

The Retired Prison Governors Newsletter

Founded by Arthur Williamson in 1980 - Now in its 42nd year of continuous publication



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NEW MONARCH OF THE GLEN, NEW TENANT AT NUMBER 10

I was born in December 1952, just ten months after the late Queen ascended the throne. Therefore, like the vast majority of citizens, I had never known any other monarch. Back in 1952 very few had people had the televisions, washing machines and motor cars that we take for granted. Space travel had yet to begin, and an early computer would have been transported on the back of a wagon, rather than in the owner's jacket pocket. Poor people were thin rather than fat, and formality and deference ruled in the workplace. The one constant in seventy years of unimaginable change was the Queen herself. Despite the best efforts of her children and their spouses, the good ship Elizabeth, much to the irritation of Republicans, always somehow managed to survive the tempest and return home safely to port. Her death will undoubtedly revive the debate about hereditary rule, even without missteps from the new king. However, Republicans cannot rely solely for argument on what to them is the absurdity of a hereditary monarchy with all the privileges that go with it, if the elected alternative results in President Blair or God forbid, President Bercow.

The Queen's first Prime Minister was born in 1874, her last in 1975. Whereas the court of public opinion will decide the fate of the monarchy, the Parliamentary Conservative Party has decided the fate of her last Prime Minister, Liz Truss, in very short order, forcing her resignation in just 45 days. I'd long grown used to currency speculators undermining Labour governments, so I never thought I'd see the day that a Labour opposition cheered on the money markets in an assault on government policy. Ian Mikardo, a prominent Labour left winger in the 1950's and 1960's, went so far as to describe the stock exchange as 'one big betting shop.' Have you noticed how the BBC is referring to currency speculators as 'investors?' Disgraceful. Despite the taxes paid by the City, it is not hard to see Mikardo's point. 'Trussonomics' more resembled the policy pursued by Ronald Reagan than Margaret Thatcher, with one key difference. U.S. borrowing had the safety net of the Dollar being the world's reserve currency, the Pound does not. We can be sure that her successor, Rishi Sunak, will be rather more cautious.

This is a bumper edition of the newsletter, enlivened as it is always is by the regular contributors. As well as his ever popular 'Your Letters' feature, Bob Duncan also gives us the fourth extract from his memoirs, recalling his earliest days in the service as a young A.G. On the subject of memoirs, Barbara Treen is the latest retired Governor to go into print. Her memoirs are reviewed in this issue, and I commend them to the members. Peter Atkinson is back, reflecting on some key moments for him during his time in harness, and in particular, on 'Fresh Start.' Sadly this issue also carries two obituaries, Mel Dickinson and John Prince. I can also report the death of Audrey Davies, widow of the late Frank Davies. Our condolences go out to their families

Finally I draw your attention to a piece from Brendan O'Friel. Brendan and his wife Barbara are hosting a Ukrainian family, and this first part entitled 'From Kyiv to St. Mary' chronicles the hugely challenging journey of the refugee family from a war zone to the safety of the Isle of Man. It is intensely moving.

PAUL LAXTON, EDITOR

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From the chair

Welcome to the autumn 2022 edition of the RPGA Newsletter which is again edited by Paul Laxton and I know Paul would welcome contributions from all members especially with pictures.

Well we seem to have the dreaded virus in a holding pattern and yes we thought it was the light at the end of the tunnel but blow me if it wasn't another train coming towards us with so many carriages labelled NHS, inflation, energy crisis, new Prime minister, drought, airport chaos, strikes etc. etc. The good news is that the country is enjoying a warm summer and we are already complaining about that too. What are we like?

Still holidays [sorry-trips] are back on the agenda especially when the kids are back at school and can I recommend Madeira for your enjoyment apart from the odd scary landing at Funchal airport. We have been going there for some years and recently had 3 weeks there, very relaxing. We then got back and moved house into a new build, very stressful! We still haven't found the white pepper it is probably in a box of shoes or lost for ever. If we buy a new one the old one will turn up promptly, you can bet..

Cricket and football are running together at the moment [August] and we went to Scarborough to watch Yorkshire [I'm a member] play Worcestershire and got a bit sunburnt, very unusual it is often freezing in the braising east wind. What about the football? don't ask.

We again join the PGA conference for our AGM at The Radisson Blu Hotel near East Midlands Airport in October and I hope some of you can attend we would be delighted to see you either in person or via good old Zoom , details on the website www.rpga.org.uk .

