

Would-be MP 'took cash from account while he was on trial'





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EXCLUSIVE By Les Reid

PÓLITICAL REPORTER

FRAUDSTER and would-be MP Vincent McKee allegedly raided a wealthy businesswoman's bank account while standing trial on 34 charges of swindling students and fami-lies, the Telegraph can reveal.

Our investigation has seen evidence that London advertising executive Lizie Gower's account with the Queen's bank Coutts was debited several times just weeks ago by McKee's ex-firm Godiva Corporate Training during his six-week fraud trial – shortly before a court wound up the company.

Her phone records also reveal she had many phone calls in the run-up to the jury returning guilty verdicts this week – with the same mobile phone number McKee uses to

contact the Telegraph.

Yet she said he was pretending to be someone else using an alias name – under what the trial heard he called his "pseudonym strategy" – and claimed to be frantically arranging a £9,500 refund for

It was after she threatened to go to the police when she discovered a stream of inexplicable unauthorised payments from her account to Godiva Corporate Training. It comes as Northern Irish-

man McKee, in an exclusive interview with us, vowed to defy the courts' attempts to prevent him trading – by offering supply teaching to UK schools and colleges from a new business with a head office in Galway, Ireland.

Business secretary Vince Cable – a Liberal Democrat like 2010 general election candidate McKee - would have to go back to the courts to seek to close down any such off-shore loophole to block McKee's intended exploits, the Insolven-

cy Service told us.

Mr Cable secured court orders, published on October 9, to wind up three of McKee's former firms in "the public interest" Godiva, UAT (GB) Ltd and UAT (UK) Ltd. Coventry Crown Court judge Peter Carr banned McKee yesterday from holding UK directorships for seven years.

The new revelations come as McKee was yesterday jailed for two-and-a-half years after the jury found him guilty on 25 counts of raiding the bank accounts of 25 students and families of £23,000 - over a 16-month period up to January last year.

It failed to reach a verdict on

nine other fraud charges and one of perverting the course of justice – after a trial which both sides estimate could have cost taxpayers between £300,000 and £500,000.

McKee. 54, of Hanbury Place, Little Heath, Coventry, pleaded not guilty to all 35 charges, but changed his plea to guilty on a 36th less serious charge of breaching laws governing business conduct.

The judge said he could serve half the sentence and be released from prison on li-

Mrs Gower told us she re-

ported her case last month to

Coventry trading standards which brought the case to trial, without previously knowing anything about Vincent McKee or the trial – as it was not a name she had dealt with.

She also revealed trading standards produced a witness statement from her with a view to her giving evidence in the trial.

But the judge ruled the jury should not hear evidence of an extra case – after McKee's defence barrister Chris Henley claimed it came too late to enable a fair defence.

Mrs Gower, managing director of West End advertising and music video firm Academy Films, accused McKee of overcharging her account by more than £10,000 since March in a string of fraudulent debits.

She claims she agreed to about £700 worth of lessons, including travel costs for her Leeds University student son, which the tutor Lynn Murphy confirmed had ended in April in an email to UAT.

Her Coutts bank statements. seen by the Telegraph, show multiple debits were since taken under the name Godiva

On checking her statements, Mrs Gower noticed significant amounts had been taken

oney was

Corporate Training. They included £130 on September 4, the trial's second day, £250 on September 6, and £150 the next day.

She said an internet search in March led to her finding McKee's former student tuition firm UAT Ltd, previously

known as ICUT.
She phoned the company and spoke with a man with a distinctive Northern Irish accent – as well as what she thought was a phoney Scottish accent - proporting to be Eammon Kennedy.

The name is one of several aliases the court heard McKee used to conceal his identity after media coverage of his fraudulent activities last year. She said she found it odd because he went into a long monologue about Scottish

politics and how deeply religious he was.

to become an MP in 201 – he has now lost

Over several phone calls to make arrangements, she said they agreed for her son to have four or five two-hour sessions with a tutor at £40 an hour. plus any tutors' travel costs to her London home.

She claimed they agreed he could debit payments only after a tutor was selected and actual tutorial time and travel costs were calculated. She gave him her bank account details.

Mr s Gower said, on checking her statements on September 6, she noticed significant amounts had been taken out of the account by Godiva Corporate Training. She quickly established through research the firm's link with UAT.

