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ROYAL MAIL GROUP – CONFIDENTIAL
Record of Taped Interview

Short Descriptive Notes
Record of Taped Interview Summary
Full Taped Interview Transcript
(delete as applicable)

(delete as applicable)

Person interviewed: ALISON HENDERSON (AH)
Place of Interview: POST OFFICE COUNTERS TRAINING ROOM NORWICH

Exhibit No: Number of pages: 20 Signature of interviewer producing

Date of Interview: 11.3.10

Time commenced: 11.08

Tape reference no.: 071654

Time concluded: 11.51

Duration of Interview: 43 MINUTES

Interviewing Officers: CHRIS KNIGHT (CK)

PAUL WHITAKER (PW)

Other persons present: KEITH NICHOLLS – BRANCH SECRETARY (KN)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
		Voice identification of everyone present and the nature of the enquiry explained. Permission to tape record given.
1.20		AH cautioned and reminded of legal rights. AH told she is not under arrest and is free to leave. Form GS001 completed and signed – No Solicitor present.
4.24		The Royal Mail Employee Rights to a Friend at an interview or search form GS003 completed and signed. Offer of friend – friend present.
8.25		An audit was carried out at the Worstead branch on 10 th February when a shortage of £11.957.78 was found.
8.55	CK	First of all can you tell me anything about that shortage?
	AH	No.

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CK | Alright well was it a shock to you when the auditors turned up and found that shortage?

AH | Yeah.

CK | Ok have you had any shortage in the branch up to that point?

AH | Not before no.

CK | Right have you got any idea why it would be short?

SJ | No.

9.40 | AH states she is the only person working in the branch under user ID AHE001 with her daughter covering holiday relief. **GRO**
GRO The hours are Monday, Tuesday 8.30 to 5.30 and Wednesday Thursday 8.30 to 12. They close Fridays and Saturdays. AH continued she does all the end of day work and branch trading statements. She could not recall problems with balancing in the last 6 to 12 months. AH said the shortage was a complete shock

12.00 | AH was informed that £11,963.15 was identified as a shortage in the cash, £20 down in stock and £25 up in postage.

12.40 | AH shown branch trading statements from April 09 to 10th February.

13.00 | **GRO**
GRO She said the safe is always locked with a bit of working cash in the drawers which is then placed back into the safe at night.

14.05 | PW | Do you think anybody's been in and stolen any money off you?
AH | Don't think anybody I know that would so.
PW | Right so there's I mean it's a difficult question **GRO** or anything like that you don't think anybody's been in and taken any money?
AH | Well would you implement **GRO** ?

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14.20 PW Well I don't know I mean I don't know your relationship with **GRO**
GRO so but you're quite happy that everything seems to be ok in
that respect?

AH Yeah.

CK Like I say the branch trading statements the last one on the 10th
February and that showed a cash in hand figure of £8,669.57 which
was the amount of.

AH Sorry when was that?

CK That was on the 10th February that was the one I believe the
auditors completed. So the one going backwards to that, the last
one that was completed by yourself was on the 6th January, if I just
show you that one.

AH Ok.

CK There's the period date, you understand what the branch trading,
all the you know it's got your Post Office, the dates the period it
covers and it's got a cash on hand figure and on this particular one
it's showing £16,712.83.

AH Ok.

15.34 CK Ok so I'll ask you the question, when that was completed was that
amount of cash in the safe?

AH Well I should imagine so if that's what's there.

CK Right ok. How do you get to that, how do you, when you say yes
you imagine so.

AH What do you mean how do you get to it?

CK When you say you imagine so, do you count the cash?

AH Yeah.

CK So what you're saying is rather than imagine so, yes the cash was
there.

AH Right ok.

CK Is that what you're saying?

AH Yeah ok yeah.

