

**GRO**

Witness Name: John Beswick

07/11/1941  
Statement No: **WITN11960100**

Exhibits: N/A

Dated: 26/01/2023

**POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY**

**FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOHN BESWICK**

My name is John Beswick and I was formerly a subpostmaster. I have been invited to make a written statement by the firm Hodge Jones & Allen LLP, who are solicitors for a number of core participants to this Inquiry.

1. In 1977 I joined the Post Office as a SPMR of Old Leake Post Office, Lincolnshire, PE22 9NS. I finally sold up in 2009. During my time as an SPMR I was a close observer of all the changes underway, both at the Post Office and within the NFSP, of which I was a member and at times branch official and delegate.
2. I know Tim McCormack, and I understand that he has retained some Post Office related documents I sent to him. I no longer have any of the documents I sent to him because I disposed of all my hard copy files in 2017 when I prepared to return to **GRO** My computer files are also lost through time

and change of hardware. I have given Tim permission to provide any material I sent to him to the Inquiry, and am willing to help the Inquiry with understanding any of those documents if necessary. Any comment from me in those documents reflected my honest views at the time of writing.

3. I was fortunate to have been invited to sit on the Association of Convenience Stores Post Office Committee as a representative of those ACS members operating a single office. The rest of the membership were the nominated SPMRs for multiples, operating any number of offices within their retail estates. I cannot now provide hard dates for the ACS committee membership but it sat both sides of the Millenium, and I attended meetings until 2008.
4. An overall observation from those meetings was that Horizon losses were dealt with differently depending on your status within POL's estate of offices, that is Crown Offices, Multiples who operated via a nominated SPMR at their head office, and individual SPMRs. Only individual SPMRs were held to personal liability for any losses shown by Horizon for their individual post office.
5. A further observation was that where SPMRs were prosecuted for shortages of significant amounts in the tens of thousands, those losses were cumulative, and in most cases, if not all, would have exceeded the normal cash holding for that office. I formed the opinion that POL could have not but known something was badly wrong at that office but failed to take action until the amount exceeded the threshold for a criminal prosecution.

6. I believe that the SPMR at an adjacent office to mine suffered that fate. The branch was Stickney Post Office, and I believe that the SPMR who faced prosecution at some point after 2000 was called **GRO**. His wife was called **GRO**. Knowing it was a much smaller office than my own, I was as certain as could be that the above was the only logical explanation for what happened at Stickney.

7. I have also been told that POL settled large amounts (millions) with a number of external clients, such as BT and Anglian Water, for balance differences between POL's Horizon system and the clients' own systems. This is not something I was ever able to verify, but perhaps the Inquiry can.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

**GRO**

**John Beswick**

Dated: 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2023