

Privileged



Alan Bates & others v Post Office Limited

Bug 28

Drop and Go Bug

Summary

- The Peak PC0260269¹ identified by the experts relates to an issue in branch involving a Drop and Go transaction that was timing out in branch and, despite timing out and not appearing to complete, being recorded as a successful transaction in the branch accounts.
- This particular instance of the issue involved the branch re-attempting the same Drop and Go transaction, being a £100 mobile phone Top Up.
- The root cause was identified by ATOS as being a problem in with one of their Drop and Go scripts.
- This was therefore a proper bug in Horizon, arising as a result of an issue with an ATOS script.

Background: 'APADC'

- AP-ADC = Automated Payment - Additional Data Capture ("APADC")
- APADC are a series of modular functions that are provided with the Horizon codeset. Specifically, these functions allow control of the user interface with Horizon and enable transaction designers to build the 'APADC' script, which contains a series of APADC functions to capture the transaction data.
- For example: a 'NameLong' function displays a graphical user interface on Horizon to capture all elements of a Name on a single screen, i.e. Title, Forename, Middle Initial, Surname. As such, adding NameLong, along with other various functions, to a transaction script allows ATOS to build complex transactions without requiring counter code changes by FJ.

Part 1: PC0260269 [F/1660.1]

- **Dates:**
 - 05-Jul-2017: PC0260269² and KEL cardc235Q³ opened as a result of the SPM complaint relating to a duplicate Drop and Go transaction appearing in the branch account.
 - 05-Jul-2017: Analysis in the Peak (F/1660.1/2) confirms that:
 1. only one £100 transaction made it to CDP system⁴
 2. the nightly transaction file from Horizon contains two records, which suggests the £100 may be charged/ deducted from the branch twice
 3. the second transaction from the Horizon file matches the transaction in the CDP system

¹ F/1660.1

² F/1660.1

³ F/1660

⁴ CDP = Common Digital Platform and is hosted by Accenture. See F/1638/68 which confirms the acronym, ATOS have confirmed this was intended to be a single point of integration between Horizon and any third party client systems. The diagram at F/1718/11 shows Post Office's IT System context and the key data flows, including where the CDP sits.

- 4. confirmation that the first transaction from the Horizon file has no corresponding transaction in the CDP system and that this generated an exception
- 05-Jul-2017: Counter log and message log extracts obtained by FJ (F/1660.1/4).
- 05-Jul-2017: FJ identify 2 potential causes:
 - 1. the 'ADCScrip-CDBalanceTopUP' script
 - 2. a user error.
- 05-Jul-2017: Call passed to ATOS (as the Drop and Go scripts are supplied and maintained by ATOS).
- 05-Jul-2017: Defect cause updated as being '42: Gen – Outside Program Control'. FJ have confirmed that this means a fault outside of Fujitsu control, including external websites, external networks etc, which aligns with the situation here as ATOS appear to be responsible for the issue.⁵
- 05-Jul-2017: KEL updated to summarise the above and confirmation in the KEL that any future calls should be routed to ATOS.

- **What happened?**

- The clerk initiated a Drop and Go transaction for £100 which failed due to timeouts, but then a success message was displayed
 - The clerk settled the transaction and handed the customer £100
 - The customer checked their balance and stated that the top up had not been processed
 - The clerk performed another Drop and Go transaction that was successful
- All of the above documented in KEL cardc235Q⁶, extract below:

The clerk initiated a Drop and Go transaction for £100 which failed due to timeouts, but then a success message was displayed. The clerk settled the transaction and the customer handed over £100. The customer checked the balance and stated that the top up had not gone through, so the clerk then performed another Drop&Go transaction which was successful. The customer has paid in £100 but the branch account has been debited by £200. Accenture verified that only the second Drop&Go top up was successful.

- Reconciliation between the Horizon feed and the Accenture CDP system identified that only one Top Up had been received by Accenture CDP but two were being shown in the Horizon Batch Feed. The second Horizon transaction matched the CDP transaction, confirming the problem was with the first transaction.

- **How was it spotted?**

- The SPM reported the issue with the NBSC and in response Peak PC0260269⁷ and KEL cardc235Q⁸ were raised.