CK So when you've completed this, tell me if I'm wrong, when you've

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		completed this you've counted the cash and the cash £16,000 would be there you would have counted that cash?
	AH	Yeah.
	PW	You input that figure onto Horizon?
	AH	Yeah ok.
	CK	Is that how you do it, what I'm trying to do I'm just trying to clear up rather than this imagine yes it might have been, what I'm trying to find out at what point?
	AH	Well I can't remember to every.
	CK	No no.
	AH	I mean I haven't had these I requested all this so that I could go through this but obviously nothing's come back so.
16.52	CK	I'm asking you when you do them, presume you do them every month you do them the same way?
	AH	Yeah.
	CK	There's nothing different about each month and obviously counting the cash and putting the figures there and then it produces the balance and away you go.
	AH	Yeah ok.
	CK	Ok what I've also produced, again just from the cash in hand figures, just a little schedule just to show, for the benefit of anybody listening to it, it's just got the dates and it's the date of the period end for the branch trading statements so the one's that I've got and the cash in hand figures and we're going, starting off on here the end period 8 th of 4 th 2009 showing the cash in hand figure of £14,179.58.
	AH	Ok.
	CK	So every month the next month 3 rd June it's 20,500 just over, 8 th of (indistinct) August, there's one for July one for August is 19,4 then September is 22,9, October is 17,000, November is 20,000, December is 15 ½ then we go onto the one we got there the January that's 16,7 then we got the one on the 10 th is 8,6 ok so

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		they're all running at I suppose we could average somewhere round about 20,000 just put a slight average of just round about £20,000 and the last one is £8,000 and we know that the audit shortage was about £12,000 so the 8,000 plus the £12,000 shortage is tying in with the rest of those figures, would you agree with that does that seem quite logical?
	AH	Yeah ok.
18.57	CK	Ok so we do know that on the 10 th of the 2 nd when the auditors came by that there was £12,000 not there that should have been there.
	AH	Ok.
	CK	So I'm trying to find out at what point did that £12,000 disappear or it wasn't there alright and you're saying to me it was a shock on that day that's the first you knew of it and that's right and is that right?
	AH	Yes.
19.40		When asked if the branch trading statement dated 6 th of the 1 st is correct, AH said to her knowledge it is.
20.12	PW	Right ok so all that money that Chris has just mentioned the cash on hand that was all in your branch on that day if that was correct 'cos you just said to do the branch trading statement you count your cash put the figures in Horizon and it produces the branch trading?
	AH	You know you're asking me the same question 3, 4, 5, you keep asking the same question and I'm giving you same answer.
	CK	No no no we're just trying to make sure that we're giving you the benefit to understand what we're asking you.
	PW	What we're saying because we're looking for £12,000 at the moment aren't we?
	AH	Yeah ok.
	PW	So we've got to go back to the last time that we knew that the

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		£12,000 was there.
	AH	And when are you saying that was then?
	PW	Well we're saying we can only go on what's in front of us and we're asking for confirmation if that's the case, you produced a branch trading statement on the 6 th January 2010 and if what you said about the branch trading statement was correct that all the money was there because you counted it and that was the figure that was there.
	AH	And I'll say again to my knowledge it was so.
	PW	Right so yeah to your knowledge so all that money was there on the 6 th January so we're looking at somewhere in the last 4 weeks between the 6 th January and the what was it the 10 th February that £12,000 must have gone missing in that 4 week period, is that what we're to assume that's all I'm trying to get at?
	AH	All you've done the figures you've drawn your conclusions so.
	PW	No I'm trying to, like I say I'm not after.
	AH	You know I've answered that same question can we move onto the next one.
	CK	Well we can do and what I'm saying is I haven't drawn any conclusion I've just transferred the figures from the branch trading statements onto a sheet to make it a bit clearer so I can explain to you.
	AH	Right ok.
22.00	CK	Ok. I'll show you another this is a taken from the transaction log ok and this is dated 6 th January and it gives your AHE001 which is the user ID employ ID they call it and then the branch trading statement is created ok so that's basically when you did the branch trading statement for that branch trading statement that we've shown you the 6 th of the 1 st .
	AH	Ok.
	CK	Alright. I'll show you another one and this is another part of the transaction.

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22.56 AH Oh and you do have to forgive me I'm not very good with figures.
CK Again this gives all the details of the Post Office and the date 14th December and basically what it says it gives you it's the transaction when you do transactions if you're selling stamps everything is on the transaction log even if you sell it and then reverse that transaction out so you haven't actually done the transaction that all comes up on the transaction log everything you do comes up on the system ok. Now going through here when we get down to the 6th of the 1st again all the times when you were doing the branch trading statement, it's showing you discrepancies. Now the discrepancies in there are showing as £10,000 and then it shows £11,000.

