

The Retired Prison Governors

In co-operation with: The Prison Governors Association

NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

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Editorial Team.

Readers of the last issue of the Newsletter are aware that after twenty six years as the editor of this publication that Brendan has decided to retire. Brendan made his views well known to your committee well before announcing it in the last edition of the Newsletter, giving your committee time to consider the long term future of these publications. It was decided at a recent meeting that to ensure continuity of publication the best way forward would be to form an editorial team. I am pleased to inform you that such a team has been created consisting of myself ably assisted by Jenny Adams Young and Paul Laxton. Readers will be pleased to learn that Brendan will still be contributing both his "People" and "Networking" articles in this and future Newsletter publications.

Long Service Medal

I know from the large amount of correspondence I have received that many of you are disappointed that despite having served more than the qualifying years of service, that you by virtue of your retirement date, are not able to receive the Long Service Medal. I note that a few years ago a lapel badge was issued to persons who did National Service. It does not matter when someone left the armed forces; just so long as they have served the qualifying period of time, they are upon application, sent the badge. Indeed medals continue to be awarded to ex military personnel for services as far back as World War 2.

For those of you who would wish to possess a Long Service Medal there is another way to obtain one. Within a few days of them being issued I observed that they were, and still are obtainable for as little as £10 each.

The editorial team wish to thank all who submitted items to this Newsletter

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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Prison Governors/, Retired prison Governors or those of the Editor.

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Newsletter Editorial Team.... Mick Roebuck, Paul Laxton, Jenny Adams – Young, Letters Editor.....Bob Duncan

Social Secretaries.... Charles Smith, Senior Member.... Brendan O’Friel, PSPC Representatives....Charles Smith Paul Laxton.

More advice from your Treasurer

Question

Do I have to incur expensive solicitor’s fees to apply for grant of probate on my late mother’s estate, or would you recommend any of the fixed-fee services available elsewhere?

Reply

According to Saga’s research, 90% of people use solicitors when applying for probate. But most solicitors only offer a ‘full administration’ service for which they charge up to 5% of the estate’s value - and with an average bill of £9000, this is a large bite out of any inheritance. Saga Legal Services charge just 1% for full administration of an estate but, if all you require is a grant of probate, it also offers a fixed-cost grant-only service from £500. This will put paid to surprise bills.

Contact Saga Legal Services on 0845 300 5337; [saga.co.uk/legal services](http://saga.co.uk/legal%20services)

RPGA-MAIL REGISTER

The e-mail register has now been operational for over 9 years and has proven itself to be an effective means of rapid communication between members.

Joining the RPGA does not automatically place you on the register. If you would like to join the ever growing register please send an email from the address you wish to have registered to Mick Roebuck email: michael.roebuck2@btopenworld.com

E-mail addresses may not be passed to third parties without permission from the person(s) registered to that specific e-mail address.

Communications to members via the email system are sent out at a rate of at least three per month, if you are on the register and not receiving these regular updates please resubmit your details to Mick Roebuck

A Thought or Two



By John J Ramwell

It has been a while since last I wrote for our Newsletter so here comes a thought or two.

For quite some time I have been 'chattering' – I aspire to be a member of the chattering class – about the idea that our government should encourage those of us with larger family homes to down size.

My wife, Jen, and I own our own home from which the children have now flown. Some five years or so ago we decided to swap our place for something smaller and we decluttered and decorated. In the event, we decided that the loss of equity and the expense and hassle involved made it less than worth the effort. So here we stay, albeit with a little tinge of guilt as we realise how difficult it is for young families today.

For the time being then, we stay put, but my thoughts on this matter were re-awakened when I lay in bed listening to the R4 'Today' programme tell us of the Intergenerational Foundation and their view that those of us with more than two spare bedrooms are guilty of 'house hoarding'. Apparently there are more than 18 million of us in this position. My tinges of guilt grew a little. I can guess at how difficult it is to bring up a young family in cramped conditions.

Then I began thinking of the other reasons we are currently being faced with that could or, perhaps should make us feel guilty. There has been much in the media over the last few years about how much older we are living and what this is costing society in care and pensions for the elderly. Now we are being told we are taking up too much space.

Initially it is tempting to go on the defence. To claim we have worked all our lives for our retirement. We have brought up children and it is their turn to make their way in the world. We had to make the effort and now it is up to them.

There is little doubt that we have had it better than our parents. The standard of living and the job security we enjoyed over the years far surpassed that experienced

by previous generations. For that we should be grateful though I do suspect that many have taken this state of affairs rather for granted.

Now we see the situation going into reverse. I do not believe that generations coming up behind us are ever, by and large, going to have it better than we did. It might be tough growing old today but I suspect nothing like as tough as paying off educational fees, finding and keeping a job with meaningful career opportunities and putting a roof over head, food on the table whilst remaining ahead of inflation.

So I beg the question. Would you rather be old or rather be young in this day and age.

I know my answer.

Even though the young are still basically very resilient and many of them will have an exciting future, there remain many who will seriously under achieve through lack of opportunity. No amount of resilience will cope with the emotions this state of affairs brings in its wake.

We did not have to face mounting debt within an economic global down turn. We did not worry about energy provision, climate change, over population and pollution. We have not been over concerned about dwindling resources, about depreciating education and health care standards, government corruption and little hope for the future.

We also missed the life before the government provision of cradle to the grave security, (read 'The Classic Slum' by Robert Roberts if you want reminding just how tough life could really be). We missed the horrors of WW2, I even (but only just) missed conscription. We had an expectation that, barring any accident, we would have a job for life with an improving life style and hope for the future. For us there were no short term contracts, delayed and contributory pensions and a global economic crisis which, even if resolved (in your dreams!) will hardly provide the much needed growth.

I ask again; would you change places with a teenager. Not quite the choice it once was. To grow old wondering whether there might be enough in the pot to care adequately for us or to be at the threshold again wondering at what chances the world has to offer.

What's my take on this question? I will stay just where I am and continue to hope that I can grow old gracefully. On the basis that the good die young I may have quite a while to go!!



Recollections of Detached Duty

By Jim Blakey

I joined the prison Service in 1959 and, being single, was required to live in bachelor quarters. After about six months, still very much a 'sprog' officer I was sent on detached duty to Gringley Camp, a satellite of Hatfield where I had been posted. My duties were very simple. They were to supervise the farm party of twenty-plus Borstal boys working one of the farms.

I was collected from my bachelor's quarter at Hatfield at 0630 on the Monday by lorry, taken to Gringley, deposited my 'gear' in a bachelor quarter there, and at 0730 counted the party on to a lorry, jumping up on the back myself, and the week started.

My job was simply to walk the farm, three miles from Gringley, and count borstal boys, making sure that the roll was correct.

At lunchtime we gathered in a tin shed with a pot-bellied stove and, having again checked my numbers, ate the "food" sent down from Gringley. I could have mine when the 'boys' had been served theirs.

At 4.45 we mounted the lorry again, returned to Gringley, and, after dropping off the party and having a bath, I had "food" sent over to my bachelor quarter from the kitchen.

This lasted from the Monday to the Friday. After returning the party to Gringley on the Friday I was picked up by the Hatfield lorry and returned to the comfort of my own bachelor quarter.

What extra payment did I receive for my period of detached duty?. To the best of my knowledge - nothing. I was being housed by Gringley and I was being fed from the kitchen. Overtime payment?. Not likely. I was on a 42 hour week. Any hours worked over that was paid as time-in-lieu - taken as and when there were "spare" staff.

Further recollection of Detached Duty

By Paul Laxton



My first taste of detached duty away from my home establishment, HMDC Werrington House, was at Lancaster Castle in November 1984. The reason that we were there was that a major trial was being held at the Crown Court in another part of the castle complex. Although Lancaster was a training prison a discrete part would provide a remand function during major trials. The main advantage was avoiding risky escorts. Just recently we have again seen how vulnerable escorts can be to a determined armed gang. As I recall it was a two week stint travelling up from Stoke-On-Trent after my shift on Sunday. After completing 12 days work at the castle I returned to Werrington to "weekend on" in the same way as I had left. Finally after 26 consecutive days of duty I got a couple of rest days. Of course this was not unusual in those days and we can all remember the bandits who would work every day in the calendar if they could. Pre Fresh Start, loyalty was bought and paid for.

I had been to the castle before as a tourist but obviously not into the prison. As the sprog I got typical junior jobs. Much of the time I was detailed wall patrol which involved both internal and external patrols during the shift so the overcoat and gloves were on almost permanently. I'd

already learned at Werrington that junior officers did outside parties in winter and cleaners in summer so it came as no surprise. I did get a stint on the gate, just opening and closing the inner wicket as people came through which was pretty mind numbing. Strangely enough I was once detailed Assist Seg and it was an experience I did not forget in a hurry. The seg officer decided he would disappear to the betting shop one morning and didn't get back before Governor's rounds. Inside I was terrified that either the Governor or the Chief would ask where my colleague was but they didn't. I just gave them the roll, I think it was only three, and opened them up in turn. As I recall it was all over almost as quickly as a Pierrepont execution. Each prisoner was asked if he was all right, the answer was "yes" and the chief nodded to me to bang the prisoner up. He didn't need to nod the second and third time. As for my colleague he didn't turn a hair when he got back.

PAUL LAXTON

Editors Note.

I know that many of you, our readers spent many happy days on detached duty especially in the London Prisons and Courts. These experiences along with such things as the Morrison Hour, Tutor Organisers, Dartmoor Heavies, Chief Officers, Sleep Duties are things that we all knew so well, but are things of the past which will if not written about be forgotten in the mists of time. So why not recount some of your memories and experiences by submitting an article about them for future editions of the Newsletter.

Prison Research

Yvonne Jewkes (Professor of Criminology, University of Leicester) and Helen Johnston (University of Hull) are doing research on English prisons during the two World Wars. Although times of great change and disruption, the war years are largely forgotten history and they would like to collate and record a broad range of information including official records and reports, biographies, letters and memories. Among the topics they are seeking information about are bombings and evacuations of prison buildings, rises and falls in prison populations, changes in regimes, stories about prisoners and prison officers who served in the armed forces and memories of everyday life for prisoners, staff and governors during both wars. They are interested in hearing from anyone who has anything that might add to the research or who simply has a story to tell. In the first instance they can be emailed or contacted by post (or via Brendan O'Friel) but they may be able to visit you in person if that is convenient. They can be contacted at: Yvonne Jewkes, Department of Criminology, University of Leicester, LE1 7QA yj25@le.ac.uk; and/or Helen Johnston, Centre for Criminology & Criminal Justice, University of Hull, HU6 7RX H.Johnston@hull.ac.uk

REFLECTIONS ON RETIREMENT



By Paul Laxton

Many colleagues, particularly those like me who were pre-Fresh Start prison officers, will remember the day they approached their boss, letter in hand, conveying that final significant memorandum, the one that announced the intention to retire. Now of course with no fixed retirement age, the vast majority will be able to go at the time of their choosing, family circumstances always permitting. My turn arrived in July 2010. I had been shifted to the Siberian power station of HQ and knew I would never be operational again. I hated the commuting and was putting on weight. It was the right decision to go but it was irrevocable, there was no way back. I can't speak for others but in some ways it's actually more emotional than your farewell party. It's a strange mixture of relief, elation and emptiness. You have given notice of getting off the treadmill; you are opting out of the rat race and abandoning the familiar, the comfortable, and the comforting.

In my case I was actually able to fix my final day of service as the final day of PGA Conference 2010. It allowed me to depart the service on as close as it gets to my own terms and in the forum where I felt genuinely valued and appreciated. The PGA would have the last word, not one of cadre of Senior Civil Servants who had done so much to block my career. I had joined the Prison Service on 8 May 1984, the anniversary of VE Day (and also Gary Glitter's birthday) and departed on the anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. I can safely say that there were many battles in between, usually with authority. It felt like my career had gone in a flash. One moment you are sitting on a chair strategically placed in what was originally the execution shed at HMP Stafford being photographed at the start of your service, and the next moment you plunge through the trap door into a void called retirement. Well, what is retirement? It's that part of your life that follows work and precedes impotence, senility and death. The fortunate ones amongst us will miss out the first two stages. As I've said on many occasions to impending retirees the trick is to draw more years pension that were spent working in HM Prison Service. I therefore need to survive and prosper until the spring of 2037, hopefully not expiring before the Grand National is run. Fortunately for me a potentially significant health problem, a B12 deficiency was picked up a routine blood test shortly after I retired. It explained a few physical issues, not least the dog tiredness that plagued me in my last twelve months which I simply put down to the busy professional life I led. One can only speculate how soon it would have been picked up had I carried on working.

At first retirement feels like being on leave. We relocated from Newhaven on the South Coast to Huddersfield in West Yorkshire. There was a major move to manage, not to mention a major refurbishment. For many years Mrs Laxton had been thwarted in her desires for new kitchens, new carpets and top to bottom redecorations. I had always argued and the point was accepted with good grace that there was no point spending serious money on a home we would not live in for much more than a couple of years. This time there was no holding back. My lump sum shrank on a daily basis. It seemed like our new home was invaded by tradesmen. When that was done it was time for a holiday in Lanzarote, and when we got back it was winter. Then there was the run up to Christmas followed by the festive fortnight itself and the sheer unalloyed pleasure of not having to bargain for a sequence of days off from Boxing Day by working Christmas Day and being on call New Years Eve. Never having made it substantively to in-charge Governor, I was never able to go to New Zealand for three weeks in December and January, leaving my Deputy in Charge. Not that I am complaining really. The pensionable nature of substitution pay turned out to be worth £1400 per year on my pension, inflation proofed for life. His leave

card was very good for my pocket. In terms of boosting your pension being a Deputy Governor for a good chunk of your final three years was hard to beat. Sadly for future generations cover pay will be far less valuable than the old system of substitution pay.

