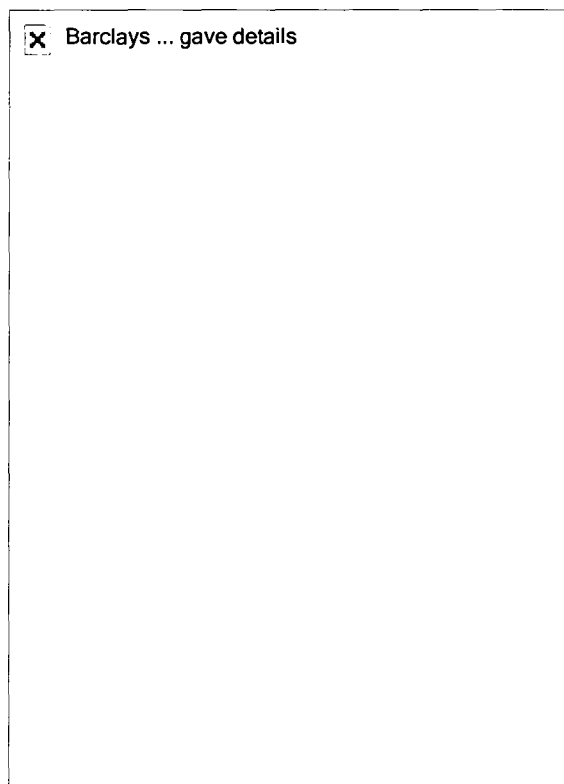




Sun Money

Exclusive

Phoney banking



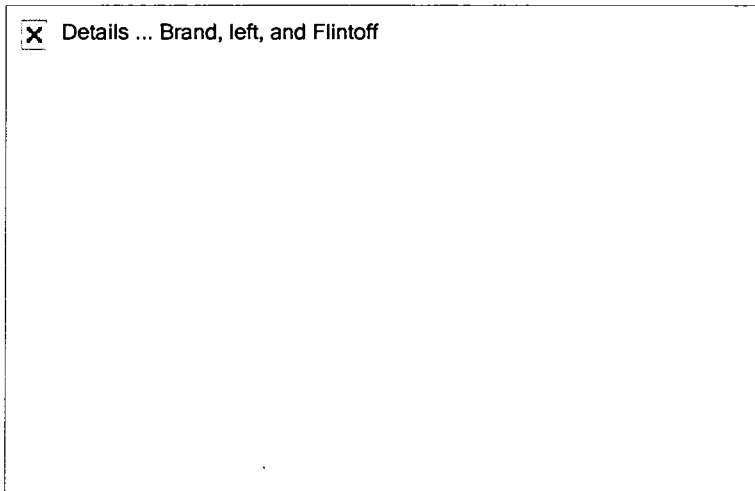
Barclays ... gave details

MILLIONS of bank accounts are at risk — because they can be accessed by crooks with just ONE phone call.

A Sun investigation found a shocking flaw in security at Barclays, which has 12million customers in Britain and 48million worldwide.

It revealed that armed with just **FOUR** personal details — including a name and address — fraudsters can ring the bank and gain valuable information.

The other personal details needed, which we won't reveal, are easy to obtain.



Details ... Brand, left, and Flintoff

By answering the simple questions we were given the sort codes and account numbers of comic Russell Brand, cricket star Andrew "Freddie" Flintoff — and even Barclays' chief executive John Varley.

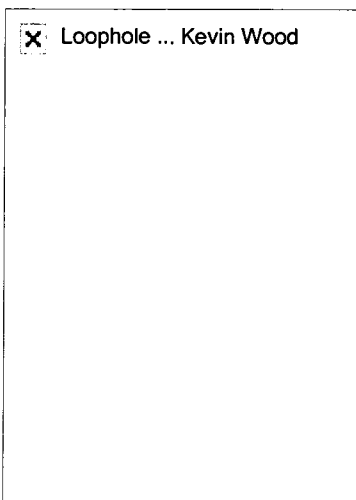
The information can be used to set up online payment accounts like PayPal.

We also checked security at NatWest, RBS, Lloyds TSB and HSBC, but found all demanded **MORE** personal details to reveal information than Barclays.

Mikko Hyppönen, of internet security company F-Secure, said: "This is shocking. The answers to such simple questions are readily available on the internet, and not just for celebrities. Think of the information on Facebook."

Banking fraud costs £14billion a year and has doubled in four years.

Our investigation came after Barclays customer Kevin Wood, 26, discovered the loophole.



Loophole ... Kevin Wood

Electrician Kevin, of Wirral, Merseyside, was horrified when a friend accessed her own account by phoning and giving four simple personal details.

He put it to the test by ringing Barclays and pretending to be a celebrity and was given the star's information.

Kevin said: "After giving four simple details I was in. It was ludicrous."

One of our reporters who is a Barclays customer tested the system. He was asked for the personal details, and given Brand's sort code and account number.

Similarly we were given the details of bank chief Mr Varley and Freddie Flintoff, who teamed up with Barclays this year in a competition to find Britain's top Premier League fan.

The Sun did NOT interfere with the accounts, nor seek extra details other than those given freely by bank staff.

Last night a spokeswoman said: "Barclays has no higher priority than the security of our customers and their money. We have robust processes to ensure this. All high street banks enable access to basic information via telephone."

She added that transferring money from a Barclays to PayPal was an "issue for PayPal".

PayPal did not return our calls.

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