Your committee continue to oversee, develop and promote your RPGA and your views; stories and ideas are always appreciated. The association continues to be stable and we are always available to members if we can help in any way.

Graham Smith, RPGA Chairman



GATE HAPPY: THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND TIMES OF A PRISON GOVERNOR

Author: Barbara E. Treen

Reviewed by Paul Laxton

Enoch Powell was referring to politics when he said that 'All careers tend to end in failure.' Barbara Treen reached what she would have seen as the top of her chosen profession in that she successfully governed HMP Brockhill, but never governed again, and was never admitted to the hallowed ranks of the Senior Civil Service, to whose denizens the power once held by Governors has long since drifted away. It's clear that the decision to take voluntary redundancy at the tender professional age of 51 after 29 years service commencing in 1983 is tinged with regret and a huge sense of unfinished business.

Going into print is also fraught with dangers from critics firing off cheap shots on Amazon under the cloak of sometimes ill-concealed anonymity. The internet is a wonderful place for trolls, and anyone sufficiently interested can look at my response to the individual who trolled my professional memoirs. Barbara can expect to be accused of score settling, and more insidiously of having an inflated sense of her own importance and ability. Well, I can vouch for Barbara Treen's talent because I had the privilege of being line managed by her at HMP Woodhill. I can vouch for her intellect and her compassion which are clearly visible in the chunks of the book that she devotes to her time at Brockhill and then at Headquarters working on policy in the female estate. I think Barbara offers an expert critique of the way we as a society treat female offenders, the baleful role of populist politicians, and the bureaucracy presided over by senior civil servants which contributes little to the humanisation of women's experience of custody.

Barbara is passionate about reform in the women's estate, and I urge colleagues who like me are fairly ignorant of the female experience of custody, to read over the relevant chapters slowly and meticulously. She is ferociously critical of the decision to shut down the Women's Group and hand back establishments to Area Managers, not least because hers clearly regarded Brockhill as a cuckoo in the nest. The re-rolling of Brockhill to a male establishment ended her career as an in-charge Governor prematurely when she still had so much to give at the sharp end.

One of the most amusing features of the book is the identification of key players in her career by nicknames such as 'The Eel, The Bank Clerk and The Machine.' Perhaps she was too polite to employ the label of 'The Dalek.' Having worked under Barbara at Woodhill I can easily identify the characters concerned without sharing her opinions of them. I'm sure readers will be able to identify a number of others. Barbara Treen joined the service at a time when the Prison Service still recruited an eclectic mix of characters to its Assistant Governor scheme. The recruits may not have met the modern definition of diversity, but they did include the charismatic, the sociopathic and the plain eccentric. It recruited devout Christians and staunch atheists. It recruited the straight and the gay (though rarely openly), the monogamous and the promiscuous. The scheme attracted those with real missionary zeal and towering intellects as well as those content to administer the status quo. It recruited the comic and the terrifying, sometimes contained in the same person. Barbara Treen's use of nicknames rather than real names brings this lost service to life when character and substance mattered rather than targets and KPI's.

Barbara Treen is candid about her weaknesses to the extent that she must have occasionally suffered from Imposter Syndrome, not unusual amongst those who have emerged from unprivileged backgrounds. Now comfortable in her own skin, she has no concerns about telling self-deprecating stories against herself, which further humanise the narrative. Barbara is a fluent writer, and the reader will find that the pages pass by quickly. After you have read it once, read it again, because there is plenty of nuance you will have missed. Gate Happy is a welcome addition to the prison service canon. I commend it to Newsletter readers.

PAUL LAXTON



FROM KYIV to PORT ST MARY

This article first appeared in the Stonyhurst Association Newsletter in July 2022.

Brendan and Barbara O’Friel are hosting a Ukraine family in the Isle of Man. This is the story of the challenges and difficulties of our families’ journey from Kyiv to our Flat in Port St Mary – and the part played by members of the Stonyhurst Association.

PART ONE – THE JOURNEY

In 2018 there was a debate about accepting Syrian Refugees onto the Island which resulted in a decision not to take any – although the Island made a large financial contribution towards refugee relief.

In 2022, following substantial changes to the political leadership on the Island, the response to the Ukraine refugee crisis was very different. The Island’ s Government agreed to set up a “Homes for Ukraine” scheme in March 2022 and invited Manx residents to open their homes to refugees.