- **How was it fixed?**

Branch 499323 TC:

- TC issued on 29 June 2017 by Post Office for £100.
- Extract below from spreadsheet of branch TCs run by Post Office's Core Finance team:

TC TO CORRECT DROP AND GO ERROR.REGARDS- DROP AND GO 01246 542001

ATOS script fix:

- ATOS Test Report confirms there are 2 issues to fix:

⁵ As Counsel may recall, FJ do not believe that these 'defect causes' are defined in any design document but have provided the current contemporary narrative for '42: Gen – Outside Program Control'.

⁶ F/1660

⁷ F/1660.1

⁸ F/1660

Issue	APADC script involved	What the script does	Issue and how it was fixed
1	Balance&TopUp	An APADC transaction script that captures and transmits data when a Customer wants to Top Up the balance of a Drop and Go Account.	<p>The issue was the primary issue summarised in PC0260269⁹ and KEL cardc235Q¹⁰ in that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the customer was charged for the Top Up despite being charged for the Top Up, the Top UP was not being added to the customer's account. <p>As per the Test Report, ATOS identified a bug in the Balance&TopUp script that incorrectly allowed the transaction to progress after an unrecoverable timeout had been identified – i.e. the transaction should not have been completed.</p> <p>As per the Test Report, this was resolved in an updated version (6.12) of the Balance&TopUp script.</p>
2	OpenAccount	An ADADC transaction script that captures and transmits data when a Customer wants to open a Drop and Go Account. As part of the Account Opening	<p>The Test Report confirms ATOS identified that the same issue as above in terms of the transaction being able to progress was present in the OpenAccount script.</p> <p>As per the Test Report, this issue was resolved in an updated version (6.11) of the OpenAccount script.</p>

- Possible conclusions:**

- There was no long-term financial impact on branch 499323 as a corrective TC was issued by Post Office.
- Any repeat instances of the issue would involve a duplicate transaction, which would be easy for the SPM to identify in the branch accounts.

- Impact on Subpostmasters?**

- The customer paid £100, but the branch account was debited £200, resulting in a £100 shortfall to the branch.
- Branch received a TC on 29 June in the sum of £100 which corrected the shortfall.
- There was therefore no long-term financial impact on the affected branch.

- Notes for Counsel**

- Coyne in JS2 [D1/2/25-26] correctly summarises that the customer was credited with £100 but the branch was debited with £200.

⁹ F/1660.1

¹⁰ F/1660

- This is easily responded to as the branch received a TC credit for the £100 shortfall and as such there was no lasting financial impact to the branch account.
- Dr Worden in JS2 [D1/2/25-26] notes that (1) this would have been very visible on the counter and (2) that the script issue would have been easily fixed.
- Dr Worden's summary appears accurate as it is clear the SPM identified the issue and reported it and ATOS were able to fix the issue.
- Note, however, that FJ have identified a further instance of the issue (dealt with separately below). This further instance relates to a different ADADC script, which was not fixed as part of the above process. ATOS have confirmed that the original author of the Drop and Go transaction scripts, including the ADADC scripts, was a Post Office business analyst who has subsequently left the business. ATOS have also confirmed that there is no documentation that describes the different ADADC scripts full functionality. This indicates that, while this was a simple script issue, there is an argument to suggest that there is a lack of knowledge within ATOS concerning the ADADC scripts, as one script that should have been fixed was not.

Part 2: Single further instance of the Drop and Go Bug

- FJ identified a further similar instance of KEL cardc235Q in PC0273234¹¹ from August 2018, which implied that there was some sort of issue with the April 2018 fix described above.
- ATOS have undertaken review and confirm that this Peak relates to a different Drop and Go Function and script entirely, namely: the APADC CountMails script.
- This was investigated by ATOS and a fix to the CountMails script issues in September 2018.


