

# Retired Governors Newsletter

In co-operation with  
The Prison Governors  
Association



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## EDITORIAL

There has been a very good response to the editorial staff's decision to ask you for a standing order subscription to the Retired Governors' Newsletter. Our Treasurer has received just over 100 standing orders and the future of the newsletter is assured from a financial point of view.

## MAILING LIST

The total number of people in receipt of the Retired Governors' Newsletter is now approaching 250. We welcome to the mailing list Mrs Betty Dennis (widow of Dougie Dennis), Norman Brown, and John Keeling (who retired from Birmingham Prison some years ago). We also welcome a large number of recently retired Governor grade including:

Jimmy Anderson (GII from Hindley)  
Harold Prior (G IV Aylesbury)  
Danny Ozanne (G III Northeye)  
Don Long (G II The Verne)  
Michael Watson-Jackson (G III Dogs at H.Q.)  
Ken Drummond (G IV Works Manchester)  
George Ellington (G II Ford)  
Gordon Lakes (DDG Headquarters)  
Bill McEvoy (G II Leyhill)

John Yates has also recently retired and writes, "I have embarked upon a second career in a field very dear to my heart, one that has kept me sane during thirty years in the prison service. I am offering special rates to Prison Governors and will take Access and Barclaycard, but not American Express !! Interested? I can thoroughly recommend retirement to any former colleagues who are contemplating making a fresh start." John writes from Kent where he and his wife give tuition in piano and singing.

## PRISON SERVICE NEWS

You should receive a current edition of the Prison Service News with this Newsletter by courtesy of the Editor of the Prison Service News. As usual we publish extracts from recent editions of the Prison Service News edited by one of our readers.

## PGA MATTERS

Over 80 readers of the Retired Governors' Newsletter asked to become associate members of the Prison Governors' Association.

This year the PGA has circulated a free diary to all members and associate members. The PGA also has produced ties and scarves for its members. Details are as follows:

Members' ties are available in two styles. The first bears the PGA crest as a single woven motif in a central position between two gold stripes. The second has the PGA crest without the word Perennis as an all over woven design. Both ties are available in maroon or navy blue double border on a white background, with the PGA crest printed as a motif at one end. The crest is produced at the top of this newsletter and originates from a member's suggestion that it should incorporate the phoenix. This seemed most appropriate as the phoenix was the only one of its kind and thus its inclusion makes a link with the notion of sui generis (sui generis was the motto used for over 10 years by the old Governors' branch). The phoenix also symbolises regeneration or something that rises from the ashes of its former self more splendid than before, as the PGA has done. It is also considered to be a paragon and a model of supreme excellence. Above the phoenix is the crown to

symbolise Crown Service and to acknowledge the amalgamation with former Chief Officers. In its talons it carries the key. The Latin word "Perennis" translates as unfalling or indestructible. Ties and scarves can be obtained by post from:

**G. Smith**  
**Governor 5, Prison Service College, Love Lane**  
**Wakefield, Yorkshire.**

Ties and scarves cost £4.50, including postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to the Prison Governors' association.

PGA membership continues to grow steadily with a membership of over 750.

Keith Gibson was recently appointed Editor of the PGA Magazine in response to the advert which appeared in Edition 18 of the Retired Governors' Newsletter.

PGA Conference was attended by 4 Retired members - Sid Powell, Gordon Lakes, Keith Gibson and A Lamb.

#### **IN MEMORIAM**

I regret to report the deaths of 3 of our members' wives - Janet Cowper Johnson, Mrs Stan Hawkins and Mrs Reg Dalton. May they rest in peace.

I also regret to report the death of the late Commander D N Venables DSC and Bar RN. Michael Gale writes:  
*"The older generation of retired Governors, by whom he was greatly liked and respected, will have heard with regret of the death, on 6th December 1988, at his home in Dorset, of Commander DN Venables. Dennis Noel Venables entered the Royal Navy from the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth during the Great War of 1914-18 in which he was in time to see active service as a Midshipman. He retired from the Navy as a Lieutenant Commander in 1928 and joined the Prison Service as an Assistant Housemaster at Rochester in May of that year. In 1938 he became Governor of Oxford Prison.*

