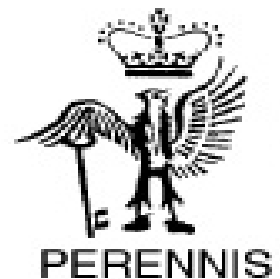


# The Retired Prison Governors

In co-operation with: The Prison Governors Association

# NEWSLETTER



Founded in 1980 by Arthur Williamson – 33 years of continuous publication

ISSUE 67

EDITORIAL

Autumn 2012

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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



I know that once again members will be pleased to read another extract from the unpublished book written by the late Major George Bride. The inclusion in this edition of the Newsletter recalls his time as an Assistant Housemaster at Sherwood Borstal at a time just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. I am indebted to the late Major's daughter for passing on these extracts, and for allowing us to publish them.

As editor I cannot let this edition go to publication without making reference to some of the events which have taken place so far this year. We started in January with a drought and hosepipe ban, something almost unheard of during our usually wet winter months. This was quickly followed by the wettest spring on record, with continual rain for months on end. It was still raining when we came to celebrate the Queens Diamond Jubilee. It was a wonderful

display of some of our traditions, heritage, and royal patronage. Perhaps the best way to sum this "spectacular", would be for me to quote a small extract from an email which I received from an American friend of mine living in Arizona, who after watching some of the events on U.S. television said, "you Brits certainly know how to party".

Then despite moving into a double dip recession came the Olympics. A derelict site in the east of London was turned into a magnificent complex of sports arenas, residential buildings, parkland, waterways, etc. All of which was completed ahead of schedule and under budget. Then came the spectacle of the opening ceremony, followed by the superb performance of our sports men and women. Yes it was an event that we can really be proud of hosting. A showcase to the world on what Britain can achieve.

One RPGA member however wishes to point out that another amazing sporting event took place earlier in the year and to prove his support of it he kindly sent in a photograph which is reproduced inside.

## **Retired Prison Governors Management Committee**

Chairman.... Graham Smith, Secretary.....Ray London, Treasurer....Jim Blakey, Membership Secretary.... Harry Brett

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.

Committee member Graham Mumby- Croft .

## **SENTENCES WITH INSIGHT**

1. You cannot legislate the poor into prosperity, by legislating the wealth out of prosperity.
2. What one person receives without working for...another person must work for without receiving.
3. The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody else.
4. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it.
5. When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they worked for, that is the beginning of the end of any nation!

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## **RPGA-MAIL REGISTER**

The e-mail register has now been operational for over 10 years and has proven itself to be an effective means of rapid communication between members.

It offers updates on current prison events and allows members to keep in touch with each other.

Joining the RPGA does not automatically place you on the register. If you would like to join the 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.

Please remember that if you change your email address you must inform Mick Roebuck, otherwise you will cease to receive further updates.



## IS THE PRISON SERVICE MORE CORRUPT THAN IN OUR DAY?

By Paul Laxton

Those readers who have E mail will be familiar with the snippets of news from our former profession circulated by Mick Roebuck. Sadly a good number of these refer to individuals convicted of corrupt relationships with serving prisoners involving money or sex, and sometimes both. From time to time Mick comments and expresses the view that “it was not like that in our day.” It is a phrase that can make the ears of the younger generation glaze over at the sound of sepia tinted old men romanticising the past. I hope Jenny Adams-Young will forgive the deliberately mixed metaphors. Coming swiftly to the point I actually agree with Mick, but I do think the explanations are a complex interplay of social change and bureaucratic practice. It was not like that in our day because what it was like in our day has largely been swept away. You only have to compare the original TV documentary, “Strangeways,” broadcast in 1980, with the one broadcast in 2011, to see how much the custodial world had changed.

So what is corruption? My Collins Dictionary defines the word “corrupt” as “morally debased.” The Latin word “corruptus” is the past participle of the Latin verb “corrumpere,” literally meaning to break. Thus that which is corrupt is utterly broken. There is no basis for trust. In economic terms corruption is the provision of services which the individual or group is not entitled to give in return for payment, or the receipt of money or services to which they are not entitled by virtue of their office. This covers the principal forms of corruption, money and sex. The debasing of statistics and performance data to enhance the reputation of a department or service provider also comes under the heading of corrupt practice. In the Prison Service the target culture which didn’t exist 15 years ago has made this form of corruption more than a fringe problem. It has also moved the problem of bullying from the shop floor into the senior management team, but that is a subject for another piece.

I have heard the view expressed by senior Police officers that the Prison Service does not take corruption seriously in terms of the resources devoted to rooting it out. The point is that the Police clearly believe that HM Prison Service is significantly more corrupt. As far back as 1999, I attended a presentation by a then upwardly mobile young accelerated promotion governor grade on the subject. Even when making allowances for it being early days the presentation was short on analysis and long on generalisation. The theme was very much that debt was the key factor in vulnerability. Those with long memories will recall that what our generation call the bank rate, now known as the minimum lending rate was 6.0% in 1999. At the beginning of the decade it had been twice that as the government sought to damp down the “Lawson boom,” part of which involved a massive increase in house prices and the easiest available credit in history. That people should become property owners was the compelling mantra of the Thatcher years. Inevitably some people managed their debts better than others and the creation of the Child Support Agency in 1993 gave some divorced people the most horrendous financial problems because of its incompetence and vindictiveness. In short people in all walks of life now had debts on a scale unimaginable a generation earlier and prison staff were no different. A bureaucratic decision taken to sell off prison quarters and allow prison officers to get on the property ladder was part of the march to the property owning society.

The sale of quarters was a boon for those who lived in them. After five years they could be sold with no repayment of discount. As a consequence this housing stock was effectively privatised in a few short years. One neglected impact of this policy was the dispersal of prison officers and governors who once lived as part of their self sustaining community often very close to the prison walls. These communities could be claustrophobic and covered up other vices such as alcohol abuse but they offered the obvious protection that safety in numbers affords. The support network disappeared. Equally it was fairly easy to spot any colleague living above his or her means. Those who spent fortunes on one arm bandits in Prison Service clubs were well known to colleagues.

The sale of quarters was not the only impact of “Fresh Start” as it was known, in 1987. Previously lucrative overtime was abolished and over a period of five years prison officer grades came down to a 39 hour week. The ability to earn your way out of trouble disappeared. As a consequence some prison staff took second jobs. It came as a considerable surprise to me to discover the prevalence of staff working as stewards and doormen at clubs where it is almost inevitable that they will come into contact with the criminal classes, people whose cell doors they may have unlocked. It sent an obvious message to

criminals that prison officers were no longer well paid. Indeed it is fair to say that reducing the pay of prison staff has been the long term policy of both Tory and Labour governments. Slashing overtime was not the only weapon. The expansion of the auxiliary grade, renamed as Operational Support Grades, and the civilianisation of kitchens and other work areas were all part of the picture of reducing costs. The danger of replacing well trained staff with much less well trained staff is obvious to practitioners. Recruitment policy after Fresh Start sought to broaden the base of recruitment. With the relaxation of the rules regarding women officers working in male prisons, a healthy and long overdue change, there was a rapid growth in female recruits. Similarly the service actively recruited from ethnic minority communities seeking to send out a powerful message of inclusion to both law abiding and criminal members of minority communities.

However, recruitment policies were never principally about diversity, they were about reducing costs. Two key features of recruitment policy which succumbed to the law of unintended consequences were local recruitment and the reduction in starting pay. The old system of national recruitment with the consequent liability to be posted anywhere in the country was seen both as costly and as deterrent (except to ex-servicemen who were used to it) to suitable recruits particularly amongst women with caring responsibilities and ethnic minorities with close family ties. All of this was very true but the other side of the coin is that prison officers frequently live cheek by jowl with offending classes in their home town who are often people they knew at school. If you reduce starting pay you prevent staff from moving to more salubrious areas where rents are higher just at the point at which their lack of experience makes them most vulnerable. Reducing starting pay also drives down the average age of recruits, male and female alike, and therefore increases the risk of immature staff being drawn into webs of deceit spun by manipulative prisoners. Streetwise older recruits, ex-forces NCO's and recruits from the Fire and Police services seeking career change are more likely to stick with their existing employment. The situation is likely to get worse rather than better as the service caps the maximum pay of newly recruited prison officers at around £5k less per annum than existing staff as part of a bid to harmonise public and private sector pay. I would never argue that low pay is a direct cause of corruption, not least because we have become very well educated about the sheer greed of the higher paid in the banking industry. My point is that low pay is one of a basket of factors that render the service more vulnerable to corrupt behaviour by individuals or groups of staff.

I have already made reference to the social changes brought about under Mrs Thatcher. As well as becoming more debt ridden, we have become less deferential and much more informal, two sides of the same coin. By the mid 1980's, in adult civilian life the use of an unadorned surname as a form of address was seen as disrespectful and had become largely restricted to male prisoners. The practice in the Prison Service persisted long after it was abandoned by traditional bastions such as the Royal Family and the Jockey Club and it did so because it was a very clear way of demarcating those who had forfeited their status as citizens as a consequence of their criminality. For the same reason convicted prisoners were deprived of the vote. During Martin Narey's period as Head of the Prison Service (1998-2005) he exhorted staff to refer to and address prisoners as "Mr," the typical appellation of the citizen. Young offenders would be known by their forenames. These were well –intentioned changes that it was believed would increase mutual respect. I have to be honest I conformed to the policy without too much thought. In practice managers carried out the policy and prison officers largely ignored it. However, Martin Narey intentionally or otherwise sent out a very significant message to the prison population. As a consequence prisoners perceived themselves on the same level as staff and the authority of staff both as perceived and in reality was reduced. Removing the natural almost invisible barriers that govern relationships between staff and those they incarcerate comes with risk. It is distance that offers staff significant protection from financial blandishments, and it is distance that reminds staff that prisoners are out of bounds as regards sexual relationships. More recently a prisoner has used the Human Rights Act to get Belmarsh staff to address him formally rather than just by surname, thus further eroding the legitimate authority of staff.

So like Mick I do believe the service is more corrupt than it was 30 years ago, 20 years ago, and 10 years ago. It is so because of a complex interplay between social change and bureaucratic reform. It is so because politicians obsessed with cutting costs and labour market reform, prison service bosses and social reformers principal amongst whom are Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, have little understanding of history, a limited understanding of human psychology, and no ability to think counter intuitively when contemplating both major and minor reforms.

# It's a con.

By J.J. Ramwell



A recent survey by a broad sheet newspaper showed that compared to a decade ago, we have become a lot less trusting in our dealings with businesses as well as with each other. It was usually possible to trust the bigger companies who you believed had built their name on trust and customer good will.

Not so. Insurance companies, many with household names, are conning millions from us. It is all done on the back of AUTOMATIC CONTINUOUS PAYMENT.

Doubtless you will have noted that insurance premiums are going through the roof. If your insurance company is keeping down its' premiums, then do us all a favour and share the details.

Three weeks prior to your insurance renewal you will receive a letter informing you that it is time to renew and giving the new quote for the coming year. Do nothing and you will be losing a lot of money. By challenging the company they will almost certainly reduce the premium to a more competitive level. When asked why they could not do this in the first place you will get blinded by their economic arguments based on gobbledegook and jargon. The worst thing you can do is simply ignore the renewal notice and pay through the nose. Your choice.

Do nothing and the insurance company will continue your insurance arrangements, be it for car, house, contents, or what ever, by simply continuing to take payments either from your bank (Direct Debit at above 20% APR by the way) or from your Credit Card (usually an annual payment), all quite legal and done on the back of Automatic Continuous Payment arrangements.

I believe there must be millions of us who too busy, too forgetful or, like me, too bewildered to deal with insurance renewal notices in the way I have described above. This being the case insurance companies are doing very well out of this 'procedure'.

Each year you need to seek out the best insurance arrangements that come with the best price. The easiest way is to go on line. Quotes are easy to acquire and it is easy to sign up. You really do need to do this each year at renewal time.

Not that the internet retailing industry does not have its' sharks.

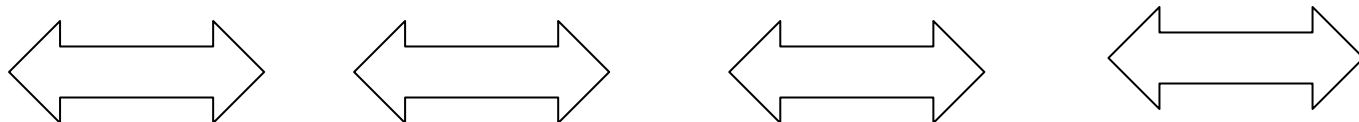
On checking my credit card payments I discovered I was paying £10 a month to a 'shoppers saving company'. How I signed up for this I'll never know but I was assured I had. It happened like this. I bought tickets from National Express on the internet and took up an offer to save £15 on next ticket purchase. It later came clear that this offer was not being made by National Express but by a separate 'shoppers saving company'. As soon as I challenged this company

they could not refund my payments quickly enough. It was as though they knew they were conning me and wanted as little fuss as possible.

My brother had a similar experience. He took up an offer to buy wine believing it was a one off payment. It was only when he noticed £20 a month going out of his credit card account did he question the payments. Again he was rapidly refunded leading him and me both believing we are dealing with, at worst illegal and at best immoral 'scams'.

As a post script I will add that the vast majority of dealings on the internet are honest and above board. They have to be in order that the whole concept of shopping on the World Wide Web remains sound. Customer feedback builds up confidence if it is good and retailers know this and behave accordingly.

None the less, buyer beware and be careful what you sign up for and always check your bank and credit card statements regularly.



## **John Yates**

Late news from Barbara Yates that John died on the 26 April 2012, he was 82.

He had suffered from stomach cancer, but generally was in reasonable health until near the end, He died at his home in Kent.

He commenced his career in the prison service in 1961 at Lowdham, and served at Cardiff, Wormwood Scrubs, S.E.Regional Office, Long Lartin, New Hall, and Cookham Wood.

He is believed to have been the first male Governor of a female establishment. John was a loyal supporter of RPGA, and many will remember his fine singing voice at the Church Services held at the RPGA annual re-unions .

He also attended many of the weekend events, particularly Bournemouth. He gave up formal singing whilst still in 'good voice', but continued to teach singing. He was a real character, and many will remember him fondly and feel sad at his loss.

Barbara has requested that she be kept in touch with Johns former colleagues via the email register which has been amended to show her email address.

# Memories



By John Berry

Having joined the prison service as an Assistant Governor in 1976 at HM Borstal Feltham I thought I would share a few recollections of those days with you.

