

# The Retired Prison Governors Newsletter

Founded by Arthur Williamson in 1980 - Now in its 46th year of continuous publication

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## INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARDS TO DISAPPEAR

I had originally intended the piece on threats to Jury trial to form the main part of this issue's editorial, until, quite by accident, I discovered the Government's proposals for Prison IMB's buried deep in the online version of the Daily Telegraph. Thus three watchdog bodies which scrutinise conditions in prisons and court custody cells are to be merged into one, as part of a Government cost-cutting drive which will see HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) and the Lay Observers who monitor police and court cells brought together into a single organisation responsible for holding prison governors and ministers to account. At the time of going to print, no public announcement has been made, but people in the organisations affected were told during the last full week of March. Chairs of IMBs received a letter from Prisons Minister Lord Timpson informing them of the decision and saying that it followed a review within the Ministry of Justice.

The driving force behind the merger is understood to be the Cabinet Office, which is examining 'arms-length bodies' across Whitehall to see whether savings can be made by closing or combining them. You have to wonder if the Cabinet Office knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. No details have yet been decided of what shape the new merged watchdog will take, or the extent to which it will continue to deploy IMB-style volunteers alongside the professional inspectors who visit prisons on behalf of HMIP. Whatever the ultimate structure, IMBs, whose origins trace back to the Victorian era, will no longer be 'independent' of the wider inspectorate. Any change will require legislation, which the Government has not yet timetabled. A Ministry of Justice source said that the merger will happen "when legislative time allows", and insisted that it would not reduce the level of scrutiny. The source added: "The Department will now be working through the detail of what a future model will look like and how it will work, in consultation with the bodies themselves."

It is not clear whether the head of the merged body will retain the title of Chief Inspector of Prisons. One option considered by the MoJ review was to merge HMIP with the office of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, but this was resisted by HMIP and was eventually rejected. I can't imagine Charlie Taylor tolerating the neutering of HMIP for one moment.

As a Deputy Governor, I valued the IMB. The Chair at Dover gave me significant personal support in a professional dispute. The Chair at Ford was a formidable county lady, and the Vice-Chair used his military rank in civilian life, yet this image of 'hats, pearls and prejudices' could not have been further from the reality. They were terrifically supportive of the gaol and commanded the respect of successive Area Managers.



Welcome to **Barbara Treen**, our new Assistant Editor. Barbara has taken over the proof reading duties once undertaken by the esteemed Jenny Adams-Young. Just as Jenny did, Barbara will also advise on potentially controversial pieces. Finally can I thank all our contributors and encourage those of you yet to contribute to do so. I know you have some great stories to tell and how much you value the newsletter. It's future health depends on you.

**PAUL LAXTON, editor**

## CONTENTS

- P 01 Editorial - Paul Laxton
- P 02 Table of Contents
- P 03 My Service and Retirement - Brian Penfold
- P 05 Grendon Has Survived - Michael Selby
- P 05 RPGA E mail Register - Harry Brett
- P 06 The Joys of Old Age and Modern World Problems - David Taylor
- P 08 RPGA Spring Quiz - Graham Smith
- P 09 From the Chair - Graham Smith
- P 10 Memoirs Part 11: Pollington - Bob Duncan
- P 14 Mike Lewis would love to hear from old colleagues
- P 14 It Couldn't Happen To Me... Could It??? - Mick Roebuck
- P 16 Private Prisons of Yore - Peter Atkinson
- P 19 My Obsession with Adjudications - Roger Outram
- P 26 Growing Up in The Age of Affluence: Author, Paul Laxton -reviewed by Barbara Treen
- P 27 Computer Corner - Graham Mumby-Croft
- P 31 Leave Our Juries Alone - Paul Laxton
- P 32 Membership Report - Kevin Billson
- P 33 From The Treasurer - Graham Mumby-Croft
- P 35 Notice of 2026 RPGA AGM
- P 35 Is There a God? - John Ramwell
- P 36 RPGA Spring Quiz answers - Graham Smith



## MY SERVICE AND RETIREMENT

These are some of my thoughts about retirement after 30 years in the service which I have managed to remember and have started with below.

So, I retired as a Manager E after 30 years service in 2010. I had done my fair shift in that time and worked as a manager in many establishments that required additional help also at that time. Here is my story.

I started off my service doing my NEPO training at Bristol, and as I was the only person on that input I walked around in my suit alone largely being ignored by officers on the landings and feeling pretty isolated. I wrote reams and reams at night about the number of fire extinguishers and alarms in each area that I visited. Some of this seemed as though I was just filling in my time, which was not thrilling but I kept on writing. I remember one ED sitting on the twos with a cup of tea watching the whole wing watch a video on a single tv screen, and after coming from a building site, I thought that this was great as I was getting paid to sit in the warm.

Two months and I was posted to Wakefield now in my blue uniform. I was good at the marching bit as I had served 6 years in the army in a previous life. As I had come in with a trade, I carried out a trade test which consisted of bending a few bits of pipe into a recognisable shape and a few questions on plumbing, so I was one of the few recruits who knew where they were being posted when I opened my envelope. No tears for me. I was posted to Channings Wood in Devon which had a direct labour project to build the establishment ongoing. When I turned up at the gate to start my initial 3 months on Discipline nobody knew I was coming. Story of my life.

I served the next 8 years as a Trades Officer helping build Channings Wood. I continued to work on the wings picking up EDs and RDs during that time. When the project was completed I was moved across to Discipline for the last year, but as I had previously taken and passed my SO on the Works I was able to apply for promotion as an STO. So it was back on the Works moving to Huntercombe as an STO. It was in those days a public expense move, and I needed it with the prices around Henley. I then passed my PO exam while I was there .

I then moved to Woodhill as PO as it was transforming into the High Security Estate, which meant another great experience not available elsewhere. When contractors drilled through both the fire and gas main in mid-winter, we lost all heating to the establishment and ended up sending a Cat A van to B&Q to buy up all their power showers, and cable to rig hot water to wings. It came close to evacuating Woodhill at that time. GMC was supporting then and PL was Head of Operations and Security.

I passed my G5 and moved to Wellingborough as HWS. I had some issues to manage there but saw it all through as well as delivering a new house unit. I worked closely with the SMT and then moved across to Head of Business Planning after another interview as G4 (manager E), and I also kept an overview of the Works. I was sat in the car park of B&Q in Northampton on a Monday and I received a call from my old Governor at Wellingborough who had taken charge of Holloway after the Marjorie Boon report. He asked me if I would come down to help and to take up the position of HWS there. I asked him when that would happen and he said next Monday!!!! I was offered an incentive and first class rail travel, my Governor at Wellingborough was on holiday that week, and when he came back I was gone.

Holloway was three years of hard work trying to bring it back onto national targets. The first two years I planned and rebuilt a great deal of the internal structures from relocating the gate lodge to setting up

external Cat A style locker rooms and RID system where the goods in were checked and then taken into the establishment in a sealed electric truck as well as building a new internal staff mess. The last year I took over as Head of Security and managed to achieve, for the first time at Holloway, the highest HMCIP grade available. I received the Butler Trust award for my work there. Holloway would take a page or two on its own.

Then back to Woodhill as eventual Head of Operations and Security which is a highly intensive post. I then moved onto so many posts that I lost count. One of the hardest was when the Head of Learning and Skills walked out after receiving an unacceptable marking on an inspection. I was asked to take up this position and was the only operational Governor grade to do this. I managed to bring the department up to a Good marking on the follow up inspection a year later which had not been achieved previously so I must have done something right.

While at Woodhill I also managed the gardens department which won an award for landscaping and putting in place a large water feature for staff and visitors to sit by. I also introduced bringing a beehive into the prison as I then kept bees. It was interesting bringing the bees through the X Ray when some of them decided to make a break for it.

My last three months were at Exeter as I was moving back to my roots. I had started in Devon and wanted to finish there. After working at Woodhill I found Exeter less challenging but very enjoyable. On my last day, staff on parade asked if I would stay on.

So to retirement.

As I was pre Fresh Start, I was able to retire at 55, which I did. Did I really want to retire? If I am honest, if someone had sat me down and talked it through I may well have stayed on, but I was tired after 7 years of hard work at Woodhill. I was one of the most experienced Governor Grades at my level at that time, no one else had the depth of experience that I had gained in my service. Why did this not happen? It was just how it was back then.

I remember walking down Torquay high street on the first week of retirement thinking that this was strange, and it felt as though I was taking my first sickie after 18 years. I bought a van and started doing removals, mainly doctors and students moving between Plymouth and Exeter. I then took a job working with my son at a local builder in Dartmouth, and ended up running their small projects department until they went bust after 3 years (not my fault).

At that time I owned three houses as I had never sold when I moved, just rented them out. This became a pain after a while, so I sold up and moved in my village to a house that needed some work.

The last 4 years I have been working for a local company selling and delivering motorhomes at the weekends. I do odd days in the week when they are short. I am 70 now, and only thought that I would work for a year over the winter, but I have just renewed my C1 licence that allows me to drive up to 7 tonnes. I had to have my first eye test and then a medical. I still do not need glasses, result.

So why have I written this, not sure really. I started writing and tried to show that there is life after retirement. It is not easy to give up working after all those years, and I am aware some people will not be as fortunate with their health. For anyone who knew me I tried my best.

**BRIAN PENFOLD**

## GRENDON HAS SURVIVED

My last 8 years as a governor were in charge of Grendon Prison. I was aware of the opposition of certain sections to the continuation of the Grendon ethos. Indeed a Principal in P2, unaware of my ambition, spoke disdainfully of Grendon and the advantage in the overcrowding situation for it to revert to normal identity.

So, after the death of the Medical Officer in charge in March, there was an uncomfortable hiatus. Nobody was posted in as a replacement. There was the Deputy Governor and the Senior Medical Officer both self regarded as uncomfortably in charge. That Grendon survived was very much to the loyalty and competence of the staff .

Where was I? Doing penance for the Brixton escape as supernumerary in South East Region, under the benign Keith Gibson. So to the task. In May, it was given to me to design the job description of the next person in charge of Grendon and I submitted the proposal that this could be either a Medical Officer OR a Governor. This was accepted.

But nothing happened! The staff asked about their future but not a murmur from the Home Office. The future of Grendon is under surreptitious debate.

Then , a whole year goes by and finally a selection process is initiated. On one day 4 Medical Officers are interviewed, the next day 3 Governors - including me. Then, unbelievably, the result takes another 6 weeks for the choice to be announced.

So what now? A month or so ago I have the most heartening experience. There is a broadcast, one of the Reith Lectures which takes place in Grendon, followed by a fascinating discussion with the lecturer by the inmates. Suddenly I am back over 30 years, the place has not changed. Grendon has survived.

## MICHAEL SELBY



### RPGA: E-MAIL REGISTER

The E-Mail register has been operating for more than 21 years and has proved itself to be an effective means of rapid communication between members. It offers updates on current prison service developments and allows members to keep in touch with each other. Joining the RPGA does not automatically place you on the register. If you would like to join the register then please send an E-Mail from the address you wish to have registered to **HARRY BRETT** at **[harry-brett@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:harry-brett@hotmail.co.uk)**. E-Mail addresses may not be passed to third parties without permission from the person(s) registered to that specific E-Mail address.