*He was recalled to the navy on the outbreak of war in 1939 and had a distinguished war career afloat, mainly in command of small ships in the Mediterranean. He won the Distinguished Service Cross and Bar and was promoted to Commander.*

*On leaving the navy after a period as an Adviser on Prisons with the British Mission in Greece, he was appointed Governor of Portland Borstal in August 1947. In July 1950 he moved to Head Office on appointment as Assistant Commissioner. He served in this capacity, overseeing a large group of prisons mainly in the South and West, until his retirement in about 1962. He leaves a widow - Marjorie, 2 sons and 1 daughter.*

*Dennis Venables was essentially a Commander rather than a Staff Officer. He was a natural leader with a great power to inspire loyalty and could well have become a highly effective Governor of one of the largest prisons. Although he was far too loyal to make any complaint of his lot, I suspect that he did not find his work as an Assistant Director with its constant travelling and more widely diffused responsibilities so congenial as that of exercising his own command. Any measure of disenchantment he may have felt did not, however, prevent him from doing a thoroughly good and conscientious job.*

*As a young and relatively inexperienced Governor at the time, I had the privilege of having him as my Assistant Director for my first five years of independent command, and one could not have wished for anyone wiser, kinder or in the best sense supportive. He was very thorough and conscientious and very shrewd and perceptive in his work of inspection. He missed very little and his criticisms and advice were always constructive. He was scrupulously fair and just in his dealings with both staff and prisoners and had the ability, which all good governors must have, to keep a proper balance between them. His visits were always welcome and looked forward to - but above all one valued his personal friendship and the opportunity of contact with a personality of singular charm, simplicity and sweetness."*

I also regret to report the death of Bob Constantine. Paddy Scrivens writes:

*"Some of your readers will be saddened to hear of the death on February 28 of former Chief Officer Robert (Bob) Constantine. He was 69 and had been ill for some time.*

*His prison service was diverse, but he is perhaps best remembered during his latter years as the Second Chief (Court Inspector) at HMP Brixton. In many ways he was the archetypal Chief Officer and earned the nickname "Constant Swine" among the younger officers, who lived in terror of falling short of the standards he set. For all of that, the name was used with affection, for he was knowledgeable and kind and must have had his patience tested often.*

*He will also be well remembered as Chief Officer at Stafford and as a member of Gordon Lakes' Manpower Team.*

*Gordon attended the funeral at Derby with other former colleagues from the Prison Service, and what appeared to be the majority of the village of Ellastone, where he settled after he retired.*

*He spent his latter years involved in community service supervision and the Parish Council. He kept horses, sheep, goats, chickens and dogs and worked hard to begin the Ellastone Horse Show, which is now an annual event and will become as much a memorial to him as the stories about him that are now part of prison service "folk Lore".*

*Maggie Constantine, who some will remember from her officer days at Holloway and Moor Court, will continue to live at Ellastone."*

### 10th ANNIVERSARY

The Newsletter is fast approaching its 10th Anniversary. I would like to produce a bumper edition in 1990 and perhaps we might try and organise a "special event" to celebrate. Ideas please to the Editor.

## YOUR LETTERS

*Stoke St Michael, Bath*

I was very surprised to receive a copy of the Retired Governors' Newsletter recently. I expect I have Roland Atrill to thank for passing on my most recent address. It has been very pleasant reading about old acquaintances.

Hasn't Brian Emes done well (and so say all of us....); it was also nice to see Nan Fyfe and John Sandys' names too. We shared some happy times at Portland.

Those who remember me may be interested to know that I am fit and well. I am now 'Grannie' to ten youngsters. Penny and family now live in Swaziland and are due on leave next summer, the first for four years. Andrew too is in Africa. He and some friends are travelling by Land Rover and camping for a year. Dougie (he of the long hair and pop group) is running his own thriving business in "Brum", hiring out his dining coaches to BBC Television on location. Susan and Libby are still in Bath, and making a good job of raising their respective families. Peter and family continue to flourish just down the road in the next village. So I have much to be grateful for.

I would very much like to receive future copies of the Newsletter if this is possible. May I also convey my good wishes to all the old friends and colleagues who can still remember me and my children, also my mother who has reached the age of 98.

Life for me of course is now very different. We made so many friends over the years but left them all behind and lost touch in our nomadic existence. I like this village and the people in it and am involved with all the local activities. I do not now have a car, but there are many lovely walks around which I enjoy so much.

