

The complaint

Mr N complains that Santander UK Plc has been unable to locate his account.

What happened

Mr N says in January 2025 he found an account passbook for an account he opened with a business later taken over by Santander. He says the passbook shows a balance of just over £440 with the last entry in December 1994. Mr N would like the money returned to him.

Santander says it has checked its records and can't find any trace of the account. It says it likely the account was closed before it took over the other business in any event. It says it has found a mortgage record in Mr N's name from 2010 which has evidence contained on it that at that time, he didn't hold any other accounts with it.

Mr N brought his complaint to us and our investigator thought Santander had carried out appropriate checks to locate the account. The investigator thought it likely the account had been closed some time ago and that the mortgage document suggested the account had been closed before 2010.

Mr N doesn't accept that view and says he had a mortgage with the business in question in 1994 which shows he had a business relationship with the it at that time. He says the passbook is clear evidence that the account was opened and the money not withdrawn.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Having done so I have come to the conclusion that I don't uphold this complaint.

I am sure Mr N appreciate that banks and building societies do not need to keep records going back over 30 years. But they are required in these sorts of circumstances to check its records and try and help a customer find out what happened to an account.

I am satisfied that a rediscovered passbook is not in itself evidence that an account still exists. And that many accounts that used passbooks also allowed other methods of account withdrawals that did not always result in the passbook being updated. For example, a lost or misplaced passbook would not be updated which may have taken place here as Mr N has told us he found the passbook in 2025.

I am satisfied that Santander has tried to help Mr N and has carried out reasonable and appropriate checks of its records. Those checks are limited due to the passage of time but I also think the mortgage document from 2010 provides strong evidence that at that time the account had been closed. I say that as I think it likely that mortgage record would have details of the account if it had still been open.

I appreciate Mr N says he held a mortgage in 1994 with the same business, which provides evidence that he had a business relationship with it. But I don't think that matters as there is

no dispute that in 1994 he had an account with it.

I think on balance that it likely this account was closed many years ago and that Santander has fairly carried out all of the checks I would have expected to try and trace the account.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr N to accept or reject my decision before 27 September 2025.

David Singh
Ombudsman