Please remember that if you change your E-Mail address you must inform **HARRY BRETT**, otherwise you will cease to receive further updates



## The Joys of Old Age and Modern World Problems

Having received Issue Number 93 Autumn 2025 Retired Prison Governors' Association (RPGA) Newsletter through my letterbox this morning, I sat down in my cold house and read it from cover to cover. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, my heating packed up on Tuesday, today being Friday, and although I have five-star cover, it has not yet been fixed. I rang on Tuesday morning to book an engineer to fix the problem, but they could not attend until the next day, Wednesday. Here I must digress a little.

My wife is in the throes of early dementia, and I was due to attend the funeral of my daughter-in-law's father on Wednesday at 11.45. I asked my wife if she would be happy for the gas man to call whilst she was in the house on her own, and she replied that she wasn't. I really knew the answer before I asked the question, but thought it worth a try. My daughter, who lives within spitting distance (is one allowed to say that these days?) is my wife's official carer – my wife refused point blank for me to be involved in her care – and usually helps out at times like these, but she is a teacher and has her own life to live. She cannot attend at the drop of a hat, (do people still wear hats now, apart from baseball caps and floppy beanies) and so the result is that I must arrange for said gas (man) person to attend on Thursday. The appointment was booked, remotely, for between 8 o'clock and 1 pm. The gas man (shades of Flanders & Swann in the story here) came at five minutes past one. Is this just my experience of appointments or does it happen to everybody? Somebody surely must have been visited at 8 am, why not me? He said that he would carry out our annual service whilst he was here, because that was overdue, and we must have received a letter about it. Alright, Mr. Clever Clogs, it's not all wine and roses when you are retired you know, I do have things going on in my life! (Tell me if I'm overdoing the exclamation marks!)

So the engineer decides to service the downstairs gas fire first before attending to the problem of why the heating is not working. This despite my wife curled up in bed to keep warm, and me having the look of Captain Oates in outdoor clothing. My daughter later pointed out that we have a small portable heater in the conservatory that we could have been using. When she says "we" she of course means that it would be in my wife's bedroom while I donned yet another layer of clothing sat downstairs. At 3.45pm he told me the fan in the boiler had burnt out and he didn't have the right one in his van. He phoned his mate up, and he did have one and agreed to drop it off. This happened remarkably in about 20 minutes. Of course, the saga doesn't end there, does it? Once the fan had been replaced there was something else wrong, the non-return fluffie valve or something wasn't working, and he would have to order the part. He also said that the circuit board had blown because he had discovered water in the boiler. Another revelation! Water in the boiler! How on earth did that get there? (I point out at this juncture that we have a combi boiler.) He said it was very rare but not unique – outdone again! – and with the recent storms the water must have come down the flue. Is this another peril of living in the Norf? The best revelation was yet to come; he only worked part time, Wednesdays and Thursday, but he would pass it on to another engineer, as he was sure we didn't want to wait till next Wednesday to get

the heating fixed. How did he guess that! He then said the other chap wouldn't be arriving till between 12 and 6pm.

It is now just before midday on Friday. And the real reason I wanted to write this article was to comment on Paul Laxton's picture of APS 1 in 1991. There are a lot of familiar faces, and I would like to reminisce about some adventures I had with a few of them.

I'll start with Dr David Cornwell. I met David whilst I was working in the Standards Audit Unit from 1996. A fascinating man, David had a first career in the army, ending it as Colonel of 2 Para. I only mention his rank and regiment because whilst auditing HMYOI Brinsford some years later, and wearing his regimental tie, he was being searched at the gate (an unusual practice which we queried as it never happened to any other person entering the jail, which we later noted to the Governor; it was the early days of audits and people employed unusual practices which they thought might please the visiting team). The Officer searching David noticed his tie and said he was in the Parachute Regiment and asked if David was in the same unit. His surprised look on the Officer's face when David told him he was the Colonel of 2 para was priceless.

David then pursued a degree in Criminology from York University, after which he pursued a career in the Prison Service. He came to the Unit having been Deputy Governor at HMP Frankland (to Peter Leonard if I recall) and I travelled in his team for quite a while. Two instances stick out in my mind. About 1 am whilst concerning ourselves with HMP Hull, the fire alarm in the hotel went off. Everybody evacuated and lastly David came down the front steps of the hotel with the hotel Manager, still fully clothed and pipe ensconced between clenched teeth and proclaimed to all and sundry "I did that, sorry." Apparently, he was sat at the desk in his bedroom typing up the day's events and smoking his beloved pipe right under the smoke alarm. The large, bosomed ladies in staunch dressing gowns and rollers in their hair were not amused.

David has his own style. Once whilst writing up an executive summary of our visit to HMP Durham, he asked me to cast my eye over the introductory paragraphs. I quote:

"Abutting the north wall of the prison lie the dwelling houses of the poor." By this he meant there was a council estate outside the prison. I mentioned that it might be couched in slightly more friendly language, and it was duly amended.

I hope he still lives a long and fruitful life. Whilst auditing a prison in North Yorkshire near his home he invited us for a meal. His tongue loosened by alcohol he told us he was still a hostage negotiator for the Metropolitan Police, and some interesting stories were exchanged. Whilst I was at HMP Manchester he had been one of the negotiators during the riot of 1990, but our paths never crossed then. An excellent cook he was, and with a crate of beer and a bottle of Chevas Regal polished off by five of us, we slept well that night.

Alec McCrystal was a colleague on the Standards Audit team. Alec was unique, very softly spoken but always got his point across. My abiding memory of Alec was knocking on his bedroom door at 7 in the evening at a hotel in Lincoln to ask whether he was coming with us for something to eat, and him answering the door in a very short, blindingly white dressing gown. I'm sorry if you are eating, reading this.

(Continued overleaf...)

Another acquaintance was Peter Bolton, also part of Standards Audit whilst I was there. Peter went off with Peter Leonard to help the Northern Ireland Prison Service, a job I would not have taken at that time. I know Paul Laxton of course, from my time on the committee of the RPGA, and whom I see at Emirates Old Trafford catching up on Lancashire County Cricket Club's fortunes or otherwise. Mick Farrington, I knew at HMP Manchester, although I think he left after the major event on 1 April 1990. Rob Kellett, I knew from when I worked at Abell House introducing Performance Standards to The Prison Service, and also when I was Area Performance Co-ordinator for the West Midlands under Bryan Pailing. Ferdie Parker was Deputy Governor at Birmingham under Mike Shann when I was at WMAO and became a good friend after I had tasted his lemon drizzle cake. Dave Hoskins, I knew through the regional meetings of the PGA which usually took place at Newbold Revel.

It is 1440 hours and the doorbell has rung. I hope his coat has British Gas written all over it. It is he, and he is upstairs with his nose in the boiler as I speak. I might have more news in the next edition.

## **DAVID TAYLOR**

### **RPGA Quiz Spring 26**

- 1, What name is given to a female fox?
- 2, What is the former name of Thailand?
- 3, In physics what is measured in Amperes?
- 4, Where in London would you find the Lutine Bell?
- 5, To which island was Napoleon exiled in 1814?
- 6, What do the letters XL stand for in Roman numerals?
- 7, Which 2 countries united in 1964 to form Tanzania?
- 8, Who directed the film, Hook?
- 9, Of which Australian state is Sydney the capital?
- 10, Which of the Beatles is the eldest?
- 11, What would be displayed using Mercator's projection?
- 12, The berries of which plant are used to make Gin?
- 13, In which USA state is the TV series "Breaking" bad set?
- 14, Who was the last inmate of Spandau prison?
- 15, Marco Polo airport serves which city?
- 16, What colour is the central band of the German Flag?
- 17, The adjective Ovine refers to which animal?
- 18, Which is the largest island in the world?
- 19, What is the colour of a Polar Bear's skin?
- 20, What type of fruit has varieties such as Honeydew and Galia?



## From the chair

Welcome to the spring edition of the RPGA newsletter and thanks to our editor Paul Laxton for his hard work.

I understand that he has had some difficulties with this edition as an initial lack of contributions from members threatened to reduce the content proportionately. Clearly the newsletter forms a crucial part in the benefits to members and as I always ask for contributions it is disappointing that we struggle to put it together on occasion. So, I ask you to consider putting 20 minutes aside and submit to the editor some short article that will interest fellow members. We all have a story to tell or a holiday that we enjoyed or a hobby we have taken up and enjoyed, it's up to you folks.

Madam and I have just returned from a cruise through the Panama Canal which I recommend as it is a bit different and very interesting. 30,000 lives were lost building it, most died of Malaria. The ship had 2 feet clearance on each side going through the canal, so tricky for the captain. The man-made lake that supplies water to the locks took 2 years to fill and is topped up by a river whose name escapes me. It cost the cruise ship \$600,000 to pass through.

The PGA, and therefore the RPGA too, are currently reviewing the continuation of supplying diaries, as currently they are not as important as they used to be. Your views are welcome. I remember when we first made them available. In fact I think it was I who liaised with the supplier. Long time ago.

Hope to hear from you soon.

**Graham Smith**

**RPGA Chairman**



## **BOB DUNCAN'S MEMOIRS PART 11: POLLINGTON**

The year's course at Southampton in social studies had placed the emphasis on one-to-one casework. Pollington, where I was posted, its therapeutic approach was on group work. So there appeared some illogicality in the posting. I subsequently learnt that Waddilove had left it so late; he got a minion to phone every Borstal and ask three questions; have you a vacancy for an AG2? Have you an empty quarter? Can it be redecorated in 3 weeks? The first to answer all three questions in the positive got me. So much for careful thought over postings and career development. As it happened a new Governor had been appointed, and he very soon

decided that staff had not been sufficiently trained in group work, and there was little evidence that it was having any beneficial effect.

Pollington was an old airbase in the middle of nowhere but beautiful in the flat countryside near the tiny village of Snaith. The nearest Doctors were in Knottingley some 10 miles away. Many of the staff quarters were pre-fabs from the aerodrome era, but there was new build senior staff accommodation according to the set down specification. You may recall that my posting there was partly based on the quarter being fully decorated. Within 6 weeks of occupation, Jane somehow set a chip pan alight. It was quickly dealt with but had blackened some of the walls and ceiling. I was not the favourite of the Head of Works, as it all had to be decorated again.

There were only five new staff quarters, the rest were prefabs. The previous Governor was still living in the quarter which was next to our allocated quarter; he had been posted to the College in Wakefield but had not moved. He was a very odd man and never spoke whenever one saw him. He had been charged with making Pollington into a 'Group Work Therapeutic establishment'. I had some knowledge of group working as I attended each week some of the Group Sessions at the youth psychiatric unit when at Southampton. But the emphasis of my training was in Casework. I sat in on a number of the sessions organized by the Principal Officer as no Housemaster was in post. It was immediately clear that these had no structure, the staff had no training and basically, they were just 'chat shops' and most of the time the lads just talked to each other. The Governor agreed and said we would revert to face to face discussion which should be written up in each lad's file. To give impetus to this I was asked to write four papers, 'What Pollington was all about including the grading system;' 'the role of work and education'; 'interviewing and writing up reports'; and 'the responsibilities of all the staff to act as role models to our trainees'. The Governor then arranged to pay overtime so that every member of staff was rostered to come in or remain in after their evening shift to have the short presentation paper presented to them and then respond to any questions they had. It was eye-opening how many staff thanked us and said nobody had tried to explain to them in simple terms what the establishment was all about and the role each of them played in it. For several weeks after that, there appeared to be a more positive atmosphere around the establishment and the role each of them played in it.