I don't recall ever having met Michael Oldfield but his

name is familiar to me. The furthest North we served was at Lowdham Grange with Macfarlane, Bill Noall, Robertson, Scriven, Carmichael, Llewellyn and Ian Riddick, not forgetting the very kind Goulds. I am still in touch with Joyce Riddick (now Rowley) and also David Gould.

I see by your address you are living in a very lovely part of Yorkshire. I once stayed in Harrogate and enjoyed the time we spent exploring the town. Doug, my late husband, was a Yorkshireman, Sheffield born and bred. I recall pleasant holidays in the Dales when the children were younger.

*Yours Sincerely  
Betty Dennis*

*(Many thanks for your long and interesting letter - also your kind comments. We shall ensure further copies will be sent to you with our compliments. W.A.W.)*

*Godalming, Surrey*

I have great pleasure in enclosing my subscription to the Retired Governors' Newsletter - cheap at the price.

Would you be kind and forward the enclosed card to Alan Robertson. I see from the letters column that he has moved, but that you have his address.

I hope all goes well with you at Strangeways. Mary and I flourish (thank God), but you will be sorry to hear that Gordon Fowler has not been at all well of late.

*Yours  
Bill Brister*

*(I feel Brendan will have forwarded your letter, Bill. I am*

*extremely sorry to learn Gordon Fowler has not been too well. I came in contact with him a great deal during my service days and regard him as one of the true gentlemen in our service. A remarkable man in every way and I do hope by now, Gordon, you are feeling better. W.A.W.)*

*Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria*

As you will know, I retired from the service at the end of November and am taking a "Civilian" post with the Cayman Government, flying out on the 15 December.

Brendan wrote to me about continuing membership of the PGA. Will you please put my name on the retired list. My new address will be: Director, Northward Prison, P.O. Box 1807, Grand Cayman BW1.

*Sincerely  
Dennis Marsden*

*(Glad to have you with us Dennis, and you will get your copy of this Newsletter sent to your new address. After Wandsworth you certainly seem to have gone to a dismal location... Let me know, will you, if you want someone to take over whilst you go on holiday. I had better get my claim in quick as there will be a long list of volunteers. Seriously though, we all wish you all the best in your new post. Please keep in touch. W.A.W.)*

*Morpeth, Northumberland.*

It appears I have neglected to inform you of my change of address from that at Bedford. Will you please change it on your mailing list for me. Best wishes to the Newsletter, yourself and all my former colleagues.

*John Hughes*

*Shrewsbury*

Thank you for sending me Edition 18 of the Newsletter, but please note address above and not Talbot House, I moved five years ago.

However - I'm 80 next year and somewhat out of touch, although I still correspond with a number of Ex-Governors, and it's time to call it a day. Could you therefore strike me off the list.

Thank you for past services. I look back with great pleasure to twenty years at Maidstone, The Verne, Durham, Wandsworth, with the last seven years as Governor of Shrewsbury. I am glad to have ended up in beautiful Shropshire. Good wishes to all.

*Sincerely  
Bob Shebbeare*

*(We are naturally sorry Col. Shebbeare feels it is time to "call it a day" but we must abide by his decision. I feel all who know him will wish him all the best for the future. W.A.W.)*

*Aylesbury, Bucks*

Your letter of December 12 has now been forwarded by John Dring's office. Thank you. I shall be happy to

subscribe to the Retired Governors' Newsletter - it will provide an opportunity to keep up with the progress of my former adversaries.

*Sincerely  
Harold Prior*

*Littlehampton, W Sussex*

I was delighted to receive the Retired Governors' Newsletter, for even after 22 years of retirement I enjoy reading about Service affairs and in particular the activities of your correspondents.

However, on reading their letters to you, most of which mention the new format of the Newsletter, it could appear that I have not received an earlier edition, for it is only from Edition 18 that I have learned of the newly formed Prison Governors' Association and of the arrangements for issuing the Newsletter.

It is very kind of you and your colleagues to devote so much of your time to voluntarily provide us 'Old uns' with this splendid service, for in doing so you not only help us to maintain an interest in what was our lifetime work, but a feeling that we are not entirely forgotten by the people with whom we shared our career.