For some 15 years, we had owned a “holiday flat” on Port St Mary Promenade used largely for our visiting friends and relatives. It seemed to us that this could be ideal for a refugee family. The flat had a large “attic” bedroom – much loved by grandchildren – so could take a family with several children.

We applied to the Manx Government to have the flat inspected – it was quickly accepted and I was subjected to yet another DBS check.

By mid-April we were wondering how we could find a suitable family. We thought it most unlikely that any one in Ukraine would have heard of the Island and, if they had, it would appear to be a very long way away. Our son Francis (OS), living in Devon, kindly took charge of searching on Facebook, a task well beyond me!

Meanwhile “our” family living in Kyiv decided in mid-April that they had to leave Ukraine for the future of their 3 small children. The Government of Ukraine allowed the fathers of families with 3 or more children to leave the country. So our family loaded up their car, and a roof box, with a few possessions and headed for the Polish Border. Once across the Border they started looking for hosts. They had a contact in the Isle of Man who posted their details on the Manx/Ukraine Facebook and Francis spotted the post and alerted me to the possibility of us having found our family.

We agreed that we would host the family and started on the visa process. Francis did a magnificent job in getting these completed and in to the Home Office by April 25th. We settled down to wait for a result.

On the Island the local Ukraine community, a group I had been totally unaware of, set up a great “networking opportunity” at a coffee morning/lunch event in a Church Hall at St John’s. We learned that there were some 25 well established Ukraine residents on Island and about 30 refugees had arrived, many to join families under the “family” scheme. We met lots of people, including key organisers within the Ukrainian Manx community, which proved very important over the following weeks.

The visas finally came through for the children late on 30th May. The parents “permission to travel” appeared a few days before. It was very difficult to find out how long visas might take to materialise, there was a suggestion of 10 days, but 36 days seemed a very very long time. Needless to say we brought what pressure we could to speed up the process.

Our family meantime had moved to Warsaw and found temporary accommodation in an office block,

certainly far from ideal with 3 children under 11. Communicating with them was difficult as they had limited English – but the “google translate” and similar devices helped us all to get messages across.

Getting the family and the car from Warsaw to Port St Mary was a challenge. The lengthy visa delays meant that the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company was in the middle of its annual peak of transporting over 10,000 bikes to the Island for the TT Races. There was no spare capacity for our family.

But first they had to reach the UK. Stena line, Hook of Holland to Harwich, offered free daytime passage for refugee families, and their vehicle. But no bookings could be made until the Visas were available. On Tuesday 31st Stena told us that they had no room after Thursday 2nd – because of peak holiday traffic. So there was a frantic scramble to encourage the family to start driving across Europe to Hook of Holland for the 1400 sailing to Harwich on 2nd June.

Earlier in May, I had decided that we needed to try and seek broader help with the task of getting our family safely to the Isle of Man. We were uncertain as to their financial position, but we knew they were living on their savings and on charitable support from their Polish hosts.

On 5th May the Stonyhurst Association was circulated with a letter explaining the problems. Essentially we wanted support for our family “on their journey”. The response was remarkable, speedy and effective. It enabled us to put in place free accommodation for the family on their journey. Offers of accommodation in homes; provision of a free stay in a Rotterdam Hotel; offers to guide our family in unfamiliar places and offers of financial support all quickly appeared. This was especially helpful as ferry congestion caused by the peak TT Race traffic meant they had to wait for additional nights in North West England.

The family set off from Warsaw on 31st May with 2 overnight stops and arrived safely for the Stena Line crossing on June 2nd. After a night in Harwich, they travelled up to Lymn in North Cheshire to stay for 3 nights in an apartment. This enabled my daughter Mary to visit them, the first direct contact with our family. We received our first pictures of the family and Mary was able to tell us how they were coping with English speaking.



Meanwhile on Island, we had appealed for support for our family in our parish newsletter and, by talking about our plans with members of our local community, preparing the way for the arrival of our family. Gifts started to arrive in our porch – a child’s bike and scooter for example. Meanwhile the Manx Ukrainian Group were collecting children clothes and bringing them down to our Flat.