The former Governor's wife, (a Doctor) was very nice and would invite Jane in for a chat, but not if her husband was home or expected home. She ran a voluntary medical clinic in Doncaster once a week and invited Jane to become a volunteer helper, which she did. That resulted in us getting to know another volunteer, Bobbie Roberts, and her husband, a hospital consultant.

On the other side of us was Bill Abbot, next to him another AG2 who was soon to move on, and finally, the Chief Officer, who did not like anybody, yet he would in due course babysit for us. As the Governor's quarter was not immediately available, he regularly spent the evening in the Borstal. So I would go with him for a drink at the officer's social club after work or Jane would have him in for supper before evening duty. So we got to know each other. In a small Borstal, there would be no 'official' deputy governor, but it was necessary to have a nominated person for when the governor was off duty, on leave or sick. I was the new boy and not the senior by the length of service, but the Governor made it clear that I fulfilled that role, but not always to the liking of my colleagues. When chairing the final Discharge Board on one occasion one colleague did not like it that I had not supported his recommendation. He was so incensed that he walked out of the Board and into the village and took no more part. Life went on and within days we were back on an even keel.

We needed a new dining room table; we knew Hull as we had visited and also used it to travel to Belgium on the overnight ferry. There was a big store there that had its own car park. It charged but if you made a purchase in the store it was free. We found a dining table we liked and went to the till to order it and arrange delivery. When it was time to settle the bill, I said, 'do not forget the free parking.' The assistant replied. 'you do not get free parking with furniture purchases.' 'That is ridiculous,' I replied. The big sign outside states 'free parking with any purchase in the store, if I bought a bag of sweets, I assume I would get it, but not for an expensive table. You better cancel the order.' 'I could get the manager to explain,' she said, so he was summoned. His explanation was long and convoluted, but he could see he was not going to win, so 'as an exception' he arranged free parking!

The one disadvantage of being recognized as the de facto deputy Governor was that all phone calls from the Orderly Officer outside of attendance hours came to me. I had then to find time to collect details and then phone the Prison Department and the Press Office. There was no way out of that whatever the hour of day or night. When I realized I was getting calls at say 5 am to inform me that the police had recaptured an absconder, I realized after a bit and advised that 'good news' can wait until a civilized hour. That at least reduced the number of disturbed nights I faced .

Bill, our next-door neighbour, was a bit of a character. He was single but a very good cook. We both had fairly substantial rear gardens, and he challenged me to see who could grow the most vegetables. I had planned to grow as much as possible anyway, but then Bill slightly cheated as he had his retired father to stay and he prepared all Bill's ground for planting.

Bill was a very keen walker and had undertaken on several occasions the famous Lyke Wake Walk, which was established in August 1955 by Bill Cowley, a former Indian Civil Servant, North Yorkshire farmer, local historian, journalist, and broadcaster. It replicates the route that coffins (Lyke) were carried over the Moors to ancient burial grounds and on to Ravenscar. It commences at the car park on Scathe Wood Moor, near Osmotherley, and finishes at the Raven Hall Hotel, Ravenscar. The distance is 40 miles (64 Kilometers) and at its highest point is 1489ft above sea level. Originally the walking would have been on the natural delicate ecology dominated by heather, this has been worn down over the years and now there are worn paths. Bill persuaded me to undertake the walk which I did, but found it quite exhausting by the end, and it is very tempting to pack in at that point. Being so near the end, one is normally persuaded to make that last effort. The route is crisscrossed by a few minor roads at some points, so a driver in a backup car can check on the condition of those taking part and carry extra provisions. This is not essential, but a useful safety back up, remember there were no mobile phones then. Invariably there

would be other walkers, so there would always be some assistance available. As Bill's preferred time of departure on the walk-in summer was midnight, that was not guaranteed.

Every week Bill was on duty at the weekend he would drive in the Borstal minibus a group of selected lads (12 -15) to walk on the moors. He was usually back at about 16.30 so the lads could get cleaned up before their evening meal. One weekend he has still not returned at gone Five pm. As the in-charge Governor, I was getting anxious and wondering what had happened, as if it was serious it would have to be reported up the line. There was no way of contacting him in those days. He eventually got back at about 18.30 and was looking very pleased with himself; I asked if he had a problem being so late. 'Oh no' he said, 'it began to pour with rain, and we had started to make our way, and this friendly farmer called us over out of the rain, let us dry off and cooked bacon butties for all the lads, so we could not rush off!'

The Governor decided that all the staff offices needed refurbishing and said we could choose what colour paint we would like, we all chose reasonable colours, the one exception was Bill who asked for the ceiling in his office to be painted dark purple. The Head of Works went a bit ballistic, but Governor said, 'oh just humour him he is a bit eccentric, and he has to live with it; it will not get done again for a good while.'

Once we were settled Jane decided she ought to learn to drive, especially as we were so remote. The driving tests were in a town called Goole. It had one main street, no roundabouts, only one set of traffic lights and was absolutely flat. She made good progress and decided she would take her test. By this time she was pregnant so did not have to do an emergency stop. So she passed the first time. To get to Doncaster, our nearest big town which had a very good market as well as many shops, you had to cross the Calder Canal which had a small humpback bridge which was single file. This was no problem as the countryside was flat and you had good vision on any oncoming vehicles. Jane, who was a good driver, did not notice a vehicle approaching until the last minute, and a panic reaction pulled over to one side at the side of the bridge and was on a gentle upward slope. The next thing I knew was Jane arriving home on foot. 'Where's the car?' I said. 'Down at the canal bridge, I had to stop sharply, and then every time I tried to get up the slope it stalled, I can't do hill starts!' So we had to find a quiet hilly area and practice hill starts.

The daughters of Jane's friends in Belgium were very keen walkers, and eldest, Christian wanted to come to England that summer to undertake the Lyke Wake Walk. Bill said he would be happy to do the walk with her and I was to be the driver and back up support. Jane was expecting Nicola, and it was a long hot July which was getting to Jane, but Nicola appeared reluctant to enter the world. The hospital in Wakefield near the end of July decided Jane should be admitted, Jane though insisted that the walk should go ahead. So late evening on the 30th July we drove up to Osmotherley ready to set off at midnight. As the backup, I drove to each road that crossed the walks path and checked all was well and supplied any refreshment required. There was only one road intersection that had a telephone box, and it was late morning before we reached it. I phoned the hospital and was advised that Jane had delivered a baby girl, and all was well. I advised our valiant walkers that speed was of the essence as I needed to get to Wakefield. Bill gave me a wry smile and said a fast walk is the best we can offer.

Walk completed, the car run to Wakefield beat all other record times. I parked and entered the maternity wing by the first door I found and found Jane and my daughter; such joy! Then a matron appeared and demanded to know what I was doing there. 'Visiting my newborn daughter,' I said in all innocence. 'This is not visiting time so how did you get in?' 'Through a door,' I said! I received a scowl from Matron and a rebuke to use only the visitors' door and only come at the stipulated visiting hours in future. I just glared,

and drove back to Pollington as the walkers were stiffening up and more than ready for a hot bath.

Not so long after all this; the Governor received a visit from the Regional Director (which was David my first Governor at Dover) during a discussion about development at the Borstal, the Director said he felt the education programme on offer needed strengthening; 'I agree with you,' said the Governor, 'but we are rather remote and find it difficult to recruit good teachers.' The Director said, 'you have an excellent teacher living in one of your quarters.' Jim looked puzzled - 'Bob's wife.' So when Jane was ready, she resumed her teaching career, but only for evening classes, and the Chief Officer's wife undertook the babysitting, a team effort.

As we neared Christmas the Governor felt it would be a morale booster to encourage the lads to decorate their dormitories as a competition and the one in each block which was judged best would all go to the local cinema in January. There were four dormitories of 20 lads in each of the two-House blocks, and each was given a basic box of decorations and advised they could make extra decorations in the art class. In the week prior to Christmas, it seemed unusually quiet in my house block, so I asked the staff to do an early roll check. The result, after a double-check, 16 lads were missing! We hesitated to contact Headquarters, partly because we were trying to think about how to explain such a large number. That saved us some embarrassment, as suddenly 2 lads appeared carrying armfuls of fir branches and holly, which they had cut from trees and bushes in the front gardens of houses in the village. In no time everyone was back with whatever they had purloined. We just hoped the villagers did not miss too much of it! So Bill and I had to take 40 lads to the cinema in Pontefract. It was the longest, most boring, and tedious John Wayne film I have ever seen and in a cinema that was cold. The lads enjoyed it though, I cannot remember what it cost Bill and me in popcorn!

Headquarters asked if Alan Rawson and I could be released to undertake an involvement in a research project in respect of remand prisoners. Our Governors agreed. Our role would be to collect data from the records mainly at Brixton Prison and Ashford Remand Centre for young offenders. We would be fully briefed as to what was required and the Governors of the establishments would give us free rein to access all the documents required and we would have keys allocated so we had free movement around the establishments. We decided we would stay with Jane's parents in Littlewick, and go into London by train, but drive to Ashford in Surrey. We were well into the project, everyone had been helpful, and we were enjoying it. In those days, the Department produced seniority lists of all governor grades giving the date of birth, name establishment and seniority. The 1967 intake of new junior governors included a Fish and a Gill, which we all thought was amusing. We were well into the project when Gill suddenly turned up to say he was from Midland Regional Office and had been sent to sort out the project. Nobody had been notified of this, but we just accepted he was there to help. Actually, he was just useless, full of his own importance, did not wish to get involved in the spadework, but gave the impression he was in charge. When we reported back at the conclusion of the data collection process, I cannot recall him being there. We were thanked for our efforts and advised that it would now be analysed, and the results fed back to the Minister. I will return to Mr. Gill later.

All Promotion Boards were announced by a Notice to Staff stating the years of service required to be considered. In February 1971, a Board was announced, my reports had been favourable, so I applied and was called and successful. I had been very happy working with young offenders and was enjoying the life at Pollington. I felt it was time to gain experience of the adult side of the Service. The Posting I received was Liverpool. **(Part twelve of Bob's memoirs will appear in the Autumn Newsletter)**

**MIKE LEWIS** is alive and well and would like to hear from old colleagues. Mike has asked me as editor not to disclose his phone number, but he is happy for initial contact, or re-contact to be made by email. Mike's email address is: [mikelewis@sky.com](mailto:mikelewis@sky.com).

When we spoke, Mike asked me to write something about the cancelled elections. Well, that is no longer necessary, and I'm sure we're both pleased that the government backed down and that democracy will take its course.

### **IT COULDNT HAPPEN TO ME ... COULD IT????**



An article in January's Daily Mail newspaper informed readers that the number of men now diagnosed with prostate cancer outnumber those ladies diagnosed with breast cancer and that prostate cancer is now the most common type of this disease in the U.K. I am aware that there may be many of our members who have been diagnosed with this disease, and who therefore may find this article unnecessary reading. It is addressed mainly to those of you who haven't suffered with this ailment and also to the wives, partners and anyone with male contacts. I thought after having read the article in the Daily Mail that RPGA members maybe interested to read via this submission, my account and my journey through this experience.