1. We all worked in a closed Borstal with no fence - well a 4 foot wall along one boundary if that constitutes "a fence".
2. Only a few staff had a radio and Assistant Governors even when duty governor did not qualify for one.
3. I regularly took out 20 boys in an evening to play football or cricket (which was normal) and the only proviso was that if anybody absconded we would not go out again - nobody ever absconded from my games evenings.
4. I remember when the prison officers nationally went on a one day strike which, the Borstal staff joined in. We organised a conker contest on the wing and the staff joined in because the boys were on the wing all day.
5. West House had a cubicle (cell) which was reputedly haunted and whilst I never saw anything, some staff and borstal boys were uncomfortable going near it.
6. I was once called as duty governor at Feltham by the night staff when a Borstal boy climbed back into the Borstal (we had a fence by then) and knocked on the door asking to come back in. In those days a boy could be allowed back for I think a maximum of 72 hours (others may remember the particular borstal rule with more clarity).
7. Assistant Governors at Feltham used to help to run a weekly club (Tuesday evenings I think) off Leicester Square for ex borstal boys from Feltham - it made for an interesting evening in London. Because Feltham took quite disturbed boys, those attending the club often came in with a variety of interesting problems which they wanted resolving.
8. A few of the boys I knew at Feltham graduated to the adult system (no surprises there) and we met again at Gartree (High Security) Stocken Cat C trainer, Gartree again (lifers) etc.
9. The best Probation Officer I every knew was an ex Feltham boy who the Home Office had eventually allowed to train as a Probation Officer. He came back to visit one of his charges and the gate officer, one Danny Blatchford (superb officer) would not let him in because he had known him as a borstal boy. Funny times.
10. A boy on the gardens party brought in a rusty bayonet he had dug up - no one was particularly surprised, apparently lots of other bits of military equipment had been found over the years - imagine that happening today.
11. I ran a 3 years old Mini and one of the Senior Officers (Bert Giddings) had a Porche. A service for his car cost more than it did to buy mine.
12. We still had some Matrons at Feltham who were graded as Principal Officers and paid accordingly so they earned about £1700 more than I did as an Assistant Governor. I earned £3,300 pa when I started in 1976.
13. Whilst Deputy Governor at HMP Stocken in 1988 I remember having dinner with Gordon Lakes when he visited the prison. He was at Feltham with one Teddy Thomas (Assistant Governor) who latterly went on to be a professor at Nottingham University. Apparently Teddy played a musical instrument and practiced at lunchtime when the boys were locked away and staff were having their break. I think Gordon Lakes may have played as well and they were both part of a brass band at the Borstal. When I joined Feltham the staff asked if I played any musical instruments (I don't) which was a great relief for them. One must assume they did not enjoy the rehearsals!

Good times. Many others who were there at the time will have other memories to add to the list.

## **Justice of the Peace**

Following on from Harry Bretts' article re his JP duties in the last edition of the Newsletter your editorial team received a further submission from John Berry who also serves as a JP.

### JP Duties

I really enjoyed reading through Harry Bretts article on JP duties in the Spring 2012 edition of the RPGA. I have only been a magistrate since 2008 but it is amazing the changes I have seen in that short time.

In my first year I sat on 46 occasions and could have done more if I had wanted to. Gradually over the last three years the work in the court has reduced considerably and this year I will just achieve the minimum of 26 half-day sittings.

Leicestershire & Rutland have closed 3 Magistrates courts, and a fourth could follow shortly leaving only 2 courts to deal with crime across the two counties. Juvenile crime has reduced by over 20%, which is excellent news provided that it is a real reduction in crime and not a massaging of the figures.

Adult crime continues to fall or at least we are not seeing as many people through the Magistrates courts due to police cautions, fixed penalty notices coupled with a reduction in police numbers, which has certainly had an impact on the number of criminals brought to justice.

The number of Magistrates also continues to fall across the country probably from a high of around 30,000 4 years ago to around 26,000 at the present time (and those numbers will continue to fall). With fewer courts, fewer crimes, and fewer magistrates the opportunities to serve "on the bench" are steadily reducing.

Like Harry I enjoy my work as a Magistrate and this complements other work I do as a Mental Health Hospital Manager for Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire reviewing patients who have been sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

If colleagues are looking for some interesting work then it is worth approaching your local Mental Health Trust or hospital to see if they are recruiting any Mental Health Act Managers. The remuneration is not huge (about £50 a session) but who does this kind of work for the money?

John Berry OBE JP



# Assistant Housemaster at Sherwood

by Major George Bride (RIP)

It was the Civil Service Commissioners task to select Housemasters for the prison and borstal service, but in reality there was some truth in the rumour that they were all the personal choice of the late Sir Alexander Paterson one of the moral giants of the Prison Commission. I had been at Nottingham Borstal for a year, when a letter from the Civil Service Commission arrived at my home address in Birmingham advising me that I had been successful in my `recent' board (some 18 months previously) and that I was to present myself to H.M.P. Winson Green, Birmingham, for a medical. Subject to this being satisfactory, I would then be advised as to where I would commence my duties. This did not worry me, it scarred me stiff, and I rapidly consulted the Governor. On reading my letter he burst into roars of laughter: `Don't worry, Bridey Boy, you will find that is how the civil service works!' `Anyway', he said as an afterthought `They have been paying you, haven't they?' They had been paying me, but now I worried whether I had been paid under false pretences. Years later I discovered that there was cause for my concern. A colleague, who joined after the war, was told after his interview to report to the Governor of Maidstone, which he duly did. Several months later he received a similar letter to the one I had, but in the interim period he had not been paid, nor was he ever for that period!

Such was the world I had entered, other appointments were from all walks of life; industry, commerce, professions, the armed forces, and from the prison officer grades. There were many applications from university graduates, but they were invariably told to go out in the world and get some experience of life first. Go into the East End of London and work with youth groups, or join the merchant navy, and if after a couple of years you are still interested, come back to us. Many did just that, several were encouraged to go out to the colonies, and of course some remained out there. It does seem a pity, looking back, that so many of these opportunities to learn about life first are not now encouraged or do not exist. With the present emphasis on academic qualifications, knowledge is now gleaned from the cloistered calm of a university or scraped together in the cafeteria queue of an educational factory. It can be rightly pointed out that opportunities for voluntary service still exist, and that many magnificent young people do commit themselves. This does, however, seem to lack an identity, it seems to be turbid and not generate that lifelong commitment to service that so personified an earlier period.

In the 1930's borstal training comprised a period 3 years in custody, followed by 1 year on license and under the supervision of the hometown probation officer, known as a Borstal Associate. Anybody between the ages of 18 and 23 could receive such a sentence. On conviction the young person went to the allocation center in Wormwood Scrubs, and was allocated to one of the then nine borstals as appeared most suitable for that individual. Each borstal had its own unique programme of training aimed at meeting the needs of the particular group allocated from the center. All the establishments followed a `stage system' — promotion by stages until eventual discharge was attained though individual effort. This was not just a matter of `keeping your nose clean', there had to be a positive effort. Discharge could, therefore, be earned before the expiry of the three years maximum, and the period `earnt back' added to the period spent under supervision.

Sherwood was the old County Goal of Nottingham, built along with some 50 other prisons in the mid 1900's and taken over by the Prison Commission in 1863. It had been closed for sometime after the <sup>1st</sup> World War, but was reopened in the early 1930's with the arrival of some `twenty lads from Wormwood Scrubs', and a handful of staff under Frank Ransley; one of the `Greats' of all time. It was the custom in those days for both prisons and borstals

to fend for themselves, so everything depended on the initiative of the governor, the skills of the staff, and the combined leadership effect upon the inmates. It was this that earned the loyalty of subordinates and the

respect for the integrity of the governor. It was totally much reliant upon personal relationships, and not on some computerized system run by civil servants.

The work of converting the 'moth-balled' prison began. The former female wing was converted into an educational center, with classrooms and hobbies and handicraft rooms. The male hospital became a recreation room for those within 3 months of discharge. Other recreation rooms and quiet rooms for study and writing were created from cellular accommodation; workshops, a gymnasium and a swimming pool were built, and a sports field was dug by hand out of an old sandpit. Other structural alterations produced offices, a library, canteen, and a meeting room. Some of this work was still in progress when I joined in 1938, including the building of official quarters for the staff.

Those serving their time at Sherwood were all over 21 years of age, many had failed to respond probation or to the training at an Approved School and a number were on their second borstal sentence. Sherwood was their last chance before prison. The majority were married men, the remainder were co-habiting, or not 'churched', as they so delicately put it. The average age was 24 (a young man sentenced to borstal at the age of 22 could be 25 before release), and they were the only 'boys' in the borstal system in long trousers.

There were four stages of progression at Sherwood – Reception for the first month, then into 'Brown Stage' after the next batch of receptions arrived from Wormwood Scrubs. They were required to remain in this stage for a minimum of 6 months before being eligible for a board for promotion to 'Blue Stage'. Each boy wore a uniform denoting the colour of the stage he had reached. It was, however, rare for promotion to come at the first board. Rejection was known as 'getting the elbow' - this expression arose from the habit of one housemaster who leant forward, cupped his hands in his chin and placed his elbows on the desk when imparting the good news 'another month to do' After 6 months in the 'Blue Stage' consideration was given to possibility/advisability of discharge. Gaining this at the first consideration was rare, but once on the list discharge followed 3 months later. Any misconduct at any point meant a reduction in stage, only for very serious misconduct was a lad reduced to the reception stage. Consequently the time served on average at Sherwood was between 20 and 24 months, it was not unknown for some to serve 2.5 years. At other establishments the time spent in the various stages was less than at Sherwood but the same principles applied.

It was the duty of the housemaster to convene a monthly House Board to consider promotion within his house, and to fully take into account the views of the officers, the principal officer and the matron. The housemaster then took the recommendations to the Institution Board, presided over by the Governor and comprising of all the housemasters, the chaplain and the chief officer. This board had the authority to ratify or change the recommendations of the house boards. Being a small establishment - about 170 lads - we all knew something about all those up for consideration and there was rarely much controversy. At larger establishments these boards could be very prolonged and could sit for 2 or 3 days. They could also provide a delightful past time as some Governors with a mischievous streak, played off one housemaster against another, and whilst they dialectically argued the pros and cons of the case, he would sit back and enjoy his pipe.

However, I was a novice and had to be trained in all these procedures. When I first went through the gate of Sherwood Borstal in the Spring of 1938, I was ignorant of all this and much more. I was met by a housemaster who was to escort me around the establishment, he was an Aberdonian, and spoke in a foreign language, which made this strange new world even more confusing. He said the Governor was 'on his rounds', I did not have a clue what that meant. After much unlocking and relocking of gates, we eventually entered the main and

only wing. The first lesson I was to learn was that whenever you go through a gate or door, whatever state you found it in, you lock it behind you. We entered the wing and immediately the smell hit me, a smell I had never come across before, it was a combination of smells. At this time there were no electric lights at Sherwood, it was lit by gas, and there seemed to be as much floating around in the gloomy atmosphere as there was providing the feeble lighting. To all this was added the stench of Black Bell- a murderous, vile form of shag tobacco. At 8p an ounce it was remarkably cheap even in 1938, b u t half an ounce was all that most lads could afford from their earnings. It was, though, a popular tobacco in both prison and borstal, and had been for so many years that the very walls smelt of it. Then swirling into this pervasive fragrance was the dainty aroma of boiled cabbage water. Like everybody else, I soon got used to it and took it for granted.

We came to the housemaster's office( three cells knocked into one) and shared with another housemaster, whose demeanor, bearing, manner of speech and moustache, proclaimed his RAF background. They both soon made me realize that I was to be their personal 'dog's body', and that if I had ideas above my station they would soon knock me down to size. Until the outbreak of war I was chased around with menial tasks and hardly had time to think. Years later we would all laugh about those days, and that wicked Aberdonian with a twinkle in his eye would say 'that ,Bridey Boy, was your basic training. It did you good and you know you enjoyed it.' Which was true. The basic message they taught me over and above all the rudimentaries, was the appreciation that I was part of a team.

There were no experts in those days, the housemasters were the experts. As well as running a house of some 70-100 lads, they organized the evening education curriculum and taught on it. They organized the trade training programmes, and the PE and sporting activities, which a prison officer PE instructor carried out. They organized the monthly concerts and film shows, they ran the library and the earnings scheme including running the canteen. It was their duty to see all visiting relatives, to deal with welfare and marital problems and to organize the discharge arrangements for each lad, and their introduction to their home probation officer. At weekends there were matches to umpire or referee; life sped along.

On the morning following my arrival I was introduced to the Governor: a tall, upright, athletic man, always with a suspicious twinkle in his eyes that all of a sudden would break into a rich belly laugh. He would laugh with the sheer ecstasy of life, and lived life to the full; he eschewed anything unsavoury, deceitful or sophisticated. He set high standards and such was his personality that everyone tried and some even succeeded. The lads called him 'The Bengal Lancer'. Well, Bridey Boy, (the name given to me as soon as I joined and which remained with me throughout my service) we will have to think about what to do with you. But for the next few days you had better stick with me and see what goes on. At this point the Chief Officer entered, and there followed a ritual that has gone on since Governors ceased to be gaolers and became salaried officers; 'Good morning Sir. The roll is correct and we unlocked 173 this morning. There are no applications but there is one report for you to deal with. If you'll let me know when it is convenient I'll make the arrangements.' Thank you chief, have you met Mr. Bride, you have, good. Now what is this report all about? 'Young is reported for using foul and obscene language to an officer at unlocking this morning.' 'Well I will be ready in ten minutes, when I have finished my pipe.' Off went the chief to make the arrangements.

I should now explain all the procedures that were not known to me then. The staff arrived on duty at 0700 and paraded on the ground floor of the wing, the Principal Officer in charge would detail them to the various landings to check the roll. The wing 'warning bell' had been rung by the night staff at 6030 and all the occupants were expected to be up, washed, shaved

and dressed, and for the cell to be neat and tidy with the bedding all folded up into a bed pack. They would then stand facing the cell door so that when the officer went along the landing he could check each occupant by peering through the spy-hole. Having completed his check he would stand on the bridge that connected the two landings; when the Principal Officer saw each of the officers on his bridge, he would call for the numbers recorded on each landing. If a wrong number, or the total did not tally with the numbers recorded at lock up the previous night, the officers would be ordered to change landings and do a recount. Once the total was agreed the order to 'unlock' would be given by the ringing of the wing bell. The cells would be unlocked but the occupants remained in them until individually called forward by their landing officer to 'slop out', thus hopefully avoiding congestion and incidents at the recess.

All had not gone so smoothly this particular morning. The miscreant who was on report was in fact a public school boy who had then been sent down by his university because of his interest and involvement in other people's cars, particularly fast ones. Continued stealing of cars had eventually landed him 'inside'. The officer who had unlocked him that morning was completely bald and he had a dome like St. Paul's Cathedral; he was also ham fisted, noisy in manner and loud in speech. Instead of waiting for permission to leave his cell the young man had stepped right out onto the landing, strolled after the officer and tapped him on the shoulder and in a studied, calm and cultured voice said, 'Good morning sir. Excuse me, but are you by any mischance the bald headed old bastard with a head like a pisspot that has just unlocked my cell door?' The officer stood flabbergasted and speechless, and the young man continued, 'from the expression on your ugly mug it is all too obvious to me that you are.

I would therefore, sir, ask you please not to make such fucking noise about it tomorrow morning.'

When the adjudication was over and the Governor and I were alone, the Governor grinned and said 'I believe the officer in question does have a head like a piss pot, but even I am not allowed to say so. What's more he called him an old bastard, when in fact he is much younger than me. Neither can be allowed.' It was clear the Governor was highly amused at the incident.