I think it finally dawned on me on 3 January, after the New Year Bank Holiday weekend was over, that I was actually retired. This is the point where you have to start finding a new purpose in life. You cannot do that until you recognise that old life is gone and if you do encounter your old life again, for example at PGA Conference which I the privilege of attending for life, it will be as a spectator. If you are to be a mover and shaker again, it will be outside of the service. Gradually I have fashioned a new life with new routines. Belatedly I joined the Campaign for Real Ale, (CAMRA) and within a year I have found myself as Branch Chairman. In one sense its mixing pleasure with pleasure and it's as busy you make it, but handling volunteers is very different to handling subordinate employees. Indeed it can be like herding cats. I have been elected to the Committee of the RPGA and am part of the new editorial board of this newsletter. Regular readers of The Key when it was under my editorship may be alarmed, but the Newsletter serves a very different readership and a very different purpose, and this I readily recognise. The PGA asked me to chair Standing Orders Committee at the 2011 Conference, and have asked me again for 2012. The main work is in September, putting the order paper together. On the leisure front I visit the gym/pool four times a week and this keeps me in good physical order, just as well with my fondness of good beer and a good curry, often together. I've got more time to enjoy cricket, go to the races and indulge a more recent sporting passion acquired some 17-18 years ago when I first lived in Yorkshire, Rugby League. Mrs Laxton and I are season ticket holders at Super League club, Huddersfield Giants. In 2012 I intend to become a member of Lancashire County Cricket Club. People like me are allowed in the members' enclosure these days.

So how does all this add up to a purpose in life? Well it probably doesn't. However, about eight years ago I rediscovered my passion for writing when I first wrote an angry article for The Key. On becoming its editor I dipped my pen in acid on a regular basis. I made a half hearted attempt to start a book some twenty years ago, but home, family and career were making other demands. I flatter myself that the ability to write is my one significant talent. Others may disagree violently. For some years I have had a bold project in mind, for what is life without ambition, rather than simply writing the memoirs of an obscure Deputy Governor, which would have zero appeal to any publisher on the basis that it would have even less to potential readers. The working title is "My Generation: How We Trashed Our Inheritance." As you might guess the theme is the baby boomers in power and how that power has been both wasted and abused. It would be an extreme vanity to describe it has a history, although obviously I have had to do some research. Primarily it is an exercise in flagellation, a polemic, a rant, the kind of book I hope Paul Johnson would read and review. Will it see the light of day? Is it a vainglorious folly? I don't know, but since fleshing out the chapter structure in January 2011, I have one-finger typed over 140,000 words and reckon it is about 90% finished. Usually I only write intensively only one day a week. I need time to read and time to remember that I am retired, need to relax and enjoy home and family time. The time is fast approaching to find a publisher, and almost as terrifyingly, an editor. As you will have observed I suffer from verbosity. My purpose in life now is to become a published author, not least because I have other ideas that I wish to see adorned in print. So if any retired governor reading this has any idea where you get an editor and how you get published, please let me know. My public is waiting for me...

Further extracts from the “ Eighteenth Report of the Prison Inspectors”

WAKEFIELD HOUSE OF CORRECTION FOR THE WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE

(Visited 14th and 15th October 1852)

Number confined this day:-

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------|------|--------|-----------|
| West Riding Prisoners | 483 | 91 | 574 |
| Government Convicts | 414 | 0 | 414 |
| | | | Total 988 |

The number of commitments to the West Riding prison was – males 3,098, females , 679 ; total 3,777 showing a decrease of 154 males and an increase of 81 females as compared with the commitments in the preceding year.

The daily average number was,- males 503.5, females 93.8 total 597.3, besides the 400 Government convicts.

The commitments for vagrancy and assaults had increased while there was a decrease in the numbers committed for felony.

About six tenths of the prisoners committed belong to the district.

There have been no alterations either in the construction or discipline of the prison since my last inspection.

The buildings were in good order.

The drainage of the separate prison is good, but I consider the ventilation of some of the cells insufficient, especially where the prisoners are working at any laborious employment.

There was much dust in some of the cells where prisoners were employed separating and preparing cocoanut fibre for the mat makers. The Governor undertook to remedy the evil.

The drainage and ventilation of the old prison and the dark cells is defective.

The general health of the prison is represented to be “satisfactory.” In the later end of the month of July, “English cholera” and “diarrhoea” were prevalent in the neighbourhood, and the prison did not escape; several prisoners were attacked with the disease, but the epidemic did not continue long.

The surgeon of the West R Wing says:- “ The majority of the diseases that have prevailed have been various forms of scrofula, slight feverish colds, chest affections, boils and carbuncles, syphilis, and infectious cutaneous complaints; the latter always adding materially to the aggregate number of hospital cases.

320 prisoners were admitted to the infirmary during the year, the daily average being 20.8. The proportion of sick to the daily average number of prisoners has been 3.5 percent. The number of deaths (five in the last year) has been less than usual, showing the proportion of mortality as rather less than 1 per cent.

Two cases of insanity have occurred which were removed to an asylum by order of the Secretary of State. In both cases I had reason to believe from their previous history that there was some mental peculiarity previous to their committal.

There were 6 deaths on the convict side of the prison, and 4 convicts were removed before the expiration of the usual period of separate confinement.

The surgeon says;-

“I consider the moistening of the air admitted into the cells and the ventilation of the gas burners (by means of a funnel to carry the air from the burners directly into the extraction flues) to be very necessary.

He adds:-

“ I some time since made certain suggestions with reference to this subject, which I believe met with the approval of the Secretary of State; and I should be glad to see them carried into effect”.

At the time of my visit there were 24 prisoners sick on the West Riding side, and 18 in the convict prison.

The chaplain’s duties continue to be conducted in the same satisfactory manner. The chaplain of the West Riding prison spends from five to seven hours a day in the prison. He sees the prisoners frequently, both in class and in private, and superintends the schools.

He says;-

“The schoolmasters are well qualified for their office, and discharge their duties with efficiency and diligence. Many of the prisoners are not so attentive as might be desired, but upon the whole it may be said that their progress is satisfactory, and some improve very well and are thankful for the instruction given.”

The chaplain of the convicted department says:-

“In general the prisoners make the very best use of their privileges, but I consider the time at their disposal for mental and moral improvement too short, considering that the system is one of moral reformation, and that the chief means recognised as effectual is moral instruction”.

He states that the schoolmasters are well qualified, and that they discharge their duties to his satisfaction. The duties performed by the schoolmasters of the convict prison are as follows:- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, seven hours of cellular instruction to the prisoners who cannot read, or who read imperfectly. The remainder of Wednesday is spent by the schoolmasters in writing up the journal and character book, and other office duties. On Saturday the chaplain catechizes the prisoners in class, the prisoners books are exchanged, and other occasional duties discharged.

During the year there were, on the convict side, 216 candidates for Holy Communion, of whom-

Withdrew from lectures75

Deferred by chaplain.....31

Admitted110

216

The chaplain states that he has received a very interesting account from a friend (who made enquires on the spot) respecting 109 convicts from Wakefield prison, who were embarked upon the “Hashemy”, “Mount

Stewart “, “Elphinstone”, and “Adelaide,” all of whom were landed (those by the first named ship at Sydney, the others at Port Phillip) in the year 1849. These prisoners had all been 3 years in the colony. And report of their conduct was as follows:-

Very good 77, Good 11, Conditionally Pardoned 1, Indifferent 6, Bad 6, Very Bad 6, Reconvicted 2 Total 109.

The general conduct of the prisoners in prison is represented to be good. The number of punishments with the West Riding prisoners was 784; with the Government convicts, 194. Misconduct was confined, for most of the part, to a few prisoners only. The chief offences were neglect of work and attempts to communicate. Prisoners sentenced to hard labour are worked on the tread wheel; they are also employed mat-making, weaving, tailoring, shoemaking, joiners’ work, and in the ordinary labour of the prison. The profit on work done for the sale during the year was:-

| | £ | s | d |
|---------------------------|-------|----|-------|
| In the West Riding prison | 2,703 | 11 | 5 1/2 |
| In the convict prison | 1,967 | 9 | 6 |

The estimated value of work done for the former prison was £208 6s 6 d for the latter £26 6s 3d. The net cost per prisoner, exclusive of any charge for rent or repairs, was county prisoners £11 19s 7d. Government convicts £14 8s 2d.

[HANSARD 1803–2005](#) → [1900s](#) → [1906](#) → [February 1906](#) → [26 February 1906](#) → [Commons Sitting](#) → [QUESTIONS IN THE HOUSE.](#)

Pentonville Prison—Governor's Salary.

HC Deb 26 February 1906 vol 152 c779779

§MR. LEA (St. Pancras, E.)

I beg to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances was Major O. Davies, a half-pay Army officer, appointed the new Governor of Model Prison, Pentonville; what amount does he receive from the Army, and what is his salary as governor of this prison; and whether he will consider the desirability of appointing civilians to such posts.

§MR. HERBERT GLADSTONE

Major Davies was appointed Governor of Pentonville Prison in the ordinary course of promotion, having been appointed to the Prison service in 1894, and having served with credit as Deputy Governor of Pentonville and Governor of four smaller prisons successively. He is on the retired list and draws an Army pension of £200, and his salary as Governor, which is reduced on account of his Army pension, is £624 16s. It is the practice already to "consider the desirability" of appointing civilians to the Prison service, and at present there are forty-one civilians in charge of prisons, and only twenty-nine naval or military officers.



Clicker's corner

By Mick Roebuck

Password

With so many of us now using on line banking along with other on line financial services it is prudent to remind members that it would be a good idea for them to store such pass words and user names, they use for these services, alongside those documents they have put safely aside for those who will be dealing with their estate.

I know several people who are currently experiencing difficulty in obtaining information in respect of online banking accounts. These difficulties, which come at a time of stress, would easily have been overcome if usernames and passwords had been left by the deceased in his/her effects.

Are You Missing Out

I have attempted, in past editions of the Newsletter, to convince those of you who are not on line to do so as quickly as possible. If the promise that opening up a new world of knowledge and communication does not convince you, then perhaps a recent article in the money section of the Daily Mail will. It stated that millions of people in Britain are being left hundreds of pounds worse off because they do not have access to the internet.

Not only do online savings accounts offer greater rates of interest but many other companies give better than high street deals when purchasers buy services and goods on line. The advantage of being able to check prices on your computer against those in the high street, get better deals with your utility suppliers by submitting your own meter

readings, get paperless billing etc. etc. really does mean that the outlay incurred when purchasing an IT system is an investment to save you money.

File Opening.

I am often contacted by users who cannot open files sent to them. The reason for this as I have said on numerous previous occasions is probably because their systems do not have the appropriate software installed.

There is now a file tool available to download which will resolve most of these problems. www.fileopener.com is a free tool which once loaded onto your computer should resolve most if not all of your problems. It is capable of recognising over 75 different file formats, enough methinks for most people's needs.

Alas it only works on Windows XP, Vista and 7.

Useful websites

Readers of my articles will already know how much I like to promote useful but more importantly free applications, especially those which offer huge discounts or better still products for nothing. If like me you think the same then you might well find www.freebiesiteuk.co.uk

just the place for you to visit. Offering a range of free items and discounts on food, toiletries, electrical goods it's a website well worthy of being bookmarked.

Whilst most RPGA members residing in the UK will be eligible for free prescriptions some of you may

have friends or family who still have to pay for their prescriptions. If they have to pay for lots of them, then make them aware of <http://bit.ly/getppc283> The site is run by the NHS and for one off fees of £29.10p for 3 months or £104 for a full year users will receive all their prescriptions for that one off payment for the period of time they have signed up for. Prescriptions are currently charged at £7.40 so a few moments with a calculator will enable you to work out if this is a worthwhile enterprise or not.

Keeping on the health theme for this next item, not many people are aware that the NHS operates a "Chose and Book" service which gives you the facility to select your own clinic or hospital appointments, at the clinic or hospital of your choice. Cancellations and appointments changes can also be made. The site can often arrange your appointment quicker than your GP surgery. You need to obtain a reference number from your doctor but once you have that the site is extremely simple to use. Why not have a look at www.chooseandbooknhs.uk

For those of you not yet aware once you reach the age of 70 you will be required to renew your driving licence. Once again this task can also be done on line at <http://bit.ly/licence283> There are a few hoops you have to jump through but the procedure is straight forward enough and will save you the time and effort of standing in a Post Office queue.

www.fixmystreet.com is also a url worth bookmarking. It allows you by entering in your postcode to report problems to your local council which requires their attention. It covers a variety of different problems from faulty street light, graffiti, abandoned vehicles, fly tipping dog fouling etc.

My final freebie download is a basic programme to enable you to print envelopes on your computer.

<http://www.yasdc.com/downloads.php> Do make sure that you download the programme at the bottom of the page marked Non US Domestic/ International.

Sleep Mode.

There are many who believe that putting their computers into sleep mode saves electricity, and many users I know place their computers in sleep mode overnight. The saving of electricity is not factually true and whilst you can access your system in only a few moments from sleep mode, you should only use it for short periods as sleep mode requires a constant supply of electricity to maintain your systems memory.

How you use your PC is a matter entirely for your good self but if I am going to be away from mine for more than half an hour I turn mine off.

Having once read that leaving a system in sleep mode overnight can use up to 12 Watts of electricity I try to ensure that I am doing my bit for the planet and also my wallet.

Warning

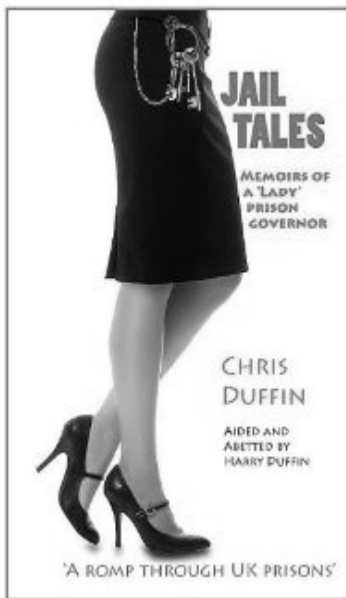
There are several programmes around at the moment which offer to scan your hard disc and retrieve passwords you may have forgotten. These programmes do work but what some don't tell you when you download software, is that, before they will release the recovered passwords there is now a charge for the service. This fee can be as much as £20.

I, no doubt like many of you, forget the occasional password, should this happen to you then most password protected sites, subject to you having the same email address, will let you re-set to a new password. Forgotten passwords only become a problem if they are passwords you have set up to access your computer systems.

Finally

If the memory on your computer is getting rather full, you can always free it up by transferring some files to a memory stick and then deleting them from your PC.

This method is easier and cheaper than installing extra memory.