I had reached the age of seventy-eight years without any major medical issues, but just after Christmas 2023 I began to feel that things were not quite right in that I would stand for some considerable time at the toilet waiting for things to happen and on other occasions could not get to the toilet fast enough. It must be my age, surely it can't be anything else after all I am fit and active. My wife convinced me to make an appointment at my doctors, so off I went still convinced I was wasting everyone's time, after all I was not in any form of pain. Having explained my problems to my doctor, on came the expected rubber glove and after the examination was told that I needed an urgent blood test. Still nothing to worry about thought I, it is just the doctor being extra careful. Within a few days the blood test was taken and two weeks later it was confirmed that my PSA level indicated that I was showing signs of prostate cancer. I was referred to Shrewsbury hospital to undergo a biopsy. Those of you who have undergone a biopsy of any kind will know they are not the most pleasant of experiences, but there I was legs up in stirrups with a doctor at one end performing the procedure.

'I always take 28 samples to make sure you don't have to come back', said the doctor. I was surrounded by three nurses with not a great deal of dignity, but at my age I wasn't over worried. One nurse held my hand, I presume to offer some form of reassurance. 'We like to play a little game' the nurse said, by trying to guess what our patients did for a living. 'Will you please give us an opening clue?' I replied that I retired at 55 years of age to which the nurse holding my hand said, 'You were a prison governor.' 'How did you know?' said I. 'It's not on my notes.' To which the nurse replied, 'it was stab in the dark because my father was a prison governor and he retired age 55 so I put two and two together.' I discovered from further questioning that her father had been a PO PEI at Newbold Revel before his promotion to the governor

grades. There may be some of you reading this item who are able to recognise that gentleman, indeed if he's an RPGA member he may be reading this item himself. If so please thank your daughter from me for her kindness on the day.

Two weeks later results from the biopsy came through showing that out of the 28 samples taken 26 had developed cancer cells. After a short period of time an appointment was made for me with the cancer team at Royal Stoke Hospital. A team of doctors at from Urology department had studied my case and prescribed radiotherapy as the most appropriate a form of treatment. The interviewing doctor arranged for me to have an MRI scan and asked during the interview, if I would like to take up the offer of a Berrigel insertion. Not all hospitals offer this treatment but Royal Stoke had been given a certain amount of Berrigel for new patients. I was informed further that Berrigel is a material that has to be inserted by a doctor and moulded by the doctor under your prostate to prevent the radiology passing beyond the prostate and into your lower area. My wife quick as a flash answered that question for me, " of course he does " said she. So a few days later I was back again at the hospital with feet back up in stirrups undergoing the procedure to have this Berrigel inserted. The gel substance stays in the body and dissolves naturally over a period of three to four months. It was an uncomfortable procedure but not painful.

Within the next few weeks I was back at Royal Stoke for 28 days of radiography. The treatment ran over a full month excluding weekends. Now the hardest part of this particular treatment was trying to find a car parking spot at the hospital. The actual procedure only lasted for about three minutes on each of the treatment days. After the radiography I was given 3 months supply of Tamulosin tablets along with two hormone therapy injections at 3 month intervals, to be administered at my local GP surgery. Three months later another blood sample was taken which showed that my PSA had fallen considerably. Another 3 months passed and another PSA blood test which showed that although my PSA level had slightly risen. it had not risen high enough to cause concern. I was informed that my next blood sample would be required in 6 months time.

We have now arrived at January 2026 almost 2 years since my original doctor's appointment. I attended my local surgery where the blood sample was taken and told that the results would be analysed by my cancer care team and the results forwarded on to me. Mid January the results came from the care team via a letter. I was informed that my PSA was now at a level which did not cause them any concern, and that they would contact me again in 6 months time when further blood samples were needed. That will take me up to June 2026. I wish to assure readers that none of the aforementioned procedures caused me anything more than a little discomfort and certainly no pain. Research by the Prostate Cancer UK inform us that prostate cancer testing is today more accurate and safer than ever before. They offer a 30 second on line self test which can be found on their website [www.prostatecanceruk.org](http://www.prostatecanceruk.org) for anyone wishing avail themselves of it.

When I retired from the Prison Service one of my ambition was and still is to live as long as possible and to receive my service pension for the same period of time that I worked. I feel sure that all of you have similar objectives. Without the aforementioned diagnosis and subsequent treatment I probably would not be able to attain that ambition. If caught early enough prostate cancer is treatable and whilst you are told that you will die with the cancer it will not be the cancer which kills you. **Please, please** can I urge all readers, if you have not already done so, see you doctor for a PSA test, if you leave it till you feel pain then it's probably too late to be cured by the simple treatment explained above or indeed by tablet.

**MICK ROEBUCK**

## PRIVATE PRISONS OF YORE



By **PETER ATKINSON**, Retired 2004 from  
**Northumberland Prison (formerly HMP Acklington)**

“Overcrowding and inhumane conditions... gaoler corruption... disease and malnutrition...” Perhaps reference to overcrowding might have a familiar ring, but the rest of the quotation is not any kind of contemporaneous comment on prison conditions. Rather, they are John Howard’s conclusions in his 1777 report on the state of English and Welsh private gaols. He visited literally hundreds of them and to say he was shocked by what he found would be an understatement.

In 1991, the Criminal Justice Act introduced the principle of private prisons in England, and a year later in May 1992, the Wolds in East Yorkshire opened as the first private prison in Europe. Since then, the private portfolio has expanded to 14 prisons run by G4S, Sodexo and Serco from Northumberland to Ashford in Kent. The arguments on both sides of the debate surrounding the issue of whether private companies should run parts of our criminal justice system are legion. But, put that discussion on one side because there was a time when private prisons were the only form of confinement across the whole country. Never mind Sodexo and the rest, Bishops, the aristocracy and the Crown all oversaw local gaols throughout the length of the land. By any standards, the conditions in those private gaols in the 18th century until the early 19th century, were mostly vile. They were run for profit where those who could summon up funds to pay the gaolers could ease their misery, whilst those with no financial help had to endure the most repressive and barbaric conditions. It took John Howard (1726 – 1790) and latterly Elizabeth Fry (1780 – 1845), among others to front the movement away from the foul, noxious, desperate prison conditions towards something more humane.

### **The old Castle Garth dungeon prison – Newcastle castle keep**



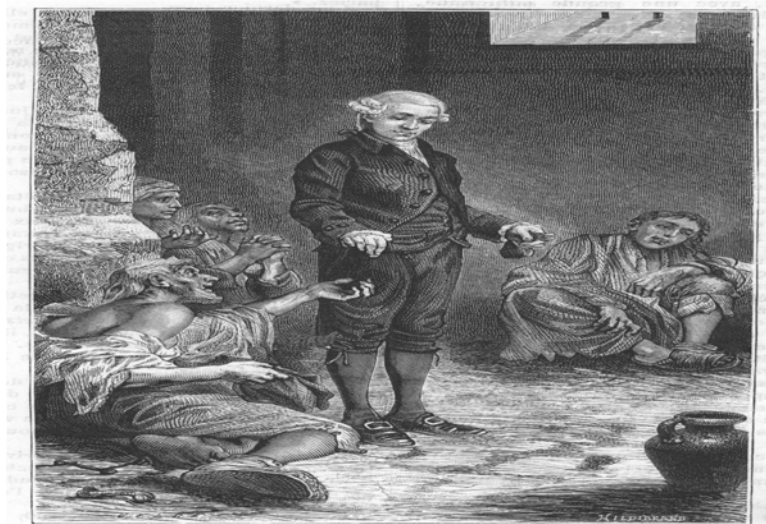
Coming to the rescue was the 1823 Gaols Act, that formed the basis of the state-run system that developed into what we are familiar with today. A more humane regard for offenders saw an end to the appalling conditions in the country's gaols, although hangings (permanently abolished in 1969) and birchings (ended in 1962) continued well into the 20th century. Just as an aside, I was a newish Assistant Governor at Stafford in 1980 where I served alongside Larry Walsh, then Chief Officer 1, who told me that he carried out an authorised birching at Armley prison in Leeds when he was a young officer.

Letters from those awaiting transportation to Australia, as well as contemporary newspaper articles, reports to Parliament and John Howard's reports on prison conditions, all provided a keen insight into the horrors that were manifest for those felons and debtors who transgressed the law throughout the 18th and into the 19th century. Debt was seen as a crime and offences against property could often be treated more harshly than murder.

Just as a sample of aristocratic gaol ownership we start with the notable Duke of Portland from Bolsover Castle who owned the notorious Chesterfield Gaol. It was situated in South Place, near the river Hipper in the centre of the town. In 1770, following a visit by John Howard, the Town Gaol as it was known experienced inmate conditions that were described as, "...truly horrific". The gaoler paid an annual rate to the Duke of £18 12s but exacted a whole lot more than that from the inmates he was looking after.

Howard described a tiny hatch to the cellar below, reporting that the door had not been opened for weeks. The one room cell accommodating four prisoners at the time of Howard's visit, had no water, no heating and no bedding. Another aristocrat, the Duke of Leeds, had a debtors gaol in Gaol Lane at the top of Northgate in Halifax. To buy food, the inmates had to pay 3/6 a week. In the Duke of Leeds gaol, felons did not spend long in their awful prison before being taken to the gibbet on Gibbet Hill where their heads were cut off. One story recounts a country lady riding by at the moment of an execution. The executioner's axe was said to have come down with such force that the head jumped into one of the country lady's hampers- mm, I'm not sure about that story. Another aristocrat, the Earl of Arundel, owned Penzance Town Gaol in a stable yard off the Corn Market. A soil floor with a pittance of straw and one small high window, confined about 12 prisoners a year.

Turning to those prisons owned by the Crown, we can start with the most notorious of all in Marshalsea prison in Southwark run by the Knight Marshal of the royal household. This had a special notoriety because it was so large. It held many hundreds of prisoners in a range of buildings. Reports in the early



**Etching of John Howard visiting prisoners – 1775. (Purchased from Alamy)**

18th century refer to it being an “earthly hell” with torture, thumb screws, iron hoods, beatings, and confinement next to rotting carcasses. Those who survived such ill treatment, often died of starvation. It was reported that in warmer weather, there was such overcrowding that 8 or 10 prisoners died every 24 hours.

The three other Southwark royal household run prisons were The King’s Bench in St George’s Fields, the Southwark Compter in Tooley Street and the White Lion prison on Angel Alley off Borough High Street. If torture and physical abuse were not bad enough, the situation was made worse by the prevalence of typhus or “gaol fever” as it was known. It’s somewhat ironic that on a European inspection of gaols John Howard died of “gaol fever” typhus in Kherson, Ukraine, after tending to a sick woman in a military hospital. There’s a bust of John Howard over the gate of the old Shrewsbury prison on Howard Street.

The picture of Castle Garth on page 16 which was the old Newcastle castle keep, served as a prison in the 18th century right up to 1820. This underground prison was inspected by a prison reformer called James Neild in 1802. To gain entrance through a trap door he had to get a man with a shovel to clear away the “dirt and filthy rubbish” before he could get in. Neild described it as, “... the worst of prisons...”, with a damp and dirty set of dungeons, where prisoners were chained to the walls. The small part of the dungeon in complete darkness that was sectioned off for the seven women, had a soil floor that was permanently wet. When it rained the water poured down the walls to cover several inches of the floor. The only place of refuge for the inmates was to sit on the top of six stone steps that led into the room. In the second half of the 18th century Lord Ravensworth leased the whole castle from the Crown, taking on the gaol as well.

