

Witness Name: Ms Marion Holmes

Statement No.: WITN0309_02

THE POST OFFICE HORIZON INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN0309_02/1

Jonan

Copy to [redacted]
[redacted]
Post Office House
3 Infirmary Street
LEEDS
LS1 1AJ
Dear [redacted]

Jesmond Post Office
41 - 47 St Georges Terrace
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
13th June 1999.

As a follow up to last Thursday's meeting at the Swallow Hotel, Gateshead, I should like to thank you for your support with the points raised.

While I feel that everyone at the meeting was dissatisfied with the way the trial is being conducted, I can, of course, only speak for myself. I feel that we have been dropped in at the deep end, with no serious training. We have just been left to manage as best we can, and this should not be the way forward.

The two day "training course" at the Caledonian Hotel did cover the daily aspects of Horizon but had no time to go deeply into the weekly balance and its appropriate paperwork. The trainers had experience only of the programme but did not know how the programme related to Post Office work. Questions like "what do I do with buy and sell over the counter Foreign Currency?" were met with blank looks. Even after asking their superiors the trainers could not tell us.

The second day was not a lot better, with very little time being devoted to the Balancing side of Horizon. When it was suggested that we should spend more time on the points that bothered us, we found that we had run out of time. The trainer was having to train another group that evening so had no time left for us.

The groups at "training" were badly selected with a lot of the time wasted with talk of Individual Stock Units when half the group would never use this system and were only concerned with Shared Stock Units.

Surely it makes sense to "train" those who work in Sub Offices away from those in Branch Offices, especially since the two ways of working are so different, and time was so short.

We even find that the Field Support Officers are learning as they go along.

Surely they should have been fully trained before this trial was undertaken.

I am certainly not the most intelligent person in the Post Office, but would not regard myself as being stupid, but yet I find the balancing side of Horizon very difficult to understand.

It now takes over five hours on a Wednesday to do what used to take one hour.

Part of this is due to the equipment – desk jet printers are just tooooooo slow!! I realise Lasers are more expensive – but are we really trying to do this on the cheap?

I don't think you can use the excuse that the Post Office is running out of money. If you can't afford to use the right equipment – for the sake of sanity – wait until you can.

PS – I have just had an invitation to travel to LEEDS for a seminar on American Express Travellers Cheques with a free buffet for 30 minutes before the meeting and a free drink in the bar afterwards, with travel and subsistence costs for two people per office. Unfortunately I have had to turn it down. It is impossible to shut the office at 5.30pm, clear up on Horizon, and then get to LEEDS from Newcastle by the time the buffet is served at 7pm. Seriously though, this is the fourth invitation to a buffet I have had in the last month so don't tell me there isn't money around – Oh I know, different budgets and all that.

(Swallow Hotel, Gateshead – Horizon – 8/10 for the buffet)

(Station Hotel, Newcastle – travel insurance – 10/10 for the buffet – I wish I had taken a doggie bag – plenty left – I could have eaten for a week)

(Novotel, Newcastle – New arrangements for stock from Hemel Hempstead instead of Boldon Colliery – 5/10 for the buffet)

All very worthwhile causes – but nothing as important as my balance.

Back to the serious side of the letter.

As I told you last Thursday, I will not work past Wednesday July 7th without some serious training on the balancing aspect of Horizon.

This gives someone four weeks to cure my problems.

I am prepared to go anywhere, Cameron House at
The MetroCentre or Leeds, at any time, night or day, even Sundays,
(particularly Sundays so that the running of the office is not effected) just to
get some proper training.

As the Office Manager and not the SubPostmaster I have no financial
commitment to the Post Office, just my life, and was probably the only one
in the meeting on Thursday who could say this, but without proper training I
will leave.

Of course it did not help that I now get a delivery on a Wednesday
instead of the original Tuesday – it's all designed to increase the pressure!!

At present I do not sleep past 4am and feel ill at ease going to work.
Restore my health – proper training – proper equipment – proper deliveries
(Tuesdays again please)

Nothing else bothers me – just the weekly balance.
Daily reports – no problem.

I realise that some of these matters are already in hand, and for this I
thank you.

Respectfully,
Peter A HOLMES

GRO