

BT Again (21st June 2008)

It's now more than 30 years that British Telecom strung some wires from the pole on the corner to our house. Over the years, we have rubbed along through the various changes that my telephone supplier have made, including adding an 8 prefix and making the Berkhamsted exchange turn into 01 442.

The latest decision of making a charge to enable a customer to pay a for a service provided using 'coins of the realm' really was the last straw, so I 'down grounded' our service to a telephone service - in realality changing from business to residential.

Little did I know that BT, as the GPO/BritishTelecom is now known, actually is divided into separate organisations which don't actually talk to each other, although you contact all by the same means. I ended up with 'BT business' owing me money and 'BT residential' being owed money. Remember, same bit of wire, with same number to same customer. BT business didn't indicate how the refund was to be made (this was March),so being a simple kind of person, I checked with BT, who suggested there might be a problem, but made a note on the computer like that I would be paying 'BT residential less the credit owed by BT business and if there was a problem, they would get in contact.

They did get in contact - apparently by disconnecting the telephone line on Friday 13th June!

Naturally, I reported the fault via the web site on the evening of June 16th and then via the local payphone on the 17th. It transpires that I had been disconnected for non-payment. No matter how I tried to point out that being owed the very same amount by BT business cut no ice, but they managed to transfer me to BT business (different outfit remember, who don't talk to each other), where they confirmed that the money was still just sitting in their bank. 'Can you send it to BT residential, please?', I asked. 'No, but we can send you a cheque, so you can pay them', came the reply. I agreed to this as I wasn't getting anywhere trying to explain how stupid this appeared to a mere customer particularly as they were just holding into the money. Strange also how only a few days earlier, they sent a letter saying they were sorry that I had left BT, and would I like to return. I hadn't left BT as far as I knew.

After spending some time in a payphone (why no seat or loo?) trying to find out what was happening, I decided to just BACS the money while I wait the 10/14 days that BT business say it will take to get my money to me. Then on the Wednesday (18th), a letter arrived from BT saying that if I didn't pay the outstanding monies, my telephone contract will be terminated on 26th June 2008. Off to my 'local payphone' to find just what was going on. Another hour+ listening to rather distorted noise, it appears that I was disconnected in error - I think - however, my telephone number has been 'lost', but not to worry, we will try to get your line back working by the 20th.

It seems that the line was indeed 'reconnected' on the 20th, but the number is a mystery, so not really a lot of use as it is not known to anyone except BT.