The church was deeply involved with gaols during the 18th century where for example, the Bishop of Ely’s palace accommodated a prison for recalcitrant Catholics in the early part of the century. From some of the inmates’ subsequent documents, it was recorded that prisoners were chained to the floor with spiked collars around their necks and iron bars over their legs. Lying in their own filth for weeks, inmates were practically starved, with no access to fresh air. The Bishop of Durham was an active owner of his town gaol at the Great North gate in Saddler Street; the Bishop of Winchester owned The Clink in Southwark; the Archbishop of York managed his own gaol in the crypt below his Sepulchre chapel and the Bishop of Sodor and Man controlled Rushen Castle prison on the Isle of Man. These are just a sample of religious leaders running their own prisons.

What’s my point with all this talk of 18th century private prisons? Well, first off, the prompt for writing this article was a book by Robert Hughes called *The Fatal Shore*. In great detail Hughes documents the horrific and appalling life for felons and debtors in county gaols in 18th century England. He describes the misery on the Hulks and the subsequent horror of transportation to Australia. I was struck by the savage cruelty that Hughes referenced when describing the inhuman conditions experienced by English criminals, as well as in the early Australian prison settlements, especially Norfolk Island. It was not simply the appalling conditions of the gaol buildings in which prisoners at that time were confined, but the abject and wanton cruelty often inflicted on them by their gaolers.

Perhaps not particularly profound, but the simple point for me in this article is that no matter how much we might moan about certain aspects of our current private or even state-run prison system, we can perhaps all agree that things are clearly a million times better than they once were.

# MY OBSESSION WITH ADJUDICATIONS WITHIN THE PRISON SERVICE



With a service period of over 30 years with a direction of travel from Prison Officer to Governor III, I have had an extensive relationship with the disciplinary and adjudication processes during my service.

## An Overview of Procedures and Practices (Rule 47/51)

### Introduction

Adjudications within Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) service refer to the formal processes by which alleged breaches of prison discipline are investigated and resolved. These procedures play a vital role in maintaining order, fairness, and accountability within the prison system. The adjudication process ensures that both staff and inmates understand the consequences of misconduct and the standards expected in our prison system.

### Purpose of Adjudications

The primary purpose of adjudications is to address alleged violations of prison rules and regulations. This process helps to deter future misconduct, uphold institutional security, and protect the rights of all individuals within the prison environment. Adjudications are designed to be impartial, transparent, and consistent with legal and ethical standards.

### Types of Adjudications

**Minor Offences:** These are typically dealt with by prison staff through internal disciplinary procedures. Sanctions may include warnings, loss of privileges, or temporary confinement.

**Serious Offences:** More significant breaches, such as violence or possession of contraband, require formal adjudication hearings. These may involve a governor or an independent adjudicator and can result in more severe consequences, including extended loss of privileges or referral to external authorities.

### The Adjudication Process

**Reporting an Incident:** When a staff member or another inmate observes a breach of rules, the incident is documented and reported according to established protocols.

**Investigation:** The incident is investigated to determine the facts. Witness statements and evidence are collected to support a fair hearing.

**Notification:** The accused inmate is informed of the charges and provided with details of the alleged misconduct.

**Hearing:** An adjudication hearing is held, during which the inmate can present their case, call witnesses, and challenge evidence.

**Decision:** The adjudicator reviews the evidence and issues a decision. If found guilty, the inmate receives an appropriate sanction.

**Appeal:** Inmates have the right to appeal the decision if they believe there has been an error in the process or outcome.

## Rights and Safeguards

The HMP service is committed to upholding the rights of inmates during adjudications. These include:

The right to be informed of charges in a timely manner.

The right to a fair and impartial hearing.

The right to access legal representation or advice.

The right to appeal decisions.

## Outcomes and Consequences

Sanctions following adjudications may vary depending on the severity of the offence. Typical outcomes include loss of privileges (such as visits or recreation), confinement, or referral to outside authorities for criminal prosecution. The aim is not only to punish misconduct but also to encourage rehabilitation and positive behaviour within the prison community.

## Conclusion

Adjudications within the HMP service are a cornerstone of prison discipline and accountability. By adhering to fair procedures and respecting the rights of all parties, the adjudication process helps to maintain order, safety, and justice within correctional facilities.

The above is what I learnt at Aberford Road Officer Training College in 1974 and being “so well” informed I arrived at HMP Leeds confident that I was equipped to manage any disciplinary issue that I might encounter! To my surprise, I discovered on my arrival that Leeds prison had been operating quite successfully since 1847 without my up to date and freshly acquired knowledge. The resident staff, as early as my first day, were keen to advise me that “this is Leeds” so I should forget all the previous training information and concentrate on absorbing and applying “the Leeds way” of operating.

Nevertheless, taking heed of the local advice, I still found the adjudication process to be an adequate way of managing infringements of the prison rules. Being of a sturdy and generally athletic build I found my own satisfactory way of dealing with verbal abuse and resolved never to use the Adjudication process for this level of indiscipline, but I did use it quite robustly for offences that could not successfully be managed at a personal level including fighting/violence, property violations, disobedience and failing to comply with prison rules etc.

My early years were undertaken under the watchful eye of Chief Officer 1 George Williamson, and I soon became a prolific user of the Rule 47 mostly because I was unwilling to let things go just because it was inconvenient. One rule at Leeds was if you had a report before the Governor and was detailed to a Main Shift - which normally meant doing a Crown Court duty - then you were kept in to deal with the report. This deterred many officers from dealing with issues properly because it meant losing a day out and subs. I was not one of those officers. I was zealous when it came to maintaining discipline among the population.

The outcome of my enthusiastic reporting caused George Williamson concern because his Clerk, who prepared the paperwork for reports, complained to him about the extra work I was causing him. George, bless him, chose to deal with his clerks complaining by making me his clerk when the time for redeployment to fixed posts came about. This was a major turning point in my career; I was now in the center of power. I did have a great deal of administration to undergo, and typing to do preparing on average seven adjudications every day for the Governor. It did keep me busy along with all the other administrative duties.

It took four years to complete my tour of duty in the Chief's office and soon after I was promoted to Senior Officer and unusually posted in-situ. I was straight away put as in-charge of the punishment landing (*"The block" in 1970 speak and by 2000's known as "Care and Separation"*). My duties involved the day to day running of the unit and administering the adjudication processes. This was a wonderful opportunity to see the adjudication process working in reality. I supported several different adjudicators in the 4 years I managed the segregation unit and observed a few different approaches to the process, all effective but different. There was one who painstakingly wrote down every word spoken in the room and another who paraphrased events. I will make mention of one memorable moment, for me. The very first adjudication I supervised as Unit SO I stood to attention at the right of Governor Bill Martin in what would have been the position of the Chief Officer, who was absent attending to some other event. I observed that the Governor was running out of paper on the adjudication "White Sheet", so I quietly opened the desk drawer and took out a sheet of foolscap and placed it to the side of the Governor's paperwork. Mr Martin steadfastly ignored my offer of paper and continued writing in the margins on the form completing the adjudication. When the prisoner had left the room Mr Martin thanked me for the foolscap but explained that he would never need extra paper because when he had filled the form the adjudication would always be over. It's also fair to say, now he is no longer with us to argue, that his script was completely unintelligible.

My next connection with the adjudication process was when in 1995 I was promoted to GV at HMP Belmarsh and sent to Newbould Revel on an Adjudicators course tutored by the indomitable Lynn Bowles. This was my first encounter with Lynn, and it is fair to say that my education was advanced significantly.

I arrived back refreshed at Belmarsh and was placed on the adjudication panel but was rarely called upon only when more senior Governors were not available. We did have one litigious prisoner (*Whose name conveniently eludes me*) and I regularly seemed to be the only available Governor when he had bumped into rule 47. He always appeared on adjudication armed with a copy of prison rules, a copy of the discipline manual and a McKenzie Friend; it was a welcome distraction and good fun.

Belmarsh was where I developed what I can only describe as an obsession with the adjudication process. My domestic circumstances changed with a family bereavement which created a need to return to Yorkshire. This need was satisfied with a posting to HMP The Wolds as Deputy Controller in the new rank of GIV and working for the incumbent Controller, Gordon Morrison. Gordon, it transpired was an expert, and the department's go-to when someone was needed to conduct investigations and write reports on deaths in custody. Happily, for me this kept Gordon very busy and I found myself conducting a greater number of adjudications and enjoying long periods of substitution in the controller's enforced absences.

This welcome break from my previous 24 years “sharp end” service lasted about 12 months and then I was posted (willingly, at the request of the area manager) to HMP Doncaster. Doncaster was unusual in several different ways, it was a big local jail, managed by the private sector and it housed category “A” prisoners. Unlike HMP The Wolds which was a Cat C Group 4 operation with just the 2 Governor grades and a single PA support, Doncaster had a G3 Controller, a G4 Deputy and a G5 Support complete with a PA and 2 other treasury Grades making up our complete fiefdom.

It transpired – intended or not - that the position of Controller was little more than somewhere to locate G3s with aspirations for Governing Governor Posts. During my 4 years tenure I had worked for three Controllers three of whom were promoted to Governing Governor posts and the last one became a Super Controller with I think responsibility for 4 Privately managed prisons. Consequently, I managed to operate as a temporarily promoted Gov4 to 3 for about half of my time at Doncaster and at the end, up to retiring, I was adjudicating at Doncaster and The Wolds.

The new role fitted my interest in the application of Prison discipline perfectly. Adjudications at Doncaster were essentially my job and 20 to 30 a day were the norm. Simply put, The Controller dealt with the politics, I did the Discipline and the G5 managed the contract. I was in my element. The whole discipline issue was a disgrace. It was clear that the officers had received only the basic training for adjudications and were operating on the basis that whatever you offered in evidence the adjudicator would simply accept it, find guilt and punish. They had no useful knowledge of gathering, compiling and presenting evidence at the hearing. There was also a lack of understanding on how punishments should be applied in the day-to-day activities of the prison. Doncaster being privately run, my loyalty was essentially to the Prison Service. My background provided a balance of loyalty to the service and the desire to see these young officers do well. It was clear from the number of adjudications that I was dismissing that there was a training need, but I had no training function within the prison.

Each time that I dismissed a charge I would keep the officer back for advice but with the number of staff I was not getting the information through to the majority. I concluded that the way forward was to create a monthly bulletin detailing the dismissals and explaining the reasons and so the Newsletter was launched in March of 2002 and continued until my retirement in May of 2004 when I wrote my last epistle. This last Newsletter continued evidence of the great improvement in the outcomes of adjudication. Improvements not only in results but in the reduction of numbers of charges brought.

It was most gratifying that throughout my adjudicating career I was never overturned in any appeal. It was also very pleasing to me that the existence of the Newsletter became known, and many Governors asked if I would forward copies to them as they became available.

Here follows an example of a newsletter.



## ADJUDICATIONS NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 1 March 2002

This is the first publication of the Adjudications Newsletter. It is aimed at staff who put prisoners on disciplinary reports. A newsletter will be produced each month in order to provide up to date information on adjudication issues. The objective is to raise awareness to reduce the level of adjudication dismissals. There appears to be a lack of understanding about what is required to bring a successful charge against a prisoner.