The next day, she phoned UAT on the same mobile number as Eammon Kennedy's to demand an immediate refund. She spoke with some-body calling himself Michael Hughes, who claimed 'Eam-mon Kennedy' had left the company.

She added: "He spoke with a strong Caribbean accent which was such a bad fake accent I couldn't stop laughing. When I said to him it was fake,

IN MONDAY'S TELEGRAPH: WHY DID



he went into a Northern Irish accent which I believed was his natural accent.

"I said I needed a full refund that day or I would go to the police. He asked me to take it no further, and promised to refund the next week.

"I said he would need to do it now. So he said he would speak to another colleague who would sanction the payment as he was going into a training course."

The call was made on the fourth day of McKee's trial at Coventry crown court.

crown court.

'Michael Hughes' later sent her texts promising repayment, seen by the Telegraph, and spoke with Mrs Gower in numerous phone calls, allegedly seeking reassurance she would not go to the authorities or the Press.

Then on September 10 she received posted "receipts" from his bank terminal machine proporting to relate to full refund payments – also seen by us.

She said Coutts' fraud investiga-

She said Coutts' fraud investigation team tracked the numbers and concluded they were fake – although three £500 refunds had been randomly paid in August. She said Coutts had also tracked

She said Coutts had also tracked the Godiva bank account that received her money, and traced another mobile phone number associated with the company.

It was a different number to the

one she had been using to speak to the person calling himself Michael Hughes.

It too is another mobile number the Telegraph has used for years to speak directly with McKee.

Mrs Gower said Coutts phoned that number on October 4 and left a message.

The call was returned on October 10 at 2pm by a man proporting to be Michael Hughes. He allegedly claimed he had been left to sort out the "mess" of the company, and re-

Vincent is going to drop a bombshell... he has a terminal illness... he's going where he couldn't take money

quested the exact figures withdrawn to enable a full refund.

It was the day after the trial deliberations had concluded, and the jury had been sent out to consider its verdicts.

Mrs Gower added: "I phoned that mobile to see if it was the same Michael Hughes on a different number. Categorically it was the same person. I hung up without speaking to him. At the same time as he was promising a refund, I learned from Coventry trading standards his company was being wound up the previous day.

"I phoned Coutts' fraud department, and said, 'This is ridiculous. He's now scamming you by claiming that he is going to pay you back, but he can't pay back,'

"Eammon Kennedy and Michael Hughes were clearly the same person with exactly the same speech patterns, with the same annoying habit of talking over me and repeating what I was saying in a slow, breathless way. Both mentioned religion and how they went to church."

She said her phone bills confirmed the mobile numbers used when she spoke to both Eammon Kennedy and Michael Hughes were the same – the same number as one given by McKee to the Telegraph.

given by McKee to the Telegraph.

In a later phone call to 'Michael Hughes' after she was made aware of the McKee trial, she said she asked: "You're Vincent aren't you?"

She continued: "He said, 'No, no,

I've never heard of him.'
"Later on, he had obviously forgotten what he'd said previously, and said, 'Well I know Vincent is

going to drop a bombshell in court

next week because he's got a termi-

nal disease and he's going where he

couldn't take his money. I can't say more than that but it's terminal, terminal cancer, and he's been so brave to continue on with his grave, grave illness. I respect him, and that court is going to realise how wrong they are to prosecute him. He is innocent.

"I thought, 'Five minutes ago you were telling me you didn't know who he was. So how come he's been telling you about his terminal cancer?' It was laughable."

McKee claimed to us that UAT (UK) Ltd was sold in September for £3,000 to an Irish consortium, which he claims he is not involved in. He said Godiva Corporate Training's "assets" were sold to his new Irish company, after he resigned as director in July, while UAT (GB) Ltd, he claims, ceased trading in January.

■ An email seen by the Telegraph – sent by McKee to his previous firms' tutors on September 19 – shows he was trying to recruit teachers for his new Irish business offering supply teaching and IT recruitment – called Godiva Corporate Training (UK/Ireland) Ltd.

The email states the company is registered in the Republic and gives the company's office as 6, Lenaboy Avenue, Salthill, County Galway. It also states is has a "British office" at Citibase, 101, Lockhurst Lane, Coventry.