AH Ok.
CK Which is give or take a few pound the figure that was found in the audit as to be in deficit so what I'm saying to you is when you came to do your branch trading statement on this particular day, the system produced a loss it showed you that there was a loss.

AH Right.
CK Ok so you knew that there was a loss.
AH So then you re-go through everything and pick it up is that what you're saying?
CK I don't know I'm just saying, I don't know I'm saying to you this is what the system has said that there's a loss ok.

24.35 AH Ok.
CK And it just happens to be like I say give or take a few pound what the audit found 4 weeks later alright?
AH Mm.
CK So I'll ask you on that day can you recall having a problem with the branch trading statement?
AH No I can't recall having a problem but then I quite often do and just have to pick through and sort it out. You know if your stamps and whatever are out then you have to go through and recount.

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	CK	Right and that's find and as I said to you the audit result stamps were up and down give or take sort of £5 they were pretty much correct, the cash was wrong by the best part of £12,000 come the audit so what we're saying is, you're saying to me on the 6 th when you did the branch trading statement everything was ok and it all balanced in the end and everything was ok. 4 weeks later when the auditors came in it was £12,000 so in that 4 weeks from what you're saying, £12,000 disappeared.
	AH	Yeah ok.
26.04	CK	Now obviously I've had a look at your transaction logs over the last couple of months and you don't have a very large amount as in value for specific transactions ok so to lose £12,000 in 4 weeks have you got any idea what's happened with that?
	AH	No.
	CK	Would it be something a transaction that you've done wrong bearing in mind that the highest transaction I saw was about £400 in the last couple of months?
	AH	Well I don't know that's why hopefully you're looking through it and you'll sort it out you'll find it I don't know.
	CK	Well what we're looking at going by what you're saying is in 4 weeks from the January to the February you lost £12,000.
	AH	Ok.
	CK	I don't believe that is where we're looking I believe that this money was gone long before January.
	AH	Well if that's the case why was it not picked up before then, I mean if you know every transaction I'm doing and everything I'm doing why was it not picked up before?
	CK	No no we're not talking about every, what I'm saying to you is the audit came to you and you're short right?
	AH	Right yeah.
	CK	But you're saying to me no no no hang on a second everything was right on the 6 th .

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	AH	As far as I can remember.
	CK	Right so we're looking at, well it's a lot, it's £12,000 not a few pounds it's £12,000 I'm saying to you the system gave you a discrepancy then you're saying that well sometimes yeah and I find it.
	AH	What do you want me to say that you know the day before this I decided to have a nice holiday on 12 grand?
	CK	No I'm not saying that the money went in one go what I'm saying to you is I don't believe that the money went in the 4 week period that you're telling me it did go in.
	AH	Ok.
	CK	I think the money had gone either in dribs and drabs or whatever long before that over a period.
	AH	Well as I say if that was a case and you can pick this up and every transaction I do on that system is picked up then why was, if it started a long time ago as you say why was it not picked up before then, why do you wait until it's 12 grand if you think I'm taking out 5 here or 2 there or whatever do you understand what I'm saying?
28.39	CK	I understand that but I can't see why you're asking that because you're saying to me.
	PW	These investigations are done retrospectively, the first point that the Post Office turned up at your door was when the auditors turned up and the auditors went there for whatever reason, it might have been, I mean I don't know why the auditors turned up it might have been because they saw anomalies in your figures I don't know, I don't know why the auditors turned up we didn't ask them to go they just turned up as part of their programme but the first time that Post Office ask you to present to them all cash and stock relevant to your office that's proper to the Post Office you were unable to do that so in a way you've answered the question yourself the first time the Post Office has come to your door and said can we have, can you show us everything that's ours you've not been able to, you're £12,000