The hours of duty were not unduly long nor were they regarded as being unsocial. To a great extent housemasters were left to their own devices to get on with the job, but to leave nothing undone. At Sherwood we always came on duty at about 8.45a.m. but never left until the lads went back to work in the afternoon at 1 p.m., and then returned again no later than 5.45 p.m. We eventually finished once the locking up roll was correct which was always after 9 p.m. We had most afternoons off except at weekends when it was a full day and evening, the afternoons spent supporting the lads in whatever sport was in season. Once a month we had a Sunday off, and the other weeks one day off midweek. Bank holidays, Christmas and Easter were really hard going — non-stop for almost 12 hours. Had we known all this before our appointments it would not have deterred any of us. There were more important things than hours of duty or conditions of service or even career prospects. This may sound smug, but we all felt the same; we were all too busy, all too involved in the job in hand, too young, to worry and get bitter and twisted about pay and conditions. It was to be some 20 years before such things contaminated us.

On joining there was a probationary period of three years to be served, at the end of which Assistant Housemasters became Housemasters class 2 and eventually Housemasters class 1. There were remote possibilities that some of us in the far distance might become Governors class 3 or 2 at one of the borstals, but it would be little short of miraculous for any of us to become a governor class 1 there were only four, all at the biggest prisons. There was little or no interchange between prison and borstal staff of any grade; in fact officers at the convict prisons of Dartmoor and Parkhurst rarely moved from these two establishments. There was a degree of snobbery on the part of borstal staff, faint traces of which remained

right up until I retired. For some unknown reason it was not accepted that prison staff were the social equals of their colleagues in borstals.

There was no such thing as an official training programme when I joined; it was left to the ingenuity of the Governor and the Assistant Commissioner to whom he reported. I was lucky, or at least I thought so. 'This is what we are going to Bridey' announced the Governor. 'Each morning for the next few weeks you will be attached to a different aspect of the establishment, firstly the chief officer, then the steward (now known by the less affectionate title of administration officer) and then a day in each of the workshops and stores. In the evenings Newcombe and Smithy (the other 2 housemasters) will look after you and you'll help them at weekends. When either of them are having a day off or are away on leave, you will keep their house running. If in doubt about anything, just ask.'

So in turn I followed the programme, learnt about the mechanics of administering the establishment, how to order materials for the workshops, and what ploys to look out for when issuing ingredients for the kitchen, the control of stores and equipment and how to set about compiling an inmate record. The housemasters taught me how to make up the inmates earnings, to order fresh stock for the canteen, to control the library and the issuing of books, and to draw up a weekend programme of activities, and how to compile and interpret inmates 'write ups.' Thirty years later 'write ups' were foisted upon us as something new, something 'advanced', the new penology, and it was called 'case work'. It is also of note that in 1938 borstals were manufacturing goods under contract for a whole variety of organizations, some 40 years later this was being put forward as something new. As well as all the above I was being regaled with nostalgic stories of days long past, I was given books to read and lists of books I should read, and I was even sent off to London to attend a course of some length to give me a skill to test the mental and physical capabilities of borstal boys, so that I did not put a round peg in a square hole.

The establishment baked its own bread and I recall observing the lads or 'Ebert's' as the staff knew them, one of them was mixing and kneading the dough in a large wooden trough that stood waist high. He wore heavy framed glasses with lenses as thick as marbles, so that he leant right over in order to see the results of his labours. The sweat was pouring from his forehead and dripping into the dough. The bread produced, however, was of a high quality and infinitely nicer and tastier than any produced by outside bakeries. It contained no preservatives, so had to be baked every day.

One morning the Governor asked me 'Apart from your annual Territorial Army training, are you expecting any other leave before the autumn? The Governor had discovered that I was wooing a damsel in Birmingham, and when off duty skedaddled to that city. I meekly replied, not really sir. Ah, well he said, I understand that on your days off you head straight for Birmingham, have you got a young lady there. I confirmed that I had. Engaged he asked, not yet sir, but I hope to once my future here has been confirmed. Well, in future you can hope off to Birmingham as soon as you have finished your evening duty proceeding your day off, and you need not report back until the morning you are back on duty — that is if the other two housemasters can spare you. However, starting next week I want you to live inside for the next 2 months, but I will tell you more about that in the morning.

What the Governor meant by 'more' was that I was to live as a borstal boy for two months. I was allowed to retain my own clothes and I could return to my digs for a bath. I could go out during the afternoon and in theory after duty in the evenings, but as I had to be back before locking up and we did not finish before locking up, that did not amount to much! I was allocated a cell on the top landing and ate with the lads sitting at the tables on the ground floor. These were arranged in groups of six or eight, and I was to move table at the end of each week so that I got to know more of the lads. For the 'privilege' of living in the Treasury would charge me 10 shillings and 6 pence a week for food and another 3s and 6p for heating,

lighting and bed linen. Heating was non-existent, it was summer and in accordance with Home Office instructions the heating was always turned off at the end of April until October, irrespective of the prevailing weather conditions – this was the law of the Medes and Persians. I only needed the light to get undressed by, and the bed linen — mailbag canvass was smoother and less like sandpaper.

I commenced my sojourn in July. Reveille was at 0600, but I was not checked at 0700 but had to be on the ground floor for 07.15 for my pint of cocoa and ship's biscuit. I was on the exercise yard doing massed PT with the rest by 07.25 and was seated having breakfast at 07.40. Breakfast was always porridge and a mug of tea, sometimes there was a sausage, sometimes a sniff of bacon, and quite often a piece of fried bread. I was immensely popular with the lads as I was the only one 'inside' who had sufficient money to buy a tin of Lyons Golden Syrup from the canteen, to help down the porridge. One table could get through a tin in a day, especially when the more sweet toothed put liberal helpings in their tea. I estimated I bought 62 tins of syrup during my spell inside — I made no claim on the Treasury for that. Nor did I ever discover what the tea was made from or what happened to the alleged sugar ration. But the cocoa was good, it was really nourishing, thick, strong, and bitter but tasting of real chocolate, if left too long it would virtually set back into a slab of chocolate! The mid-day meal was a kind of soup followed by pie — there was 'sips pie' "cottage pie", 'meat pie', 'fish pie' 'potatoe pie', and 'chefs pie', and they did all taste different. This was always followed by pudding or 'duffs', which were all of the same texture. Again there was variety, one day it was covered in treacle another by custard, some were believed to contain a date or a fig or even 4 or 5 currants, and if there was a streak of discolouration this was accepted as jam. These were in fact quite tasty and very filling, and there could be fatal results if one went swimming within 24 hours of eating ones ration. Tea was much more staid, bread, margarine, sometimes jam, sometimes a rock bun or a current bun, both of which were appetising. Finally at 07.30p.m. a pint of cocoa or more if you wanted it, and a ship's biscuit before locking up for the night.

At 0800 each morning we all trooped off to work on the various labour parties, but I was allowed the concession of marching alongside the party officer and not in the column of the 'erberts'. The weather being fine and sunny I had opted to work with the sand pit party, officially known as 'general labourers', who were constructing a sports-field out of the old sandpit. The new receptions each month were allocated to undertake the domestic chores, cleaning pots, pans, cutlery and crockery; they scrubbed floors (twice a day) they scrubbed stairways, landings, chairs, benches and anything moveable. They were excused the early morning PT because they were busy preparing the tables for breakfast, so they half an hour of PT each morning and afternoon after they had finished scrubbing. The next batch of receptions took their place and they moved onto the general labourers. In due course they then moved on to trade training parties or to work as labourers for the works department, the gardeners, the kitchen party or the laundry. A selected few managed to get the choice jobs of storemen or orderlies for the various departments.

Even within the general labourers there were grades — progression was shovel, pick then barrow. What was dug from the sandbank at one end was barrowed to the other end to make a level pitch. I was given a shovel and began loading wheelbarrows for eight hours a day with ten minutes break morning and afternoon when we were allowed a drink of water. I cannot recall that the work was too arduous nor was my presence on the party resented. There was plenty of banter, a fair amount of impractical advice, and lots of laughter and general good humour at our situation. This was stimulated by the sardonic, sarcastic humour of the officer, 'Dodger Green' whose deadpan expression only moved us to barely controlled hysterics. This was a well tested ploy by the officer, and it paid dividends — his miserable, dejected countenance, with never a smile, not even a flicker of an eyebrow, was an unflinching

source of merriment to the work party.

He soon promoted me to pick, and then to barrow. Not a good move, naturally the `erbert' loaders overfilled my barrow and I then had to struggle under the extra load along 4-inch wide planks for some 80 yards of rough ground, and keep up with the rest of the party! These months, however, passed all too quickly. Not quickly enough for Newcombe, who kept reminding me that he had plenty of work for me to undertake so when was I going to stop playing sandcastles! At the end of the two months I went on leave and returned to become Newcombe's assistant for two months, then Smithy's assistant.

All the other borstals had separate, self-contained units that were termed `houses'. Not so Sherwood, it was (having been taken over from the prison) just one wing of four landings including the ground floor hatch- potch of offices, library, scullery, canteen and so on. Consequently, Sherwood had `divisions' housed one on each landing above ground level. After about a year in the job, the Governor decided it was ripe for me to have my own division. I was given the top landing, on the pretext that I had lived up there for two months. I maintained it was because the other two housemasters lacked wind and legs to carry them that high. In response Smithy was quick to remind me that I was still the junior squirt. The work now became absorbing as I discussed on almost equal terms with the other two the ever-changing quality and nature of those committed to us. They were a mischievous lot without malice and I had long been made aware that consistency was the main virtue they looked for in staff. They accepted firmness, even severity as long as it was applied with uniformity particularly against the bullies who could be morally destructive if not dealt with.

Prompt at nine o'clock each morning we three housemasters met in the Governor's office when we would discuss any relevant matters, then back to our own offices to tackle the first task of the day, censoring the lads mail. They were allowed one letter out each week in which they could enclose a visiting order once a month. Outgoing letters were issued on Friday with the weekly earnings and the letters had to be in the housemaster's office by Monday morning; incoming mail was daily. Quite a lot has been written about the rights and wrongs of censorship in penal establishments, so here is my two penneth. Experience soon reveals that for the great majority only a cursory glance is necessary. For out-going letters the problem very often was the tone and the likely effect it would have on the recipient, all that was needed was to point this out and suggest a re-write. Reading incoming mail alerted us to `problems', and enabled us to cushion the recipient against domestic shocks or upheavals. Such letters were also the means of creating a relationship between the housemaster and the lad when such letters were discussed with them during the evening interview.

Correspondence was only allowed between wives, parent, relations, and in a few instances `approved friends'. Pressure was maintained to ensure visiting orders were only used to sustain family contact. I would often get the request to send a visiting order out, having ascertained that one was due I would enquire to whom it should be sent. `My cousin Sid.' `What's his name?' `Bloggs, Sir' `And how does he fit into the family network?' This would be followed by a highly involved enumeration of the branches of the family, to which would invariably come the reply `stop trying to pull the wool over my eyes, this just a try on'. `Oh no, sir, on my mothers life or may I drop dead, sir, if I am telling a lie' I would end the banter by reminding him that one day the Lord might actually hear him, and secondly the V.O. could not go to that person.

Returning to the daily routine, after lunch work resumed at 1 p.m. and ceased at 5 p.m. for tea. Then it was the `silent hour' from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. when those not attending evening classes or the gym remained in their cells reading or writing. The only sound came from the housemasters as they went from cell to cell carrying out their interviews. After silent hour

there was a period of recreation when the noise level and activity was often quite frenetic. During this period housemasters were invariably trapped in their offices with a small number of lads enraptured in fast, varied and vociferous discussion. We called it 'getting under their skin'. Twenty years later it was introduced to the service as a new technique and branded 'group counselling' having been adorned by both sociological jargon and computer speak. At 8 p.m. the day began to draw to a close with the issue of the supper cocoa and biscuit. Those in brown stage went to their cells first, whilst the receptions washed and wiped down the tables and then went away. The blues were allowed an extra 20 minutes and those on the discharge list were the last away at about 08.45. Before being locked up at night those with pains, infernal and internal (real or imaginary) were given medical treatment.

The wing office kept three half-gallon bottles of different coloured liquids; two of the bottles were made up by the officers on duty and labeled 'Mist k'Nut' and 'Mist st'Mac'. The contents were simply tap water into which had been dropped a drop of colouring agent to differentiate between them. The third bottle was known as 'White Mixture' and was made up by the hospital staff and contained paracetamol. Any lad feeling unwell in the absence of the hospital officer, reported to the wing office where enquiries were made as to the location of the indisposition. He was given a fairly liberal dose from one of the three bottles depending whether the ailment was located below the belt, above the belt but above the tie, or above the tie. There can be no doubt as to the efficaciousness of the remedies as those seeking medication were less than a handful a week, and during the whole time I was at Sherwood no one was ever detained in the hospital. It has to be remembered that these borstal boys were strapping young men in their early twenties. They were fit, tough and now living an organized life, set meals, and away from booze and temptation.

Medical facilities and knowledge have improved considerably since those early days. The medical side has expanded vastly to keep up with the poorer health of many coming into prison, many conditions self-inflicted by abuse of alcohol or drugs. A whole range of medication is now prescribed and administered by hospital staff at set times of the day. At these times stream hordes of sick, lame and lazy — always the same faces. One suspects that the length of the queue is more indicative of the gullibility of the Doctors than any reflection on the true state of health of the supplicants. Prison surgeries are now known as 'Yates' wine Lodge'!

Looking back, the regime was rigid, it was exacting it had no or little ambiguity. Step over the line and you were in trouble. They were kept on the go for 14 hours a day, under pressure at work and play, and it was not difficult to be marched in front of the housemaster for some irregularity.

Serious breaches were put before the Governor, which invariably meant a reduction in stage and the need to start afresh. But the staff cared; they were interested in the lads and their families and permeated right through the Service. Those at the Prison Commission, a small group, were able to find the time to visit every establishment several times a year, when they chattered to everyone — staff and lads. They discussed with us mutual problems, they were able to dispense advice then and there, and they considered the well being of our families to an exercise in personal relations and understanding it has never been excelled. Sherwood had a very happy atmosphere and a commitment to fulfilling its purpose. Out of every ten lads discharged only three ever returned to crime.

Life, though, began to change, there began a feeling of uncertainty. Munich came and went and we began to feel dirty and sick. The lads began to ask questions about whether there would be a war, questions to which we did not have answers. Would there be bombing? Would they be released and sent home? Would they be released to join the forces? We, housemasters went on anti-gas first aid courses: other members of staff were taught methods of rescue and how to secure damaged buildings. Plans were made as to where to site



sandbags, anti blast barriers, and how to speedily evacuate workshops or wings, and where to locate slit trenches and fire fighting equipment. Then came the “Peace in our time” but nobody believed it and air raid precautions were speeded up. We all hoped for peace, but in our innermost hearts we knew war was getting fearfully near.

Then, mid-day on the last Friday in August 1939, the BBC announced that all reservists, members of the Territorial Army, RAFVR were to report to their units. I finished my lunch and went to see the Governor, I told him of the announcement and that I would have to be off. He said he had heard the announcement and understood I would have to go. He said he would square it with the Commissioners. He wished me luck and said to take care. Life was to be very different for many a year.

## **Editors footnote**

### **HM Prison Nottingham**

Originally called Bagthorpe, which opened in 1891, Nottingham Prison was designed to accommodate 200 male prisoners. In 1894 a new block opened to accommodate 40 female prisoners. The first execution was carried out there in 1897.