There are a number of fundamental issues to consider when bringing a report forward.

Has an offence been committed?

What is it?

Is the information about the prisoner accurately recorded on the forms?

Only include basic details of the charge at Section 3 of F256 and avoid including what is essentially evidence. Evidence should be written on F254.

Does the evidence put forward prove the charge?

Is the time, date and place accurate?

Does the information on the F1127 give the prisoner enough information about the offence for the prisoner to have an opportunity to form a defence?

Does the evidence provide enough information to leave no doubt as to guilt?

Does the evidence given on the F254 raise any questions?

If it does, then the evidence is questionable and needs to be reconsidered!

Were there any witnesses who can corroborate the charge?

If there were:

Have you got written statements from them in support?

Remember to refer to the statements in your evidence so that they can be presented to the Adjudicator when either you give your evidence or it is read in your absence.

Remember the only evidence that the Adjudicator is permitted to consider is that which is produced in the prisoner's presence.

Do not speculate in your evidence about what you thought might have happened, confine your evidence to the relevant facts.

Do not refer to other offences or incidents, which are not directly relevant to the charge.

If you apply these principles, you will always bring successful prosecutions.

During March the following statistics apply:

	Not proceeded	Dismissed	Totals
HB 1	5	4	9
HB 2	5	3	8
HB 3	4	3	7
SEG	0	2	2
HCC	0	1	1

What follows is a breakdown of how the 'Not proceeded' and "Dismissed" came about during March. It is not intended to embarrass or criticise any individual and reporting officers are not identified neither is the area where the offence has been committed. The intention is to provide assistance and guidance for the future and not to apportion blame or criticism.

Not Proceeded: 14 in Total.

- 6 Released prior to adjudication.
- 2 Charge not laid within the statutory 48 hours. There was no option but to dismiss. Delays should be avoided.
- 1 The co-accused was transferred, and it would have been unreasonably expensive to have him returned.
- 1 Insufficient evidence brought forward to find guilt.
- 1 Unsafe to proceed, because of lack of evidence.
- 2 This was a fight where the co-accused was released at court and in the absence the accused was given the benefit of doubt.
- 1 This prisoner was abusive to the officer and pleaded guilty to the charge but mitigated successfully. The facts were he was attending the health care center for treatment of what I saw as, horrendous, and open sores on his legs. He had used abusive language to the officer who had insisted on rubbing down his legs after being asked to be careful of the injuries. It would have been possible to perform the search in a more sympathetic manner, looking and not touching and more appropriate in the circumstances. While the abuse was not appropriate, I considered that the provocation mitigated the offence, not sufficiently for me to dismiss but enough to simply not proceed.

Dismissed. 13 in Total

MDT with a negative confirmation test result.

Fights where one of the accused prisoners pleaded self defence successfully.

Medical evidence supported the prisoners' defence. Proper investigation by the reporting officer would have eliminated the need to bring this charge.

Video evidence was brought forward which was inconclusive and left a reasonable doubt. If reporting officers are relying on video evidence, they would be best advised to view it closely before bringing it forward. If the video evidence does not show what they say it shows in evidence, then the charge is fatally flawed.

This was an assault when the victim stated on adjudication that the charged man was not his assailant.

The charge and F1127 declared the prisoner to be in possession of "various canteen articles which do not belong to you". The articles were not identified individually in the charge. All prisoners are entitled to prepare a defence to any charge and in order to do so they must be allowed to know exactly what it is they are charged with. Moreover, the advice in the discipline manual is that where more than one item is alleged to be unauthorised, separate charges should be considered for each item.

This prisoner was charged with misusing his cell call light. There was no evidence brought forward by the reporting officer that any proper order had ever been given for the prisoner to stop using his cell call light. In any event I would find it difficult to find such a charge as this proved. A generalised order to a prisoner not to use his cell call light cannot be a proper order because he may subsequently have a proper need to use it. Giving an order about a particular use of the call light "do not use it to obtain a light for a cigarette" for example may be appropriate. This charge would have worked better if the evidence had been expanded during the hearing. After the charge had been dismissed and I was completing the paperwork I became aware of some additional evidence on a form Annex A. This form had been made out in support of the charge and may have allowed me to find the prisoner guilty if it had been produced as evidence during the hearing. The adjudicator can only consider what s/he hears during the adjudication and if reporting officers want other documentation to be considered they should present it as evidence. Where the reporting officer is not going to be present at the hearing, they should make reference to any additional documentation they wish considered in their report.

This is a particularly interesting one. The prisoner was charged with failing to produce a sample of urine. He stated that he had initially provided a sample of 32ml and two subsequent samples during confinement of 20ml and 10ml. The reporting officer confirmed this claim. The guidelines given to the MDT Team from headquarters are that a minimum of 45ml is required to split into two for satisfactory testing purposes. The prisoner argued that checklist note 7 in the "Chain of Custody Procedure" document states that when each urine sample is divided into two and placed into the bottles it should "Fill each above the 15ml line and below 30ml line." It is clear that his initial offer of 32ml could be split in accordance with the rules but not in accordance with the guidance. When it comes to reports it is only the rules that count.

The prisoner pleaded guilty to the charge but was on an open F2052SH and evidence showed that immediately after the offence he attempted to self-harm. The Discipline manual states clearly that the proper response to self-harm should be one of care and that a punitive response is inappropriate. See 2.14 page 5 of the discipline manual.

Charged with having a tampered phone card. The card when produced in evidence was bent along its length. The prisoner admitted having the card and offered in explanation that it had become bent in his pocket. There was no evidence brought forward to negating that defence. (If the card was not signed a charge of unauthorised possession would have been more successful. All phone cards have to be signed by the holder to be authorised).

**Roger Outram**  
**Deputy Controller**

# GROWING UP IN THE AGE OF AFFLUENCE: A WORKING-CLASS CHILDHOOD

Author Paul Laxton: A Review by BARBARA TREEN



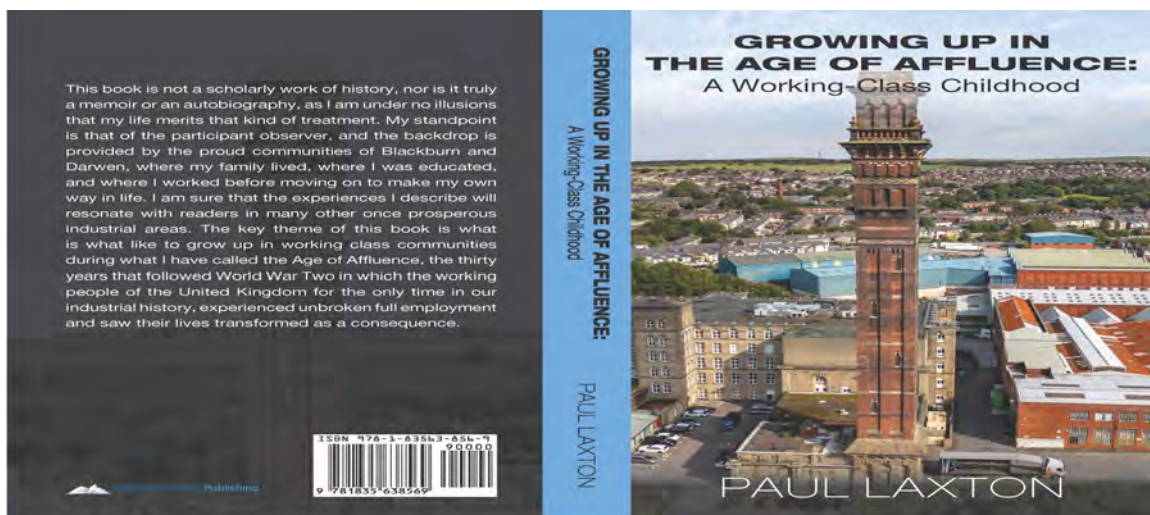
Where to start! This is a comprehensive and passionate description of the author's world as he grew up beginning in the 1950s. Although technically an autobiography the author provides so much more than a superficial glimpse into the past. Every memory is surrounded by an extremely detailed historical picture and analysis of the age. He particularly reflects on social mobility and the way social class affected and still affects one's ability to progress to the upper echelons of life.

Readers may particularly enjoy particular chapters more than others depending on their own memories of the time and interests. Chapters include for instance the era's music, Blackburn Rovers and children's television. The author acknowledges his readers may choose to skip sections and to be honest the passionate and encyclopedic section on Blackburn Rovers is one section I skipped over not sharing the same passion or knowledge of the game. The following section on terrace culture drew me back in however to learn about how the young Grammar School boy risked life and limb at the hands of the 'greasers' and 'skinheads'. I learned much of the aggro apparently occurred due to the tradition of changing ends at half-time!

I am in awe of Paul's detail. As well as memory this book must have required comprehensive research over many months, even years. It is simply astonishing. I now know what days of the week I must have watched each children's TV programme! And know all there is to know about Dr Who and the BBCs ineptitude at hanging onto its archives.

I am ashamed at my lack of recall about my life even as an adult. Paul has incredible recall. He remembers for instance what he did on day one at primary school and paints vivid pictures of all his teachers and many fellow pupils. In particular his schooldays are fascinating where he reveals his affection for those around him he respects and shines an uncompromising light on areas of corruption. His accounts of school life particularly his junior school are harrowing for the level of cruelty and physical brutality meted out to young children. His respect for the severe but often enlightened teachers in secondary school is clear however.

This is not an 'easy read' given the level of complex detail in every chapter but it is an impressive work. Paul admits a liking for obscure facts and there are plenty here for the reader to enjoy.



## COMPUTER CORNER

In past issues of the Newsletter I have contributed a Computer Corner article to help The Editor to balance the content, and to try to provide some advice and support to those of you who use your computers very little, and therefore may not always be up to speed on the latest news. Sadly, my articles usually end up concentrating on the subject of Online Safety as it is an unfortunate reality that many criminals are very comfortable in their use of computers, in fact not only comfortable but very skillful in their use, and have turned their skills and knowledge toward ways to separate honest hard-working people from their money in ways that are not only criminal, but are often cruel, callous and completely without morality. Unfortunately the criminals are always at least one step ahead of the authorities, who often struggle to keep up with the latest developments, which quickly change in what is a very fast moving environment often from week to week or even day to day. It is now an irrefutable fact, backed up by official figures, that at a time when crimes of violence, burglary and theft are falling, fraud is at record levels and is the fastest growing crime in the UK.

Whilst the vast majority of this is large scale benefit fraud it is also true that fraud involving individuals being targeted specifically in a whole range of scams carried out by phone, computer, post or face to face in what is referred to as “Doorstep Fraud” is a growing concern. Whilst these crimes can be targeted at anyone there does seem to be a disproportionate amount of “older people” who are the intended, and sadly all too often, the real victims of these crimes. So I make no apology for the fact that my Computer Corner’s often concentrate on warnings about the latest fraud/scams and about ways to avoid falling foul of scammers, and some advice on what to do if, unfortunately my advice is too late, and you have already fallen victim to a fraud.