Jail Tales

An insight into the world of a prison governor

As the first woman governor into HMP Strangeways and the notorious Dartmoor Prison, Governor Chris Duffin was a ground-breaker. In 'Jail Tales' she recounts some of the many stories and incidents from her twenty-year career both as a lowly 'screw' and as a prison governor. Whether it's flying out of the UK with a briefcase full of class A drugs, talking to the BBC News in her nightie, displaying a naked hunk's willy on her office wall, or having Myra Hindley as her tea-lady, these tales will amuse, entertain and definitely change your view of life behind bars.

Jail tales is a light hearted look at some of the things we who worked in the service accepted as the everyday norm and is available from Amazon

- **Paperback:** 86 pages
- **Publisher:** Cumulus Publishing Limited (9 Nov 2011)
- **Language** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0473199394
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0473199395

Message from the Chair,



Since its foundation the RPGA has developed its role in response to and for the benefit of its members.

The areas focused on by your committee revolve around pensions, retirement, communications with members and professional bodies, diaries and social events aimed at giving retired Governors a chance to exchange experiences and ,yes, recall some of their career memories.

The Newsletter and email system so diligently run and managed by Mick Roebuck and, until recently by Brendon Ofriel, allow those with an ongoing interest in the "old firm" to keep up to date. This is not for everyone of course as is the case of a key event the annual reunion which despite excellent work by past committees has declined to the point where it is no longer financially viable. I can see why this is as the Prison Service has changed so much over the years and contact and interaction between Governors across the Service is much less now than before. However should members wish us to return to a similar event in the future we will be happy to assist or arrange.

In the meantime I want to encourage members that can to attend our new arrangements for the RPGA AGM which is due to take place on the 16th October at Newbold Revel. Details of the AGM are given elsewhere in the Newsletter.

This will not only be a chance to contribute to the RPGA's future but also a chance to meet other retired Governors and see Newbold again.

We all look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the AGM.

Graham Smith

Lancaster Castle Handover

Changing hands: Lancaster Castle was a prison for 60 years until 2011

The former HMP Lancaster Castle site was officially handed over to the Duchy of Lancaster on Tuesday 11 January.

The lease with the Duchy was due to expire in March 2014 but, following the closure of the prison, Ministry of Justice (MoJ) officials negotiated an early exit



from the site creating significant savings for the Department.

At midday the Union Flag was lowered and replaced by the Duchy Banner

during a small ceremony to mark the end of an era for the castle which has operated as a prison for 60 years.

Elizabeth Dickinson from the MoJ, Paul Clarke, the Duchy of Lancaster's Chief Executive, Lord Shuttleworth, Chairman of the Duchy Council and Robert Johnson, the County Palatine High Sheriff witnessed the event.

Staff who have remained on site since the prison closed completed their last shift and handed over responsibility for the buildings to the Duchy's security team later that evening.

The Duchy of Lancaster will be appointing consultants to work with interested parties to investigate future uses, including greater public access.

In the short term, the Duchy intends to open more of the castle to the public during the summer as part of the commemorations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the 400th anniversary of the Pendle Witch trials.

How the internet was born - a true story

In ancient Israel, it came to pass that a trader by the name of Abraham Com did take unto himself a young wife by the name of Dot.

And Dot Com was a comely woman, broad of shoulder and long of leg.

Indeed, she was often called Amazon Dot Com.

And she said unto Abraham, her husband,

"Why dost thou travel so far from town to town with thy goods when thou canst trade without ever leaving thy tent?"

And Abraham did look at her as though she were several saddle bags short of a camel load, but simply said, "How, dear?"

And Dot replied, "I will place drums in all the towns and drums in between to send messages saying what you have for sale, and they will reply telling you who hath the best price.

And the sale can be made on the drums and delivery made by Uriah's Pony Stable (UPS)."

Abraham thought long and decided he would let Dot have her way with the drums.

And the drums rang out and were an immediate success.

Abraham sold all the goods he had at the top price, without ever having to move from his tent.

To prevent neighbouring countries from overhearing what the drums were saying, Dot devised a system that only she and the drummers knew.

It was known as Must Send Drum Over Sound (MSDOS), and she also developed a language to transmit ideas and pictures - Hebrew To The People (HTTP).

And the young men did take to Dot Com's trading as doth the greedy horsefly take to camel dung.

They were called Nomadic Ecclesiastical Rich Dominican Sybarites, or NERDS.

And lo, the land was so feverish with joy at the new riches and the deafening sound of drums that no one noticed that the real riches were going to that enterprising drum dealer, Brother William of Gates, who bought off every drum maker in the land.

And indeed did insist on drums to be made that would work only with Brother Gates' drumheads and drumsticks.

And Dot did say, "Oh, Abraham, what we have started is being taken over by others."

And Abraham looked out over the Bay of Ezekiel, or eBay as it came to be known.

He said, "We need a name that reflects what we are."

And Dot replied, "Young Ambitious Hebrew Owner Operators."

"YAHOO," said Abraham. And because it was Dot's idea, they named it YAHOO Dot Com.

Abraham's cousin, Joshua, being the young Gregarious Energetic Educated Kid (GEEK) that he was, soon started using Dot's drums to locate things around the countryside.

It soon became known as God's Own Official Guide to Locating Everything (GOOGLE).

And that is how it all began.

Honest. **William Walter Wilberforce.**

RETIREED PRISON GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

A.G.M. 2012

The RPGA annual general meeting will this year be hosted at Newbold Revel on

16th October. The meeting will commence at 2.00pm. Attendees will be informed of the room on their arrival at Reception.

Attendees will be paid 10p per mile travelling plus 2p per mile for any passengers. Those travelling by train will be paid the lowest second class rail fare for their journey.

Lunch will be provided at Newbold Revel from 13.00 hrs.

To enable your committee to make the necessary arrangements will those of you intending to attend please complete the form below and return it **as soon as possible**

Ray London RPGA Secretary

14 James Court

Eynesbury

St Neots

Cambridgeshire

PE19 2QQ

Cut-----

Name.....

Name of passengers if applicable.....

I/ we will be requiring lunch Yes/No (please delete as appropriate)

Please identify any dietary needs.....

Signature -----Date-----

Please return by as soon a date as possible



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

By Harry Brett

Membership Secretary

It is sometime since I wrote a membership report and therefore there are quite a lot of changes in the membership. We have seen an overall increase since the last AGM in June of 10 to 470 but that doesn't tell the full story. We welcome as new members; David Percival, Mike Keating, Graham Mumby-Croft, Nick Plumbridge, William Farrell, George Curruthers, David Whitfield, Paul Biddle, Vicky Pails, Rosie Crosby, Norman Davidson, Gordon Morrison, Andrew Simpson, Lisa Smitherman, Neil Johnson, Dr Peter Bennett, Les Sunshine, Norma Barrington, Taff Hill, David Thompson, Mike Bolton, Arthur Littler, George Baker, Francis Flynn, Marie Rys-Reuton, Louise Taylor Grace Clay and Caroline Dodds. A total of 227 PGA members have taken early retirement since April 2011 as a result of the Service's efficiency savings.

We regret to inform you of the deaths of the following; Pat Barker, Harry Brown, Stan Bester, Henry Smalley, Mrs Bryan, Mary O'Neill, Colin Heald, Douglas Martin, Mary Clarke, Violet Fisher, Betty Campbell, Terry Weiler Lionel Steinhausen and Tony Goodair. Our deepest condolences go out to their family and friends. We also heard about the deaths of other governor grades that were not members but may well be known to many of you. They were: Dick Sissons, Francis Medland, Dee Douglas Marsh, Jack Price, Derek Dean, Diane Greasley and Julie Minnette. Again our deepest condolences go out to family and friends. Honorary membership was offered to all widows (ers) of deceased members and we are please to inform the membership that the following chose to continue receiving the newsletter; Marjorie Barker, Sylvia Brown, Pat Bester, Lesley Goodair.

Members will also be aware that a decision was made at a previous AGM to make a donation of £25 to 'a charity of your choice' to the dependants of deceased members. The rationale of this was that often we did not find out about the death until after the funeral had taken place and also very often family members only wanted family flowers. Charities which have benefited from this decision are: Prison Service Charity Fund (2), British Heart Foundation, Eccleshall First Responders, Scouts Association, RPGA Benevolent Fund, Royal Naval Benevolent Fund, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Heart of Kent Hospice and CAFOD. I am sure members will be more pleased that the money is going to good causes and still allowing the RPGA to mark with respect the death of its members.



By Harry Brett JP

JP DUTIES

I have been asked (bullied) by Jenny to put together an article which gives some insight to the duties of a Justice of the Peace or magistrate as they are often referred to. I am aware that there are at least 2 other RPGA members who are also JPs. They are John Berry who sits in the Leicestershire area and Graham Smith who sits at Wakefield and there may be others.

I first applied to be a JP when I was still in service back in 2001. The normal waiting period for a practising governor grade has to be a delay of 2 years after finishing in the service. Anyone who knew my service history will be aware that it was mainly described as 'excused prisoners' and so I was given special dispensation by the Duchy of Lancaster to be considered. I needn't have worried about the time requirement as the whole process in considering your application to being sworn in onto the Bench took nearly 2 years in itself.

My boss at the time, Alison Gomme, gave me a glowing report (she was probably glad to get shut of me if the truth was known) and I received reference from a couple of neighbours and friends. My application was duly sent off and then I waited and waited and just when I had about given up any chance of a reply I was invited for an interview about 9 months after my original application had been sent off. The interview took place at Manchester Magistrates Court and, whilst waiting to be interviewed, I was given a couple of sentencing scenarios to consider which would be referred to later in the interview. The interview panel consisted of 3 experienced magistrates trained in interviewing skills. They put you through an in-depth interview lasting about 45 minutes where discrimination was a word they had never heard of. The questions asked were so designed to test if I had any prejudices or skeletons in the cupboard which could later embarrass the magistracy. Needless to say they didn't find them and then I waited and waited for the letter informing me that I had been successful. I was eventually sworn in August 2003.

We then had to undertake training which was quite in-depth, requiring 5 days covering bail applications, remands to custody, sentencing guidelines, human rights legislation, court procedures, role of legal advisor, role of District Judge and finally the competencies required to make a good "winger." It was explained that you would normally be in a team of 3 with one chair and 2 wingers. It was your role as a winger to support the Chair, ensuring that nothing was overlooked, help by keeping a record of solicitors' names, ensuring that proper procedures were adhered to by the Chair, finding the defendant on the appropriate page on what could be a complicated and long list of defendants, and finding the relevant sentence guideline if the defendant was found or had pleaded guilty so that the appropriate sentence was awarded. You have to give very good reasons why you go outside the sentencing guidelines. There are certain offences, shoplifting or begging for example, which no matter how often committed, the defendant cannot be sent to prison. You are very restricted as to what sentences you can pass

which are based on the charge made by the CPS. Each charge has sentencing guidelines which often have up to 3 levels of gravity. If you go outside the guidelines either above or below, you have to give very good reasons why you have done so.

An example of this would be for a Public Order Act section 3 – Affray would be:

1. For a brief offence involving low-level violence, no substantial fear created – The starting point would be a low level community order with a range of a Band C fine to medium level community order.
2. For a degree of fighting or violence that causes substantial fear – the starting point would be high level community order with a range of medium level community order to 12 weeks custody.
3. For a fight involving a weapon/throwing objects, or conduct causing risk of serious injury – the starting point is 18 weeks custody with a range of 12 weeks custody to remand to Crown Court for sentencing (i.e. you consider that the punishment should be greater than 6 months imprisonment – the limit of your powers for one offence).

You also have to consider mitigating circumstances such as group action, threats, or a lengthy incident which would tend to push the sentence up the range, or did not start trouble, provocation, stopped as soon as police arrived which would tend to push it down towards the bottom of the range. Of course unlike a Governor in a prison you have two other magistrates to assist you in your deliberations and a legal advisor to ensure that you remain within the law (and sentencing guidelines). You are also supplied with sentencing pronouncement cards which ensure that the defendant receives fully the information he/she needs to meet sentence requirements.

Some of the most difficult decisions you have to make are around the granting of bail, especially when violence has occurred (domestic particularly). The presumption, even when the defendant has pleaded guilty, is that they should be granted bail and that you as magistrates should set restrictions that would safeguard the public and especially the complainant or witnesses involved. We have all heard about very serious crimes being committed by defendants on bail, but it is very difficult to justify a remand in custody when their sentence has been for probation reports and the sentence guidelines do not pass the custody threshold. As stated previously, you do not have to make these decisions on your own, you have the benefit of your fellow magistrates' input. All decisions are made on a majority basis.

Eventually having served your probation as a winger, you can choose to also sit in the Youth or Family Court. I chose to also sit in the Youth court and here your sentencing guidelines are more concentrated on the number of offences previously committed by the defendant, as opposed to the offence. For example, for a youth who pleads guilty and appears in court for the first time you can only give them either a referral order (community penalty) up to a maximum of 12 months or a Detention and Training Order (custody) with a maximum of 2 years, half of which they spend in custody. Obviously for very grave offences, like the adult court, you can decline jurisdiction and send to the Crown Court which has much wider sentencing powers. What it does mean though is that you are much more likely to deal with more serious offences in the Youth Court than in the Adult court, as a youth can only be given approximately half the sentence that an adult would have been given. The Stephen Lawrence trial is an example where Dobson and Norris only

received 15 years because, although they are now adults, they committed the offence as youths. Had they been adults then they could have received a tariff of 30 years.

When time is served as a winger (varies at different courts) then you can be considered as a Chair. You go through a limited training session which is more an awareness of the different role than actual training, but this is followed by a minimum of 4 sessions where you take the chair and you are assessed by a legal advisor and experienced Chair who sits with you as one of your wingers. Not everyone is deemed competent after 4 assessments but they will only be allowed to take the chair when they are considered competent. They may have to undergo continued assessment until they are considered competent or revert to being a winger. Of course when you do get your ticket you have to be prepared to see your name appear in the local newspaper by name. You can't choose not to be quoted as your name is in the public domain.