In 1930 the prison was closed and reopened as a Borstal Institution in 1932.

In July 1950 it reverted back to being a prison. New blocks opened in 1996 to accommodate 100 more inmates. There was further rebuilding and refurbishment during 2009-10.

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Harry Brett posing with the cup at Manchester City Football Club.





# Clicker's corner

## Get Safe On Line

Get Safe Online is a joint initiative between the government, law enforcement, leading businesses and the public sector. Their aim is to provide computer users and small businesses with free, independent, user-friendly advice that will allow them to use the internet confidently, safely and securely.

The Get Safe Online website, <http://www.getsafeonline.org/>, provides lots of useful information about scams, frauds and how to stay safe. It includes travel tips and information about identity theft, smartphones, rogue apps, PC protection and much more including downloadable leaflets and an online quiz to test your knowledge.

### Windows 8

As reported in last edition of the Newsletter Microsoft will be launching their latest operating system to be known as Windows 8. It becomes available in the U.S. from October of this year. Users in the U.S.A. with Vista or Windows 7 will be able to upgrade their systems for \$40, about £27 at today's rate of conversion. I await with anticipation to see what the upgrade charge will be in the UK. One can guarantee that it will be more expensive. Also being launched by Microsoft next year will be an updated version of "Word" to be known as "Word 2013".

With upgrades coming out as frequently as these it makes it expensive and frustrating to keep ones system fully up to date with the latest software.

### Scams

Via these articles and the email register I have attempted to make readers aware of any scams or hoaxes which come to my attention, either via the internet, telephone or through the mail.

I thought I would let you know about something which happened to me in August of this year.

I received a phone call at home from a lady who asked, "Did I know my car was due for a service?". Thinking it was my garage I

replied that I did and I was thinking of telephoning them in the next day or so to make the necessary arrangements.. "No we are not the garage", said the lady, "we are a private company who will offer you up to £150 towards the cost of your cars service." Normally at this stage I would hang up, but I thought that I would play along and get as many details as possible and if necessary warn others of this scam. Upon asking, the lady willingly gave me her name, contact telephone number and the company website URL. She explained that her organisation was employed by several leading manufactures to monitor their franchise performances against company standards and that Renault was one of them. Asking what the "catch was" she explained that there was not a catch, what she required to do was listen in on my telephone call to Renault, tape that conversation, and check what was said against expected Renault standards. "What else is expected from me I asked quizzically", She explained that on the day I took my car to the garage one of their agents would meet up with me some distance away from the garage and accompany me there pretending to be my transport home. The agent would listen to the procedures adopted at the garage. The agent would take no part in the processes. The same would apply when I collected the vehicle. If I agreed to participate in the scheme she would transfer this call to my garage to arrange the service booking, record my conversation with the dealer and once she had checked the laid down standards she telephone me back in about 10 minutes. I agreed but asked her if she would be kind enough to call me back in an hour rather than 10mins. This was agreed and of course in that hour I was immediately on the internet checking out the company. I was amazed to find that all she had said checked out. The company website look genuine and I could find nothing to raise my concerns contained

within it. I Googled “scams and complaints,” and again could find no adverse reports. I also discovered from the website that Renault was indeed one of their clients. By now my initial feeling of unease was beginning to subside.

After the hour the lady telephoned me back saying that she would now send me a letter of confirmation to my home address and that their agent would contact me a day or so before the date of my car service to arrange a mutually convenient meeting point, close to but out of sight of the garage.

Two days later the promised letter arrived. It came in an envelope bearing the company logo and the letter was written on company headed paper with a variety of trust certificate awards emblazoned along the bottom of the page.

Some minor meeting arrangements were made over the telephone between myself and the appointed agent, and on the day of my cars service we met a little way from the garage. It surprised me to learn that she came fitted with a covert camera and recording device secreted within her clothing. We attended the Renault garage , she pretending to be my lift home. All went well and the procedure was re enacted when 2 hours later I collected my car. Once again we met away from the garage where I handed her some of the document given to me by the garage and answered a short questionnaire. She assured me that the documents would be sent to my home address along with my cheque, all of which did arrive four days later.

I’m informed that these companies are called “ mystery shoppers” so if you receive a telephone call from a company called Douglas Stafford then you can rest assured it’s not a scam phone call.

### **Mail and Telephone Preference Services**

I presume that most readers of this column will have by now registered themselves with the mail and telephone preference services.

For those that have not already done so the url’s required are [www.mpsonline.co.uk](http://www.mpsonline.co.uk) and [www.tpsonline.co.uk](http://www.tpsonline.co.uk) For those readers who do not have online facilities you can still register with these two organisations via

telephone . Mail preference Service number is 0845 703 4599, whilst the Telephone Preference Service number is 0845 070 0707. Please remember that it does take a couple of weeks after registering for the systems to become fully operational.

### **Useful Websites**

A rather interesting and useful website for people of our age is [www.askmabel.co.uk](http://www.askmabel.co.uk) This online facility offers tailor made searches on a variety of interesting and informative topics. Do download it and having done so spend a few minutes opening up the various links. I feel sure once you become familiar with it you will want to bookmark it.

### **What Is a Trojan ?**

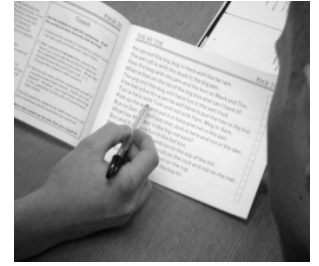
This is an all too common method that fraudster use to get hold of your personal data such as banking passwords and credit card details. Emails will look as though they are from friends or from a company such as a bank or building society. These files can look harmless, but once clicked, immediately install a type of program known as a Trojan horse when clicked. The Trojan can then record keyboard strokes and transmit the data back to the fraudsters. If in doubt at all you should delete the email. Do not open any links it offers nor forward it to others in your email account.

### **Excel**

For those of you who use formulae in Excel it is often useful to see if you have entered the correct formula to calculate the equations. I find the following tip most helpful. Open up the page you wish to check the formula on then hold down the Ctrl key whilst at the same time press the key to the left of key 1. You can revert back and forth by toggling the key.



# VOLUNTEER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Sue Kent who is the administration projects manager for Shannon Trust asks if any retired members would be interested in volunteering to donate some of your time and professional skills to her organisation.

The Shannon Trust is a registered charity which helps prisoners to develop their reading skills. Working across the UK, supporting prisoners who can read to work as mentors with prisoners who can't read. We provide learning resources, staff training and individual support from trained volunteers, free of charge, to almost every prison in the UK.

## Volunteer with us!

**As a Local Prison Representative:** The Shannon Trust team is made up of volunteers who act as 'Local Representatives' in prisons. Local Representatives usually work with one prison in their area, and are supported by a Shannon Trust Area Co-ordinator. The role includes delivering training to mentors, meeting with the mentor group on a monthly basis, liaising with prison staff and managers to ensure that things are working well, and sharing the successes in their prison. All Local Prison Reps receive Shannon Trust training before they start working in their prison. The time commitment is around one day per month with quarterly team meetings.

There are currently opportunities to join the Shannon Team at:

HMP Blundeston, HM YOI Brinsford, HM YOI Feltham, HMP Oakwood, HMP Peterborough, HMP Prescoed, HMP Usk, HM YOI Werrington, HMP Whitemoor,

**As an Area Co-ordinator:** Shannon Trust volunteers are organised in area teams. To achieve our vision of 'Every Prisoner a Reader' areas have been re-organised into smaller teams which has created a number of volunteer Area Co-ordinator opportunities. Each team is supported by an Area Co-ordinator. This is crucial role, which involves co-ordinating activities in the area, holding team meetings, and working with the volunteer team to empower them to carry out their Local Prison Representative role. It may involve liaising with colleagues in the prison, being able to identify problems and find solutions, and helping to support communication across the team. Area Co-ordinators who work with us usually have some experience of leading a team, working in business, statutory services or the third sector at a senior level. Area Co-ordinators typically commit 20 to 30 hours per month to their role.

Shannon Trust is currently looking to recruit Area Co-ordinators for the following areas:

Kent, East Midlands (North), London (East), London (West), North West (South), South Central (North), South Central (South), Wales

### *As an Area Secretary:*

We have an opportunity for an Area Secretary to join our West Midlands team. This is an important role which involves working alongside the area co-ordinator to support our volunteers. The role includes organising quarterly area meetings and minute taking, supporting training events, keeping contact records up to date and recording reports and statistics provided by our local prison representatives. Area Secretaries who work with us usually have some experience of office administration and are proficient users of MS Office Word and Excel. They commit around 14 hours per month to their Shannon Trust role much of which can be carried out from home.

There are volunteering opportunities for Area Secretaries to join Shannon Trust in:

North East, West Midlands, Eastern (North), Eastern (South), North West (North), North West (South), South Central (South), Wales, Yorkshire & Humberside (North), Yorkshire & Humberside (East and West)

Out of pocket expenses such as travel, phone calls etc. will be reimbursed by the Shannon Trust.

**If you would like to find out more these roles The Shannon Trust, please contact [communications@shannontrust.org.uk](mailto:communications@shannontrust.org.uk) for an information pack.**

The following was sent to me from a member via the email register.

I would like to raise the question for comments in the Newsletter.

Is today's prison service "Fit for Purpose?"

As one who thinks that the removal of Chief Officers, Principal, Works, Hospital Officer, and all officers who had a secondary role, but reverted to Discipline Officers at the first sign of trouble, was a mistake, has the Service today lost its way?

I also personally think that female officers should remain in female jails and male officers in male jails.

Is there an increase in incidents, staff involved with prisoners, assaults on the rise etc

What are your opinions?

If you wish to respond to the issues raised by this member please submit them to any one of the editorial team for publication in the spring edition of the Newsletter.

The closing date for submissions for the Spring edition is Valentine's Day 2013



# NETWORK

By Brendan O'Friel

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](mailto:brendan@ofriel.fsnet.co.uk)

## **PGA OFFICE Change of address**

The PGA Office new address is:

**1<sup>st</sup> Floor in Clive House, 70 Petty France, London, SW1H 9HD.**

Their email address is

[office@prisongovernors.org.uk](mailto: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 -**

International Centre for Prison Studies

1st floor, the Merchant Centre

1 New Street Square

London EC4A 3BF

Tel: +44 (0)20 7842 8508

Website: [www.prisonstudies.org](http://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](http://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.stabilisatiounit.gov.uk](http://www.stabilisatiounit.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](http://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](http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk)

## **Rates from April 2012**

The basic State Retirement Pension was 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. One of the differences between the RPI and the CPI is that the latter does not at present include housing costs.

Work is going on within Government to consider including some element of housing costs in the CPI which may go some way to reducing the difference between RPI and CPI rates. Progress – or lack of it - will be reported in the RGN as information comes to hand.

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 each year.

From April 2012 public service pensions and SERPS were 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](http://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.

## Tell Them Once.

When someone dies, the last thing those left behind want to be landed with is extra paperwork and red tape, but from now on, thanks to the new “ Tell us Once “ (TUO) service being rolled out across the country it will be easier for families to notify government authorities about changes in their circumstances.

TUO is being launched by The Department for Work and Pensions in partnership with local authorities across England , Wales and Scotland. It enables key local and central government departments and services to be notified simply through one single appointment with the local registrar. TUO saves time and hassle and is expected to save users £66m over the next ten years.

Under the scheme up to 28 different services can be notified on relative’s behalf making it a much easier way for them to report their bereavement to the relevant authorities.

Overall, a person using TUO can expect to contact government seven fewer times when compared to previous arrangements. Those wishing to use the service will need to bring the relevant documentation to their appointment including their own photo bearing identification.



## **Keith Gibson – A Tribute –**

**by Michael Selby**

**Keith Gibson was born on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1927. He died on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2012.**

I first met Keith when I was on a month's course at the Staff College in February 1957, sent from Huntercombe Borstal to learn how to be an assistant Governor. I joined in June 1956 and was without relevant experience and knowledge, so was sent for a day to Hull prison - which at that time was a closed borstal for those who, throughout the system, were not only thoroughly badly behaved but deemed "untrainable". Clearly this was a disastrous idea because it was deemed by its inhabitants to be a badge of honour to have reached this shabby and bomb damaged destination.

Keith was an Assistant Governor Class 11 and he seemed then, as ever, to manage the reading out home leave conditions to two excited "trainees" in a calm reassuring manner. He was friendly and helpful but did *not* encourage me to ask for a posting to replace him.

He had been a career soldier, commissioned in the Royal Artillery in 1944, serving in Berlin just after Germany surrendered. He left the army in 1948 and took up a post in Custom & Excise but for less than 12 months. I never asked him about his motivation for joining the Prison Service but it could well have been the same as many others at that time - for a quarter in the limited housing available in post war England. So, newly married, he was posted to Camp Hill and soon followed the birth of his daughter and transfer to Rochester Borstal.

I sensed he was uncomfortable at Rochester borstal. At that time the governor was markedly eccentric - and his Assistant Governor colleagues older and more experienced - many had fought in the war - one a major in the Gurkhas - extroverted and highly competitive. He moved to Hull - not a popular posting - in 1955 and his daughter, Susan, told me of a family tale of Keith's involvement in the arrest of John Prescott who was protesting outside the prison.

He was soon promoted to A.G.1 and posted to Leeds prison where life was more agreeable - his stories were fascinating. One described where the Chief Officer, required to attend a hanging, was found scoffing the delicious last breakfast which the about to be executed prisoner had not had the appetite to consume. Keith's anecdotes were always taut, slightly sardonic, lightly told - with a fine regard to significant detail.

But now, when promoted Governor 111, in 1962, he was posted to Wakefield prison as deputy Governor where Allan Bainton was in charge. This was the lead prison in the penal field and Bainton the coming man, soon to be promoted to Prison HQ. Keith was strongly influenced by "Uncle Al" and gained greatly in confidence.

In 1965 Keith was transferred to Bedford prison - a small local prison. Keith enjoyed this first time in charge and clearly did well, as his next job was to be promoted to be governor of Coldingley Industrial Prison. This was a plum appointment. Here was a security prison designed to provide a full day's work in factory conditions, attracting meaningful commercial contracts. He, with his team, designed this regime and the staffing structure to answer this requirement. He made a considerable success of this and the Home Office was delighted.

It was here that we met again as I was the staff training development Officer (G111) required to supervise the installation of electronic unlocking. This was a brave attempt utilising electronic

surveillance at decency, to enable prisoners to use the lavatories during the night time lock up, so dispensing with pots and lavatories in cells. It was ingenious and the particular design of the wing made it possible. My task required the cooperation of the management and flexibility in responding and Keith enabled both to succeed with quiet efficiency. I also reported back to him a remark by a prisoner to me "They're security mad here, they count us into breakfast and they count us out of breakfast - who do they think we are - cannibals?" Keith produced a small smile and a raised eyebrow - "possibly".

The Home Office next promoted Keith to be in charge of staff training at HQ in 1971, to succeed the flamboyant Colonel Jim Hayward, thereby depriving him of the experience of Governing a Class 1 Prison. So for a short time we worked together until I was promoted to be Governor of Chelmsford prison in 1972.

