

WITNESS: NICHOLA ARCH

STATEMENT No: WITN01220200

EXHIBITS: 0

DATED: 25 NOVEMBER 2024

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF NICHOLA ARCH

I, MRS NICHOLA ARCH, GRO
GRO will say as follows:

1. I am a former employee within a Post Office that was affected by the Horizon IT scandal and am now a Core Participant in the Post Office Horizon It Inquiry ('the Inquiry'). I have drafted this statement with the assistance of Hodge Jones & Allen solicitors, my representatives for the purposes of the Inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

2. In 2019, I saw a snippet of Angela van den Bogerd when she gave evidence at the GLO. I recognised her immediately and realised she was the investigator in my case. That was the first time I had seen her since she gave evidence at my trial.
3. I went to Angela van den Bogerd's second day of evidence at the Inquiry on 26th April 2024 to see if it was her or not. I sat very close to her. I knew it was her straight away. She looked straight at me and looked at me like she recognised me. She knew exactly who I was.

4. In her evidence, she said she was never involved in prosecutions. This is not true. She has interviewed others, not just me. It appears her evidence was an attempt to hide the level of her involvement because I know she conducted Mark Kelly's interview. This was in South Wales, which isn't far from me.
5. Many years ago, I requested my interview tapes and was told they were destroyed. It must be on record that Angela van den Bogerd was conducting interviews around this time.

AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION

6. The audit team came around October or November 2000. Three people attended, and they all introduced themselves as auditors, not investigators. I had been reporting shortfalls to the helpline and had been told they were teething problems. I genuinely believed they were there to help me.
7. One of them was Angela van den Bogerd. When she first arrived at the branch, she was quite stony-faced and business-like, but pleasant enough. We had a coffee and a general chat in the stockroom while the audit was taking place.
8. When the audit finished, the auditor came out of the stockroom and asked if I knew I had a shortage. I said I did, which is why I reported it. He said they needed to ask questions about it. Angela van den Bogerd said we would go to the Stroud Crown Office because there would be more room to ask questions there.
9. She said we would go in one car and wouldn't allow me to take my own because the parking was awful. The other investigating officer sat in the front, and Angela van den Bogerd sat in the back with me. On the way to the Crown Office, she commented on how the area was expensive, and I agreed.

10. When we arrived at the Crown Office, we walked through the main door where they accept parcels. It felt like all the staff were looking at me. It was strange and uncomfortable. Angela led me to a room in the back office. She tapped in a code, walked in, and I followed with the other man behind me. There were two chairs on one side, one chair on the other, and recording equipment. It felt like everything was set up before they had even spoken to me.

11. I sat down. Angela van den Bogerd asked if I minded if they recorded the interview. I said I didn't because I had nothing to hide. The man said it would save a lot of time if I told them where the money was. I said I didn't know. The atmosphere suddenly changed. He said, "We know you've taken the money. The sooner you admit that, the sooner it will be over." I said I wanted someone there to help me. Angela van den Bogerd said, "You've obviously got something to hide if you need someone else here." I said I was fine.

12. In the interview, they showed no interest in what I had to say. They were threatening and intimidating. It felt like they wanted to force a confession at any cost. They told me I was the only one with problems, everyone else was doing great, and that I must have taken the money. They saw a holiday postcard on the wall of the branch and asked if it was a holiday paid for by the Post Office. Angela van den Bogerd told me I would never step foot back into the business.

13. I arrived at half-past ten, and I was driven back to the business at quarter to four. I couldn't get back inside as they had the keys and told me to go home. They called the sub-postmaster who owned the branch and said he needed to suspend me, or they would go after him instead.

14. I was questioned a couple more times by the same interviewers, the man and Angela van den Bogerd, at a police station in Stroud. The questioning was very

similar and repetitive, but it was better because I had a solicitor present. All communication from the Post Office went to my solicitors, Simon James Solicitors, and was then relayed to me.

TRIAL

15. The trial took place on April 14th 2002 two years after the initial investigation.
16. Angela van den Bogerd gave evidence at the trial. She didn't focus on any specific evidence. Her testimony was based on assumptions such as claiming the money couldn't have gone elsewhere and that I must be stealing. She didn't mention Horizon, nor did the prosecution barrister.
17. When the jury acquitted me, they just walked out, and I didn't even receive an apology.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed



GRO

Print full name: NICHOLA ARCH

Dated 25/11/24