

Credit card fraudster hit 35,000 motorists

A computer wizard branded 'the most prolific chip and pin fraudster in the UK' has been jailed for four years.

Theogones De Montford, 29, stole the details of at least 35,000 motorists during a £725,000 scam targeting petrol stations.

He designed tiny circuit boards which he fitted inside chip and pin machines at checkouts at Shell and Texaco garages.

The bugs broadcast the PIN code and credit card details up to 20 miles away via bluetooth for De Montford to pick up using a laptop computer.

The software engineering student then sold them to credit card fraudsters in Britain and across the globe.

The court heard that credit card cloning in the UK has undergone a 'noticeable' drop since he was caught.

His scam was more sophisticated than previous frauds which have used tiny cameras to record a customer keying in their PIN codes or cashiers secretly copying details using card readers.

The devices made by De Montford, of Hayes, West London, were undetectable to the untrained eye once fitted.

The minimum loss the Crown was able to prove caused by De Montford was £725,000.

But the court heard the figure was probably much higher as he was found with details of 35,000 stolen credit cards.

The judge, Mr Recorder Nicholas Rhodes, QC, said: 'I've seen elsewhere that the minimum take per card is usually £1,000. On that basis, this fraud could cost the banks £35m.'

De Montford was arrested after being caught on CCTV interfering with chip-and-pin machines.

He admitted conspiracy to defraud and conspiracy to possess articles for use in fraud from late 2008 to last September.

Three co-conspirators were each jailed for three years for conspiracy to defraud.