I have found the role of JP being very satisfying. It keeps the mind active and you are certainly allowed to use the skills that you picked up working in a prison to good advantage. There are various committees for which you can also elect to be considered, Training and Development, Probation Liaison, Licensing Appeals Committee, Drug Training and Treatment to name a few. You are restricted to the number of sittings that you must complete and a number you should not exceed. This may vary at different courts but in Manchester the limits are set by the Duchy of Lancaster. The minimum is 26 half-day sittings and a maximum of 55 if you sit in just the adult courts, only or 30 and 88 if you sit in both the adult and the Youth or Family court and 45 and 88 if you sit in all three courts. However, anyone who thinks this is potentially lucrative is mistaken. Mileage is paid at 44p per mile, and subsistence is paid only where no meals are available at court. There is considered to be a fine line that means you show a level of commitment but without appearing to become a professional (full-time) magistrate. Manchester has 3 to 4 District Judges sitting on any one day.

We have now combined with Salford as a result of efficiencies, making Manchester and Salford the second largest court in the country. This has also meant that normal progression to being considered a Chair, or for consideration to sit in either the Youth or Family courts, has come to a halt. There are also a number of different ways that the court has previously approached their method of working, especially rota systems. This is causing a little bit of friction at the moment as Manchester is conforming to the Salford method which requires you to say 6 months in advance when you are not available and then the Rota clerk will provide you with your shift pattern. It has meant numerous alterations after the lists have been produced. There is very mixed opinion about the benefit of this type of rota as opposed to the old Manchester system where you would sit on alternate days, e.g. every other Tuesday. There has as a result been quite a high level of resignations, some from Salford because they don't want to change to Manchester and some from Manchester because they don't like the changes being introduced.

Magistrates are only allowed to sit until they are 70 irrespective of their personal competencies so I have another 5 years to go. I do get a lot of enjoyment out of being a Magistrate and would recommend it to anyone. It also keeps you involved in something which is stimulating, something which is very important when you retire.

WEEKEND AT BATH

The event will take place for 3 nights from Thursday 12 April 2012 until Sunday 15th April 2012 at

LEIGH PARK COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL
Leigh Road West,
Bradford on Avon,
Wiltshire,
BA15 2RA



www.leighparkhotel.co.uk

The rates for 3 nights dinner, bed and breakfast is £135 per night for a double or twin room and £88 per night for a single room dinner be and breakfast.

The hotel is a Georgian country House set in its own grounds and 7 miles from the city of Bath there is ample car parking in the grounds. The restaurant offers both traditional English and International cuisine using locally sourced produce.

The city of Bath has many interesting places of special interest not least of all the famous thermal springs which the Romans first developed 2000 years ago and many other historical buildings including The Royal Crescent, It is also a modern city with all types of shopping and entertainment which caters for all tastes

Within the surrounding area of Wiltshire there are many places to visit and provide sufficient ways for those persons who attend the event to spend their time. Or people could just relax and idle around the lounges and grounds of the hotel anticipating dinner and a pleasant evening spent conversing with friends over a few drinks in the bar.

If you are interested in attending please contact Charles Smith tel 01704 575266 or smithpr8@btinternet for further details.

RETIRED GOVERNORS WEEKEND 2012

The retired Governors Weekend break will take place between Thursday 12 April and Sunday 15th April 2012 at :-

LEIGH PARK COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL
Leigh Road West,
Bradford on Avon,
Wiltshire,
BA15 2RA
wwwleighparkhotel.co.uk

The cost for three nights dinner, bed and breakfast is £135 per night for a Double or Twin room and £88 per night for a Single Room

RETIRED GOVERNORS WEEKEND BREAK
LEIGH PARK COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL

12th APRIL to 15th APRIL 2012

I would like to reserve _____ places for the above weekend.

I enclose a deposit of £_____ which is £ 30 per room

Accounts to be settled before 1000 hrs on the day of departure.

Cheques and deposits to be made payable to Leigh Park Country House Hotel and sent to Charles Smith at the address below.

Your Name and Address Double Room _____

_____ Twin Room

_____ Single Room

_____ Please Return to :-

Charles Smith,
21 Bowness Avenue,
Ainsdale,
Southport,
PR8 3QP

Tel _____ 01704 575 266

email smith8@btinternet.com



Terry Weiler

Colleagues will be sorry to hear of the death of Terry Weiler on December 28th. He was 92.

Terry regularly attended our annual reunion, in recent years driven up from London by one of his daughters. For many years, Terry had also written a column for the RGN on “News from the Service”, a summary based largely on the Prison Service News. He had also strongly supported the Koestler Trust for much of his retirement, acting as a steward at the annual exhibition of prisoners work.

He served in the Royal Artillery during World War Two in India and Burma as an intelligence officer: he produced a daily publication of war news for his colleagues – an early indication, perhaps, of his ability to write a column.

After the war, he joined the Home Office as an Assistant Principal and was rapidly promoted. He spent much of his time in the Prison Service, with two periods on the Prisons Board. He was first appointed to the Board in 1962 as Establishment Officer at Assistant Secretary (Grade 5) level. The restructuring of the Prisons Board in 1969 included upgrading a number of posts – Terry was reappointed to the Board in 1971 after promotion to Assistant Under Secretary. He was known as Controller Personnel and Services at the time of the retirement in 1979.

Among his many post retirement activities, Terry found time to research and write up the history of cell overcrowding – published by the Home Office as “Coping with a crisis: the introduction of three and two in a cell”

A Times Obituary on Terry was published on 17th January 2012.

Prison Service Journal continues to provide articles of possible interest to some of our readers. It was through a recent edition of the PSJ that we learned about the research into prisons during the two World Wars being undertaken by Professor Yvonne Jewkes. We hope some colleagues will respond to her note elsewhere in this edition.

The latest PSJ (January 2012 number 199) includes an interview with the architect responsible for the conversion of Oxford Prison into a hotel run by Mal Maison. One of her memorable comments is about the challenges dealing with the need for fire precautions “to design a building to get people out of which is designed to keep them in”.

The theme of the latest PSJ is “Alternative Representations of Imprisonment” and the articles selected include a discussion of the TV series “Porridge”; an account of Ruth Ellis in the condemned cell and a photographic project on the demolition of the Maze prison.

People, Places and Publications

By Brendan O’Friel

Barry Smith, who retired as Deputy Chief Inspector, has returned to England from a spell living in France and has settled in Dorset. He continues to fly light aircraft.

Bill Brister heard news that Don Smith, who served for many years as a Principal in Prison Service HQ, had died in 2011.

NETWORK

One of the objectives of this column is to encourage exchange of information about work opportunities post retirement with a special emphasis on keeping in touch via email. Contributions to this column from readers with information about post retirement work activities would be very welcome.

Please note my email address which is: -

Email: brendan@ofriel.fsnet.co.uk

PGA OFFICE Change of address

The PGA Office new address is:-

1st Floor in Clive House, 70 Petty France, London, SW1H 9HD.

Their email address is

office@prisongovernors.org.uk

The PGA website is <http://www.prisongovernors.org.uk>

Telephone **0300 047 5781**

Fax

Voice bank 0762 695 2576

Web Site Information

We welcome exchange of helpful website information from readers so let us know if you have an interesting site

The International Centre for Prison Studies -

Centre for Prison Studies

1st floor, the Merchant Centre

1 New Street Square

London EC4A 3BF

Tel:

+44(0)2078428508

Website: www.prisonstudies.org

Follow us on Twitter @ICPSLONDON

Andy Barclay writes:-

“The International Centre for Prison studies has moved from King’s College London to the University of Essex where it will link up with its highly respected Centre for Human Rights. Andrew Coyle has returned as Director of ICPS. Andy Barclay continues as Projects Director.

Andy will be very happy to hear from any colleague who would be interested in working with the Centre.

Public Service work opportunities

Readers may find it worth consulting the public appointments website – www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/pau

For those interested in overseas work, there is a new website for the Cabinet Office Stabilisation Unit which identifies expertise required for some posts abroad. Inevitably this tends to be in conflict areas. Consult www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk.

Private Sector work opportunities

Colleagues recently retired seeking work should remember that a substantial number of private sector posts – especially part time and temporary posts – are filled through networking rather than by the more formal advertising process. Being part of networks – which can take time – is often a necessary first step.....

The Retired Governors Association receives approaches from time to time from organisations seeking persons with prisons expertise. **Anyone interested in such work should ensure they are on the Retired Governors email network as this is the only way to ensure you hear about such opportunities.**

STATE PENSIONS AND PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS - BACKGROUND

Pensions Act 2004

One of the changes under this act is for people approaching State Pension Age. Before 2005, it had been possible to defer drawing your state pension and earning additional state pension known as “increments” by this means. The Pensions Act 2004, however, increases the amount of additional state pension you can earn by deferral. Previously you could earn 1% addition for every 7 weeks you deferred; from 2005 this was improved to 1% for every 5 weeks that you defer drawing your state pension. Or to put it another way this is worth an additional 10.4% increase in your state pension for every year that you defer. There is also provision for accumulating a lump sum by deferring your state pension. A good source of information is the Department for Work and Pensions web site - www.dwp.gov.uk.

State Retirement Pension Forecasts can be obtained by writing to: -

Retirement Pensions Forecasting Team

The Pensions Service

Whitley Road

Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE98 1BA

Tel 0845 3000168

They also provide a booklet entitled “Understanding your State Pension Forecast”

The Pension Service also provide “A Guide to your Pension Options” – you can obtain a copy by phoning 0845 7 31 32 33.

Free Guide

There is a free Guide available on the range of Government Services for people aged 60 and over. This is titled “Pensioners’ Guide (PG1)” For your copy phone 0845 6065 065.

The Pension Service website is www.thepensionservice.gov.uk

Rates from April 2012

The basic State Retirement Pension is being increased from £102.15 to £107.45 for a single person and from £163.35 to £171.85 a week for couples.

State and Public Service Pension Increases

Both State and Public Service Pension Increases have been linked to the Retail Prices Index (RPI) published each month. But this has been changed from 2011.

There had been a long campaign to restore the “earnings link” for updating the state pension. This was withdrawn by the Thatcher Government decades ago and state pension increases were

linked to the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The Coalition Government decided to link the basic state pension to earnings with effect from April 2011. To be exact, the decision is probably rather better than just linking basic state pension to earnings: it provides two other options in case earnings are less than the RPI. The basic State Pension will be increased by the best of these options.

Unfortunately, all the other news on pensions continues to be not good. The Coalition Government – on the basis that it needs to reduce the Government deficit - is making cuts to public service pensioners’ future pension entitlements. First, those entitled to more than the basic state pension – many colleagues will have accumulated some graduated pension or SERPS or State second pension. In future the increases in such additional state pension will depend on the Consumers Price Index (CPI) not the RPI. This means that in practice increases are likely to be lower as the CPI generally records lower increases in the cost of living than the RPI. Second, all existing public service pensions will in future be increased by the CPI figures not the RPI. Again in practice this means lower increases for public service pensioners.

Increases are paid in April each year but the calculation of the increase is based on the previous September’s CPI/ RPI increase – published in October. The RGN has published details of the increases in our Spring Edition for many years.

From April 2012 public service pensions and SERPS are being increased by 5.2%.

Questions about pension payments

One of our members phoned asking about the address for the body that pays our Civil Service Pensions – she had a question and did not know who to write to. The address is:-

Civil Service Pensions
PO Box 215
Mowden Hall
Staindrop Road
Darlington
Co Durham DL3 9GT

If any member has difficulty getting a reply, we suggest you write to the “Customer Services Manager” at the above address. We would also welcome feedback from members about their experience of raising issues with Civil Service Pensions and whether they feel their letters and concerns have been properly dealt with.

Overseas Pensioners

Colleagues in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and some other countries do not receive the increases to their State Pensions. A full list of the countries within which colleagues will receive their full increases to state pensions will be found at www.dwp.gov.uk/international/social-security-agreements/list-of-countries. .

Colleagues considering moving abroad may wish to check on the implications of any move on their state pension by consulting the above website.

Changes to Blue Badge Issuing Criteria

The rules as follows:

1. You automatically get a badge if you receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

2. Those who become disabled after reaching 65 would not qualify for DLA and therefore fall under the discretionary criteria. This means that they have to be assessed in order to decide whether or not they are immobile enough to warrant the awarding of a Blue Badge. 66% of the 2.5m Blue Badge holders fall into this category.

As from 1 April 2012 anyone applying under category 2 above for a new badge or re-applying because their old one has expired (they last every 3 years) will have to see an Independent Mobility Assessor. This is likely to be an occupational or physiotherapist, who is privately employed by the local authority.

There are England-wide guidelines for them to follow, but each individual assessor might view things slightly differently. Off the record discussions have revealed that before the assessment even begins - individuals will be viewed arriving at the assessment centre. If they get out of their car easily or climb the stairs to the assessment office they will not get a badge. A crude rule of thumb that assessors will use is to ask whether an individual can go to the shops on their own. IF they can - then it is unlikely they will be awarded a badge.

A concern for RPGA members is that they may have received a Blue Badge under the old system (signed off by their GP) and now find that their badge is due for renewal under the new system. As a result, they may find they no longer qualify.

Whilst there is an appeals procedure, it is difficult at this stage to know how successful these will be.

It would be helpful to your committee if members can make us aware of any problems they have encountered in renewing a blue badge, either for themselves or for family members along with any help or advice you feel will be of assistance to our membership or their families.



The item below has been sent in for publication from John Pudney who spoke highly of this company at a recent AGM. It is published by the editorial team without recommendation one way or the other. It is a matter for individual members to deal with them should they wish to do so.

HMCA – Advice on Getting the best out of Private Medical Health

HMCA have over 30 years providing private medical care plans exclusively to members of Associations and Professional membership groups. These include Magistrates, Civil Service and Military groups along with Accountants, Freemasons and Royal Academies. We have amassed a wealth of experience providing medical health plans and offer the following tips when choosing a plan for you and your family. Getting a plan that suits you and your lifestyle is important.

The majority of RPGA members will be aware of private health plans, and will more often than not question if they really need it when they receive their annual renewal every year. In most cases, the answer will be no, but the knowledge that it provides you with peace of mind when faced with a medical problem will encourage you to keep it.

For example, if you spend a lot of time abroad or have sporting hobbies, you may want to consider a plan that covers you for overseas travel and sports. As an example HMCA cover all sporting injuries and members are covered whilst travelling overseas. Check if your provider offers you a free Transfer facility with no breaks in your cover – an important factor when taking out a health plan as circumstances can and do change.