I have forwarded that part of the form you enclosed for paying my annual subscription to my bank manager and herewith is my application for Associate Membership.

*All good wishes  
Arthur Coomes*

*Sandbach, Cheshire*

Many thanks for the Newsletter and Journal, they made interesting and enjoyable reading, please enrol me as a member.

You have been in the news recently. I hope the problems are resolving themselves. It always seemed a pity to me that a few people were allowed by their Association/Union to be so destructive and cause so much discontent and unhappiness to so many.

Since my retirement I have done all sorts of things, and you can take it from me that the Prison Service is well managed when compared with the industries and Local Government I have been involved with.

At the moment much of my spare time is taken up with the Local Council, and Charity work. I am on the Management Committee of the Local CAB, a School Governor and even assist in judging the best kept village. On top of this I teach Cindy and play golf.

We are both very well and enjoying life and hope you and your family are happy and prospering too.

*Yours  
John Keeling.*

*Stafford*

Congratulations on Edition 18  
The new work is a splendid project and I am happy to

subscribe. Should I be of any assistance please let me know.

I am always delighted to hear good news of former colleagues and wish them well. Roland Attrill and I have already been in touch - we were together at Pollington - it is pleasant to chat with old friends with whom we have 'done time'.

Recently, whilst driving through a crowded centre in Cumbria I (and everyone else) heard a loud shout, "There's my old Governor", followed by the appearance of a former Thorp Arch 'customer' who proceeded to shake hands and enquire "How are you, you old devil?"

Having ascertained that my wife and I were quite fit he intimated he was becoming dehydrated and only £2 for a drink would save him. He received it and departed joyfully.

*Best wishes*  
*Kenneth Watson*

*Winchester*

I am enclosing a Bankers Order Form duly completed to take effect from 1 August 1989. My previous contribution I hope will cover until then.

Even though I have only recently retired I thoroughly enjoyed catching up with news of so many retired Governors. I occasionally see Michael Gale and hear of but have not seen Jack Beisty. I hear he lives in Winchester.

I wish you well with the Newsletter and look forward to receiving Edition 19.

*Sincerely*  
*Veigh Roberts.*

*Market Drayton, Shropshire*

Please find enclosed completed Bankers Order Form and attached Associate Membership of the Prison Governors' Association.

After reading your recommendation, Vera and I spent a four days break at Eaves Hall and thoroughly enjoyed it. We also enjoyed our day out at Newbold Revell where we met up with some old friends. It was good to see such people as 'Colonel Jim', Colin Honey and others. My main contact these days with the service is through golf, both at Stoke Heath and National Level. After a setback last May - heart attack - I am happy to announce that my golf is as good as ever.

My regards to you and the rest of the Newsletter team. I am sure you will continue to go from strength to strength.

*Sincerely*  
*Bill Ritson.*

*Doncaster, Yorkshire*

Thank you for the communications I have received from you via Northeye. As you can see by my address, we are now settled in retirement (*and in the right county too. W.A.W.*).

I enjoyed the Newsletter and have completed the forms as requested. It is surprising how quickly one gets cut off from old friends and it is good to have news and see names in print. With moving we found immediate retirement hectic, including hitches over house purchase, however it is all behind us now and we look forward to enjoying our leisure.

Best wishes to you and all our old friends.

*God Bless*  
*Danny Ozanne*

*Morecambe, Lancs*

My thanks for the always welcome Governors' Newsletter, now in its new glamorous form. There is a great deal of work, thought and enthusiasm going into what is still a unique mine of information.

Although you do not require subs from widows of your former colleagues, it would be nice to think that we can show appreciation of the fact that we are still remembered (in the old days we were the unpaid part of the team), so I have much pleasure in sending a small donation towards the postage. With thanks and good wishes.

*Joan Bride*

*(It was very kind of you to send a donation, but honestly there is no need for you or any widow of former colleagues to do so. We now have funds enough to meet our needs. But thank you all the same. May I suggest that the one way our 'Lady friends' can help is to read our magazine and then occasionally drop a line to the Editor with all their news. We cannot ask for anything more - then we can all enjoy it. W.A.W.)*

*Chard, Somerset*

Thank you for all the Governors' Newsletters received. We have had much pleasure reading them. I am sorry for being so late in replying to your last letter. Yes, I do wish to become an Associate Member of the Prison Governors' Association. I return the form, duly completed, and apologise for the mistake. I also enclose a cheque for the Association funds and in appreciation for the Newsletters previously received.