On Monday 6th June the family were booked on to the 18.15 sailing from Liverpool Pierhead to the Island on the Fast craft Manannan. The ferry was very full with hundreds of TT bikers. When they arrived at the Pierhead, there was an issue about their Roof Box and the head room on Manannan, but the staff were great and solved the problem quickly, removed the box, transported it on the ferry’s luggage wagon and restored it to the car’s roof in Douglas,

At 21.00, I was waiting for their arrival at the Sea terminal in Douglas with Karolina Davison, a Ukrainian

who had married on the Island and a great “networker” for the local Ukraine community. Much frantic waving when they finally appeared, the roof box was very useful for identifying their car! Karolina was able to greet them in their native tongue and demonstrate that they were joining an established community. Then we set off, slowly, for Port St Mary and installed the family safely into our Flat about 10.30.

So despite the difficulties and obstacles, our family are safely in Port St Mary. The two shipping companies were helpful. The successful outcome was the result of the combination of the support of the Stonyhurst Association with our family in anticipating and overcoming problems. To see three small children from Kyiv running down Chapel Beach into the Irish Sea at Port St Mary on June 7th, a lovely hot day, was a small indication of how our combined efforts have produced a very worthwhile result.

BRENDAN O’FRIEL

June 15th 2022

In Part Two - Brendan O’Friel will provide an update on how the family are settling into Island life. Readers may be interested in the link to an ongoing fundraising effort for essentials for our Ukraine family:- https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/adrian-shaw-123?utm_term=dxaN7KDm5

NOTICE OF 2023 RPGA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The next Annual General Meeting of the Retired Prison Governors Association will be held at the Radisson Blu Hotel at East Midlands Airport on Monday 09 October 2023 at 13.30 hours.

The AGM is held at the same venue and same time as the Annual Conference of the Prison Governors Association, so there is the opportunity to meet up with old friends and colleagues over lunch which is provided courtesy of the P.G.A.

The date and venue are subject to confirmation. The Committee does not expect there to be any change, but we will repeat the notice in the Spring newsletter so that you can firm up your diaries accordingly. We look forward to seeing some of you there.



Understanding the Russians *written for the Retired Prison Governor's Association, April, 2022.*

We should expect some changes in Ukraine prior to the next Newsletter. Am planning for the worst but hoping for the best.

What follows is a mixture of facts and opinions in equal measure. The facts are provable and the opinions are mine; ...for what they're worth.

It is 0300 hours. Woken by the chronic discomfort of arthritic hips and a hooting owl from the woods across the road, I lie still - enjoying the quiet and peace which I know contrasts starkly with the state of affairs in Mariupol, Ukraine, where they are suffering from Putin's invasion, or as he himself describes it, a 'strategic military exercise.' I note our press are often referring to the conflict as 'Putin's War.' They are right to do so as this conflict is not at the democratic instigation of the Russian people; far from it. There is little doubt that Putin himself has an obsession with Nazis, or, at the least is using this as a fear factor to persuade his people. We should not underestimate this fear. We have no perception of what it is like. If you're told the moon is made of cheese or the werewolves really do exist, then this is seen as credible and real.

This military incursion to 'denazify' Ukraine to provide his rationale may seem hard to fathom for ourselves but not for the regular Russians. Even as one distraught Ukrainian grandmother lamented to a reporter, 'please show me just one Nazi in my country' as the news reports and films trickles through to the Russian people showing the scale of destruction and the distressed grandmother all in plain view, - they simply cannot, nor will they ever, believe it. My take on Russian governance. That they could accept Mr. Putin's comparison of neighbouring Ukraine — where millions of Russians have relatives and friends — to Nazi Germany, the country that invaded the Soviet Union at the cost of some 27 million Soviet lives — defies reason. Or does it? As in most conflicts, there are two sides of the story. Whose is the right side? Well, this is for you and/or history to judge. I have no doubt that there is sufficient evidence to support the NATO version which is - there is far more of an explanation than there is a rationale encompassed within the account of the fall of the Warsaw Pact but none the less, a sufficient rationale for President Putin to employ his forces on his strategic military exercise to invade Ukraine. He is trying to persuade his people (and maybe himself) that his justification lies within the collapse of this Pact.

My take on a possible outcome is not encouraging. Here it is as published on my Facebook page a few days ago. "I have three conclusions regarding the possible consequences of this 'strategic military exercise' undertaken by President Putin. My first conclusion is that he has lost, or is losing, his mind. History shows that many of those who take on really politically powerful positions often succumb to such power in bizarre ways. For example, it's too easy to be convinced that you are right, despite the facts showing otherwise, whilst still pressing ahead with seemingly counter productive policies. My second conclusion is that President Putin cannot lose this 'military exercise' against Ukraine, without it becoming the finish of him both at home and internationally, and that, inevitably, he will come to understand this. Once he does, my third conclusion kicks in. My third conclusion is that, just as Adolf Hitler did when he lost WW2, he will commit suicide; but unlike Hitler, who died in a bunker, Putin will die in his palace with his finger on the nuclear button."