• Dates

- 31-Aug-2018: Issue in branch 117844 arising from £30 Drop and Go Top Up
- 01-Aug-2018: Post Office internally investigate the call
- 13-Aug-2018: Post Office pass issue to ATOS to investigate why the Drop and Go Top Up failed
- 21-Aug-2018: Peak opened as a result of SPM reporting a failed Drop and Go Top Up
- 21-Aug-2018: Peak identified as an instance of KEL cardc235Q and the relevant keystrokes added to the Peak
- 21-Aug-2018: Peak closed by FJ and request for Peak to be passed to ATOS
- 12-Sep-2018: Root cause identified by ATOS (explained in fix below) as being an issue with the CountMails script and an updated CountMails script produced to fix the issue
- 18-Sep-2018: The fix – i.e. the updated script was deployed to the test environment
- 25-Sep-2018: The fix – again the updated script – was deployed to live.¹²

Issue	APADC script involved	What the script does	Issue and how it was fixed
3	CountMails	<p>An APADC transaction script that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captures the number of items that a Customer wants to leave with the branch to process later ← note that this is the primary function of the CountMails script • Offers the Customer the opportunity to Top Up their account as part of the Count 	<p>The issue was the same as the above and involved the secondary functionality of the CountMails script that enables the customer to top up as part of the transaction, meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the customer was charged for the Top Up • despite being charged for the Top Up, the Top UP was not being added to the customer's account.

¹¹ In the process of being disclosed as raised after the Peak extract was run.

¹²

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mails transaction ← ATOS have confirmed that they were unaware that the CountMails script also offered the ability to Top Up. For completeness, ATOS have confirmed that the original author of the Drop and Go transaction scripts, including the CountMails script, was a Post Office business analyst who has subsequently left the business. ATOS have also confirmed that there is no documentation that would have identified that the CountMails script also had the ability to Top Up. <p>In terms of the functionality of the CountMails script, ATOS have confirmed that the 'Count Mails' transaction was intended to be a quick transaction for the clerks to perform in branch and take receipt of a number of Drop and Go items at the same time, registering the number of items received and issuing a receipt to the customer for the number of items. The clerk would then use a separate transaction (called 'Start Mails') to process the items individually after the Customer had left the office – i.e. at a quiet moment when there were no other customers are present in the branch. It is only at the point of processing the individual mails items that a clerk would identify whether there was sufficient balance on the account to process the items. It would therefore be unusual for a customer to request a Top Up (the second functionality described above) as part of the Count Mails process as they would need to have prior knowledge of their account balance before performing the Count Mails process to know that a Top Up would be needed in order to process all of the items.</p>	<p>As per the embedded email chain below, the incident was received by ATOS on 13 August and a script fix deployed to live one month later on 13 September 2018. The email chain confirms that the updated script was produced on 12 September 2018. ATOS have subsequently confirmed that the fix was processed under RADC/1809/005, the Business Change Reference that ATOS Information Services Team and Fujitsu use when sharing reference data between them. In this case, we understand the reference data tool the form of an excel spreadsheet: 38779 CDCountMailV6.13, which has a Worksheet for each step within the CountMails APADC script.</p>  <p>FW: Failed Drop & Go Top Up - 22145833.n</p>
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- **Relevant Documents**

- Peaks: PC0260269 [F/1660.1]
- KEL: cardc235Q [F/1660]

- **New Documents to disclose:**

- Spreadsheet of branch TCs run by Post Office's Core Finance team

(In process of being disclosed. Once disclosed, we propose to add this to the Trial Bundle as it is helpful in terms of confirming the TC was issued, provided the Counsel team agrees.)



499323_Transaction
Corrections_220517_

- NBSC Call Logs confirming SPM reported the issue on 20 June 2017



Filtered_499323_Leg
acy NBSC Case S_Ad'

- Test report issued by ATOS during resolution of Drop and Go issue

(In process of being disclosed – on Charlie and Amy's disclosure tracker. Once disclosed, we propose to add this to the trial bundle as it is helpful in terms of confirming the steps taken by ATOS, provided the Counsel team agrees)

- Peak PC0273234 (further instance)

(In process of being disclosed – on Charlie and Amy's disclosure tracker. Once disclosed, we do not propose to add this to the trial bundle but let us know if the Counsel team disagrees)



PC0273234.pdf

- Email chain between ATOS and POL (further instance) (excluding email to WBD)



FW Failed Drop & Go
Top Up - 22145833.r

(In process of being disclosed. Once disclosed, we do not propose to add this to the trial bundle unless the Counsel team decides to include the above Peak in the trial bundle but please let us know if the Counsel team has a different view)