Aggressive, abusive bully with a soft spot for Filipinas

VINCENT McKee admitted barricading his former office landlord's wife into a car park at his Tower Street business premises one Saturday during the trial.

The return to his old office – where there was a dispute with landlord Gurch Samra over rent arrears until police arrived – was reported to the court as a direct breach of his bail conditions, and he was scolded by Judge Peter Carr. McKee told the Telegraph shortly before being sent down that he is engaged to a third Filipina woman, aged 28.

The court had heard the second left him for another man days after he stood as a Lib Dem candidate in Coventry North west in May 2010. With some students still wondering whether they will ever get their money back, McKee admitted to the Telegraph he spent £2,000 hiring a private investigator to track her down in Manchester after she left.

Asked whether he would now finally personally issue refunds, with people still up to £8,500 out of pocket, he said: "We'll have to look at what resources one has."

Yet the court heard from students and

Yet the court heard from students and parents of similar promises broken, including written promises in emails. Some got some refunds, mainly from the banks' charge-back system.

McKee has an outstanding loan of £40,000 and faces confiscation of any assets he has, and refunds could come through the proceeds of crime act.

McKee – who likes to call himself Dr Vincent McKee after obtaining a PhD – told us he would not return to party politics, after quitting the Lib Dems last year.

He had appealed for the jury's sympathy, claiming to have been injured by an IRA bomb at a Belfast bus station in 1972; that his headmistress mother rejected him when he failed his 11-plus; that he was then taken into care; had episodes in psychiatric units as an adult, and had a tough Ulster Presbytarian upbringing until converting to Catholicism. But the judge said he was often an aggressive, abusive bully to clients.

In a phone call, he told one Nigerian student: "F*** off back to where you came from."



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FOUR YEARS TO BRING FRAUDSTER TO JUSTICE?

Spooky play time for kids

NUNEATON and Bedworth Leisure Trust will be running its popular playscheme for half term next week.

The playscheme was introduced last year and proved to be a hit.

Daily sessions will take place at Etone on Monday, . Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, at Jubilee on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and at The Nuneaton Academy on Thursday and Friday.

Sessions run from 9am to 4pm and parents have the option of dropping off their children from 8.45am.

The theme for this half term is Halloween with all sorts of great activities available for children each day.

Charity morning

A COVENTRY care home will be in the pink to raise cash for cancer tomorrow.

Weavers Care Home in St Nicholas Street, Radford, will raise cash for the charity **Breakthrough Breast Cancer**

during a coffee morning. Residents and staff will also wear pink clothing for the event, which runs from 10.45am until 12pm, to raise funds for the cause.

Jewellery stolen

A LARGE quantity of jewellery was stolen by smash-and-grab thieves in North Warwickshire.

They gained entry to an unoccupied house in Tamworth Road, Kingsbury, between 6-9pm on Monday by hurling a paving stone through a patio door.

They also took games consoles and an expensive



Vould-be MP's fraud raises serious concerns

anecdotal insights into the bizarre world of would-be MP turned convicted fraudster Dr Vincent McKee.

They include politicians, churchgoers and journalists – circles he moved in before being incarcerated in prison last week, to serve perhaps half his two-and-a-half year sen-

They include many victims of this unrepentant con-artist; the self-pro-claimed devout Catholic who stole from bank accounts of students and their families.

I've known ex-Lib Dem Parliamentary candidate McKee for years. He swings excessively from combative aggression to charm personified, as a jury heard.
In 2010, I suspected he had some-

thing to cover up when he went to eccentric lengths to ingratiate, in-sisting he "personally escort" me for

a "three-course meal".

He picked me up at the old Telegraph offices, drove round the block to his student tuition firm – one minute's walk away – and had office staff prepare food, which I ate off my

lap.

He alluded to business difficulties and disputes. He made uncomfortable claims about his early years, including being injured by an IRA bomb in 1972, which the jury heard.

When I enquired more last week, he said it was at a Belfast bus station, and he was one of few survivors This time, his face contorted as he claimed it wasn't something he could talk about. Scholars of Northern Ireland's "troubles" could per-haps say whether it accords with

The jury also heard his



JAILED: Dr Vincent McKee

strict Presbyterian headmistress mother rejected him; and he was in care as an "emotionally disturbed" child. Yet he presented no evidence from the witness box.