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		short so I understand what you're saying that you know if it's, if we think it's gone missing a long time ago why haven't we come.
	AH	Yeah which is what you're saying.
	PW	It's not that we pay Sub-Postmasters a remuneration to operate the Post Office to our standards and our standards are that when the auditors turn up to give us the money and show us the money show us the vouchers etc etc which you were unable to do so what, I think what we're dancing round here is like Chris says is we don't think this money has gone in the last 4 weeks, I don't think this was a surprise to you and the auditors coming, I don't think at all it was, I think you've known about this for a long time and basically you've been covering it up.
	AH	Well that's, you know you're entitled to think what you think.
30.23	PW	Well if we look back at the facts of how they are, you're a small office that does very very little large transactions, if you were a Trafalgar Square Crown Office in the middle of London and you were £12,000 short you could look back through your Giro in-payments you could look back through your application for premium bonds or whatever and see a number of large transactions whereby £12,000 could have gone missing in here in there, I would suggest that if £12,000 has gone missing in 4 weeks at your branch which is what you are claiming because you said on the 6 th everything was fine.
	AH	As far as I can recollect yeah.
	PW	Well this is as far as you're aware, that's your branch trading statement that you produce at the end of the trading period to say that is the state of my accounts, that is the correct state of my accounts, if it's not it shouldn't have been produced, the purpose of the branch trading statement is to show an accurate reflection of your accounts at the end of that trading period. You're allowed to do trial balances beforehand and you look at the trial balances and if they're wrong you do it right and the branch trading statement is that's it it is right it's not, to the best of my knowledge it's right or it

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		could be right, that's your branch trading statement.
	AH	Well I've only ever done them to the best o my knowledge that's all I can do and that's all I, I mean one day training in the classroom.
	PW	And what's the best of your knowledge Alison?
31.45	AH	That everything was fine.
	PW	So you are maintaining that everything was fine.
	AH	I'm not going to keep going over and over this I've answered the same thing can we move onto the next.
	PW	Well you're maintaining that everything's fine so are we to look at that 4 weeks period 'cos it makes it easier for us to look at a 4 week period.
	AH	You know at the end of the day I know that I signed a contract 13 years ago that said any shortfalls I have to make good, any overs I can keep so I know the outcome of this is I'm either going to be able to get a job get a loan and pay the Post Office the money they think I've taken or they're going to prosecute me so you know I know that that's going to be outcome so this is all relevant really to me.
33.26	PW	So what's happened?
33.31	AH	I don't know and I can't say any more I'm not prepared to say any more I've got no other answers to give you.
33.55		AH maintained she does not know where the money has gone.
34.22	PW	Do you produce cash declarations at the end of each day's trading?
	AH	Yeah.
	PW	Right what were the cash declarations?
	AH	I don't know, I don't know what they are I mean I haven't gone, most of my paperwork is, the main paperwork is with the Post Office, the cash declarations are there but I haven't gone through them 'cos I haven't, didn't think I'd need to.
	PW	Well just off the top of your head were your cash declarations saying £8,000 or were your cash declarations.
	AH	I don't know off the top of my head because whatever figure I say I'm

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		not going to implement myself in saying I don't know what are we on here, I don't know I could look at a figure I'm not, I don't know ok, I don't know.
	PW	Were they correct?
	AH	To my knowledge yeah.
	PW	So to your knowledge they were correct so whatever the cash declarations were, whatever they were and forgive me I haven't got them in front of me, but whatever the cash declarations were, that was the amount of cash that was in your branch?
	AH	Or yeah or sometimes if I hadn't done one the night before or when I closed up it would flash up and yes I've actually sort of just used it as the day before so.
35.34	PW	But to the best of your knowledge like you just said the cash declarations that you declare.
	AH	Oh.
	PW	They were, I'm confirming understanding that's all Alison I have to apologise sometimes I'm a bit slow but I have to confirm my understanding so at the end of the day when it asks you for a cash declaration a quick count of the cash and what you put in that figure, that figure that you put into the computer bar a couple of days like you say when you put in the previous days one is the accurate figure of the amount, the notes and the coins that were in your branch?
	AH	Well if you take a quick guesstimate then yeah.
	PW	Yeah there or thereabouts I accept cash declarations it's a bump bump bump bump but they would certainly not.
	AH	Right so there we go right now I've answered it 2 or 3 times.
	PW	But there was certainly not £12,000 difference?
	AH	I don't know.
	PW	Well you do know Alison if you count the cash you know whether it's a quick bump bump bump or not whether there's £8,000 or whether there's £20,000.
	AH	9 times out of 10 I probably didn't even look at the figure at the end.