Pleased to say May and I are very well. Keeping out of the doc's way and still enjoying retirement.

*Best wishes to all*  
*Jim MacGowan*

*Taverham, Norwich*

Receipt of the Winter Edition of Newsletter and of a first class diary on becoming an Associate Member of the Governors' Association, reminds me that I am in my tenth year of retirement. This is stressed by the fact that there are so many names in the Newsletter of people retiring of whom I have never heard, and of the Association's NEC there are again only three names which I recollect. How time does pass.

Of course, I do not consider myself as having retired because since leaving the department I have been and still am actively engaged in the private sector and have

probably worked harder and travelled more extensively than I ever did as a Governor. I keep fit and well. None of the Old Gentleman's complaints touched on by Roly Attrill in his penultimate paragraph of his most interesting letter in the last issue having caught up with me. I strongly recommend a second career if one can manage it.

I congratulate those who set up the Prison Governors' Association. I am sure it was a wise step. I personally was sorry that it became necessary to leave the NUCPS as the "Society" now is, but fully understand the reasons.

Nevertheless, over the years I received many kindnesses from the Society Officials and particularly during my overseas service it was nice to feel the strength of the Society wrapped around one. Some great names served as Branch Committee members in the old days - Lawton, Bainton, Clark, Bride, Gould, Davies, Timms and Les Lewis amongst them.

Lastly Arthur, congratulations to you on what the Newsletter has become. It was your idea and from its humble beginnings you have seen what it has developed to in its present format. It must have given you a great deal of satisfaction in achieving this and our thanks to you should be real and sincere.

Yours Aye  
Peter L James.

*(Many thanks, Peter, for your usual long and very interesting letter. I know we can look forward to getting your news and I wish more of our readers could find time to do likewise. Also my own personal 'thank you' for your kind words. My own personal satisfaction is that the Newsletter is continuing to flourish some eight years after I first started it. In latter years of course the main effort has come from Brendan, and without his valuable help I feel it would have ceased to exist a long time ago. So may I share your appreciation with him, and indeed others who have helped behind the scenes. Ted Cowper-Johnson (CJ) and Sid Powell, to name but two. W.A.W.)*

Ellesmere Port, South Wirral

My wife and I returned from ten weeks in Majorca to the usual pile of mail, amongst which was the R G Newsletter.

As usual it was good to read all the news and to see that the future of the Newsletter seems to be assured.

Whilst in Majorca we had cards from Lionel Steinhausen, Arthur Kearns and C O Alec Carson, all of whom and their wives seem to be "in the pink".

Regards to all old colleagues, retired or not.

Bert Jones.

Chippenham, Wilts

Thank you for the Retired Governors' Newsletter which my wife and I are very pleased to receive. Please convey our thanks to all concerned in its production and dispatch.

As you are aware, we retired from Sudbury in August 1973 after having been in the Service since November 1938. Having had to settle quickly into each place we served at, we soon settled into our small village and started enjoying the friendship here so freely offered.

Because of the need we became involved in activities. My wife started a toy making group, which made an average of £300 annually for the Church - I worked for the Church of England Children's Society and helped in many ways with my interests and activities: Church warden, Chairman of Village Hall, which means all repairs etc, frozen pipes and broken windows being the most annoying. I have kept the Sunday School going, which has fluctuated between a dozen and 33. I have been active with the Lyddington Bridge Hostel and am still Vice Chairman.

We still have a very happy retirement and on November 5th last we had our Golden Wedding Anniversary. We had a lovely time - hiring and having a buffet lunch in the Swindon Leisure Centre Link when a lot of our family, 72 of them, swam, skated, snookered etc from 11a.m. to 5p.m. We asked for no presents, but said if they would, they could join us in sending a donation to the Cancer Research Fund and our church. We had a surprise party and a church service on the Sunday, 6 November and friends from far and near came to this, 82 of them, and the party afterwards. Our friends and family donated in all £525.

