As long as my solicitor can have copies of-

(TC: 00:40:02)

Moderator: There will-, copies will be given to Mr Williams and-,

(TC: 00:40:05)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:40:06)

Moderator: It's just to help us to verify, err, anything to do with the Horizon (mw 40.11). Also, are you willing to let us have access to your bank accounts?

(TC: 00:40:16)

M: No problem.

(TC: 00:40:18)

Moderator: No problem. We have some forms, I don't propose to go through them. Do you know the account numbers?

(TC: 00:40:23)

M: Not off hand, no.

(TC: 00:40:25)

Moderator: If we leave you with the forms, could you possibly send them back to us?

(TC: 00:40:28)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:40:29)

Moderator: It just-, it's just so, um, um-, I think that's just about covered. We will go away and talk now and sort out the bits we can sort out. Just to recap then, £48,000, have you stolen that money?

(TC: 00:40:51)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:40:52)

Moderator: Okay. Have you ever-, have you falsified any of the, the cash accounts over the last six, twelve, eighteen months?

(TC: 00:41:00)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:41:03)

Moderator: Have you inflated the cash which enabled you to (ph 41.05)?

(TC: 00:41:05)

M: No comment.

(TC: 00:41:09)

Moderator: And if-, you're willing to let us have any paperwork, you're willing to let us have access to your bank account.

(TC: 00:41:16)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:41:18)

Moderator: (Talking over each other 41.19).

(TC: 00:41:21)

Moderator: We're gonna get this (mw 41.23) outside.

(TC: 00:41:23)

Moderator: Yeah.

(TC: 00:41:24)

Moderator: Are you-,

(TC: 00:41:24)

M: We'll look at that shortly.

(TC: 00:41:25)

Moderator: Are you-, do you want to do that on-, off tape?

(TC: 00:41:27)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:41:28)

Moderator: Okay.

(TC: 00:41:28)

M: I'll have to, err, read through that with Mr Thomas.

(TC: 00:41:30)

Moderator: Okay.

(TC: 00:41:33)

Moderator: We have-, I've got no further questions. Have you got any-, anything further you'd like-,

(TC: 00:41:37)

M: No, I just hope that you will be able to find something on Horizon. Um, and just one other comment I'll say. Um. I haven't had a holiday for twelve years.

(TC: 00:41:52)

Moderator: No, that-, that's fine, I've, I've noted that down and, you know, your record will prove that you've had no holiday relief (inaudible 41.58).

(TC: 00:42:00)

M: And if there's anything wrong, it is down to me and nobody else. I, I accept any responsibility once everything is cleared. And that's the last comment.

(TC: 00:42:12)

Moderator: So, you're taking full responsibility.

(TC: 00:42:13)

M: Yes.

(TC: 00:42:14)

Moderator: For the 48-, for the audit shortage. Right. Mr Williams, have you got anything to say?

(TC: 00:42:22)

M: No thank you very much.

(TC: 00:42:23)

Moderator: Um. Are you happy that the interview has been conducted according to the (mw 42.28) etc?

(TC: 00:42:29)

M: I'm sure.

(TC: 00:42:30)

Moderator: Yeah.

(TC: 00:42:31)

Moderator: Okay.

(TC: 00:42:32)

Moderator: Just before-,

(TC: 00:42:32)

M: I'm quite happy as well. Thank you very much.

(TC: 00:42:35)

Moderator: Thank you.

(TC: 00:42:37)

Moderator: Now, just slightly different to the (inaudible 42.40) we're using our serials (ph 42.41) if I can just ask you to-, you've still gotta sign but could I just ask to repeat that number just before we switch the tapes off, it's only (mw 42.52).

(TC: 00:42:51)

M: Yeah. 37924.

(TC: 00:42:54)

Moderator: Okay, um, can you just sign there for me, please? (inaudible 42.57). Right. (mw 43.03)

(TC: 00:43:03)

M: Yeah.

(TC: 00:43:19)

Moderator: Okay. The time is now 8:36 and I'm switching off the tapes.