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PW Well you've just told me your cash declarations.

AH So I would assume that they were, you know if it was from the day before or the other day that I hadn't done and it flashes up and tells me then yeah it's rough idea I would think.

PW Is it rough to assume that there's £12,000 difference?

AH I don't know until I look at them I don't know ok.

PW Alison can we remind you of what this is and can we remind you of the, you know the caution that Chris explained to you at the start?

AH Mm.

PW 'Cos we don't want you to think that if you sit here and say I don't know what's going off at an office that I was responsible for, an office that I was responsible for putting the figures in the counting for, the Post Office gave me all these cash to look after on their behalf I don't know where it is I don't know what's happening I don't want you to think that that's good enough for when we go away and someone looks at this and decides what's to happen next that people think well that's alright then.

AH No I know at the end.

PW There is suspicion in relation to his.

AH I know and that's what I said to you just a little while ago I know at the end of the day that I signed a contract.

PW It's not contractual it's legal.

AH To make.

PW It's legal criminal.

AH Yeah alright.

PW You're in a criminal interview.

AH Yeah if you let me finish I was going to say I signed a contract to say that I would make good any losses I could keep any overs and I know at the end of the day I've got to try and get a job to try and pay the money to the Post Office that they think I took.

CK Right but that.

AH Then when that's happened and after that I also know that the

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chances are you're going to prosecute me, I know that but irrespective of what I say here that's going to happen so it's.

38.30 It was put to AH that it was difficult to believe she does not know what has happened. She was reminded of the caution.

39.30 It was put to AH that she had created a false account and that she had stolen the money and she was informed this was her opportunity to explain why the account was £12,000 short.

41.10 CK You haven't stolen the money is that right?
AH I haven't and I go back to this if you say that this a year ago was there, why was it not, if you thought that I'd taken the £12,000 a year ago why did you not, why did Post Office®
CK What I'm saying to you I'm not saying that £12,000 was taken in a bulk at a specific time.
AH Right so alright over this period of time then.
CK Let's say it's 12 months.
AH They know exactly what I'm doing every month on that system with that computer.
CK But we don't check every transaction and every Post Office every, it's not, it's when something is flagged up then action is taken
PW Retrospectively we can see the figures that mean suspicion but at the time
CK All I'm saying to you I've pulled the figures off these figures are only just taken rather than passing 12 bits of paper around I've taken them out and listed them so you can see in front of you in one bulk where they are ok and what I'm saying to you is as I said at the beginning the last figure that we know is correct it's just over £8,500 that's what actual cash you had that rest 12,000 was missing should have been there and I'm saying to you going back to the figures you include what let's say you were reporting, you had reported about £20,000 which ties in with the rest of the figures over the year so I'm

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		saying at some point I believe that this wasn't just in 4 weeks that £12,00 has gone that £12,000 has gone over a period of time and obviously it's gone over a period of time I believe it's gone in chunks ok?.
	AH	Ok.
42.45	CK	So we're here asking you what's gone wrong with Worstead Post Office and you're saying it's all gone wrong in 4 weeks £12,000 has gone from the safe I don't know how it's gone it's just gone and that's what you're telling us.
	AH	No that's what you're telling me.
	CK	No no, this is where we go round and round.
	AH	Ok so can we move on because we're not going to resolve this particular.
43.22	CK	I'm repeating what you've told me and I want to confirm that that is correct so we don't suddenly go oh no what I meant was this later or I should have said that I meant to say that I want to be 100% sure that this is your opportunity to tell me what has gone on at that Post Office and why £12,000 was not there when it should have been there?
	AH	I've got nothing more to say really because we're just going to go round and round in circles.
43.56	CK	Right you're saying that you know nothing about this money is that correct?
	AH	I'm not saying any more I've said it all it's all on there, I really don't what to do this any more now.
		Master tape seal signed on number 071654 Interview terminated at 11.51