

POST OFFICE LTD CONFIDENTIAL: INVESTIGATION, PERSONNEL

POLTD/1011/0095

Theft & False Accounting

**Name:** Miss Alison Loraine HALL

**Rank:** Postmaster                      **Identification Code:** 1

**Office:** Hightown SPSO                      **Branch Code:** 512 323

**Age:** GRO                      **Date of Birth:** GRO

**Service:** 5 years 8 months                      **Date Service Commenced:** February 2005

**Personnel Printout:**                      **At Appendix:** C

**Nat Ins No:** GRO

**Home Address:** GRO

**Contract for Services Suspended:** 3rd September 2010 Mrs Karen Arnold

**To be prosecuted by:** Royal Mail Group (including Post Office Ltd)

**Designated Prosecution Authority:** Mr Iain Murphy, Fraud Strand Leader

**Contracts Manager**

The circumstances surrounding the suspension and subsequent interview of Miss Alison Hall are briefly as follows;

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010 Ms Tracey Bedford, Migration Support Officer attended Hightown Post Office® prior to the branch being migrated to Horizon Online (HOL). When she counted the cash on hand against the Horizon Cash Declaration a shortage of £13,624.41 was discovered. The branch was closed and a full audit took place the following day, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, conducted by Mr Jeff Roper and Mr Richard Goss.

Hightown Post Office® branch is situated on the Halifax Road (A649). The premises consist of the Post Office® branch, Newsagent and small off licence. This building is attached the main house which stands behind.

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September I wrote to Miss Hall and invited her to an interview and gave her details of her legal rights. The next day she telephoned me and I explained further the nature of the

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interview. She seemed a little confused but she said wished to have a Solicitor present. I advised her to speak to a Criminal Law Solicitor and we could arrange a time and location for the interview.

On Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September Mr Paul Normandale, Solicitor with Inesons of Cleckheaton telephoned me while Miss Hall was with him. We agreed to conduct the interview at his office.

On Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> September in the company of Mr Paul Whitaker I attended the offices of Inesons Solicitors in Cleckheaton. At 11:37hrs a tape recorded interview with Miss Hall commenced. Mr Normandale was also present.

At the start of the interview Miss Hall said that she believed the shortage was due to problems with the Lottery Scratch cards. She went on to say that on a number of occasions she had to alter the stock shown on Horizon to match what was physically in the branch as there was a discrepancy. This would cause a shortage in the cash and this carried on. She added that these alterations were made because of the Transaction Correction (TCs) she was receiving.

She remained adamant throughout the interview that the problem was with the Lottery Scratchcards but she admitted that she had not managed the situation well as she had left it to build up hoping to be able to sort out the problem.

Miss Hall said that she had out in £640 of cash to cover a shortage, but when asked could not recall when that had occurred. She offered to look at her bank details to find the date. (18:30)

Miss Hall said she could not balance the Branch account in January 2010 but could recall how much by.

Miss admitted that since January 2010 she has been Falsifying the Branch trading statement by increasing the Cash On Hand figure to achieve a balance. When asked she agreed that she had gained an advantage of remaining in employment during this period when if she had raise the matter she may have reasonably expected to be suspended and be in the same position she is now.

Miss Hall was informed that she may have rendered herself liable to prosecution. When asked if she anything further to say she said she was sorry for the all the mess she had caused herself and Post Office Ltd and should have asked for help sooner.

The interview concluded at 12:37hrs.

A Summary of the interview has been compiled.

I have spoken in depth to Mr Neil Thorneycroft the Lottery / Scratchcard Manager in the P&BA Section in Chesterfield. He explained the process for Lottery Scratchcards;

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- Cards received from Camelot are initially scanned to inform Camelot they have been received.
- Cards then need for sale are scanned and the £s value is entered on to the Horizon system manually.
- At the end of each day the Lottery terminal will give details of Sales and prizes. These figures are manually input in to the Horizon system. At this point the cash must be physically added to the Post Office® till. In essence this is a cash deposit in to the account.

Any TC received would only affect the Scratchcard stock and not the cash on hand figure.

If Miss Hall made manual alterations to the stock on hand this would affect the cash on hand figure. But both TCs and stock alterations do not total anywhere near the £15k loss.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010 I attended the home address of Miss Kimberley Langley, Counter Clerk at Hightown Post Office® Branch. Miss Langley [GRO] has worked at the branch for approximately four years. She works Monday and Tuesday 09:00 to 17:30hrs and Thursday 12:00 to 17:00hrs.

She said she was not aware of any Lottery issues until recently. While Miss Hall was on holiday during the first two weeks of August 2010 she ran the branch. When she produced the Cash Declaration at the end of each day she was told to add in a specific figure by Miss Hall.

I also went to see Mrs Marjorie Higgins [GRO] the other clerk. She only worked on Tuesdays and only if they were desperate as she had [GRO]  
[GRO]

Both clerks were registered correctly with Post Office Ltd and were the only ones registered.

The Helpdesk (NBSC) have confirmed that there were no telephone calls received from Hightown SPSO between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2010.

Miss Hall [GRO] and their [GRO]  
[GRO]

The current loss to Post Office Ltd remains the initial loss at the time of the Audit of £14,775.76

These papers have been submitted to the Criminal Law Team for advice on possible criminal charges. A decision to prosecute will then be taken. If the criminal case is to progress it can only do so where a Postmaster has been dismissed.

Therefore could you inform me of the outcome of the conduct case against Miss Hall.

Christopher G Knight  
Fraud Investigator

18<sup>th</sup> October 2010