In 1974, he was further promoted to be Regional Director of the South East Region. This was an arduous task, in many respects impossible. His territory covered all kinds of penal establishments ranging from Suffolk and all East Anglia, the London prisons, the Kent gulag, the Isle of Wight. Absurdly, when Grendon was taken away from being managed by the medical department - that too, was added to the South East responsibility.

At Chelmsford we found him supportive and calm. In 1977 I came nearer, to be Governor of Brixton. My predecessor, Barry Wiggington, had died suddenly of a heart attack. Keith's message to me was unambiguous. "Barry reorganised Brixton from chaos and straightened it up; I want you now to humanise it." He supported me even when things went skew-whiff. What I did find was that Keith required every proposal to be set down on paper, well prepared and costed. It would be subjected to searching and shrewd questioning. An example was the proposal for greater involvement of prison officers on the remand wing in the detailed and immediate contact with a prisoner's home. A man might go to court and find himself - much to his shock - not granted bail and the consequential domestic crises needed instant solutions. Keith examined, prodded, queried and supported the plan. As a consequence one probation officer was needed where three had worked before.

Keith never reproached me for the disastrous escape of 3 Cat A prisoners from Brixton prison security wing in 1981 and found, to his discomfort that I was wished onto his organisation as a spare supernumerary Governor 1. This was not a good idea for a punishment period. I heard later that Mrs Thatcher had shouted "Sack him!" while Willie Whitelaw - the Home Secretary - considered demotion to Governor 11 and appointment to Rochester Borstal with an opportunity to appear on a promotion board in 3 years' time. But the civil servants torpedoed that excellent idea. So Keith had me for that period and treated me with discretion and tact and I am grateful. He not only found work for me but gave me opportunities which I was happy to accept.

I also observed the way that he ran the overcrowded, seething, politically sensitive South East region and the strain this caused him - particularly Prison Board meetings for which I helped him prepare. For under that calm exterior was a passionate caring man.

One more sensitive recollection. In August 1979, a Disturbance at Wormwood Scrubs was followed by an inquiry conducted by a competent prison official under Keith's supervision. The conclusions of this "Gibson Report" were crisp, forthright and honest but, as far as the Home

Office was concerned, provided the wrong answers. He was told so. It was early Friday afternoon, the Deputy Regional Director came in to my office –would I go and see Keith, she was unable to help. We spent over 2 hours together, he was furiously angry at his treatment and

the dishonesty of the political/civil service process. By 5, he felt able to travel home; we never referred to that time again and I never told anybody what we discussed. The Inquiry Report was finally published on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1982 together with a substantial Home Office Statement.

He was an honest man and when the offer of early retirement came – he had completed 13 years in an extraordinarily stressful post - I think it was this event that made him happy to accept.

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To Michael's recollections, let me add something about his trade union work. When at Bedford, he was Secretary of the former Prison and Borstal Governors Branch and I recall his contribution as I joined the committee as a very junior assistant Governor. He was exactly as Michael describes – passionate and caring about issues, but with a very calm exterior.

When we set up the PGA there was an urgent need to develop a magazine to serve our new organisation. Keith Gibson was approached to be Editor as the committee were extremely busy trying to deal with the many issues confronting us. Keith produced the first PGA Magazine in May 1989 and developed the Magazine as Editor over the next 10 years and some 50 Editions. The Magazine played a valuable part in helping the PGA mature and survive the strains and pressures we all had to face. We owe Keith a considerable debt of gratitude for the ten or so years he gave to the PGA in retirement.

Brendan O'Friel

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**CHIP & SIGNATURE DEBIT AND CREDIT CARDS**

The Payments Council has recently launched a campaign to raise awareness regarding the availability of *chip & signature* debit and credit cards that can be provided to anyone who has difficulty in using a PIN, arising from dexterity limitations, visual impairment, memory problems or mobility issues.

Apparently, all banks do provide these cards, although research undertaken by *Which* magazine has highlighted that not all bank staff are aware of these provisions. The availability of *chip & signature* debit and credit cards is a requirement that was reinforced by the Equality Act 2010 and which makes all banks duty bound to supply these cards and retailers duty bound to accept them!

*Chip and signature* debit and credit cards operate on a similar basis to *chip & pin* cards, except that, when the card is inserted in the card reading machine, the customer is prompted to use his/her signature to authorise the payment.

To apply for a *chip & signature* card, individuals will, in the first instance, need to speak to their bank. Further information is available on *chip & signature* cards at the following website [www.payyourway.org.uk](http://www.payyourway.org.uk) ; alternatively, a message can be left at the Payment Council's public enquiries line on **020 3217 8259**.

# WHEN MAY A PRISONER HAVE BEER WITH HIS MEALS?

By Roger Brandon



*When can a convicted prisoner have beer with his meals?* Governors of a certain era may know the answer, and if not they would know where to find it.

*How much bread does a prisoner on bread and water punishment get?* I wasn't intending this to be a quiz, but I am now getting carried away. We are going back some way now, but even if we never administered a No. 1 dietary punishment ourselves we probably read up the instructions in our Assistant Governor days. They were contained, of course, in the 'bible' that we kept in our desk; Prison Standing Orders. The answer is 1lb a day, or "per diem" as the earlier orders stated. Presumably any Governor worthy of the title knew his Latin. A standard modern loaf, by the way, weighs 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs.

Sorry, here is another one: *How much water does a prisoner get in his bath?* I suspect most of us remember that it was 9". Throughout the 1970s the push was on for showers on the wing but many prisons still had the bathhouses with rows of baths in cubicles, where a bathhouse officer wielded a stick marked at 9 inches. The early S.O. 29 also instructed that prisoners were given carbolic soap, a small strong brush, and a towel. Rather alarmingly it goes on to say; "The soap must not be left in the bath, as the alkali contained in it is likely to destroy the enamelling." This was, of course, before the advent of 'White Windsor' soap which didn't even remove dirt let alone enamel.

Standing orders gave us the rules on almost everything that we needed to know, and much that we didn't. Do you treat a *vagabond* differently from an *incorrigible rogue*, or someone deemed *idle and disorderly* – and yes, these were court sentences not descriptions of the staff. *Can you handcuff a mental defective or weak-minded person* (only as a last resort)? And *when can you allow a prisoner to have a jigsaw in his cell?*

Jigsaws were part of the 'stage' system where prisoners were given marks for behaviour and attitude and progressed through the stages. He had to get to stage 2 before getting the privilege of having one in his cell during lock up. The exception was illiterate prisoners who could have one straight away. These were the days when prisoners were generally in single cells, and before the advent of radios. Illiterate prisoners had no stimulus for hours on end except a jigsaw and the odd "illustrated magazine" which would have been a far cry from today's counterpart.

By now you will have realised that I have an old copy of Standing Orders in front of me and am getting sidetracked by odd and interesting paragraphs. This was not the original purpose of this letter – which I will come to eventually. But first;- do you need to know the *allowance for an officer who inflicts the birch or cat-o-nine tails (2 shillings and sixpence), or when you can put a prisoner in a straight jacket?* My copy is a 1936 version, with amendments. We must all remember cutting out the amendments and sticking them in. If you were very lucky you got a whole page to exchange but mostly our orders were a mass of slips of paper and sellotape. Mine has myriad amendments up to the 1960s, but fortunately much of the original remains.

Standing Orders fell by the wayside in the 1980s. I think it was Derek Lewis who started issuing Instructions to Governors, and although Standing Orders supposedly retained their authority they

stopped being updated. In 1999 the Prison Rules were redrafted and Prison Service Orders & Prison Service Instructions were issued to replace the old Standing Orders.

Did you get the question about *beer*? Half a pint was allowed to condemned men with lunch and dinner. Instructions about capital punishment and how to hang a prisoner remained in our standing orders long after it had ceased to be a punishment for murder. I won't need to tell you that it stayed on the statute books for the crimes of Arson in Naval Dockyards, Espionage, Piracy with violence, and Treason, being finally removed in 1998. I expect that you knew that, but did you know that beheading remained as a sentence for Treason up until 1973. You did? Well I didn't.

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### **It may save your life... PLEASE READ**

Let's say it's 6.15pm and you're going home, after an unusually hard day at work.

You're really tired, upset and frustrated.

Suddenly you start experiencing severe pain in your chest that starts to drag out into your arm and up into your jaw. You are only about five miles from the hospital nearest your home. Unfortunately you don't know if you'll be able to make it that far. You have been trained in CPR, but the guy that taught the course did not tell you how to perform it on yourself..

### **HOW TO SURVIVE A HEART ATTACK WHEN ALONE**

Since many people are alone when they suffer a heart attack, without help, the person whose heart is beating improperly and who begins to feel faint, has only about 10 seconds left before losing consciousness.

However, these victims can help themselves by coughing repeatedly and very vigorously. A deep breath should be taken before each cough, and the cough must be deep and prolonged, as when producing sputum from deep inside the chest.

A breath and a cough must be repeated about every two seconds without let-up until help arrives, or until the heart is felt to be beating normally again.

Deep breaths get oxygen into the lungs and coughing movements squeeze the heart and keep the blood circulating. The squeezing pressure on the heart also helps it regain normal rhythm. In this way, heart attack victims can get to a hospital. Tell as many other people as possible about this. It could save their lives!!

A cardiologist says If everyone who gets this mail sends it to 10 people, you can bet that we'll save at least one life.

The above item was email into the editor by one of our members

## The Last Woman to be Publicly Hanged in Britain

Frances Kidder made history by becoming the last woman to be publicly hanged in Britain, when she was executed at Maidstone at midday on Thursday, the 2nd of April 1868.

25 year old Frances had been born in 1843 to John and Frances Turner of New Romney in Kent. She married William Kidder in 1865 as she was pregnant by him and she gave birth to the baby daughter they named Emma before the marriage. What Frances did not know at the time was that William had two children by a previous relationship with a woman called Staples. The younger child was sent to live with relatives after its mother died but his daughter, Louisa, who was about ten years old came to live with Frances and William at Hythe in Kent. From the outset things did not go well between Louisa and Frances. Although corporal punishment in the home was considered normal in the 1860's, Frances inflicted wanton cruelty on the little girl who turned from being a typical lively ten year old into a withdrawn and sullen girl over the next two years. Frances beat the child with anything that came to hand, made her wear rags and often deprived her of food. She was also frequently excluded from the house, irrespective of the weather, or was made to sleep in the cellar with old sacks for bedding. Such was the abuse that their next door neighbour William Henniker reported William and Frances to the police who charged Frances with cruelty for which she was fined. Louisa was sent to live with a guardian. However William did not make his regular maintenance payments to the guardian and Louisa was returned to them. Louisa's presence re-kindled France's resentment and the abuse of the little girl resumed. William and Frances began to quarrel over her treatment of his daughter and at least once he threw Louisa out of the house. Frances helped William in his work as a potato dealer and in July 1867 was quite seriously injured in an accident when she was thrown from their horse and cart due to the horse bolting. The accident may have caused brain damage. In any event she took some time to recover from it and it did nothing to reduce her enmity towards Louisa. On the 24th of August 1867, she had taken Louisa to visit her parents in New Romney and also took her own daughter, Emma, with her. She was to tell her parent's neighbour, Mrs. Evans, of her feelings towards Louisa and that she intended to get rid of her before returning to Hythe.

On the Sunday Frances told her parents that she was ill and would not be going out for a walk with them, preferring to stay at home with the children. Once they had left she suggested to Louisa that they visit a nearby fair and told her that it would be sensible to change into their old clothes before going. This they did and then started out on foot for New Romney. They came to Cobb's Bridge and it was here that Frances grabbed Louisa and forced her into the stream that ran under the bridge. She held the girl face down in the stream and drowned her in less than a foot of water. Frances' father and her husband who had come to collect his wife and daughter started searching for them. Frances got back to her parent's house just before William returned and he immediately noticed that Louisa was not with her. Neither, William or his mother could get a satisfactory explanation from Frances as to Louisa's whereabouts. She ran upstairs to her bedroom and was discovered by her father, having changed into dry clothes. He found her previous clothes which were very wet and muddy but could get nothing out of her regarding Louisa. In view of the history of violence towards the girl, he and William decided to go to the police. Constable Aspinall returned with her father and husband and took Frances into custody on suspicion of Louisa's murder. The constable questioned her and she told him that Louisa had fallen into a ditch after being frightened by passing horses near Cobb's Bridge. A search was organised and little girl's body was soon discovered. It was removed to the Ship Inn to await an inquest and Frances was charged with murder. The coroner's inquest opened the next day and heard various witness testimonies which led to a verdict that Louisa had been murdered by her mother. She was thus taken before the magistrates for a committal hearing who remanded her in custody to appear at the Kent Spring Assizes at Maidstone. She was transported to Maidstone prison the following day, suffering fits during the journey and having to stop at Ashford Police Station until they subsided. She remained on remand for over six months and was ministered to by the chaplain, Reverend W. Fraser, who managed to teach her to read and get some grasp of religion. William did not visit her on remand and it was rumoured that he had started a new relationship with Frances' younger sister who had been helping him look after Emma.

Frances' trial took place at Maidstone on the 12th of March 1868, before Mr. Justice Byles and was to last six hours. She had a court appointed barrister, Mr. Channell, to defend her. The prosecution brought in evidence of the widespread abuses of Louisa and of previous threats to kill her. A local doctor who had examined Louisa at the Ship Inn told the court that the girl had died from drowning but that he had found no marks of violence on her body. Mr. Channell suggested to the jury that some of the witness evidence against Louisa, whilst not actually lies, may well have been exaggerated, but made little of the injuries sustained in the accident with the horse and cart and the effect of them on her mental and physical health, nor of the doctor's findings of no marks of violence on Louisa's body. Frances clung to her defence of the two of them being frightened by the horse and of Louisa falling into the water, from where she claimed she had tried to rescue her. Mr. Justice Byles made a careful summing up and told the jury that they were to give Francis the benefit of the doubt if they were not wholly satisfied with the largely circumstantial evidence against her. All of this was rejected by the jury, after just twelve minutes of deliberation. Francis had shown an interest in the proceedings and particularly in the judge's summing up but was calm when she was sentenced to death and walked unaided from the dock.

The execution was set for midday on Thursday the 2nd of April and William Calcraft again officiated. The gallows that had been used to execute Ann Lawrence the year before was again erected for the hanging outside the main gate in County Road.

Around noon the under sheriff of the county, the chaplain, Calcraft and the other prison officers formed up outside her cell and Calcraft went in to pinion her, with a strap around her body and arms at elbow level and another around her wrists. She was then led out across the yard to the main gate which opened to reveal the gallows. Frances had to be helped up the steps onto the platform and held on the trapdoors by two warders where she prayed intently while Calcraft made the final preparations. Her last words were "Lord Jesus forgive me". With that Calcraft released the trap and she dropped some eighteen inches, struggling hard for two or three minutes, writhing in the agonies of strangulation. A well behaved, but quite small crowd estimated at 2,000 people, a lot of them women, had come to watch her final moments although they could only see the top half of her body above the platform. Her body was left hanging for an hour before being taken down and buried in an unmarked grave within the prison. There was some sympathy for Frances in the press and amongst the public. The Times commented on the way William had treated her and the fact that he had deserted her in prison and taken up with her sister. It was reported that an effigy of him was burned in Hythe after the execution. On the 29th of May 1868 Parliament passed the Capital Punishment Within Prisons Bill ending fully public hanging. Six more men were to die in public before this Act came into force. The last of these was Michael Barrett who was hanged at Newgate on the 26th of May for his part in the Fenian bomb outrage in Clerkenwell.