Neither did the jury hear evidence of another alleged fraud revealed in my exclusive investigation on Saturday. It raises serious questions over why, and whether more prosecutions should be sought.

We reported one of McKee's ex-

firms, Godiva Corporate Training, was still taking money from a cli-ent's account during his six-week trial, before he was found guilty of 25 frauds committed before January last year. The jury couldn't reach verdicts on more recent other cases, or of perverting the course of justice. He denied all.

The client was Lizie Gower, wealthy MD of West End TV adver-

tising firm Academy It transpired Coventry Court judge Peter Carr had rejected Coventry trading standards' appli-cation to put her evidence before the jury, partly due to its lateness – evidence suggesting McKee's activities

were continuing.

Last month, she discovered her
Coutts bank account had been inexplicably debited more than £10,000 by Godiva Corporate Training since booking lessons in March for her student son, with McKee's ex-firm

She had dealt in March with someone with a Northern Irish accent, who she said also used a laughably fake Caribbean accent. He called himself "Eammon Kennedy", which the trial heard was one of McKee's false names used under his self-pro-

claimed "pseudonym strategy".

During the trial, she phoned the firm's same mobile and was told she was speaking with "Michael Hugh-"Eammon Kennedy" had left.

In further calls, he allegedly pre-tended to be frantically arranging a £9,500 refund after she threatened the police. He then posted allegedly bogus receipts.

When I examined Ms Gower's records, the mobile phone numbers logged were the same ones I have of-

ten used to speak with McKee.
What Ms Gower then claimed would be hilarious, if not so serious. After she confronted him saying: You're Vincent aren't you?" and his initial denial, "Michael Hughes' proclaimed Vincent's virtues. Of how Vincent was bravely struggling on with "terminal" cancer, and was innocent.

Vincent's tangled web of deceit had

point where one of his fictitious al-ter-egos was killing himself off! Freudians would have a field day.

In January 2011, Sky News' Jason Farrell broadcast evidence of fraud allegations, and we investigated complaints – heaping pressure on

> Audacious McKee told me he intends to defv new UK court restrictions over his business dealings

the local authorities to finally prosecute over complaints they knew about since 2008.

Coventry council's trading standards last week decided against a retrial on the outstanding charges after the trial cost UK taxpavers an estimated £300,000. The police never wanted to prosecute – apparently partly as amounts defrauded were not great enough.

Despite contrary claims by McK-ee's defence barrister, audacious Mc-Kee told me he intends to defy new UK court restrictions over his business dealings, by selling teaching services in the UK from his new company in Ireland, Godiva Corporate Training (Ireland) Ltd.

The danger is McKee and other fraudsters will carry on stealing in the digital age, knowing all about the heavily-cut public services' reluctance to prosecute.

■ Trading Standards confirm new investigation: Page 14

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AGUAR WORKE

BUSINESS REPORTER WORKERS at Jaquar Land Rover have voted to accept a two-year pay deal said to

be worth almost ten per

By Jenny Waddington

Union leaders have confirmed the deal, which was thrashed out during four days of talks earlier this month, was accepted yesterday by 78.5 per cent of its members.

The new agreement which is worth up to 9.8 per cent – comes after a boom in business for the luxury car maker, which has its global headquarters in Coventry.

will see the 21,000-strong workforce



picking up a pay rise of 4.5 per cent plus £500 from next month. This will be followed by a rise from November 2013 of three per cent or equal to the Retail Price Index.

It also means that from November, 2,400 agency workers with Jaguar Land Rover will become perma-

employees. The deal covers workers at Coventry's Whitley at Coventry's

Don't miss Les Reid's blog at www.coventrytelegraph.net

9.8% PAY DEAL FOR

base, Gaydon in Warwickshire as well as workers at Castle Bromwich, Solihull and Halewood on Mersey-

industry-leading wage deal comes just two vears after Jaguar's Castle

Bromwich factory saved from closure. Union leaders have welcomed the vote – which was 3-1 in favour.

National officer Roger Maddison said: "This is a very good result for JLR in particular and the car industry in general. We can now move forward to reinforce the renaissance in British car production.

"The deal is nothing less than the workforce deserve as they have contributed greatly to the nearly £3 billion profit made by JLR over the last three vears.