We interpret peace of mind as being able to talk to your provider about any concerns you have and being treated in a personal, sympathetic and professional manner. The last thing you want is to be connected to an automated service and pushing buttons to get through to someone. Simply contact the provider by phone and speak to their claims department to assess the handling of your enquiry.

Having to claim on your health plan is the reason for joining. You need to know how their system works, including how approachable the staff are, what is the claims procedure and how quickly will your claim be settled.

We are able to offer our members highly competitive rates and a first class claims handling service coupled with a personal and confidential helpline facility. All calls are answered personally and we also provide a specific medical helpline to give you the advice and support needed when faced with an operation. We also provide our members with a range of discounts on other products along with Marks & Spencer's vouchers for 12 months subscription to our plans.

For further information regarding HMCA plans you can call us on 01423 866985 or visit our website at www.hmca.co.uk.

Readers please note

Items for inclusion in the autumn edition of your Newsletter should reach any member of the editorial team no later than August Bank Holiday.

Hobbies, Part 2,

by

Mike Lewis



In the Newsletter dated February 2010, I wrote an article on my hobby of coin collecting, and also a letter covering the subject of members' interests, hoping to encourage others to contribute (this was not particularly successful); however, the Editor has asked me to try again.

Before I launch into the new subject, I thought you may wish to have an update on coin collecting.

Since I wrote last, I have had numerous enquiries on coins from friends and their relatives and contacts, ranging from gold and silver coins to a complete collection. In the latter case the coin collection was relatively worthless, but some of the other coins were worth over four figures. This time my article concerns my interest in naval treen.

Naval Treen

When war ships of yesteryear were broken up, a lot of valuable metal was salvaged, as was wood, particularly teak. The larger planks were re-used on new ships, but some were converted into furniture, for example, park benches, household items, planters, tea trolleys and hat stands. Smaller off-cuts were converted into knick-knacks and curios, such as ash trays, barometers, match barrels and serviette rings. Invariably these small pieces have a brass plaque on them, indicating the ship of origin, battle honours and campaigns and sometimes, if a flag ship, the name of the



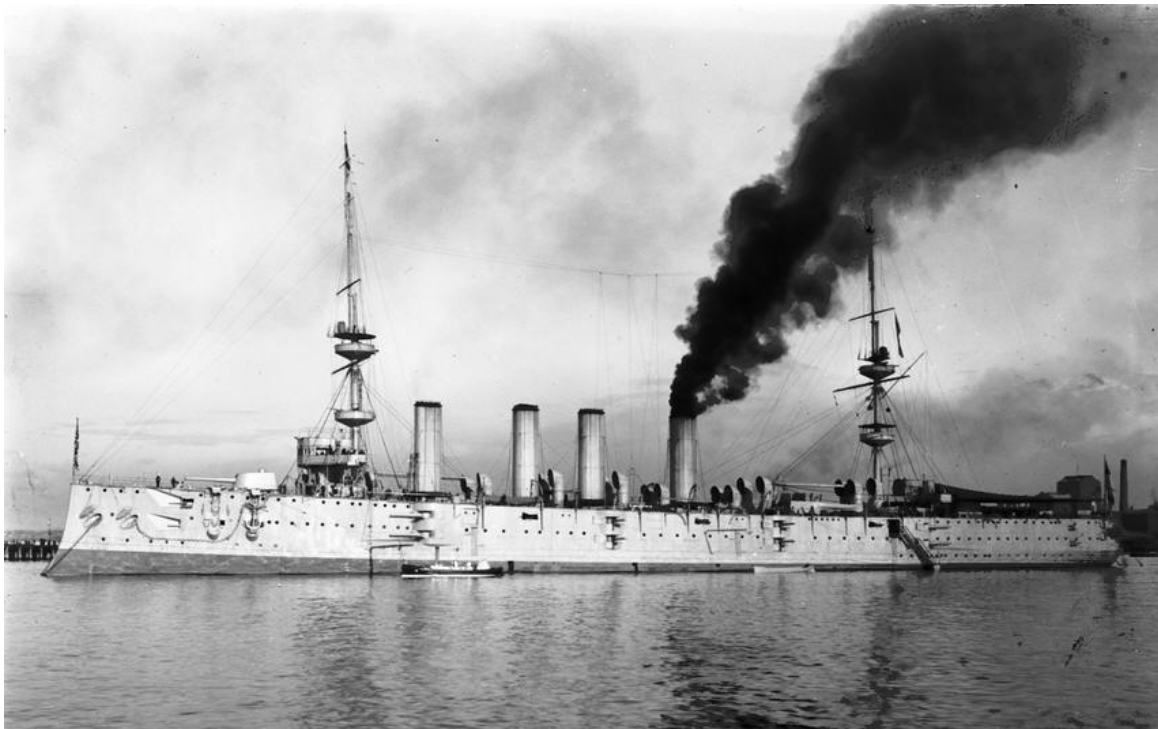
Above some of my collection

commanding admiral.

Most of my collection is of this type. They are fiendishly hard to find, but they do turn up from time to time in charity shops, car boot sales and curio shops. I am always on the look-out for them.

The first item I acquired was an ash tray made from the teak of H.M.S. *Terrible*. The legend on the plaque states, "Whose guns relieved Ladysmith." Ladysmith is a town in South Africa and the action relates to the Boer war of 1889-1902. The better-known relief of a besieged town in this war was, of course, Mafeking. Break off for a moment and consult a map. Just see how far the ship's guns had to be hauled over rough terrain from the coast to Ladysmith.

I have a double family connection to this artefact. My maternal grandfather worked for Listers of Dursley, Gloucestershire, the engineering company which made the item. My paternal great-uncle Charlie served on H.M.S. *Terrible*, (or 'horrible' as the below-decks men called her). Charlie once told my father, "The xyz officers returned to a heroes' reception. They did not have to haul the xyz guns!" It is said that such actions are the basis of the gun-carriage competitions which are a feature of military tournaments to this day. Curiously, the guns of H.M.S. *Terrible* were also hauled overland to another action, at Tientsin, China, during the Boxer Uprising of 1898-1900.



Above HMS Terrible

I also have artefacts from H.M.S. *Birmingham*, *Warspite* and *Iron Duke*, Admiral Jellicoe's flagship at the battle of Jutland in 1916. Most folk now don't know where Jutland is: indeed, most guess it was a land battle. In fact it was the largest-ever

head-to-head naval battle involving over 250 warships and 100,000 sailors from Britain and Germany. Loss of life was considerable: 8,500 died, including 6,000 British and 2,500 German sailors. The battle cruiser H.M.S. Queen Mary was sunk, and of the crew of 1,266 men only 9 survived.

What I find fascinating is the primitive nature of the warfare. Many commanders did not have a clue where the other ships were, enemy or their own squadrons. Intelligence-gathering was done by civilian ships, sub-aircraft, or even zeppelins.



Apart from the flagship, British ship-to-ship communication was by flags, not much of a change since Nelson's time. It is noteworthy that commanders on both sides were very reluctant to engage the enemy in bad weather or at night, although the Germans did use wireless.

Left HMS Warrior

Who won the battle was, and still is, subject to dispute. Both sides claimed victory. What is not in dispute is that the larger British fleet lost more ships and men than the Germans. Post-Jutland the Germans were very reluctant to risk their surface ships, concentrating on and developing their U-boat fleet, a policy they pursued to devastating effect in a much later conflict.

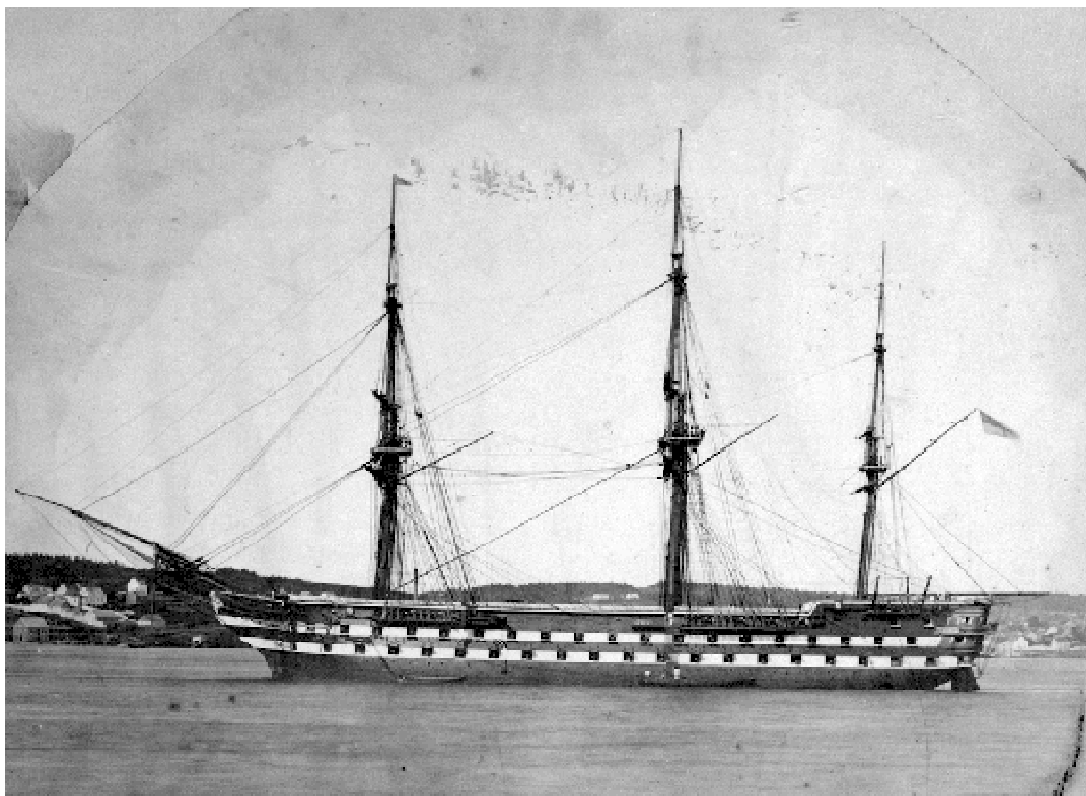
Prior to Jutland, Winston Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty. He said of Jellicoe, "He was the only man who could lose the war in an afternoon", hardly an unqualified endorsement of one's Supreme Naval Commander!

You might ask where the wood came from. The Jutland warships were all of iron/steel construction. They were, of course, all fitted out with a lot of teak, including the exposed deck work. Earlier ships were mostly made of wood, originally oak, and teak, whose property of resisting salt water was extensively known and used. Indeed it is said that the only organic material still intact on the Titanic is teak. I have a teak artefact from H.M.S. Warrior, our first iron-clad war ship, dating from 1861, and her sister ship, H.M.S Black Prince. Interestingly, both were built to counter the French war ship Gloire, built in 1860. She had a wrought-iron belt on both sides of the hull and down several feet below the water line. H.M.S. warrior's hull was in fact completely made of iron. Like Gloire, she had steam-driven propellers and was the first of the modern war ships. She has been restored and can be seen at Portsmouth dockyard, a handsome vessel. For all the world she looks like a clipper with guns.

Arms race or what, nothing is new, but it is a joy to know that we no longer fall out or are in competition with the French or the Germans!

The oldest teak artefacts I own are from firstly, H.M.S. Ganges built in 1821 in Bombay and broken up in Plymouth as late as 1930 (She was the last wooden fighting ship to act as a flag ship, carrying the commanding admiral) and secondly from H.M.S. Cornwall, also built in Bombay in 1815. What stories could this 200-year-old teak have to tell?

As with my coin collection, my interest in naval treen quickly progressed from a narrow family connection to a history lesson and an ongoing and active detective enquiry. Attempting to answer the whys, wheres and hows is far more captivating than owning or looking at a lump of wood or metal.



Above HMS GANGES

Again, as last time, if you possess any naval treen (or pre-decimal coins) I would love to hear from you. So I know would the Editorial Board.

Please write and tell us all about your hobbies. Others will be interested.

If you have some expertise in a particular subject, hobby or interest why not put pen to paper or better still fingers to keyboard and submit the article for future publication. Fear not if you do not have access to a word processor as your Editorial Board will be only too willing to convert the handwritten to an electronic version.

Your fellow members would love to hear from you and who knows you may find out that some of them share similar interests.

HMP HUNTERCOMBE

HMP Huntercombe is to become the third, and largest, foreign national offender (FNO) only



prison in the estate, following HMPs Canterbury and Bullwood Hall.

FNO-only prisons have played an important role in managing capacity in the NOMS estate since 2006 and have proved successful in facilitating UK Border Agency (UKBA) operations more effectively.

Every establishment in the estate was considered for its potential suitability to operate as an FNO-only prison. HMP Huntercombe was identified as a suitable option taking into account the operational needs of both NOMS and UKBA.

Huntercombe will still retain its function as an adult male Category C training establishment but will transition to holding a solely foreign national population as part of NOMS' commitment to providing additional FNO-only accommodation for UKBA – both to support Government priorities on the deportation of FNOs and to reduce the overall FNO population.

The process for making this change has already begun and will take place over the coming months.

Mark Read, Deputy Director for Operational Services and Interventions Group said: “The Government is determined to remove more foreign criminals, and increasing removals under the early removals scheme (ERS) provides a valuable contribution to managing capacity in the prison estate.

“Consolidating FNOs serving prison sentences into dedicated establishments enables the UKBA to facilitate these removals more effectively.”

NOMS has a service level agreement commitment to work with UKBA to identify further FNO-only sites, with a view to doubling current provision. No further FNO-only prisons have been identified at this time.

Timescales for the completion of this change will be agreed between NOMS Capacity Management teams, UKBA and the establishment. There will be no additional costs to NOMS.

YOUR LETTERS



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It is never too late to write with news, as illustrated by **Bill Ritson**; he has only taken 31 years to write his first letter to us. Delighted to hear from you, as you will see from his letter he has kept in touch with some colleagues through the golf association. It would have been good to hear from Bill earlier, as many colleagues would have been interested. But more sadly, he wished for a separate letter to be passed on to **Terry Weiler**, who passed away a week before Bill's letter arrived. So the moral is: it is never too soon to write, we are all interested in you all.