## WEEKEND AT BOURNEMOUTH 2013

THURSDAY 11th April TO SUNDAY 14th APRIL 2013

at

THE HINTON FIRS HOTEL.

9 MANOR ROAD,

BOURNEMOUTH

DORSET,

BH1 3ET

Favourable rates for RPGA members have been obtained from the hotel of £170 per person for Dinner, Bed and Breakfast.

This includes  
Tea, coffee and pastry on reception.  
Sunday lunch on departure.

The event has been held at this venue on alternate years for some time and consistently retains its popularity. The reasons for this are I believe, due in no small way to several aspects such as, the comfortable en-suite bedrooms and the various hotel facilities available. The restaurant has in the past provided a varied selection of good meals and the service has been friendly and helpful. The bar or lounges provide a pleasant venue for people to gather and socialise before dinner or to quietly unwind after the day. There is a pool spa complex with a sauna for those who like to maintain their exercise levels, although to use the outside pool in March one has to be of the more hardy variety, even with the effects of global warming.

During the evening one can be entertained in the ballroom followed by music to dance to, or follow ones inclination either to sit with friends in the lounge or bar, or take a stroll along the adjacent sea front and while the hotel is set in a rather tranquil environment the attractions of the vibrant nightlife of Bournemouth are just a 15 minute walk down the sea front.

In and around Bournemouth there are plenty of places to visit within a short drive or by the use of public transport, which provide sufficient interest for the three days. One can of course have a walk around the shops and stores in the town centre.

The hotel has been under private ownership for 50 years has 52 bedrooms and is located at 9 Manor Road, Bournemouth. BH1 3ET. Website: [hintonfirshotel.co.uk](http://hintonfirshotel.co.uk)

If you would like stay at the hotel on this weekend, please send the completed the booking form as included in this Newsletter with cheques for deposits of £50 per person made payable to HINTON FIRS HOTEL.

To Charles Smith,                      telephone 01704 575 266.  
21 Bowness Avenue,                  smithpr8@btinternet.com  
Ainsdale,  
Southport,                                  PR8 3QP



## ***RETIRED GOVERNORS WEEKEND 2013***

The retired Governors Weekend break will take place between Thursday 11th April and Sunday 14th April 2013 at :-

***Hinton Firs Hotel  
9 Manor Road, Bournemouth.***

The cost for three nights dinner, bed and breakfast is £170 per person this includes tea /coffee on arrival, and Sunday Lunch.

### ***RETIRED GOVERNORS WEEKEND BREAK HINTON FIRS, BOURNEMOUTH***

***11<sup>th</sup> April to 14th APRIL 2013***

I would like to reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places for the above weekend.

I enclose a deposit of £\_\_\_\_\_ which is £ 50 per person

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

Cheques and deposits to be made payable to HINTON FIRS HOTEL and sent to Charles Smith at the address below.

Your Name and Address                      Double Room \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Twin Room  
\_\_\_\_\_ Single Room  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Return to  
Charles Smith,  
21 Bowness Avenue,  
Ainsdale,  
Southport,  
PR8 3QP  
Tel 01704575266**

## **PUBLIC SERVICES PENSIONERS COUNCIL AGM**

Held at Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012./ It was attended for the RPGA by Charles Smith and Paul Laxton.

### **CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT**

It was agreed at the 2011 AGM that the general Purposes Committee would examine the structure of the PSPC and accordingly the following proposals were recommended that The Executive Executive Committee the main role of which is to elect the General Purposes Committee be abolished. The general Purposes Committee would be renamed the Executive Committee and would be elected by the AGM. This would remove one layer of bureaucracy.

The Constitutional Amendment was passed and the nominations for the new Executive Committee were elected by the AGM.

One of the effects of this is that both of the two representatives from the RPGA who attend future AGMs will be entitled to elect the new Executive Committee.

### **PENSIONS INDEXATION - SWITCH FROM RPI TO CPI**

. The PS PC's main campaign focus for 2011-12 continued to be the switch in pensions indexation which affects the State second pension, basic State pension, public service pensions and some private occupational pensions. The switch to CPI came into effect from April 2011 for public service pensions and the State second pension and to the prices component of the basic State pension triple lock from April 2012.

Despite best efforts in 2010-11 the PSPC were unsuccessful in persuading the Government to reverse its decision. We did not decide to end the campaign and having raised the profile of the PSPC we have built on this to continue the campaign during 2011-12.

The PSPC has continued to work closely with the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC), Occupational Pensioners' Alliance (OPA), Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA) and J AGE UK in opposition to the switch. The organisations' RPI/CPI campaigning group has met regularly throughout the last year to coordinate activities.

Members from each organisation in the campaign group, including members of PSPC constituent organisations, took part in a leafleting lobby of each of the three main political parties' autumn conferences. This helped raise the profile of the PSPC and keep our campaign to restore RPI in politicians' minds. '

A legal challenge by a cohort of pensioner organisations and trade unions against the decision also took place. Although the PSpC was not a member of the cohort we were very much in support of the action and were kept informed of events via the RPI/CPI campaign group. The Judicial Review took place in October where the decision went in the Government's favour. An appeal was heard in February but was unfortunately dismissed.

This meant that we had to move the focus of our campaigning activities.

It was agreed that another national Pensioners' Lobby of Parliament, such as the one that was held in March 2011, be organised to coincide with the debate triggered by a 'government e-petition'. The Government's e-petition system enables issues to be debated in Parliament if an online petition secures 100,000 signatures and a sponsoring MP or MPs puts the case for a debate to a Parliamentary Backbench Business Committee. The PS PC and affiliates supported an e-petition in opposition to the switch to CPI, set up by a trade union member, which reached 100,000 signatures in December 2011.

The Backbench Business Committee took the decision to hold the debate on 1 March 2012 but with little over one week's notice. The short time-scale meant we were not able to organise a national Lobby. The PS PC was very disappointed about this. However we had asked members of constituent organisations to lobby their MPs locally urging them to speak and vote against the Social Security Benefits (Uprating) Order which was debated in Parliament on 23 February 2012. Various documents were produced by the PS PC to enable members to lobby their MPs locally, including an MP briefing which the PS PC sent to all MPs about the (Uprating) Order and the e-petition debate. All the documents were downloadable from the PS PC website.

Throughout the year the PSpC has been represented on an RPI-CPI User Group working with the Office for National Statistics, the Royal Statistical Society, the National Pensioners' Convention and others to improve the working of CPI. Owner-occupied housing costs are expected to be included in CPI from early 2013, which will mitigate one of the complaints about CPI. It is likely that the work of the User Group and the ONS consultation on the inclusion of owner occupier housing costs in the CPI, expected in the summer, will form the focus of the next year's campaigning activity. The PS PC will continue to work to persuade the Government to reverse its decision to switch to CPI indexation.

#### **PSPC SUBMISSIONS TO THE GREEN PAPER**

The PSpC submitted evidence regarding the Department for Work and Pensions Green Paper - A state pension for the 21st century. The Green Paper consulted on a radical overhaul of the state pension system, which would lead to a state pension being paid at a level above the current means-tested benefit threshold.

The critical weakness in the proposals is that the Government only intends this system to apply to future retirees, and would leave existing pensioners with the current system. The PS PC believes that this is unacceptable.

The Green Paper also consulted on the mechanism for future increases in the state pension age beyond those already enshrined in the 2007 Pensions Act. The PS PC's response restated our policy that the state pension age should not be increased beyond 65. The submission was circulated to constituent organisations and is on the PSPC website.

#### PROPOSED CAMPAIGNING

. Among other measures discussed were that there should be a leafleting campaign at the three main party conferences this year.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE PENSION SCHEME NEGOTIATIONS

In October 2011 the PSPC secretariat wrote to Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary, asking that the PS PC be included in any discussions with the Government concerning future scheme governance and urged the TUC to involve relevant pensioner organisations in the scheme specific discussions. The TUC's response assured the PSPC that it would be happy to support the involvement of the PSPC. We also wrote to Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, on the same matter in January 2012. Mr Alexander stated he would welcome our views and promised to contact the PS PC regarding the discussions.

#### PRESS RELEASES The PSPC

issued two press releases in the last year. In December 2011 we issued a joint press release on the e-petition reaching 100,000 signatures as part of our work with the RPI/CPI campaign group and in March we issued a press release on the 2012 budget, opposing the freezing of age-related tax allowances for the over 65s. We have also publicised an e-petition <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31778> to constituent organisations on the subject of the freezing of the age-related tax allowances in which the number of signatures had reached 65,793

#### INCLUSION OF OWNER-OCCUPIER HOUSING COSTS IN CONSUMER PRICES INDEX

The Office for National Statistics has announced plans to include owner-occupier housing costs in a new Consumer Prices Index (known for development purposes as CPIH) from March 2013. This will sit alongside the existing CPI index.

This is an important issue for public service pensioners. The indexation of public service pensions was switched from the Retail Prices Index (RPI) to the CPI from April 2011. RPI is on average 0.7 per cent a year higher than CPI. One reason for this difference is that CPI excludes items related to housing costs, including mortgage interest payments, council tax, housing depreciation, buildings insurance and surveyors' and estate agents' fees.

The ONS has been examining two methods by which owner-occupier housing costs could be included within the CPI. The first method, 'rental equivalence', attempts to measure the price owner-occupiers would have to pay to live in their own home. The second method, 'net acquisitions', measures the costs associated with purchasing and maintaining a home

The ONS's Consumer Prices Advisory Committee has recommended that the rental equivalence method be adopted. The ONS will launch a formal public consultation on 11 June. Further information on the consultation and how to respond will be published on 11 June. The UK Statistics Authority will make a decision as to which method to use in late September based on the ONS recommendation and the results of the public consultation.

The PSPC has been represented on the ONS's RPI-CPI User Group which has fed into the process. Constituent organisations will understand that the issues are extremely complicated.

The PSPC, and most other lay organisations present at the User Group meetings, did prefer the net acquisitions method. Our instinctive view was that it was better to attempt to measure the cost of the constituent parts of owner-occupied housing rather than use rents as a proxy for these costs. We also had reservations about the methods used to estimate rents for the owner occupied housing market, when this will have different characteristics from the existing private rental market. The PSPC is planning to respond to the consultation and constituent organisations should consider making their own response.

Including some or all of the housing costs owner-occupiers face will not 'solve' the problem of CPI. The major reason why CPI is lower than RPI stems from the 'formula effect' - that RPI is based on an arithmetic mean, and the CPI is largely based on a geometric mean. It is estimated that this makes up 0.5 per cent of the average 0.7 per cent gap between CPI and RPI. CPI

## MOTIONS

Motion 1 This Annual General Meeting (AGM) condemns the announcement in the 2012 Budget Statement that Age-Related Personal Tax Allowances (ARPTAs) will be frozen from 2013 and will not be available for those born after 6 April/1948.

This AGM also notes with dismay that this decision is in direct contradiction to the promise given in the 2011 Budget Statement that ARPTAs would be increased in line with RPI for the rest of this Parliament and that, while pensioners on modest incomes will lose financially because of the measures in the 2012 Budget, those earning over £150k a year will see their higher tax rates reduced from 50% to 45%!

This AGM also re-iterates its support for the principles behind the introduction of the ARPTAs as a financial measure for pensioners to help meet the costs of home maintenance from third parties because of increased restrictions on their abilities to physically undertake such work themselves.

This AGM instructs the General Purposes Committee (GPC) to work with other pensioner organisations to seek the re-instatement of the RPI-inflation proofing of the ARPTAs and to look into the feasibility of restoring the previous differentials between the ARPTAs and the Standard Personal Tax Allowance.

CSPA

The Motion was passed.

#### PSPC SUBSCRIPTIONS 2012 - 2013

It was agreed the rates be increased by the inflation rate of 5.2% accordingly the Rate for the RPGA with a membership of under 1000 is £78.

assumes that consumers will adjust to price rises by substituting into cheaper goods. The PSPC believes that CPI is not fit for purpose as a compensation index because of this fact alone. We will continue to campaign for the restoration of RPI indexation for public service pensions.

# Do you need to know this?

**Q: Why do men's clothes have buttons on the right while women's clothes have buttons on the left?**

**A: When buttons were invented, they were very expensive and worn primarily by the rich. Since most people are right-handed, it is easier to push buttons on the right through holes on the left. Because wealthy women were dressed by maids, dressmakers put the buttons on the maid's right! And that's where women's buttons have remained since.**

**Q: Why do ships and aircraft use 'mayday' as their call for help?**

**A: This comes from the French word m'aidez -meaning 'help me' -- and is pronounced, approximately, 'mayday.'**

**Q: Why are zero scores in tennis called 'love'?**

**A: In France, where tennis became popular, the round zero on the scoreboard looked like an egg and was called 'l'oeuf,' which is French for 'the egg.' When tennis was introduced in the US, Americans (mis)pronounced it 'love.'**

**Q. Why do X's at the end of a letter signify kisses?**

**A: In the Middle Ages, when many people were unable to read or write, documents were often signed using an X. Kissing the X represented an oath to fulfill obligations specified in the document. The X and the kiss eventually became synonymous.**

**Q: Why is shifting responsibility to someone else called 'passing the buck'?**

**A: In card games, it was once customary to pass an item, called a buck, from player to player to indicate whose turn it was to deal. If a player did not wish to assume the responsibility of dealing, he would 'pass the buck' to the next player.**

**Q: Why do people clink their glasses before drinking a toast?**

**A: It used to be common for someone to try to kill an enemy by offering him a poisoned drink. To prove to a guest that a drink was safe, it became customary for a guest to pour a small amount of his drink into the glass of the host. Both men would drink it simultaneously. When a guest trusted his host, he would only touch or clink the host's glass with his own.**

**Q: Why are people in the public eye said to be 'in the limelight'?**

**A: Invented in 1825, limelight was used in lighthouses and theatres by burning a cylinder of lime which produced a brilliant light. In the theatre, a performer 'in the limelight' was the centre of attention.**

**Q: Why is someone who is feeling great 'on cloud nine'?**

**A: Types of clouds are numbered according to the altitudes they attain, with nine being the highest cloud. If someone is said to be on cloud nine, that person is floating well above worldly cares.**

**Q: In golf, where did the term 'Caddie' come from?**

**A. When Mary Queen of Scots went to France as a young girl, Louis, King of France, learned that she loved the Scots game 'golf.' He had the first course outside of Scotland built for her enjoyment. To make sure she was properly chaperoned (and guarded) while she played, Louis hired cadets from a military school to accompany her. Mary liked this a lot and when returned to Scotland (not a very good idea in the long run), she took the practice with her. In French, the word cadet is pronounced 'ca-day' and the Scots changed it into 'caddie.'**

**Q: Why are many coin banks shaped like pigs?**

**A: Long ago, dishes and cookware in Europe were made of a dense orange clay called 'pygg'. When people saved coins in jars made of this clay, the jars became known as 'pygg banks.' When an English potter misunderstood the word, he made a container that resembled a pig. And it caught on.**

So there you are! Now you know!