Other elements of the deal include new starter rates rising from 90 per cent to 95 per cent of the current pay rates, as well as an increased holiday bonus for the summer holidav.

It will also see an investment and sourcing agreement to guarantee the operation of all UK plants until at least 2022.

Earlier this year, Jaguar Land Rover revealed record profits of £1.5billion. The manufacturer the biggest company in the Midlands – has seen its profits smash last year's record of £1.1billion as demand continues to grow worldwide.

And last week the company was one of 16 firms in the West Midlands to share a slice of £124million from the RGF.

Pupils get out and about to meet new buddies

NEW pupils at George Eliot School in Nuneaton enjoyed a three-day exercise designed to foster teambuilding, build friendships and encourage bonding.

They went to Condover Hall in Shropshire, to take part in a wide range of activities, including climbing, fencing, archery, obstacle courses and problem-solving.

Year seven director of learning Patti Hearne said: "It was a really valuable experience and enabled the students to work and interact with each other, as well as getting to know their form tutors who they will work with closely over this next academic year.

next academic year.
"The students were
wonderful, they all got on
well and their behaviour
was excellent."

The party was accompanied by students from year eight, who went on a similar trip last year and acted as their "buddies," to help the George Eliot newcomers settle into secondary education.



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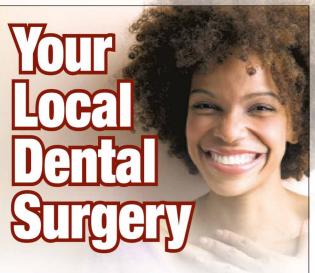
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FRAUDSTER FACES NEW CASH PROBE

By Les Reid

POLITICAL REPORTER

COVENTRY trading standards officials are investigating allegations that would-be MP and convicted swindler Vincent McKee was still defrauding during his trial.

Coventry Crown Court trial judge Peter Carr is also facing questions why he did not belatedly allow the jury to hear the evidence of McKee's latest alleged antics.

Our exclusive investigation on Saturday uncovered evidence that wealthy London advertising boss Lizie Gower's bank account was debited several times by McKee's ex-student tuition firm Godiva Corporate Training during his six-week fraud trial.

It came shortly before a court wound up the company.

McKee – who stood for the Lib Dems in Coventry in 2010 – was found guilty last week of defrauding 25 students and families of £23,000, in the 16 months before January 2011.

The jury failed to reach verdicts on nine more recent charges up to September last year, and a charge of perverting the course of justice. McKee, aged 54, of Hanbury Close, Little Heath, Coventry, was jailed for two-and-a-half years.

Ms Gower's phone records revealed she also had many phone calls during the trial – with the same mobile phone number McKee uses to contact the Telegraph.

Yet she said McKee was

Yet she said McKee was pretending to be someone else using an alias name – under what the trial heard he called his "pseudonym strategy" – and

claimed he was frantically arranging a £9,500 refund for her. It was after she noticed her account had been raided and threatened to go to the police

Ms Gower, who had sought lessons for her student son, reported her case last month to Coventry trading standards, which produced a witness statement for the trial.

But the judge decided to to put it before the jury – after McKee's defence barrister Chris Henley claimed it came too late to enable a fair defence. Nigel Wooltorton, Cov-

Nigel Wooltorton, Coventry trading standards fraud and financial investigations manager, told the Telegraph: "Trading standards is investigating this case."

Trading standards decided not to immediately pursue a re-trial on the counts where no verdict was delivered.

was delivered.

The trial is estimated to have cost taxpayers at

least £300,000.

Valerie French, who had £1,880 taken from her account after booking £100



lice and trading standards should consider further action in light of the evidence alleging McKee was continuing his fraudulent activities during the trial. "It should have been considered by the jury

of lessons with McKee's

ex-firm ICUT, said: "Po-

considered by the jury, and taken into account in his sentencing.
"I strongly recommend

I strongly recommend trading standards to take this latest evidence back to the crown in the public interest."

Dr Jim Sharp, a former tutor and briefly a director working for McKee's firm, who gave evidence against McKee and his use of alias names, said: "It should have been put before the jury. Further charges should now be brought."

We also revealed on Saturday that McKee is intending to defy the courts' new attempts to prevent him trading including a seven-year ban on holding UK directorships – by offering supply teaching to UK schools and colleges from a new business with a head office in Ireland.