If you are a computer user and are running Windows 10 or older, (XP, 7,8,8.1 or Vista) these operating systems (OS) are no longer supported by Microsoft and therefore are extremely susceptible to attacks by rogue viruses that will seek to take control of your computer for a variety of reasons, mostly criminal and designed to cost you money, and in the worst cases, all of your money. If your OS is out of date then you should update it as soon as possible. The latest version of Windows is Windows 11 (26H1) which was released on the 10<sup>th</sup> February. If you are running Windows 10 then you should still be able to upgrade this to Windows 11 for free. If you are running one of the other OS then it is likely that you will need to purchase an up to date OS such as Windows 11 but you need to be aware that this OS will only work on certain computers, usually relatively modern systems, say less than 10-years old.

Of course this only applies if you use your computer to connect to the internet. If you only use it for word processing and never connect to the internet, you are safe as long as you do not load anything from a disc or pen (USB) stick that someone has given you.

In recent weeks there has been a re-boot of the systems and support for people who have, or believe they have been the victim of a criminal fraud/scam. The website that was called SCAM ALERT is now called **REPORT FRAUD** and is a central reporting service for people who believe they may have fallen victim to fraud, or who need advice on how to avoid being a victim. Their website is a “one-stop-shop” for support and advice. You can contact them through their website at: <https://www.reportfraud.police.uk/> or by phone at:0800 123 2040. I would urge you to take note of, and keep these contact details somewhere safe as a reference. In addition to REPORT FRAUD if you receive an email that you believe to be a scam, but are not taken in by it, you can still take action to help others by reporting the attempt. You can do this by forwarding any suspect emails to: [noreply@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:noreply@phishing.gov.uk). There is nothing else to do other than forward the suspect email.

## **Get help or report a scam.**

If you think you've uncovered a scam, have been targeted by a scam or fallen victim to fraudsters contact REPORT FRAUD at: <https://www.reportfraud.police.uk/> Reporting crime, including fraud, is important. If you don't tell the authorities, how do they know it has happened and how can they do anything about it? Remember, if you're a victim of a scam or an attempted scam, however minor, there may be hundreds or thousands of others in a similar position. Your information may form part of one big jigsaw and may be vital to completing the picture.

## **Mobile phone scams**

Smartphones are mini-computers, so take all the same precautions with them as you would with your own computer at home. One of the "popular" scams on mobile phones at the moment is based on a message, either text or Whatsapp that will read something like, 'Hello Mum/Dad My phone has been lost/stolen and I am using a friend's phone. Can you call me on this number ASAP?' If you receive a message like this, it is almost certainly a scam, and if you call the number there will be an attempt to extract information or money from you. Do not reply and simply delete the message.

## **What you should know**

If you use an online banking app, only use the official app provided by your bank. If in doubt, contact your bank to check.

Only download apps from official app stores, such as:

- Apple App Store
- Android Marketplace
- Google Play Store

Downloading them from unofficial or unknown sources could infect your phone with a virus. Keep your phone's operating system updated with the latest security patches and upgrades. Your operating system provider normally sends these. Never give your mobile banking security details, including your passcode, to anyone else and don't store them on your phone. For added security set up a password or PIN or fingerprint to lock your mobile.

Just like on your computer, you can get antivirus tools for your mobile; use a reputable brand. Some banks offer free antivirus software for their customers' phones. Check your bank's website for more information. Be wary of clicking on links in a text message or email. Don't respond to unsolicited messages or voicemails on your phone. Your bank will never email or text to ask for your PIN or full password.

## **Examples of mobile phone scams**

Text scams offering you money for an accident you may have had is often a ploy to get your personal details. Don't reply, even by sending a 'STOP' text. Simply delete the message. You may get a text or advert encouraging you to enter a competition for a great prize. The scammers will charge extremely high rates for the messages you send them, as high as £2 per text message. Don't reply.

'Trivia scams' involve you answering general knowledge questions to win a prize. The first few questions will be very easy, so you keep playing. But the last one or two questions you need to answer to claim your 'prize' could be very difficult or even impossible.

If you try to claim your prize, you may have to call a premium-rate number, **often beginning 0906**. You then have to listen to a long recorded message, designed to keep you on the line. It's highly unlikely there'll be a prize at the end of it. Don't phone back to claim.

**'SMiShing'** (SMS phishing) is when a scammer texts asking for personal or financial information. The message may appear to be from a legitimate company, like a mobile phone provider, but legitimate companies never ask you to provide sensitive information by text. Don't reply to these texts. Simply delete them.

Unless you're using a secure webpage, don't send or receive private information when using public WiFi. And be aware of who's around you when using a mobile device to go online. Public WiFi includes connections in hotels, coffee shops, stations and hospitals in fact any WiFi connection that is not your own home system is likely to not be secure.

### **Mass market fraud or scam mail.**

The sophistication of mass market mail and online fraud and scam mail can vary enormously but as a general rule, if something seems too good to be true, it probably is. Many people in the UK, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, are lured by the prospect of a surprise win, and give large amounts of money or personal data to claim their fake prize.

### **Examples of scam mail:**

The most common mass-market fraud, the fake prize scam, is where you get a message by post, email or text saying you've won a prize or competition, usually one you've never heard of. The message asks for an upfront payment to claim the prize, which either never arrives or is very different to what was promised. 'Psychic' and 'clairvoyant' scams set up victims for a fake prize scam. In this situation, a 'psychic' sends the victim a list of 'lucky' lottery numbers. Soon afterwards, a letter arrives telling the victim they've won a lottery with those exact numbers. Of course, this is all part of the scam.

You may receive unsolicited mail advertising 'high quality' or 'exclusive' goods, which in reality are poor value for money. Another mass marketing scam is to offer a share of a cash prize that you can only get by ordering goods. The goods are usually very poor quality and the cash prize is never mentioned again.

Also be wary when sending money, or receiving money from, someone you don't know and trust. This may be a ploy by a scammer to get you to pass money through your bank account that's stolen from another victim's account. If you do this, technically you're money laundering and being a 'money mule' for the scammers. If convicted of money laundering you could be sent to prison. Having a criminal conviction can make it harder to get financial products or get a job.

It can only take a single response to a scammer to be inundated with more scam mail. Your name and address will be included on a 'suckers list' and you'll get lots of scam mail every day.

Remember, you:

- can't win money or a prize in a lottery you haven't entered
- can't be 'chosen at random' from a list you didn't sign up to
- should never have to pay a fee or make a purchase to claim a legitimate prize

For more information and help or to report on this and many other types of fraud, visit [Report Fraud](#), the UK's national cyber crime and fraud reporting service.

## Internet Scams

Many internet scams take place without the victim even noticing. Scammers put programs on your computer that can steal, wipe or lock your data. To prevent this, have antivirus software and a firewall installed on your computer, and keep it up to date. Take the precautions below and use common sense to avoid becoming a victim.

### What you should know:

Scammers defraud people using spam emails. Simply delete the email without opening or replying to it, otherwise the scammer will send you more and more emails from lots of different addresses. Any email you get from someone you don't know is likely to be spam, especially if it's not addressed to you personally and promises you some kind of gain. If you get an email with an attachment, apparently from someone you know, but it's not the usual sort of message you get from them, **don't open the attachment**. Contact the person who's supposed to have sent it and confirm it's genuine. The email may have been infected with a virus and forwarded through their address book.

Online marketplaces can be a lot of fun and can save you money but they're also used by scammers. Scammers will try to steer you away from online sites and get you to use unusual payment methods, such as money transfer agents or e-money, a digital equivalent of cash.

### The most common scams at the moment are for:

concert and event tickets ; apartments, residential and holiday lettings ;m dating and romance;  
vehicles for sale or hire (especially if they deliver the hire vehicles to you)

Adverts and websites can be very sophisticated so do some research to make sure everything makes sense. Always think about your personal safety when meeting anyone you've only talked to on the internet. Be careful of official-looking but bogus websites that claim to help you apply for passports, visas and driving licences.

There are lots of ways scammers gain personal or financial information from their victims, such as:

phishing, where an email that seems to be from a legitimate company asks you to give your personal details  
vishing, where either an automated phone message or a cold-caller who seems to be from a legitimate company asks you for personal details  
spear phishing, which focuses on an individual or department in an organisation; the email appears to come from a legitimate organization.

Using these methods, scammers ask for information such as login details and passwords, or install malware on your computer. As a general rule, never give your personal or financial details to anyone unless you know and trust them. Remember-Your bank will **NEVER** contact you and ask you for your PIN number or to transfer money into another account. The police will **NEVER** contact you to withdraw or transfer money from your account and only **CRIMINALS** will ever ask you to withdraw money from your account, in cash, to be collected from you later. If you receive a suspicious email that you think maybe, or know is suspect then do not open it. Simply forward it to [noreply@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:noreply@phishing.gov.uk) and then delete the message. If you are uncertain if a website that you have an address for is legitimate you can check it before clicking on it using ASK SILVER at: <https://www.getsafeonline.org/asksilver/> or by using the url safety check site at: <https://urlsafetychecker.com/>

**GRAHAM MUMBY-CROFT**



## LEAVE OUR JURIES ALONE

The Government is busily engaged with piloting its criminal justice reforms through parliament. Probably the most controversial feature is the proposal to deprive defendants facing a charge or charges who, if convicted, would face a custodial sentence of three years or less. The impact would fall mainly on defendants accused of 'either way' offences where he or she can elect to be tried either in a Magistrates Court or by jury in a Crown Court.

The Secretary of State for Justice, David Lammy, is also proposing to apply the change retrospectively to defendants who have been charged, but whose cases have yet to come to court. Applications for judicial review are inevitable, and likely to be based on Human Rights legislation, passed by a Labour government, and supposedly the guiding light of the Prime Minister. A case of selective amnesia?

Juries are not perfect and they do wrongfully convict defendants from time to time. However, wrongful convictions are often easy to explain. Juries are always more likely to convict the innocent where there is police malpractice, most commonly the failure to disclose evidence rather than the confessions extracted under duress before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984 stamped it out. Stephen Downing, wrongly convicted of the 'Bakewell Tart' murder, is one of the most notorious victims of pre-P.A.C.E. wrongdoing. Juries are also prone to error where the prosecution has the monopoly on forensic expertise. The 'shaken baby' cases and the initial conviction of Deputy Headmaster Sion Jenkins, are classic examples. Trials being held amidst moral panics also weaken the protection the jury system gives to defendants.

So why does this matter? Well, it's far from obvious that judges will do any better, and plenty to suggest they will do worse. I can remember being a Principal Officer at HMP Wakefield when Private Lee Clegg of the Parachute Regiment was serving life for the murder of a Northern Ireland civilian during the 'troubles.' Private Clegg was tried by a judge sitting without a jury in Ulster rather than a jury of his peers in England. Justice was only served when Private Clegg was cleared on appeal. There is also the very real concern that Judges are not ordinary people; on the contrary they are highly educated members of the nation's Metropolitan Elite, and there would be no protection against the 'woke' prejudices they may have imbibed.

Mr Lammy has defended the proposals on the grounds that the backlog in cases being heard is impacting on victims of crime, particularly victims of serious sexual offences. Critics of the bill are adamant that the restrictions will not save time, not least because of the need for Judges to compose and deliver written reports in support of their verdict in the proposed new intermediate courts. The Prime Minister claimed that only around a quarter of cases currently tried by jury would be affected. The Financial Times suggested that the figure would be more like half of the 15,000 cases currently heard in front of a jury annually. It said that around 2,500 cases would be tried in the new 'judge only' courts with a further 5,000 being tried by Magistrates.