Our garden continues to give us great pleasure and fresh vegetables, fruit and flowers, for us and many of our friends. The apple trees which I grafted three years before we retired not only were useful in a demonstration to some of the men at Sudbury, but gave us wind break, lovely blossom and much fruit, some of which lasts us through the year. Our bees have given us joy, honey and an excuse to give lectures and let me talk and meet others. The oil seed rape which is more than two miles away gave us 200lbs of honey. Our friends and family have enjoyed it and we have never sold any honey, except through charities, all through the 25 years we have kept them. This winter, the mildest we have ever known, has meant that a lot of the honey has been fed back to them as their cluster has not been so tightly maintained.

Thank you for reading this ramble, and thank you to all those for the job they are doing in the Service today in such difficulties. We sincerely hope that the time will come again when the emphasis can be put on training and the numbers will not dictate policy.

We would like to finish by saying hello and every happiness to all who have known us.

Best wishes  
Olive and Charles Miles.

*(Many thanks Charles for your very interesting letter. You both seem to lead active and very satisfying lives and long may this continue. I feel certain your many friends will enjoy reading of your activities as much as I have enjoyed typing them out for the printer. Before I 'sign off' may I take this opportunity of offering belated*

*congratulations to you and your wife on your Golden Wedding Anniversary. I do this on behalf of all your old colleagues and friends. W.A.W.)*

*Islèworth, Middlesex*

I was delighted to see the letter from "Rocky-Smith" in the last newsletter. It brought back happy memories of the visit Trudi and I made to Vancouver in 1981. Duncan Fairn had written to Rocky to say that we were coming and he regaled us with stories of the pre war service (as well as of his Canadian experience both correctional and as a member of their parole machinery.) One of the unexpected bonunes was that his brother Ted a member of the Probation Inspectorate with whom I had worked

was staying with them and joined in the story swapping.

I also noticed that Roland Attrill was enquiring about how new prisons got named. I am not an expert on this but I know that it involves consultation with both the Post Office and the local authority. There is often vehement local opposition to a name which can be directly associated with a particular village and this can be carried to the point of objecting to a feature from the Ordinance Survey Map (I think High Point is an example). In the case of Gartree, resort had to be made to an Anglo Saxon or medieval ecclesiastical district title.

*Terry Weiler*

*(Thank you Terry. I would welcome more readers stories about Service Life in the pre war era - we need more on the record. Editor)*

## APPOINTMENT OF MAGISTRATES

I remember one of my Governors showing concern that Governors could not be appointed Magistrates on retirement, so I wrote to the Lord Chancellor's Department for clarification and received this reply:

"In your letter of 8 December you asked about the restrictions on the appointment of prison governors as Justices of the Peace.

You asked first about age. In general, the Lord Chancellor will not appoint anyone over the age of 60 unless he has had previous judicial experience. Lord MacKay has recently indicated that he is prepared to make exceptions to this rule in particular circumstances - this would normally only be if an Advisory Committee was having difficulty in finding enough younger candidates. Most Advisory Committees look for candidates under the age of 55.

As to the question of work, all members of staff of a penal institution and their spouses are barred from appointment. This does not apply to staff working eg in Headquarters or Regional Offices, though in those cases Advisory Committees would be concerned about the nature of the individual's duties. The purpose of the rule is to exclude anyone whose work would conflict with or be incompatible with the duties of a magistrate.

If I can help any further, please let me know.

*Yours Sincerely*

*D A Bleach - Assistant Secretary of Commissions"*

## STRANGWAYS

Thank you particularly for best wishes from Lyn Davies and Arthur Coomes. Your photographs taken in 1967 and 1968 with staff are in place in a newly decorated F Wing, along with one from Norman Brown's time and one of the 125th Anniversary of the Prison taken in June 1988. We have a brand new hospital, opened in January 1989. I recently saw the old BBC film of the fifties featuring Gilbert Hair and Jack Beaumont. Some problems never change - Gilbert Hair was complaining about stray cats on the film, still a problem in the eighties!