Bill writes, this is the first time I have written to the Newsletter, not that I have not kept in touch with the Prison Service since retirement on the 1st August 1980. Then I received a personal hand written letter from the head of the Prison Service thanking me for my contribution to the Service. He also urged me to 'keep' in touch. '(We endorse that sentiment wholeheartedly)

I have done so in many ways, but mainly through my contact with the Prison Service National Golf Association. At the time of retirement I presented P.S.N.G.A with a trophy, the '**Bill Ritson Challenge Cup**' to be competed for annually. For the 29 succeeding years, I attended to present the cup wherever the golf venue was held in England; and in support of the National Golf Team I attended the 3 day International golf venues held alternatively annually in Scotland and England. I was often given the privilege of presenting the 'Scrimgoer Cup' to the winning team. We should have heard about such dedication before now!

Bill goes on to explain how he also came to stay in contact with the service, but this was in the note to Terry, I am sure he will not mind me extracting relevant bits. Bill served in those days when we all resided in quarters, many of which were in close proximity to the establishment, so our lives became intertwined; as Bill explains his daughter, Catherine, was christened in the Church of England faith by the Chaplain of Winson Green Prison, prepared for Confirmation by the Chaplain of Stoke Heath; and her marriage to a serving Principal Officer, was conducted by the Chaplains of Drake Hall and Birmingham Prisons. She went on to take a B. A. Degree in Sociology at Liverpool University, then a 2 year social work course at Keele University sponsored by the Home Office as a trainee Probation Officer, but with further study was awarded a master Degree in Criminology. Clearly a very talented young lady, who decided to make her career in the Probation Service. During that she has spent time seconded to Drake Hall and Stoke Heath, and on promotion to Senior Probation Officer took charge of Stoke Heath and Shrewsbury

Prisons Probation Departments. Now she is a Probation Service Area Manager Based in Kidderminster.

So it is clear how Bill kept in touch with developments in the Service. He further comments, there was so much information in the Newsletter that stirred many memories, particularly the deaths of three valued colleagues, **Arthur Williamson**, posted copy No 1 of RGPN on my retirement in 1980; I met Colin Heald socially in Stafford Town, after his retirement from Dartmoor Prison, and we used to have lunch together. **Reggie Llewellyn** who was special to me, he was my tutor on the 8th Staff Course at Wakefield. He prepared me well for my developing future career. A debt I could never repay.

News of **Betty Dennis** recalled that I knew the family well in the latter half of the years 1950. Under the Governorship of G.B.Smith at Portland Borstal, Douglas Dennis, Robin Fall (who Governed Lancaster Prison prior to his retirement from the Service) and myself served together for some time as A.G. 11 House Masters.

During my 8 years in charge of Stoke Heath Borstal, staff always welcomed Terry Weiler's official visits to the establishment. More so by my family; when he joined us for an evening meal and interesting conversation. So many memories revived from reading every copy of R.P.G. Newsletters. Thank you and keep posting future issues.

No, thank you Bill for such a lovely letter; I am sure that many others will agree with you sentiments. Also a vivid reminder that it the people we meet that mean so much to us all. Do write again, and sooner than last time!

As Bill says, **Terry Weiler** will be greatly missed, though not a Governor, he had a passion for the Prison Service and was an ardent supporter of the R.P.G.A. He invariably attended re-unions and was a delight to talk to. For those who did not see his obituary, he was a lifelong supporter of the Koestler Trust, and always wore his P.G.A. tie which he was awarded when he was made an honorary member. He also had a very distinguished Second World War record serving in the intelligence core in Burma. Weiler's regiment advanced south to cut the Japanese lines of communication to their crossings over the Chindwin River. His diary faithfully recorded the hardships they faced. For example 'We pushed along a track thick with mud and littered with skeletons of animal and man. Then the rains came and stayed. This at least provided drinking water.'

After the war he kept up his membership of the Burma Star Association and the Chindits Old Comrades and sought reconciliation with former enemies. For many years he was, he was chief usher at the annual service at the Cenotaph for which he was appointed OBE in 1993.

Another stalwart who has been out of touch for a bit, **John Morrison**, got in touch to say he would be updating me fully with events, but he was busy and was off on another cruise. He has not been in touch, so clearly the cruise was imperative, let's hope it was with the right line. As he did not give me his new address it will not even get the Newsletter. I will have to chase him up. I did get in touch and he clearly had a long,

enjoyable and successful cruise, and is now still writing the missive he promised me. We look forward as always to that, John

On the other hand, **Peter Bennett**, a new retiree, let us know that 'he was pleased to be crossing over to the land of retired governors. However he expected to remain busy in a related field as he was taking over as Director of the International Centre for Prison Studies. He was sure he would be seeing some of us at the retired governors' do's. We look forward to that.

Brief news from **Dave Simons** who was at PGA Conference as part of the Standing Orders Committee, and saying only 4 of the honorary members made it this year, and **Lynne Bowles** had to go home as soon as she arrived as she had an abscess on her tooth, and looked like a swollen faced chipmunk!

Steve and Lesley Metcalfe are well and have been trying to sell their Cotswold house and move back to the Isle of Wight, but potential buyers are still wary of the 2007 floods. They state further, wedding and funerals seem par for the course at our age!

Al Papps has had what he calls a dismal summer. He had a total hip replacement last June, which has since dislocated twice and hence involving a lengthy operation in October to sort out what was evidently going wrong. We hope that has done the trick, and I am recovering well. Marion has notched in as a splendid nurse (or rather Matron!!) throughout this saga. We all wish you a complete recovery.

John and Jean Childs had their Golden Wedding Anniversary on the 30th September 2011. He reminds us that it was glorious weather then, and they had their reception at the Royal Box at Epsom Racecourse, we decided to keep guest list small- family and friends who were at are wedding in 1961. This allowed us to spend more time with our sons and their family from Hong Kong and Japan and our daughter and family from Southampton. He does not mention whether the Queen popped in!" Belated congratulations from all of us.

Danny and Joan Ozanne say another year has flown by and they are still kept busy, and they always look forward to the Retired Governors Newsletter. Thank you for that, always good to know our efforts are appreciated. Their first grandchild is now at university (how time flies) and as Danny says, only three to go! They no longer have a car; decided it was time to give up before someone told them to. Their daughter runs them into town each week to do the heavy shopping, and they can use the local supermarket for the odd bits. The advantage of living near some of the family, my daughter is in Beirut so I would not get much shopping!

Brief message from **Ron Haines** to apologise that he did not make last year's re-union, but plans to be at the next! We look forward to that Ron.

Abi and Zarina Sheik have been in touch and are feeling much better health wise, Abi decided to invest in a treadmill (well he did serve at Pentonville) and uses it every day for 30 minutes, and this appears to have worked as I feel less lethargic, especially on those days when there is so much to do in the garden. So you see the old ways were always the best, I suggest we should bring back 'bread and water!'

He went to Turkey with his wife and granddaughter last year and found it very interesting; he says he has travelled widely, but found Turkey and its people very impressive. He found there was a lot to see, such as site of Gallipoli, Roman and Greek ruins, not to mention the palaces and buildings by Turcoman Empire. We spent the last 4 days in a seaside town called Fethye where most of the ex-pats have second homes and yachts etc. Found it very relaxing as well as the old town reminded me of Mombasa in Kenya.

Peter Meech has been in touch to update us on **Stan Bester**, who suffered a stroke some three years ago, and is now resident at a Care Home in Freshwater. Sadly he now suffers from Dementia and although I have visited his memory is not clear beyond D-Day, he still remembers crossing. His wife, **Pat**, has moved to a flat not far from me and I know she would be pleased to receive the Newsletter. (She has been made an honorary member.

Fred and Ann Thomas write; I have been retired for about 18 years having served in various establishments over 31 years, most of them in uniform, the last 6 or so as a governor 5 at Huntercombe. I regularly receive the RPGA magazine and saw the note concerning **Betty Dennis**. I think she was the wife of **Doug Dennis** who was the warden of Erlestoke when I started my career in 1962. Perhaps you could give her our regards, she and Doug came to our wedding whilst we were at Erlstoke (my wife was in the Admin Dept there) she may remember us. (I have put Fred in touch with Betty). I found the recent magazine particularly interesting, I served with the late **David Brown** at Huntercombe, **Ray Campbell** was Governor at the time, and David was also at Holloway where I also spent time during the officers' strike. The article by **Harry Brown** evoked memories of my first few years at Erstoke and I found myself drawing comparisons. He concludes saying he will close now as he anticipates I am inundated with emails for publication!

If only! Two points strike me, firstly the old coinage to describe governor grade ranks; it still has crystal clear meaning to so many. Sadly that has changed and the next 're-organisation of all grades' is under way. As more recent retirees join we will have gradually change the coinage, very sad. Secondly, how much updates on colleagues we have known, mean to everyone in bringing back our own happy memories. It is your stories that interest your colleagues, and each of you has something to share. So do not take 31 years like Bill, and inundate me with emails!

The usual heartening letter from **Roger Dauncy** as well as enquiring about my telephone number, informs that they are still in touch with Roland Adams and are in the process of arranging a lunch date.

Rosamond and I are reasonably fit (both mentally and physically- we think) and celebrated our Diamond Wedding anniversary last August. Congratulations to you both from us all, particularly after the health scare of 2 years ago. These days we take each one as a blessing and , whilst we do plan ahead, we think it a bit unrealistic to complete a form asking whether we think a re-union in 2013 would be a good idea (by then I'll be 90) and would we be there!

As you put it, we really have reached the passing of the Old Guard and, whilst still wanting to keep touch with the organisation and Prison Service colleagues via the Newsletter, should gracefully bow out from organised meetings and re-unions.

Sadly realistic and true for a number of our esteemed colleagues, we will miss seeing you, but like the committee we are having to rely increasingly on 'new blood' What is worrying is that the genuine 'fellowship' of the twentieth century staff does not seem to have spilled over to the twenty-first. Hopefully with time we might be proved wrong. It is clear though, that the Newsletter is held in high esteem by so many, and I am grateful for the number of contacts of late, do keep it up.

Colleagues will be sorry to that **John Dring's** wife, Jenny, had a fall in December and sustained a bleed in her brain at the sight of the tumour. Thus Christmas was cancelled as she has been in hospital ever since and John has been at her bedside. John is glad to say that she appears to have turned a corner; but now needs help again to get her walking. She is waiting for a place at the Oxford Centre for Enablement (which got her walking 5 years ago) so fingers crossed. All our thoughts are with you both and we all hope full recovery will be achieved.

Mike Selby has kindly sent his own personal re-collection of the late **Bob Hodgson**. Bob (senior works officer) and I (deputy governor) worked together at Everthorpe in the 60's. I can remember sitting on the sofa in his house with Bob squeezed between myself and **Basil Watson**- the administration officer – both of us persuading him to put in for promotion. He took our advice and when I met him again several years later he was now an AG1 as they were then, now a governor 4 (no Mike, now I think a Grade E). After my congratulations we discussed his work and he confessed to feeling lost. A works officer is tucked away and knows little of what is happening in the rest of the prison and to be pitched in without ceremony as a newly promoted AG1 who is expected to know his job was confusing. 'What do you need to know?' I asked. He told me. 'As it happens, I replied, I am now the Staff Training Development Officer so I can do something.' So there and then we organised a course tailored to his needs. A rewarding moment for both of us.

I doubt that would happen in today's' service!

Ben Hart wrote to **Harry** so say he had just been reading about his exciting holiday in the Newsletter, it brought back lots of memories for him as he did his National Service in Egypt and Libya 1954/55. Obviously there have been lots of changes since then. When I was there they were still recovering from the effects of World War 11.

Further to that **John Berry** writes, 'Having just received the Newsletter in the post and thoroughly enjoyed reading it I can see why we had months of disturbance in North Africa, which stymied my plans to visit the Roman ruins in Libya – **Harry Brett** in short trousers ! No wonder the Arabs spring came so violently with mass disturbance across the North African continent. Reminded me of the film 'Carry on up the Khyber and the men in kilts' Still, good to see Harry and Carol enjoying themselves and hopefully when things settle down again I will get to see the Roman ruins.

Having reached 60 and still enjoying working (in the private sector) I can understand why so many of us 'Carry on Regardless'. It was sad to see so many familiar names who are with us no longer, mentioned in the Newsletter. I was, though, delighted to see that some colleagues who were senior governors when I joined the service still enjoying a long and well deserved retirement.

I see that prisons are going through more restructuring to ensure they are competitive in the new round of market testing- Fresh Start mark 8and9 by now, but it is difficult to see how they can compete given the historical staffing costs. I suspect we will be left with the High Security Estate and the rest will be privatised.

Still we are grateful that our son a Captain in the Royal Irish Regiment survived a very serious head injury received in Afghanistan and is now retired and living in the village along with his wife and their baby son Thomas (10 months old). Having spent a number of years fighting to get compensation levels increased for injured service personnel (along with many other individuals and Charities) he can at least enjoy a reasonable standard of living.

Next year we are touring Italy – so Harry, just stay away from there especially in your short trousers.

Graham Lawrence has sent me an obituary for the former Chief Officer at Parkhurst, **Francis Medland** who died at the age of 91 and whose death we reported in issue 65. Born at Parkhurst close to where his father worked as a warder, he attended school in Parkhurst until he was 14. After leaving school, Frank went to work for J.Samual White shipyard in Cowes and then to Wadham's in Newport, where he trained as a French polisher and met his future wife, Joan.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, he joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and served at El Alamein and later in Italy. In 1947 he married Joan at St Mary's Church, Carisbrooke, and they had two children Sharon and Paul.

He joined the Prison Service at Parkhurst in 1947 where he worked until 1959 when he was posted to the mainland to help with the opening of the new prison at Ford in Sussex. Three years later he was posted to Dartmoor Prison, just before the severe winter and heavy snow of 1963, when the prison and the local community were cut off from the outside world for 2 months, receiving food and other supplies by helicopter.

Before returning to the island in 1972, he spent several years working at Gloucester Prison. His final posting was to take him back to Parkhurst as Chief Officer Grade 1, where he had started his career.