**Do you recognise yourself or anyone else?**



Sent to me by Charles Smith the photograph above is of a POUT training section from Leyhill in 1968.

Not sure who should have been in the empty chair

=====

**Wimbledon Ballot Tickets**

I know from the feedback I receive that many RPGA members like a day at Wimbledon. Tickets as we all know are extremely difficult to obtain, but readers who would like a day there in 2013 might like to enter the ticket ballot. Successful entrants will be notified early in 2013. All winners will be offered one pair of tickets for a specific court and date. The procedures below of how to apply for ballot tickets have been taken from the AELTC's website.

**STEP ONE**

In order to apply for tickets for The Championships, you need to fill in a Public Ballot application form:

To obtain an application form, send in a self-addressed, stamped envelope from 1 August 2012 to: AELTC, P.O. BOX 98, London SW19 5AE by 15 December 2012.

Only one application per household. Don't ask for more than one form: we will void your applications. If you do not send in a stamped, self-addressed envelope, you will not receive a form. *No letter is required.*

There is a separate ballot for wheelchair spaces so if you wish a wheelchair space please make sure you write clearly 'WHEELCHAIR' on both the outer and on your return envelope.

Non-UK residents should send in an International Reply Coupon instead of a stamp. If your post office does not provide these, please simply send your self-addressed envelope.

The self-addressed, stamped envelope should have your return address and should be the type 'DL' which is approximately 110mm x 220 mm (4 1/4" x 8 5/8")

It will greatly assist us in processing your request if you send the correct size of envelope (and self-seal if possible, rather than gummed).

Requests postmarked after 15 December 2012 will NOT be processed.



## Your Letters

By Bob Duncan

28 Dumpton Park Drive

Broadstairs

Kent

CT10 1RQ

bobduncan@hotmail.co.uk



The Olympics appear to have been a great success and cheered everybody up in what was until now a rather wet and dismal summer. There are of course consequences, having a meeting in London, I bought my ticket for the fast train to St Pancras (which costs extra) and nothing was said by the booking clerk. Once on the platform there was a blank on the screen for trains to St Pancras. So forced take a slow train, on asking ticket inspector why no through fast trains was advised they were not told anything official, but it seems they have all been cancelled to ensure enough trains to get everyone to the Olympics at Stratford. I was not alone in querying why no information had been displayed. Oh well, I got there a little late!

More importantly we too have our own Gold Medal winner, **Muriel Allen** who has been awarded an MBE in this the Queen's Jubilee Year, 'For services to her local- community'. At the time of writing, Muriel had not yet been summoned to the Palace, but is prepared as she has acquired a new outfit and a wonderful hat, the kind you can hide behind. I am sure you will be most elegant and heartiest congratulations from all your colleagues.

Letter Reads:

"The award recognises the fundraising I have achieved for local charities over many years which began before my retirement. It is a bit of a cliché to feel one does not deserve such an honour, and I really do feel that it is the many people who have so loyally supported my ventures that are the true deservers. The Charities are in the main, our wonderful Hospice which did not exist when I became a founder Trustee, (and now an Emeritus Trustee). The Roberts Centre which is a remarkable organisation for the homeless in Portsmouth, and the Beneficial Foundation which serves our community by offering a training programme for those with mental deficiency to a standard required by employers, and finds employment for them. All such positive approaches are an inspiration in themselves to me and my other supporters, and I wonder why it was necessary to announce 'The Big Society' to the nation when there are thousands of charities like these, all with wonderful people who tirelessly support and fundraise and are recognised at least by their local communities. Yes I am proud to have been nominated and to have played a small part in all this."

Quite right too, again congratulations, and can we have a photo in due course, but not hiding under 'the hat'.

We also have other star winners

**Gerry Ross**, our erstwhile and most diligent Secretary until most recently, has just celebrated his marriage to **June** in Windsor in early August. **Jim and Sheila Blakey** were present for this august event and send the following. The town of Windsor did Gerry and June proud in that the streets were bedecked with flags and there was a large police presence, Sheila said it was to do with the Olympics at Eton Dorney, but I like to believe it was all laid on for Gerry. **John O'Neil, Alex Fraser, and David Evans** (former POA General Secretary) and their wives attended in addition to Sheila and me. David is a long term friend of Gerry from their Pentonville days. You may recall he successfully negotiated the terms of 'Fresh Start' for prison staff. Perhaps Gerry invited him to the wedding to negotiate his 'fresh Start'

Congratulations to the happy couple from all of us.

Next we have a champagne contribution from **Mike Selby**. Firstly he writes about a re-union of the 4 Grendon Governors to date, 'We celebrated the appointment Of **Jamie Bennett** to the Governorship of Grendon and Springhill Prisons by a ceremonial visitation. We were the 'old fogies' who proceeded him – **Michael Selby, Tim Newall and Peter Bennett** (no relation) – so we had our photograph taken to celebrate the event. Only the fourth governor in charge in 30 years, which is not only a modern record but a credit to

The Department for allowing continuity. Thus for the majority of Grendon's 50 years, a non medical person has been in charge, and despite the gloomy prognostications at my appointment, therapy has not only been retained but has flourished. Bear in mind too, that the inmates involved over these years have been men with a history of personality disorder, instability and violence both outside and within the prison system itself prior to reception at Grendon.

Jamie Bennett gave us lunch and the anecdotes flew and bounced, clearly there had been bumps and thumps over time and the process of therapy does not always run smooth. The secret of governing Grendon we assured him is to make a difficult job look easy – I'm not sure that helped him! He does have the support - all three of us old fogies had attended a Restorative Justice Conference at Lambeth Palace recently and the Archbishop and the Minister of State had visited Grendon and spoke with enthusiasm about the work.

For me it was a splendid day. I realised that I had been part of a team nurturing a seed planted by Rab Butler and **Bill Gray** and that Grendon's future is in good hands. He also recounts that in March he was in North Pembrokeshire testing out the new boiler –which worked!

So we went to South Pembrokeshire (there is a great difference, the north is Welsh speaking but the south is English) to visit **John and Anne Thomas Ferrand**.

We were colleagues at Grendon. He is in fine fettle and has moved out of Tenby to a house on the Ridgeway, which he has rebuilt and which has the most gorgeous view over the hills and the sea. It was a great day to enjoy. He sends his regards to everyone.

Mike also makes comment on content of the last edition of the Newsletter, firstly on Grendon, 'Interesting photo of the Grendon staff ". In the centre, looking emaciated was **Dr Bill Gray** – he was a heavy cigarette smoker who seemed to have little appetite for food. The gentleman on his left, **Adrian Arnold**, also a cigarette smoker. To be appointed to Grendon to take part in this exciting experiment was a mark up for him. He was an A.G.1 at the time and appointed to look after the administration, the nuts and bolts of running a prison. Understandably he became involved in the therapy and Bill Gray told me that he had to do much more admin work than he anticipated as a consequence.



*AboveThe Grendon Four*

Adrian was a delightful companion; we bumped into each other throughout our working careers. Adrian had a very varied career including a borstal type Young Offender

institution in Nigeria. We first met at a meeting in Cambridge where I, an eager freshman, sat next to him, to listen to a lecture given by **Duncan Fairn**. This was November 1951 and Duncan was a recently promoted assistant commissioner on his way to inspect Lincoln Prison, at that time governed by **Brigadier Paton Walsh**. This turned out to be the 'twitch on the thread' for both of us. Two future governors from one lecture was not a bad evening's work.

He also has a comment on the article on Detached Duty: "The most stressful was condemned cell duty. Staff from another prison were chosen and many staff found this distressing. I remember talking to one P.O. who had this duty for William Joyce – Lord Haw-Haw – whom he found to be an agreeable person. Indeed, he gave Joyce the notification that the King did NOT intend to exercise the prerogative of mercy, so he would hang. He took this news with great courage he said".

Well! There's some famous names and social history to digest.

There is also sad news of dear colleagues who have departed. **Jenny Graves**, daughter of **Charles Brian Graves**, advises that he died on the 21<sup>st</sup> March this year aged 87. He was born in 1927 and joined the Prison Service in the early Fifties at Pollington. Over the following years he served as a governor grade at Buckley Hall, Huntercombe, Wetherby, Swinfen Hall, Winchester, and Head Office. He was Governor of Bullwood Hall, and retired from Pentonville in 1987. After retirement he lived in Bournemouth for 24 years.

**Tim Boulstridge**, who only retired from Downview in July last year, and **Ray Ellington** (ex Guys Marsh, Birmingham, Brockhill, and Hewell Grange) who retired in 2004. Ray died in early July in a hospice in Wolverhampton. There was news from **Joan Pye** that **Peter** had passed away in June. She wrote "Peter's health deteriorated rapidly in the last 2 months of his life, but thankfully with the help of our local hospice we managed to get him home, where he wanted to be, for the last three days of his life. He died peacefully surrounded by the people he loved". Joan thanks the RPGA for the donation to the local Hospice, particularly as they had helped so much and had nursed him with such loving care.

**Peter Meech** advises us regrettably of the death of a dear friend and colleague, **Stan Bester**, who died at 10.05 on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> August after a long illness. Peter advised the Isle of Wight Prisons and they flew the standard at half mast. "Stan joined the Prison Service at Leeds after war time service in the Army (as a Battery Sergeant, he went ashore on D-Day). He attended the Staff Course and then served as Asst. Governor, Dep. Gov and then Governor at, Wakefield, Camphill, Sherwood, Dartmoor, Portsmouth,

Rochester and Guys Marsh, and retired as a Governor 11 at Camphill. He led an active life in retirement and we enjoyed each other's company."

Very brief news that **Peter Pope** died in April.

**Susan Ledger** (daughter ) reports with great sadness that her father, **Keith Gibson** passed away on 23<sup>rd</sup> July at a nursing home in Bewdley Worcs after a long illness, he was 84. Keith was a great supporter of the PGA. He joined the Service in 1949, serving initially at Rochester and on promotion in 1957 he went to Leeds. He then went as Deputy Governor at Wakefield before moving to take command of Bedford.

Around 1968 he took charge of opening the new prison at Coldingley, and on promotion to G1 went to P6 Division at HQ in 1971. From there he became the Regional Director of the South East. On retirement, he edited the early editions of the PGA Magazine, a vital task as the committee needed someone to gather material together and present it in reasonable form. He had also been Secretary to the former Governors Branch when he was Governor of Bedford.

So many dear colleagues, who will be sorely missed, but whose life will live on in all our memories.

News as usual from the **Lawrence's** on progress at the Dabaso School (to which we made a small donation a little while back) which I will keep brief. When the Lawrence's were first involved 5 years back the school roll was 600, by 2012 it had risen to 1,797 with 24 teachers. The largest class comprises 103 children with one teacher. As is obvious, all resources, including drinking water and toilets are under tremendous strain, let alone classrooms and staff. Despite all that the school is achieving tremendous results, and everyone is committed to building on this and achieving even greater heights.

Delighted to receive news from **John May** (ex Dartmoor and Area Manager South West and Wales). He writes 'Prompted by the latest Newsletter, I write to offer my compliments to all of you who are continuing to keep the news and the RPGA going. Like, I suspect, many of your passive members, I greatly enjoy reading of what others have been doing, and I have rather assumed it would go on forever. It is worth the effort and would be sorely missed if it ceased.

For my part, retirement is proving fairly entertaining. I was lucky enough to do a couple of bits of work for **Andy Barclay**, which was terrific, and I can thoroughly recommend everybody to try it. I am assisting with training in Kenya, working with Prison Governors from a variety of African countries, very humbling when the major issues are about being able to get food for prisoners and pay for staff.

who run the country's canals. strangely isolated lives. will be recreated. British Waterways on 01977 554351.



**Former governors at prison reunion**

**FORMER** governors and deputy governors attended a staff reunion at Wakefield Prison last week.

The reunion was part of the prison's 400th anniversary celebrations which began in February with the unveiling of a plaque bearing the names of all the prison's governors and the publication of a booklet outlining its history

by present governor Bob Duncan. Alan Rawson, former deputy governor (left), Ian Dunbar, former governor, Bob Duncan, Harry Cropper, former deputy governor, and Brian Emes, former governor, are pictured under the prison's mulberry bush — which is thought to have inspired the nursery rhyme "Here we go around the Mulberry Bush". (W599/1)

**Redal power**  
*Wanda Green 26/5/95*  
 CROFTON licensee Steve Garbutt is getting on his bike for a good cause.

For Steve will be leading a group of staff and customers from The Cock and Crown Brewers Fryre on a ten mile sponsored bike ride around the area to raise funds for Marie Curie nurses.

The ten cyclists will set out from the Doncaster Road pub at 2pm tomorrow.

The event is part of Whitbread Sherwood Inns' month-long campaign to raise £100,000 for Marie Curie Cancer Care charity which provides nursing care for the terminally ill in their own homes.

The phone has now definitely stopped ringing and I am focused on my hobby as a peasant farmer. We took on the running of the family farm, and whilst exotic holidays are not on the agenda, I have discovered the childhood pleasures of working with animals, playing on the quad bike, chewing straw and grumbling”

Greetings from far away Siam from **John Ship** (ex Pentonville) who writes, I retired five years ago after having spent the last six years of my service on

secondment to the UKBA, working for **Kevan Brewer and then Brian Pollett**, which I enjoyed very much. I moved to Thailand on retirement and I am now living in Bangkok where we can use as a good base to tour the region. Have done the odd bit of consultancy work to keep the old grey matter going, much of that has dried up, but I have a little to keep me going. Enjoying retirement whilst reading about the doom and gloom in NOMS. We have had a few visitors from the UK visit us here including **Kevan Brewer and Jeanne Bryant** and more next week from Staplehurst in Kent. He was kind enough to say how much he enjoyed my book on Pentonville, and said it was one of the few books he took with him.

Recently visited my friend **Alan Rawson** at his Yorkshire abode. We had earlier in the year travelled to Alan's favourite Hotel in Croatia, though the food was excellent as ever, the weather was not so kind and Alan was not too well midweek, so not our best break there. Alan is still troubled with not being able to walk easily and at times has falls. He was not at his best, but needed to tax his car. After sometime rummaging for the necessary paperwork we set out to reach the post office. Mission accomplished we returned, only to find that Alan had not taken the house keys with him! I eventually found a neighbour in who had a spare set for such a situation. We had splendid stay despite that with excellent food.

Speaking of Alan, rummaging around I came across a newspaper cutting of Alan more in his prime, taken as part of the celebration of 400 years of 'lock up' on the Wakefield site. The other notorious characters are well known I am sure.