## THE CARLISLE COMMITTEE

I asked David Atkinson, who served on the Committee, to give us his impressions of this experience - thank you David for this fascinating contribution:

*"In your letter of 23rd June (so long ago!) you asked me for a contribution to the Newsletter about my experiences as a member of Lord Carlisle's Parole Review Committee. I hope these following lines may do, and will be of some interest to someone!*

*We were, as you no doubt observed, "leaked" a week or two before the intended publications date, so that the Report finally landed with all the impact of a warmed-up suet pudding. Indeed the media, having already extracted what seemed to them the juicier morsels from the unauthorised version (and having by now focussed on more exciting stories) largely ignored the official publication altogether. It may in the end be no bad thing, since most of them got the emphasis wrong in what they did highlight, and because all the real issues will have to be gone through many times yet before, and if, the Report's recommendations ever reach the stage of legislation.*

*Like all products of committees made up of people with wide-ranging interests, the Report is a compromise. Firstly it is a compromise with a sentencing system we were not required or permitted to make recommendations about - other than to point out, as we do, that the success of our proposals will depend on the judiciary "playing ball". For if they do not, as again we stress in the Report, some much more drastic review of sentencing practice itself really will become necessary, unless prison overcrowding is to reach stratospheric proportions. To put it another way, our proposals will not increase the prison population (that was axiomatic from the start) and should actually reduce it; marginally if sentencing maintains the present status quo, much more drastically if sentencers respond in the way we hope and expect them to do, and in proportion to, the extent of that response. Secondly, the recommendations are a compromise between the various commitments of those who formed the committee - between those, if you like, who saw the task as pragmatically to bring realism (and perhaps some plain honesty) into a system which over the years and under many pressures had largely fallen into disrepute with public, practitioners and "clients", and who, whilst at least equally concerned to restore fairness and equity, were less willing to concede changes that might extend the custodial sanction even marginally, merely for the sake of improving public credibility.*

*I did ask myself, of course, as an individual member, what a prison governor might hope to see out of it. One thing, it seemed to me, would have to be a system of custody and release that was simple to understand and less embarrassing to defend, to have sentences which actually bore a closer resemblance to what was said in the courts, and which would be effective for the whole of their length. (Thus, the basis concept that a "sentence of imprisonment" means half in prison and the other half - subject to discipline and, in the case of the most serious crimes, to an assessment of public risk - in the community, under supervision and liable to recall, had much to commend it.) Another would be to reduce the enormous burden of paper and effort currently expended on parole for short - termers, which is so wasteful of resources and disproportionate to the end result. A third aim would be to restore the (to me anyway) pretty important principles severely damaged by the "restricted policy" of 1983 and thus eliminate a lot of the nugatory reviewing and resulting cynicism which riddles and largely ruins now the fair operation of parole for long-term offenders. Again, it seemed to me that it was high time we faced up to the hoary old issues of providing reasons for parole refusal, and open reporting.*

*I won't bore readers (if any) with an analysis of the Report's recommendations, and how far they may go towards meeting these objectives, but my personal view is that they go quite a long way, within the overall constraints of the judicial policies and systems we have to operate, and that if they were adopted I, as a governor, would have found them workable and a good deal more honest and comfortable (not to say economical) to live with than present arrangements. But everyone will, no doubt, read the Report and decide that for themselves. Only time, and the politicians, will eventually tell.*

*Working with the committee was great fun, if at times frustrating. We saw and heard a vast number of individuals who had stimulating (and often conflicting) points to make. We visited a great number of penal establishments - for me, again, an educative experience - and probation offices. We spoke with prisoners and Y.O.s and were variously exhorted or reviled. We spent a hectic eight days in North America: in retrospect a patchwork quilt which could be the subject of another article in itself; impressions ranging from Death Row and the Electric Chair in deepest Tennessee to the ultra-modern technology of advance high security at Minnesota's Oak Park Heights. We discussed electronic tagging with probation officers who were operating it (in a very small way). We witnessed parole hearings run with a homespun authoritarian frankness that left one not knowing whether to laugh or cry. We pored over massed statistics.*

*We were blessed with a remarkable Chairman. Mark Carlisle, as a former Home Office minister, knows all the ropes and all the pitfalls. He is a realist who is also a man of compassion and intellectual honesty. He held us together when we might have split on certain fundamental issues, and kept us firmly but with humour trained, through all the massed evidence, on the essential themes. We were also, and equally, happy with our superb secretary, William Fittall (now departed to take up the reins in that thorniest of Prison Department Divisions, P6, and therefore likely to be much better known to more people before long.) As a committee member one*