During his service he was awarded the Imperial Service Medal and the Queen's Jubilee Medal. He retired in 1977 and moved to Brightstone and for several years of his retirement he worked with the meals on wheels and hospital car services. He is survived by his wife, his children, seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

I am sure there are many who remember him.

Ron and Sue Curtis are well now that Ron has recovered from a nasty Achilles tendon injury which curtailed his full walking ability for almost a year. Their youngest son Daniel greeted the New Year by taking a new job with a different musical instrument company, and his wife has expanded her role as a psychologist in the health service. Their eldest son and wife live in Eindhoven in the Netherlands, and live in a 1930's art deco house

with some of the original features preserved, in one of the few areas of Eindhoven not bombed in the war.

We have visited the Netherlands twice in the year; it is not like being abroad at all as everyone speaks English. It is a lovely country and Amsterdam is a fascinating city- not least the opportunity to view so many Van Gogh paintings, and see the house where Anne Frank was hidden. In September they were in France visiting the Pyrenees for the first time, breathtaking particularly as the weather was clear. We regularly go north to Scotland, who knows, with the moves in the direction of independence, that too may become 'abroad'.

Sue continues to put in much time and effort in the weekly 'drop in' at a church in town, a project sponsored by Churches Together. She has also joined Open the Book; a group of Christians who present Bible stories in dramatic form to the children in local primary schools. Ron has had a very interesting time helping to organise a programme of events to celebrate The Tear of the Bible, that is the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible. This included an interesting discussion evening involving a Muslim, Jew and Christian on the importance to their faith of their Holy Book

Bill Brister remains well and as interested in developments in the Service as ever, but is glad he is out of. Mary remains content in her nursing home, but is not the Mary we all knew, now described as 'quiet and docile'

Paul Wailen describes 2011 as the worst year of his life with just about everything that could go wrong doing so and costing a small fortune along the way. He has subsidence problems in a big way, all the trees had to be demolished, and the stumps poisoned, but due to warm Spring it did not work so had to be done again. So Paul spent all summer madly weeding as could not replant. When the builders came in to start repairs on the cracking in the lounge, the ceiling just fell in; I was told that had I been underneath it at the time I would have been killed outright. That was all put right but then it was discovered that damage to the underground pipes had caused widespread dry rot to the floors and walls of the kitchen and dining room, and none of that was covered by insurance. So for the next couple of months my dining room and my kitchen were ripped apart back to the brickwork and had to have new joists, floors and walls replastered. It was like living in a builder's yard, and it might have been quicker if the builder had moved in! As the house was largely out of bounds, I spent the time redecorating it outside myself, only to discover that my porch roof was also riddled with wet rot, fortunately covered by insurance.

When it appeared all was finished I started to redecorate internally, only to find when I stripped the walls, further extensive cracking. So the saga continues into 2012.

Paul says it was not all doom and gloom, prior to the above he went with some friends to tropical island of Langkawi in Malaysia and had a really lovely and relaxing time, although the weather was dominated by monsoon downpours and some steamy weather too. On one occasion the rain so was so heavy and extensive, when we were in a Starbucks coffee house part of the ceiling came crashing down and water just gushed in. Clearly, not my year for ceilings. I also ventured further north to Burma, a country I had always wished to visit but because of the previous regime had held back from doing so. In Rangoon, the capital, you really felt the country was moving towards a semi-developed economy, with modern fruit juice and cake/ pastry shops. It was not possible however to use a credit card except in a small number of exclusive hotels. The

countryside was very different, the people were poor and had to scratch a living together and the means of transport was the bicycle or if you could afford it an ox-cart; and with the very occasion heavy duty diesel lorry which looked as if made in 1900.

Bagan was something quite extraordinary, an area of some 8-10 square miles with over 20,000 temples from the minute and derelict to the vast and magnificent, with Hindu and Bhuddist within touching distance of each other. I had hired a bicycle and guide to get me round this area, and when we set out at 9.30 one morning the temperature was 104 degrees Fahrenheit!

Mandalay was also an experience, but I was unfortunate to arrive on the opening day of the water festival, when practically everything in the city was shut down, and if you ventured out you were doused in freezing cold water by all and sundry.

My enduring memory is of a people who have been oppressed for decades by a heartless and brutal military regime, but for all their hardship, always had a smile on their face and who were utterly trustworthy and welcoming to anyone who spoke to them. Humanity sometimes knows no bounds and it put all my latter troubles of 2011 in perspective.

More sad news just arrived regarding a 'legend of the service' as **Peter Meech** puts it.

Julian Steinhausen has written to **Pat Bester** to say that **Lionel** had passed away on the 23rd January aged 94. Peter says Lionel of course was well known by my generation, he made his mark wherever he served. I followed Lionel to Durham and learnt that he always signed his letters '**Lionel Steinhausen G.O.D.!!!**'

I can remember visiting Lionel at Durham when I was at the Staff College, on arrival he apologised and said he could only give me a few minutes as the van would be waiting to drive him to the station as he was on a 'jolly' to London or rather he had been summoned there for a bollocking for searching Lord Longford's 'bag of goodies' he had brought for the prisoner he was visiting. He appeared to relish it all like a badge of honour!

Lionel was a loyal member of the R.P.G.A and was always at the re-unions. He will be greatly missed by all.

From my former colleague of many years ago; when we served together with young offenders, **Bill Abbot**. Given that I have been made redundant I have more time to read novels. I was interested in the novel 'Carter' by Tom Cain who puts his character in a safe flat which on entering he describes as done in borstal colours. A new descriptive word for borstal. I doubt many of his readers understood the reference. The colours were of course blue for ordinary grade red for training grade green for senior training grade and brown for discharge grade.

My other research is spotting the number of times Young Offender Institute is wrongly referred to as Young Offenders Institute. They are such in Scotland. I recall Stephen Tumin querying this and Peter Atherton advising us the 's' could be removed using a hair dryer!

Happy day's gone bye.

Bill concludes by saying that he remains of the view we should now wind up the Retired Governors Association. If not now, when, for surely it will happen.

Betty Dennis, already mentioned by other colleagues, has also been in touch, she asks to convey her thanks to all involved in producing yet another R.P.G. Newsletter. I always enjoy reading it even though it contains rather a lot of sad news these days, but that is the price one pays for living to 90. I have seen off so many 'old dears' who have been

friends and acquaintances from the village, but fortunately for me my neighbours are mostly youngsters. They keep an eye on this 'old girl'.

Reggie Llewellyn was the Dep at Lowdham Grange when **Doug** was a housemaster in the 50's, **Juliet**, his wife and I were friends and their 3 daughters played with my youngest and attended the village school. We were the only car owners in the place, a Morris Countryman and most school days it was full of kids being conveyed down the drive to school and back. It was a good place for children to grow up in, with the use of the outdoor swimming pool, a play area and the tennis courts. My youngest daughter was born at No 5 'The Green' and her siblings were involved in the annual staff panto. I learnt to play badminton in the gym with Doug and others. Most evenings we were to be found playing when the Governor **George Macfarlane** was doing his rounds. His usual comment was, ' Burning the midnight oil again I see', bless him.

I was very sorry when we had to leave due to a posting to Portland, but once settled into our cold, draughty but vast quarter we began to enjoy the rugged beauty of the Island and loved it.

My youngest was born in Feltham but 'graduated to school' in the village of Borstal. We lived in the enormous Victorian property opposite the Social Club and next door to the Chaplain. We also had some memorable Christmas parties there; I remember that the dining room was vast enough for a games room or dance hall. When both homes were demolished to make room for a remand centre I was really upset, in spite of having to put up with cold and damp rooms and only a coke stove for heating. Talk about Downton Abbey, the kitchen was right out of that era, but we loved the old building and the wild great garden with the tall Douglas fir trees and sweet Chestnuts. Such a wicked shame that they were all demolished. **Arthur Robinson**, our nice kind Chaplain did try to save them but in those days no one cared about 'preservation'

One morning when **Doug and I** were returning from some function in Rochester we saw the Suffolk Punch farm horses wandering about on the bowling green; his concern was for the green but mine was for the beautiful animals who could easily have caused chaos had they strayed onto the main road. Doug went on to phone the farm manager, I went over to the horses who knew me from the times the children and I had visited them at their stables. So I approached them with quiet confidence and led them back to the farm. They were well fed and loved by the lads and staff so were happy to be returned home to their stable. Betty had served her country by being a member of the Women's' Land Army and was much more accustomed to working with horses than tractors, so it was a great joy and made her very happy to be at so close quarters with those lovely hard working animals again.

Now, there a real piece of old history for us all

Certainly not everyone agrees with Bill, **Olwen Spiers** phoned Harry from Australia and sends her good wishes and thoughts to all and thanks the committee for all the work we do. She really appreciates it.

So, judging by recent correspondence I am not convinced **Bill** is right, but do let us know, we only seek to provide a service that is wanted.

I look forward to a flood of correspondence!

LANCASTER. 1955 -59 By Major George Bride

Continued from last Edition

But men's reactions to their errant wives differ. I remember one wife excused her behaviour by explaining that her seduction had occurred in the kitchen, on the kitchen table to be precise, and not in the bedroom, which her husband accepted as an extenuating circumstance. Many prisoners uttered dire threats whenever they heard that their wives had been for a drink, to the cinema or the Bingo for an evening. They would read all manner of things into the most innocent of news and would bring them to me as evidence of their wife's `carrying-ons'. In this they had been assisted by fellow prisoners who collaborated the so-called proof with highly coloured accounts of their own sexual exploits. It never seemed to occur to them that if the wife was carrying on they would be unlikely to disclose it in a letter with other family news. Pregnancy was, of course, irrefutable proof of the momentary lapse, or more. The causes were usually simple to understand, and I can not recall a single prisoner who was not prepared to accept the reasons for lapses by their spouses, though they did not always forgive. Many discussed these problems with their Officers and I am in no doubt that they preferred the matter of fact approach of the experienced and married Prison Officer to the professionalism of the unmarried social worker

'What's the matter with you, Smithy, these days? You've got a right cob on.'

Ar. It's m' Judy. She's playing up.'

'How old's your bit of stuff?'

'Nineteen.'

'Nineteen! Blimey!! You don't expect a young lass of that age to stay in every night moping and dreaming about you do you? Anyway, how many times have you had a bit on the side, eh?'

That's different.'

'Is it? How bloody different?'

But **they** could never explain, even to their own satisfaction, how different. It made them think, and to achieve that was something. The prisoners understood such an approach and it made them more forthcoming. Maybe they felt that here was someone who not only talked like them but perhaps thought like them and so, understood the way he acted and why.

Quite a different letter was placed before me, this time by the recipient. The prisoner asked me to read this letter **from his** wife as he was worried about her. I read the letter and fully understood his anxiety. He went to ask me if I could check that what his wife had written was true. And at the same time **put his mind** to rest. I said I would though I failed to understand how his mind could be put to rest if what she had written was true. However, later that day I telephoned the Probation Officer and named the prisoner concerned, which was greeted with:

'Please don't mention that name - even over the telephone. It turns the air blue in this office.'

Obviously one of those problem families too well-known to the Probation

service. I went on to explain the contents of the letter and was promised that these would be looked into. A day or so later the cheery voice of the Probation Officer confirmed the facts. The prisoner was sent for:

'I've just had a telephone call from Missof the Huddersfield Probation Office and these are the facts. First, your wife is being summoned for getting electricity into the house without it first going through a meter. Second, she is also being summoned for obtaining national assistance whilst gainfully employed. And, lastly, she has had an argument with the woman next door. This she settled by clouting the woman over the head with a galvanised metal bucket, so your wife is now on bail to appear before the Magistrates having been charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm.'

His face began to light up and at the end an enormous grin of obvious relief right spread right across as he expressed his thanks, ending with:

'.....and here's me been worrying cos I thought it was something serious.'

From time immemorial prisoners have expressed their opinions about members of staff in letters to their friends and relatives. Not only do they know that such mail is censored, but that abuse of the staff is not permitted. They know equally well that such abuse never led to an appearance before a Governor. The letter would be stopped, the prisoner would be seen and ordered to rewrite the letter leaving the offending part out and this the prisoner would do. He was delighted. His views had come to official notice and he also knew that it was more than likely that the censor would pass on the to the subject of his opinion the manner in which he had expressed himself.

Aligned to this sort of behaviour was the prisoner who advised all and sundry he was going to tell the Governor just what he thought of him. A simple example (and fairly frequent one) would be when a prisoner would resentfully carry out an order given to him by an Officer. Then back with his cronies there would be a conference:

'You're not going to stand for that are you?'

'That was a bloody liberty, the way he spoke to you.'

And finally:

'I'll see the Governor and I'll just tell him what for. I've got my rights.'

The next morning the prisoner would be in the queue of litigants outside the office door, where he would be advising all who cared to listen just what he would be telling the Governor. His turn would come:

'In you go, Smith'

In comes Smith, the 'legal advisor' of all the most notorious layabouts. 'Yes, Smith. What is it you want?' I would ask.

'Good morning, Sir. I don't like bothering you, Sir.'

'Well, don't!'

'Yes. Sir. But I wondered if you would be good enough to let me have a special letter.'

'What for?'

'It's my sister-in-law. She's looking after my pigeons while I'm inside.'

'Why can't your wife look after them?'

'Well she is, but I thought it would be a good idea if my sister-in-law could go round and have a look.'

'Do you expect me to believe that load of codswallop? Go on. Clear off'

Then outside and addressing his ready listeners:

'Cor, you should have heard me telling the Old Man what for. There will be no messing about - he got it straight from me. There'll be no more trouble from that screw - the Old Man as good as admitted he was wrong.'

As an Assistant Governor I had tended to regard those from Head Office as next in seniority to The Almighty. When I became a Deputy Governor I quickly learnt that only the Chairman of the Prison Board, the Commissioners and their Assistant Commissioners came anywhere near such classification. And it was at Lancaster, as a governing Governor that I found they were warm, understanding men of great integrity and moral giants who supported the staff with their distinctive wisdom and the interest in the domestic affairs of families of staff. Being such a new prison and steeped in history there were frequent visits from Head Office personnel who sat and talked informally over a cup of coffee and imparted their advice on future plans and answered current problems. In later years one felt that such informality was regarded as a sign of inefficiency and was replaced by regular deliveries of dogmas.