The absence of a jury from cases where one would have normally been present sends the defendant naked into the courtroom. The defendant's future is in the hands of an agent of the state, not his peers. For those whose cases are deemed suitable to be handed over to magistrates, there will not even be the protection of a written judgement. Finally, the notion that the interests of victims outweigh those of defendants is a bogus dichotomy that undermines the principal of a fair trial.

**PAUL LAXTON**



## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT – SPRING 2026**

My last report of Autumn 2025 recorded a membership of 340. Over the past six months this number has decreased by eight to **332**, comprising of 287 paying 'full members' and 45 non-paying 'Associate members'. Recruiting new members continues to be very difficult, to try and combat this I will shortly prepare a draft PGA Bulletin to remind those not yet retired of who we are and what we can offer. In addition, both Harry Brett and I attended the PGA Conference last year and were given an opportunity to make a short presentation on the RPGA and to encourage delegates to visit our 'stall' outside of the Conference room. We hope to repeat this exercise this year.

Since our AGM in October last year, we have welcomed three new members; David Dyson, Mary Tucker (Associate Member) and Kath Preston (Associate Member). In addition, we have welcomed back Maria Rys-Reuten who has re-joined. Sadly, we have had to record the **deaths of five members**;

**Peter B. Tucker**

**Les Dacombe**

**Margaret Middlemiss**

**Jean Childs (Associate Member, wife of John Childs)**

**John Pudney**

Our deepest condolences go out to the family and friends of all our former colleagues that have passed away this year.

We have had four resignations; Ruth Nolan (Associate Member), Alan Brown, Daphne Smith (Associate Member) and Bill Preston. We have lost contact with Robert (Bob) Mason whose subscription standing order appears to have been cancelled, and emails are being rejected by his mailbox. We have therefore reluctantly removed Bob from our membership list but would be grateful to hear from anyone who knows him and can advise on his current circumstances.

I have been closely checking my membership list over the past three months and discovered a couple of anomalies in which I have failed to remove former members from the current members list. This explains the further two 'lost members' since the Autumn figure of 340.

Finally, the Treasurer has brought to my attention five separate accounts paying their annual subscription, but we have no contact with them;

**P K Garrard: Member that has moved but provided no forwarding address or email**

**E Lewis: Member who we have lost contact with**

**J Lockerbie: Member who we have lost contact with**

**Susan James: Name of account paying annual subscription but no record of Ms. James ever being a member**

**Margaret Tee: Member who we have lost contact with**

If you know any of these members or have contact details for them, could you please give me a call or send me an email as we'd very much like to ensure that we can provide the service for which they are paying.

**KEVIN BILLSON** Tel: 07827 320 413

E-mail: [kevinbillson@ntlworld.com](mailto:kevinbillson@ntlworld.com)



## FROM THE TREASURER:

As I sit down to write what I believe is my 15<sup>th</sup> annual financial report, I glance out of my window to see that, surprise, surprise, it is raining again. Looking back I am at a loss to remember a wetter year, although I am sure that there must have been others equally as miserable. It was certainly wet when I lived in Manchester, but then you do expect it to be, but Lincolnshire is usually a much drier region. At the end of October I was speaking to my neighbour, who has a small weather station in his garden, and he was telling me that we were 7 inches under the average rainfall for the year. From the day of that conversation it has hardly stopped raining and when I spoke with him last week we had more than made up that 7 inch shortfall, and were in fact an inch over the average. Having said that, it hasn't rained for two days in a row now, so I am expecting a hosepipe ban to be put in place any day.

From a financial perspective, 2025 has been a relatively good year for the RPGA. Despite our membership falling again in the year, with a subsequent reduction of £374 in subscription income, our efforts to reduce our operating costs, specifically by distributing the Newsletter by email to those willing to receive it in this format, have now paid dividends, to the extent that even taking into account the reduction in income, our surplus of income over expenditure increased by £759 from 2024 giving us an overall surplus of £1452 for the year.

With a balance of funds in our account of £17,080, the financial position of the group is, for the foreseeable future, on a sound footing. This in turn gives me the confidence to be able to say that there is certainly no immediate requirement, or indeed any recommendation from me, for the committee to have to give consideration to reviewing the subscription rates.

However, there are some possible events in the pipeline that will certainly have an impact on our financial situation, not least of which is the exercise currently being undertaken by the PGA to review their policy of providing a diary to each of their members. This is of course something that we had extended to our own membership, for the payment of an additional subscription fee, currently set at £7 per year. Having seen the figures from the PGA treasurer I think that the writing is very clearly on the wall that the provision of a free diary to every PGA member is financially unsustainable, and that the 2026 diary will, in all likelihood, be the last to be issued. This will of course have an impact on the RPGA.

You will be aware that Harry circulated the bulletin from the PGA on this subject out to all our members who are on the email list. Interestingly, we received quite a few very quick responses from our members who currently opt to receive a diary, to say that in view of what the PGA were saying, they would like to amend their membership and drop receipt of the diary. Other members responded that they found the diary useful and that they would be sorry if it was no longer available. If, in light of the discussion and review currently being held by the PGA, you have decided that you no longer wish to receive a diary, whatever the final position will be, please remember, **as treasurer I cannot make any type of amendment to your annual subscription payment. This is a matter between you and your bank and something that you must do yourself.** With this in mind, I would remind you to please remember to contact your bank and amend your Standing Order to the **revised figure of £13 per year.** Also, please ensure that you keep the date of payment **unchanged.** If the PGA does decide to withdraw the provision of diaries then obviously, every one of our members who is currently in receipt of a diary will need to amend their standing orders. We will of course issue a reminder to everyone who may be impacted by any possible changes nearer to the time.

Since its formation, the RPGA has had a policy of making a donation to charity in lieu of sending flowers when a member dies, and we are informed of the funeral arrangements, and if there is a chosen charity. The rate for the donation was fixed at £25 and has remained at this figure for several years, and certainly for the whole of the time that I have been treasurer. You will see for this year's accounts that we only made donations to the value of £50 in 2025 and this was in fact a single donation, as the committee agreed that the death of Bob Duncan merited something a little more substantial. The main reason that we do not make more donations is not because we have ceased the practice but because quite often we do not get to hear of the deaths of members in time to be able to make a donation to any charity nominated as part of the funeral arrangements. Indeed it may be several months before we get the news, and it is becoming increasingly common that the first we know of a member's death is at the end of the financial year when myself, and the membership secretary carry out a reconciliation of the names on his membership list compared to the names on my list of subscriptions received. We have been carrying out this exercise for several years now and it is the main method by which we eventually determine that sadly, some people are no longer with us.

I do appreciate that when a member dies, cancellation of their RPGA membership is far from the top of the list of things for their spouse, partner or family to do. Indeed in many cases it will not even be something that registers or that they are aware of. So, by the time we do find out, it is often too late to offer a charity donation, and is not always something we feel comfortable to raise, especially if some considerable time has passed.

Back on the subject of diaries, in his response to Harry's email, one member stated that instead of reducing their subscription by £7 they would rather we gave the money to charity. I also had an incident recently where in 2025 I had received a subscription payment for someone who I knew had died in 2024, I had after all conducted his funeral service, and his family had overlooked cancelling his standing order. Once this was corrected, they did not want a refund of the overpayment, and so this was donated to charity. These two events led me to thinking that perhaps the RPGA should have a nominated charity, and each year we could make a donation in memory of all of our members who have died within that year, as opposed to individual donations. In this way, donations would not be dependent on our being informed of a member's death so that we could make a charity donation. However, in those cases when we are informed at the time, we could still make a specific donation to the charity nominated by the family.

Each year, the PGA dedicates any money raised at their annual conference to a nominated charity which changes every year and one suggestion is that, as the PGA very kindly allow us to piggyback our AGM onto their annual conference, our donation could go to their nominated charity. I have tabled this item for discussion at our next committee meeting, and it will likely be the subject of a proposal to the AGM. In the meantime, if you have a view or opinion on this, or any other financial matter regarding the RPGA finances, I would be very happy to hear from you,

The full audited accounts will be published as usual in the Autumn Newsletter, and as always the full accounts are available for inspection should any member wish to do so.

**GRAHAM MUMBY-CROFT**

**Treasurer**

**THE NEXT AGM OF THE RETIRED PRISON GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD ON: MONDAY 12 OCTOBER 2026 AT 13.00 HOURS. ANY MEMBER WISHING TO PUT A RESOLUTION BEFORE THE AGM SHOULD E-MAIL IT TO JAN THOMPSON AT: [janthompson370@gmail.com](mailto:janthompson370@gmail.com). PLEASE ENSURE YOU GET A SECONDER.**

**THE VENUE WILL BE THE EASTWOOD HALL HOTEL, MANSFIELD ROAD, NOTTINGHAM NG16 3SS**

**\_AS USUAL OUR AGM WILL BE HELD USING A FACILITY BOOKED BY THE PGA FOR THEIR ANNUAL CONFERENCE.**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE DATE AND VENUE ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE PRISON GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION WHEN HMPPS HAS FORMALLY APPROVED THEIR FACILITY TIME.**

**YOU CAN ALSO ATTEND THE AGM VIRTUALLY AND DETAILS OF THE LINK WILL BE GIVEN BY GRAHAM MUMBY-CROFT TO THOSE MEMBERS WHO ARE ON THE E MAIL REGISTER NEARER THE TIME.**

**ANY MEMBER PLANNING TO ATTEND IN PERSON MAY FEEL FREE TO E-MAIL ME NEARER THE TIME AT [relaxpaul@btinternet.com](mailto:relaxpaul@btinternet.com) SO I CAN CONFIRM ARRANGEMENTS.**

## **IS THERE A GOD?**

Is there a God? Is there a purpose? Where did we come from? Is there anyone out there? These questions used to be the province of religion. But, increasingly they're becoming answered by science which points out that the world has always been scary and that, in our search for answers to the meaning of it all, we might be better off using religion to explain them. But today, in the view of many, science is coming up with 'more realistic' answers.

It goes on to illustrate this by quoting several imminent scientists who've discovered the explanations we seek. For example it is science that tells us about the universal rules of nature that will enable us to predict the future. It One could define God as the embodiment of the laws of nature. He goes on to predict that before the end of this century we'll be in a position of knowing what the future holds.

Here are some 'interesting' questions. At least I find them interesting.

- What is inside a Black Hole?
- Is time travel possible?
- Will we survive on Earth?
- Should we colonise Space?
- Will we cope with Artificial Intelligence?
- How do we shape the future?

For many we need a God that provides a personal connection which science fails to provide. Unfortunately, science has not set out to replace religion but to find the explanations for what we see, hear, taste and smell.

**JOHN RAMWELL**

## **RPGA Quiz Spring 26: Answers.**

1, Vixen

2, Siam

3, Electrical current

4, Lloyds of London

5, Elba

6, Forty

7, Tanganyika and Zanzibar

8, Stephen Spielberg

9, New South Wales

10, Ringo Starr

11, A map

12, Juniper

13, New Mexico

14, Rudolf Hess

15, Venice

16, Red

17, Sheep

18, Greenland

19, Black

20, Melons