*could not have asked for more, and for someone like me, already sunk three years deep into so-called "retirement", it was a privilege to have been invited to serve.*

*Finally, perhaps, how well did my old Service come out of what was, in some important respects, an examination of its stewardship? On the whole, I think, not badly. There were a few establishments where things not wholly constructive were said, a few where the standards of work presented clearly did not impress. Once or twice I didn't feel terribly proud. But they were a tiny minority, and in many more cases the high level of skill and dedication shown by all staff predominated and shone through the difficulties, frustrations and shortages, arousing admiration - and sometimes indignation - in the committee members. We met few senior Governors, which was a pity. And though the team from the Governors' Branch acquitted themselves orally with great distinction and made a most favourable impression on the committee, they were not backed up by any seriously-researched and cohesively presented statement of policy. Considering the major role which prisons have to play in any parole system, this probably only highlights the difficulty governors have always found in establishing a proper professional base from which to respond on policy issues.*

*Finally (finally) it was a great pleasure to me to travel about again and meet so many old colleagues, and so many younger people now occupying senior positions and doing well. I can only hope the time and interest they devoted to receiving and enlightening us will not be wasted.*

*With Kindest regards  
David Atkinson.*

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## **EXTRACTS FROM THE PRISON SERVICE NEWS**

We again include a selection of items which have appeared in the Prison Service News since the last issue of the Newsletter.

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Current developments: The Prison Board has promulgated its five key priorities for 1989/90: full use of accommodation; maintenance of the estate; workshops and farms; activities for prisoners; and corporate objectives for establishments.

Separate studies are continuing into the possibilities of private sector involvement in (a) running remand centres and (b) the escorting of remand prisoners to court and court duties.

A feasibility study is to be carried out to assess the potential benefit of conducting remand hearings via live video links between magistrates courts and prisons and remand centres.

The go-ahead has been given for the installation of integral sanitation in 27 establishments.

The first comprehensive guide to the needs of the main non-Christian faiths has been issued to all establishments.

A six months study of the organisation and location of central and regional headquarters is to be completed by July.

Distinguished Visitor: The Princess Royal who has visited establishments all over the country - Cardiff prison being the most recent - has just paid a visit to headquarters staff in Cleland house.

New establishments: The first purpose built Special

Secure unit opened inside Full Sutton in December. It reinforces the special units at Leicester and Parkhurst and provides maximum security for up to eight prisoners representing an exceptionally high risk.

A new hospital at Manchester was opened in January. It provides 56 beds and cost £1.4 m. The laundry team at Manchester has won the Elton trophy, awarded annually for the best performance by a prison service industrial facility.

A creche, staffed by local volunteers, has been created in one corner of the visits room at Winchester. Camp Hill and Parkhurst are hoping to follow suit.

Staff housing at Stocken Hall has been awarded a commendation by the Civic Trust in their 1988 awards scheme.

Parkhurst prison opened on 26 December 1838. Newsletter readers who were not around then may be interested to know that it originally housed children until they were old enough (14) for their sentence of transportation to be carried out and then, for six years, women prisoners before it became a male convict prison in 1969.

Sport: The Prison Service Rugby XV defeated the French Prison Service 29-0 at Newbold Revel. North region retained their title in the sixth Prison Service Inter-Regional Volley ball Championship at Featherstone.

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## 1989 PERRIE LECTURES

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# THE QUALITY OF PRISON REGIMES

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Newbold Revel College, Nr. Rugby  
28th September

***Speakers:***

Brendan O'Friel - *Governor of Manchester Prison*

Prof. Roy King & Dr. Kathleen McDermott  
*University College of North Wales, Bangor*

***Cost:*** £15 (includes coffee, lunch and tea)

***Details and application forms from:***

Trevor Williams, Head of Custody  
Rudgate Prison, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7AZ

## ***IN BRIEF . . .***

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- ***Geoff Lister*** is back from Mauritius
  - ***Leslie Portch*** was After Dinner speaker at a Governors Conference at Windermere in April
  - ***Garry Dadds*** has been appointed Regional Director South East in succession to ***Colin Honey*** who is retiring
  - ***Bill Martin*** - our Treasurer - retires from Leeds and is replaced by ***John Jones***
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