Finally another fine dip into history from Peter Meech who recounts 'His time in the Service.' Some more immortal names for you all to reflect upon

#### PETER MEECH

"In May 1950 I had recently married and was enjoying terminal leave following 7 years service in the RAF as a Navigator. Adjusting to 'civvies' life was not easy; I had applied to join Customs and Excise, but the interview was not until September. Fate stepped in; a chance meeting with **Roland Attrill**, who had been a school friend and one time patrol leader in the Boy Scouts. He was then an officer at Camphill Borstal and about to join the Staff Course and become an Assistant Governor. He persuaded me to think of joining, and I found myself facing the current Governor, **George MacFarlane**. I recognised him as someone with whom I was on nodding terms at the Vine Hotel in Newport. George was extremely persuasive and I found myself reporting for duty at Camphill in June – incidentally the same day as **Doug Dennis** joined as an Asst. Governor (Housemaster). A week of introduction and I found myself on 'lates' in St Georges' House. The house officer was Jim Absolem. At 8.00pm he handed me a huge bunch of keys, saying '72 all correct, I'm off to supper as I am sleep in.' One week in the service and 72 street wise kids in my charge. Fortunately I had spent my induction time wisely and new all about the hierarchy of Browns, Blues and House Captain. I sent for the House Captain – one Daddy Edwards – and instructed him 'to put away the Browns'. Half an hour later it was the Blues, and then when the night patrol arrived I checked the roll and locked everyone away. My day ended with the House Captain bidding me good-night and 'you'll do sir' –what an accolade!

Most of my training was 'on the job' and I spent time as second officer on the Farm Party, Forestry Party, shops and gardens as well as learning the routine of Gate Officer, searching and inevitably chasing absconders who ran from outside work parties.

I did my training at Wakefield, my course tutor being **Gordon Fowler**; it was he who set my career on the right lines. Returning to Camphill, I was given Christmas leave, the one and only time you will get I was told, and advised that I was posted to Lowdham Grange borstal. This had been my first choice and I was pleased to be going to a purpose built open borstal. **George MacFarlane** had recently been transferred as the Governor.

Arriving at Lowdham late in the day I was greeted with 'weren't expecting you'. I spent my first night in the punishment cell. Next morning I learnt the awful truth – a very long waiting list for quarters, so I was housed in a small room adjacent to the boys' dormitory. That was my home for the next 22 months –watching the snail like progress of new quarters being built. I spent the time gaining valuable experience. I joined all the sports events both staff and borstal; and enjoyed the wonderful support and comradeship of my fellow officers (the majority ex- service).

After two years I applied and was accepted and was selected to attend the first in-service Physical Education Course run by the newly appointed Director of Physical Education – **Ike Newton**. What a wonderful life.

**Jack Boddington** and I were responsible for Sports, Games, and PE programme, full time. An opportunity to hone leadership skills, which was to prove so beneficial in my later career. Perfectly happy, 'wife, son, new home and a rewarding job. What happened?

A visit by legendary **Bob Taylor**, Director of Borstal Administration. A great advocate of physical endeavour, he would spend much time in the gymnasium and on the sportsfield when he visited. It was the end of a particularly hectic gym session when Bob called me to one side and said 'Meech its time you applied to become an Asst. Governor.

I was interviewed by **Tom Hays** and following tests and interviews I found myself selected to attend the first Asst. Governor's course comprising direct entry candidates and officers. Among the eight direct entrants were **Brian Emes, John McCarthy, Peter O'Neil, John Lee, Ben Lyte, and the Rev Andrew Fyffe**; the Four officers were **Bill Driscoll, Derek Whitehead, Stan Brumby, and myself**. There was a wide range of skills and experiences- armed services, academics, the ministry and officers.

We integrated well and learnt from each other. The 6 month course completed I found myself posted to Northallerton Borstal, which was a secondary borstal selection centre. After 9 months I was on the move again to Wetherby, a former Royal Navy training establishment, and due to take its first inmates. **David Hewlings**, just returned to the service, was the Governor, and for the first year the roll was kept at 90 to enable consolidation to take place. David was inspirational, he took a new look at borstal training; established routines and training methods which mirrored his philosophy – to look at the whole person. He had in mind to create a therapeutic community involving staff at all levels and disciplines. Much time was spent with staff groups, working through them to achieve his goals. It was at times irritating and often to the detriment of routine tasks, like report

writing, cash checks, stores checks etc, but somehow it worked. After 3 years it was receiving approving nods from around the service. Times moved on and David was promoted to Leyhill and I found myself on the way to Portsmouth Recall centre. Portsmouth was so different, and brought idealism down to reality. Borstal boys could and did re-offend despite our best endeavours. Whilst at Portsmouth I was called to my Asst Gov1 Board, **John McCarthy** and I went up and both were successful. It was almost a year before I took up my new post as Dep. Governor at Hollesley Bay Colony. **Leslie Wheeler** and I arrived within a few weeks of each other and so began a very warm and positive relationship which lasted throughout my time in the service and extended to our families. We started several new initiatives; among them the establishment of a pre-release hostel in Ipswich appropriately named 'Taylor House'. This was achieved with the help and support of the Probation Service and **Frank Foster** the Director of Borstal Aftercare. It was staffed by an officer from the Borstal, on a month's detached duty, who lived in and supported the 8 inmates working in the local community.

I believe it was a success but would be interested in any published assessments. Leslie attended several out-of-service commitments, so I was fortunate to enjoy lengthy spells of acting up and gained valuable experience. In 1968 I attended my Gov.3 Board and arrived back at Wetherby as Governor on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1969. It was snowing like mad and the removal van got stuck on the A1! I was fortunate to spend the next five years there, so it was a very productive time as I was able to see through to conclusion several initiatives I had dreamed of first time round.

Not least of my achievements was to see all the governor grades housed in new quarter, instead of a variety of converted R.N. buildings (my first quarter there were converted classrooms with a choice of Petty Officer or W.R.N.S. toilets!)

I was fortunate to have **Peter Bland** as my Education Officer and with the active support of **Alan Baxendale** (Director of Education) a new purpose built education centre came into being. This was to cater for the increasing number of inmates for whom there was a statutory requirement to receive full time education because of the raising of the school leaving age.

We never achieved the optimum but had a 50/50 split between work and education. I also had my first of many 'inspections' from the newly created Inspectorate. One other aspect I was proud of was the dramatic reduction in absconding due I believe to a very positive input by staff and a zero tolerance by me. It would have been about 1974 that I was promoted to Gov.2 and on my way to Everthorpe. As a closed borstal it had its limitations, but a dedicated Education Officer, staff eager to support initiatives that enhance their job satisfaction and a supportive Board of Visitors, which all enabled some positive input. Whilst at Everthorpe I was visited by **Eric Towndrow**-Director of Personnel, he knew of my reluctance to leave borstals, but put it to me bluntly, 'If you want to make Gov.1 it means a move to prisons'. A vacancy occurred at Ford and the removal van was once more at the door. My Regional Director was **Keith Gibson and his Deputy was Jim Absolem**, (Yes the very one who was at Camphill when I joined). Keith visited Ford in my first week and we discussed the many problems, his parting shot to me was 'I want you to bring Ford back into the Prison Service in 2 years'. Task completed I was summoned H.Q. for my Gov.1 Board. I was successful and hoped for a 'home posting to Parkhurst', but to my surprise it was Durham. My Chief Officer in congratulating me said 'Along with Wormwood Scrubs that's the last real nick in the country'. How right he was.

Durham was one of the larger Local Prisons, plus the addition of a women's wing which housed some 40 cat A females including Myra Hindley. Durham just oozed confidence and dealt with some of the counties most difficult prisoners. The staff were extremely professional, knew their role and gave loyalty and support. I cannot leave Durham without mention of 2 amusing incidents.

When I arrived to take up my appointment, I rang the bell at the main gate; after what seemed a long delay the wicket gate opened and a huge form appeared, 'Yes' it said. I produced my warrant card and replied 'My name is Meech and I am the new Governor'. I was invited in and the Orderly Officer summoned. In possession of my keys I was about to go through the inner-gate when a voice from behind said 'Sir, if you please, the Governor of Durham does not ring the bell, he gives one bloody great crash on the knocker, Sir'. (The knocker is a replica of the Sanctuary Knocker on Durham Cathedral). I never forgot.

The second incident occurred during a night visit, (which was a requirement of Governor to undertake once a month). There was a set routine; a police car at the main gate, and I was met by the Orderly Officer and a dog handler and dog. The dog handler accompanied me on the external rounds. As we approached the hospital the dog sat and refused to move; an embarrassed officer explained, 'he won't go behind the hospital it is where the executed prisoners are buried.'



The Regional Director was **Dennis Higman** and he pre-empted the post of Regional Manager. The 5 establishment Governors 1 each had responsibility for a number of junior establishments; we provided staff training, temporary staff deployment, and managerial support. All at nil cost and it worked well.

After 3 years at Durham, Dennis advised me that there was a vacancy at Albany and was I interested. Although perfectly happy with my role at Durham from which I was getting great satisfaction, it was a chance to 'return home'. So it was off south again. My lasting memory of Durham was the regard in which 'The Governor' was held. He attended all the civic functions and on one occasion was invited to Durham Miners Gala!

I arrived at Albany, and just one week in post, when all hell broke loose; a major riot fuelled by disaffected political prisoners. Within a short period, despite an emergency plan, considerable damage had occurred; there were clashes between staff and prisoners, and group had gained access to the roof of A wing. The wing was evacuated and some 80 prisoners transferred to mainland prisons, no small task as it was a bank holiday weekend. It was all contained, supplies of water and food were curtailed, and the incident isolated with staff in control. We continued to negotiate and in a matter of days it ended peacefully. I was to experience a wealth of support and goodwill from colleagues at all levels.

The end of the riot coincided with me receiving a letter from Durham, containing a foolscap cartoon penned by 'one of the girls from the female wing' depicting a match-stick man jumping up and down on the prison roof and with me swimming across the Solent and with a caption that read, 'If this is their idea of a welcome, I'm off back to Durham'. I had it framed.

The period between the end of the riot and my retirement, some 2 years later, was largely taken up with restoring the living accommodation and re-opening all 4 wings. Staff morale had taken a blow and training was directed to restoring confidence and examining what had led to the disturbance, with the long term aim being of introducing a more productive regime. I stand by opinion, however, that Albany was a poor choice for a maximum security prison, housing as it did, a volatile mixture of political prisoners and gangland 'hard men'.

Albany was designed for a population who required maximum security, but were at the tail end of their sentence. The regime envisaged prisoners spending the maximum time out of their cells. The cells were small with shared ablutions. All the facilities required maximum time in association, completely alien to the population at the time.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1985 I retired. A warm farewell from colleagues and it was a new beginning – but that is another story. One thing I will pass on, in my time I learnt delegate but never to abdicate my responsibilities.

Separately we reproduce another chapter from George Bride's unpublished book; this really is an historical chapter about life in our young offender establishment. Anyone else who can add memories of that period we would be fascinated to hear from you. Maybe the RPGA may put together an historical collection of penal history.

Keep writing you alone are the lifeblood of the RPGA

Bob August 2012

# WEEKEND BREAK 2012



**Leigh Park Country House Hotel  
Bradford Avon, Wiltshire.  
12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

Report by Charles Smith

Throughout the Friday and Saturday the weather was dry and often sunny and so it was very pleasant to have a look around the places of interest in that part of England.

The City of Bath, which was 7 miles distant, was easily reached by car, using the park and ride system, or by the local bus service using the Bus Pass system. The town of Bradford on Avon which is only a mile or so, down the road was certainly worth a visit which has among its attractions, a Saxon Church which records indicate it to have been there in 1155.

The river Avon flows through the town and the old stone bridge seems to be the centre with the streets lined with equally old stone buildings, restaurants, pubs, shops and houses leading up the quite steep inclines and towards the outskirts of the town.

The Leigh Park Hotel as well as being a pleasant place to stay, has its own interesting history. It was a gift to the Earl of Leicester from Elizabeth I in 1574. The Earl of Leicester, Dudley was her favourite courtier and it is believed that



she stayed there in that year.

That said, there has obviously been very extensive building and refurbishment since that time, which from our point of view was fortunate, since it is well known that Elizabeth wasn't big on baths and showers. The installation of electric lighting and TV are both useful in their own way, if only to find out who won the Grand National, which was run on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup>. Also the installed system of Central heating beats the 1574 system of throwing another log on the fire and is much more easily controlled.

No doubt the Elizabethan meals as served at Leigh Park in 1574 were quite sumptuous with wild boar roasted over a spit and all the trimmings etc, etc., but in the April of 2012 the meals served to us were excellent both in taste, quality, variation, presentation and service, and the fact that next door to the dining room was the bar to round off each evening, added to the enjoyment. Some of our group were located in the coach house, which has been extensively converted to a suite of very nice rooms; there was no mention of where the coaches are now located, not to mention the horses. For those of us located within the main house the stairs and corridors by which the floors were accessed, were as one would expect in an old building, very charming with the odd creaking floorboard and the rooms very comfortable and reflecting the period.

It was said by those who attended, to have been a very enjoyable weekend.

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## **REUNION 2013 MEMBERS CONSULTATION**

At the June 2011 AGM a Resolution was passed that Members be consulted by way of the e mail register and the Newsletter as to whether a formal Reunion should be held in 2013. Accordingly a Consultation Questionnaire was contained in the Autumn 2011 Issue of the Newsletter seeking member's views and suggestions, as to attendance, venue and format. To reply to by post or e mail. The response was discussed at the March 2012 Committee meeting and was considered to provide insufficient confirmation of numbers prepared to attend to justify the organisation and costs of a Reunion in the near future. The matter will however be further discussed at the AGM in October 2012 and those members who feel that a future reunion should be held, are urged to attend the AGM in order to make their views known.

The committee would like to express their thanks to those members who did respond for their well thought out comments and suggestions.

THIS IS HAPPENING RIGHT HERE IN OUR OWN COUNTRY!

Annon

We Must Stop This Immediately!

Have you noticed that stairs are getting **steeper** .Groceries are **heavier**. And, everything is **farther** away. Yesterday I walked to the corner and I was dumbfounded to discover how **long** our street had become!

And, you know, people are less considerate now, especially the young ones. They speak in **whispers** all the time! If you ask them to speak up they just keep repeating themselves, endlessly mouthing the same **silent message** until they're red in the face! What do they think I am a lip reader

I also think they are much younger than I was at the same age. On the other hand, people my own age are so much **older** than I am. I ran into an old friend the other day and she has aged so much that she **didn't even recognize** me. I got to thinking about the poor dear while I was combing my hair this morning, and in doing so, I glanced at my own reflection. Well, REALLY NOW -even mirrors are not made the way they used to be!

Another thing, everyone drives so fast these days! You're risking life and limb if you happen to pull onto the motorway in front of them. All I can say is, their brakes must wear out awfully fast, the way I see them screech and swerve in my rear view mirror.

Clothing manufacturers are less civilized these days. Why else would they suddenly start labelling a size 10 or 12 dress as 18 or 20? Do they think no one notices? The people who make bathroom scales are pulling the same prank. Do they think I actually 'believe' the number I see on that dial? HA! I would never let myself weigh that much! Just who do these people think they're fooling? I'd like to call up someone in authority to report what's going on -- but the telephone company is in on the conspiracy too: they've printed the phone books in such small type that no one could ever find a number in there!

All I can do is pass along this warning:

**WE ARE UNDER ATTACK!**

**Unless something drastic happens, pretty soon everyone will have to suffer these awful indignities.**

**PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO WE CAN GET THIS CONSPIRACY STOPPED!**

PS: This is being reproduced in a larger font size, because something has happened to my computer's fonts - they are smaller than they used to be.