Miss Mellanby was then a Commissioner for women's establishments and was also responsible for libraries in all establishments. She was a woman of few words, great charm and sublime graciousness, whose personality and intellect stood head and shoulders above many of her contemporaries. She had a keenness of perception that could be frightening but she was the expression of kindness and wisdom, adored by every member of the Service. On one of her visits she suggested that Lancaster could be the first prison to have a library supplied and run by staff from the City Library. We discussed this at some length and she went and met the City Librarian and those City Councillors who were members of the relevant committee. In my heart of hearts, I knew that once Miss Mellanby spoke to them the library would be as good as installed. It wasn't!! It took ten days before the shelves were filled with books and arrangements were completed for the Assistant Librarian, Miss Muriel Thornton, to attend three lunch times per week to supervise the issue of books and to advise prisoners on their choices.

Mr Duncan Fairn was the Commissioner for Prisons at that time, a man internationally respected for his knowledge of and experience in penal matters. He was an exuberant man who knew with disconcerting detail every Governor in the service, most of the uniformed grades and many, many prisoners. He was a warm man, who cared and spoke freely and easily. And with considerable persuasion, to staff and prisoners. He had a well developed sense of humour and I always thought an urge for mischief - but he terrified me to death. His first question when he bounced into my office was always:

'Hello, Bridey - you're looking fat and prosperous. How's your wife? And the girls? How are they getting on at school? Now tell me what it is that you've been doing that you shouldn't have done and that you should have told us about.'

I was so terrified that I would tell him.

He has another unhealthy habit. He would always visit a prison as soon as, if not before, the morning staff came on duty. He was inspecting Lancaster and being aware of this I managed to get into the prison shortly before 6 am. He was there - away up on the top landing of the highest wing in the Castle. I clambered up and up and up, and there he was chatting to one of the biggest hooligans from Tyneside (and they can breed them there!). But:

'Hello, Bridey. What are you doing here? Couldn't you sleep?' and I was sufficiently scared to blurt out:

'Not likely, with the thought of you running around this place before dawn.'
He seemed to appreciate my honesty!

Later we discussed the possibility of forming a prison committee made up of prisoners selected by their fellows, by staff and including other staff to consider matters of mutual benefit to all. It was not to be a medium for ventilating grievances - there were already sufficient avenues for that.

'I think this could be done here, Bridey. I think you've got the right atmosphere for starting this sort of co-operation. Perhaps you'd like to think about it before you give it a try, but before you move let me know.'

The general consensus was that it could be done, though a small minority of the Officers were very much `agin'. But we did form a committee and it did serve a useful purpose, so much so that I took the idea to Eastchurch and on to Maidstone when transferred. But it could have been a catastrophic exercise in other prisons where any positive action designed to encourage prisoners to seek better things was only seen as a measure to be exploited by trouble makers for their own comfort and material advantage - and an attitude that was never just the preserve of prisoners.

Long before the reconstruction neared its completion and more accommodation became available it was realised that other forms of employment would be needed for the prisoners with a programme of evening education, interesting and suitable for adults. This in turn, would mean some direction being given to the dispatching prisons of the criteria of selection for transfer to Lancaster. The educational programme caused no problems and we were able to commence classes before the evening work came to a halt. We were fortunate in obtaining the services of a gifted occupational therapist whose personality was such that it soon became necessary to increase the hours of his classes and maintain a waiting list. This was not a flash in the pan - he engendered this interest for the next 20 years. Other classes followed in a natural progression until the programme was a reasonably well balanced series of subjects.

But the day time employment of the prisoners looked as though it would cause some problems, due mainly to the lack of workshop space but a suitable room was equipped and developed into a wireless and TV engineering workshop - the first of its kind in an English prison (though I had seen similar wireless engineering workshops in two German prisons some years before). As the rubble cleared away PT activities were fitted into the inner courtyard and dining/recreation room.

In the October of 57 I learnt that the Moor Hospital, a large local hospital, had been instructed to dispose of its four farms on the outskirts of the City. Several days were spent inspecting every acre, every beast, every piece of equipment, every stone wall, every building and discussing with the hospital authorities what had been encountered. They could not have been more helpful. It was agreed that it would be to the advantage of all if we took them over and we moved into possession. For a variety of reasons the farm had been allowed to run down, which meant that there was plenty of work for some years ahead - roads, walls, ditches, fencing, drainage, and more repairs to farm buildings. Enough work for at least 40 prisoners, eight hours a day and for those working with the dairy herd and other live stock , 6am to 8pm every day and in all weathers.

But nothing is smooth sailing and working in the open with the minimum of supervision tempted some prisoners to seek other interests elsewhere - they escaped. But one can find humour in most situations.

The Police Cadet and I were quite alone, leaning on the parapet of a bridge carrying a country lane over the Lancaster Canal. The canal at this point went through a series of deep cuttings where the trees on either side reached into one another forming a tunnel. We waited quietly for sign of the escapee or that he was approaching us. He had only escaped from the farm party less than two hours before and it was a safe bet that he would use the canal tow path. It provided cover and the general direction was north-south, and he needed to go south. So we watched and waited. Some distance along the line of the canal the birds started squawking and circling the tree tops, and their consternation started infecting other birds nearer at hand.

'I bet this is him' I remarked to the Cadet. 'Would you care to go further up the tow path and get yourself well hidden? I'll get tucked away just down here and when he's between us we'll come to life and grab him'

We both hid ourselves and the seconds ticked away then, sure enough, and looking thoroughly at peace with the world and enjoying the birds and the bees our escapee hove into sight. He passed the hidden Cadet, who quietly stepped on to the tow path, but the escapee was more concerned with the apparition that arose in front of him.....

'Fucking hell. It's you!!!!'

'Who did you expect to see - Father Christmas?'

At which witticism he turned to run back but there stood the Cadet - and less than 15 yards away. So he turned left and clambered up the bank. By the time I reached the top the escapee was a good 50 yards away, closely pursued by the Cadet, who had lost his cap and was in the process of casting his jacket as he ran. Seeing a Panda car on the road to our right the escapee made a sharp veer to his left, still followed by the Cadet. I kept straight on as it seemed to me I might shorten the distance between us - or at least before he got to a stone wall. Both the escapee and the Cadet reached and climbed it before I was within 20 yards of it. By now I was grievously short of breath, my legs were beginning to buckle, and now knowing that I would never climb the wall I hurled myself at it. I managed to straddle it and fall over the other side. Vaguely through the perspiration and gasps I could see the escapee and the Cadet in a bleary distance. There was the impression that the escapee was brought down by a rugby tackle, and I continued on my unsteady way. By the time I had reached them the Cadet had obtained a neck hold and the escapee was still struggling. I staggered on to them, the struggles ceased and the prisoner drew my attention to his discomfort.

'Governor, tell him to cut it out. He's hurting my fucking neck.'

'Is he? Well, he has my permission to break the bloody thing if you don't keep still.'

At which point the Panda car arrived and out stepped a Police Officer, at least 20 stones of him. Immaculate. He looked at the Cadet with some disgust.

'What do you think you're up to? Where's your tunic? Where's your cap? Put your tie straight.'

And I wondered whose day this was.

Another escapee was away for more than an hour. He was not captured by the police for more than four weeks, and then it was only three miles away where he was working for another farmer. He had, in fact, gone straight from his compulsory farm work to the less restrictive one of free enterprise. Consequently he had not committed any offences during his period of liberty and he was returned direct to the prison. But he possessed one bottle of Booth's gin, bought with the money he had earned. This was confiscated and placed in my office safe, and on completion of the punishment awarded for his escape he witnessed the contents being poured down the toilet. I passed the empty bottle to the Chief Officer who had witnessed the disposal of the gin.

'You can get shut of this bottle, Chief?'

'Yes Sir. Leave it to me.'

During my weekends off duty the Chief Officer was left in charge of the prison and took possession of my keys. He was an Ulsterman, a staunch Protestant, always cheerful and had that happy **knack** of getting the best out of everyone - and the worst out of me. Time goes by and Christmas was at hand when he suggested we should have a drink to welcome the forthcoming festival.

'Yes. I'd love to. A good idea. Come and join me at my club tomorrow evening.'

'What about today, Sir?'

'Well my club isn't open on a Sunday but we can go down the King's Arms as soon as the roll is correct if you like.'

'Actually, I was thinking of now. What about having one here?'

This I could not understand and said so.

'Well, I've got some gin.'

My mind went 'click'. But how? It could not be true - I had poured it away myself.

'Come on. Tell me . Where did you get it from?'

During my weekends off duty and during the time that the prisoner was completing his punishment he had taken the bottle of Booth's gin from the safe, transferred its contents to another bottle and replenished the Booth's bottle with a liquid sufficiently coloured to look like the original contents, and this he replaced into my safe. I had poured away an innocuous liquid, and then instead of disposing of the empty bottle he had returned to it the original contents and put in HIS safe.

'Well, of all the tricks to play. I've never heard of anything so diabolical and dishonest. What do you suggest we have with it?' Now the Chief Officer also had in his safe an official store of Holy Communion wine for use by the Chaplains.

'What about a spot of Holy Communion wine?' *'Oh No!!! You never did?'*

'Oh, yes Sir. But I always used the R. C.s.'

From what I remember it was quite a good mixture.

But my days at Lancaster were soon to end and promotion was to send me to Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent. My wife and daughters - and myself - did not greet this news with much enthusiasm. The work had been fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable. We had all made many good friends and had been greeted with kindness and warmth to be expected from Lancastrians. And Lancashire contained some of the most beautiful scenery in Britain. So happy had we all been among people rich in character who knew one purpose in life was to help one another, that we knew then we would come back one day.

Readers can look forward to a further article from Major George Bride re his time at Sherwood Borstal which will be published in the next edition of the Newsletter

Killers can die in jail, judges say

Britain's most dangerous and notorious criminals can be kept behind bars for the rest of their lives, European judges have ruled.

Killer Jeremy Bamber and two other convicted murderers lost their appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that whole-life tariffs condemning prisoners to die in jail amounted to "inhuman or degrading treatment".

The whole-life tariff is not "grossly disproportionate" and in each case London's High Court had "decided that an all-life tariff was required, relatively recently and following a fair and detailed consideration", the judges ruled.

Bamber attacked the court's decision. In a statement released by his supporters, he said: "If the state wishes to have a death penalty, then they should be honest and re-introduce hanging. Instead, this political decision that I must die in jail is the death penalty using old age or infirmity as the method..

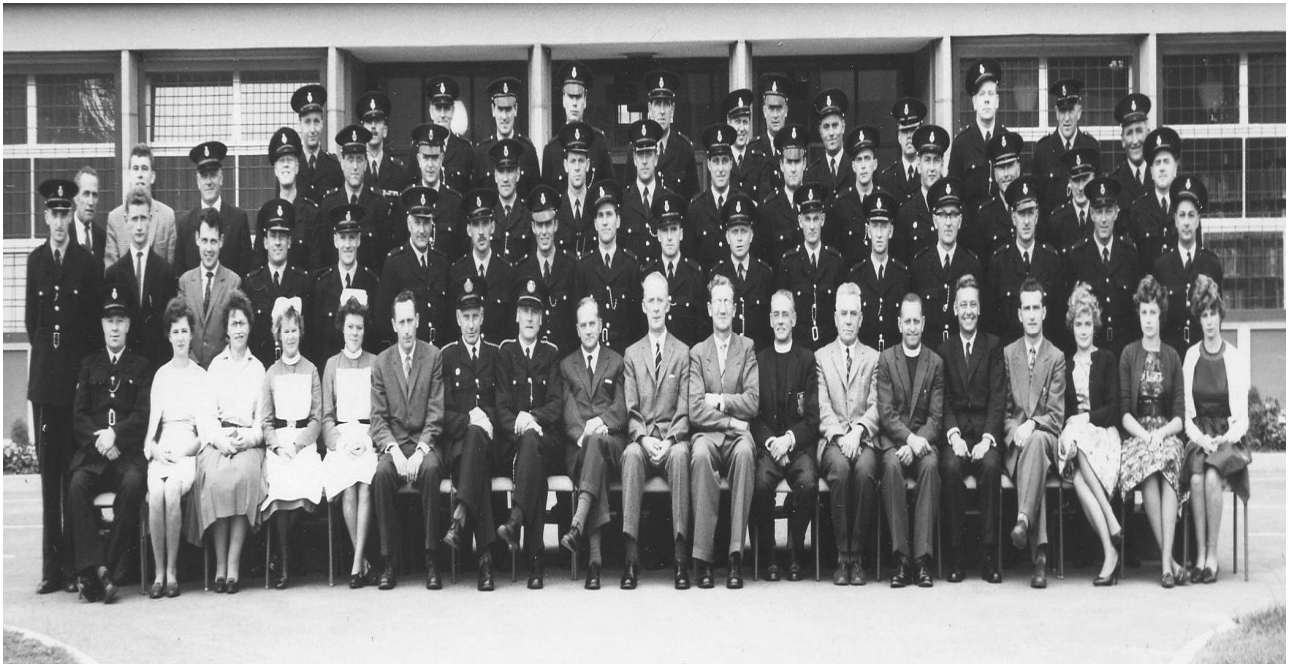
Bamber's legal team, which is also representing convicted killers Peter Moore and Douglas Vinter, submitted the application to the ECHR in December 2009.

But their claims were strongly opposed by Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke, who has said the Government has been "fighting the case vigorously and defending the principle of the whole-life tariff". Under current law, whole-life tariff prisoners will almost certainly never be released from prison as their offences are deemed to be so serious.

A Ministry of Justice spokesman said: "The Government strongly welcomes this decision. We argued vigorously that there are certain prisoners whose crimes are so appalling that they should never become eligible

From Times Gone By

I'm indebted to John Ramwell for the two photographs on this page . He informs me that the top one is the staff of HMP Grendon in the early 1960s, whilst the one below it was taken at the North Region Governors Conference. No doubt many of you will recognise yourselves and former colleagues.



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JOIN THE MODERN PRISON SERVICE

Those were the days.

The days of Officer's wearing a tie and a hat are now about as defunct as the newspaper from which this advertisement was taken. No doubt many of you will remember sending off a form similar to this.

Our thanks go to Paddy Scriven , who I'm told found this in her must do today file. Thanks Paddy it has brought back some fond memories.