Now I know there is little we, the average citizen, can do to change history. We have, thanks to science, the Nuclear explosive capacity to end the future as we all currently anticipate it. Russia alone is reputed to have enough nuclear fire power to probably blow our already damaged Earth off it's orbit with fatal consequences for mankind as we follow the destiny of the dinosaurs. These circumstances explain our western reluctance to shake Putin's cage too hard. While we would like to have the Ukrainians come out

on top, should they do so, we, all of us, will likely pay the price. Maybe we have become inured to the results of a modern day nuclear explosion as we put our faith in the anti ballistic missile programme or simply believe it is too terrible to actually happen. So we in the west need to be very careful how we proceed. As for suggestions ... I have none. But the really, really frightening thought that is bugging me is - NEITHER DOES ANYONE ELSE...!!" Now why should I have any special insight into the Russian psyche. Well I had the privilege of spending time in western Russia back in 1992. Not that, for a moment, does this give me the right to sound off on this complex subject other than I think I can use it to help me write a little bit about it. Those that are far better informed may disagree. So be it.

A crazy idea.

So back then, in the last decade of the last century, I used to lead youth expeditions around the world. This was a privilege that I thoroughly appreciated but I began to feel it was time we tried branching out and away from totally friendly countries where we had often previously travelled and could guarantee all the usual facilities such as acquiring provisions and logistical support. And so I approached the British Schools Exploration Society, a vibrant and popular concern that I had previously worked for as a leader. I put a proposal forward that mustered all my powers of persuasion and made my case to the BSES Committee to take a group of over 50 British youngsters to the White Sea of Russia. I knew I was undertaking the task of converting a crazy idea into reality. But it worked and I have no doubt at all that it would never have surfaced without the help of Lt Col (Rtd) Peter Steer. Peter was then the Director of the British Exploring Society and he soon saw the benefits of exploring new ground: ground that was starting to become a little more friendly towards us here in the west under the Presidency of Boris Yeltsin.

We would be creating a 'first' and an important breakthrough in east/west relationships and, despite Peter's long and distinguished career in the British military where his principal enemy had always been Russia, he became determined to make this 'crazy idea' into one that was at least feasible. Together we battled a sceptical BES committee where we won a 'well, don't blame us if it all goes wrong' response. And so it wasn't long before we were both sat before the Russian Ambassador explaining our vision of taking 60 young British youngsters to the White Sea area of his country. Initially he was clearly unimpressed. But then we both simultaneously saw a 'light switch moment' as the Ambassador's attitude suddenly changed to one of enthusiasm. As tempting as it is to tell you more I need to get on with my current reason for writing. Meanwhile I do have the full BES Report available on request.

To remind you of my reasons for writing... ... which is to attempt to explain the what and the why President Putin is trying to accomplish whilst also trying to explain the circumstances regarding his almost certain failure. His own rationale for this invasion is well covered in his account to his own people which is available in full on the World Wide Web. Go to <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/full-text-putin-s-declaration-of-war-onukraine> To take on this task I shall explain my own take on the Russian perspectives on life; achieved as a result of my brief time in their country. I'll start with an account of my meeting with a Babushka (an elderly Russian grandmother) whom I had noticed as we were off loading gear and food from the local sea port. (we were unable to purchase these commodities locally!). My 'babushka' was holding back and watching us from a distance. She was sobbing quietly. I approached her carefully and attempted to find out what was so troubling her. It soon came clear that I'd need an interpreter if I was to get to the bottom of her story. We had an official interpreter as appointed by the Russian authorities but I guessed this might not succeed in me getting the full story. I had me my own secret interpreter; a BES leader who had Russian speaking parents. (who was to work for the British Foreign Office on completion of his studies.) With his help I discovered that the old lady was simply watching the young people whilst mourning the loss of her own children who'd been killed in the Russian/Afghanistan war. What really troubled me most was her account of how the 'Authorities' had told her they'd been killed in action and no more. No details of how and where. No funeral arrangements, nothing, zilch. What's more she explained how the 'authorities' demanded she not talk about her losses to anyone, which vindicated my

choice of interpreter. I mean, sad or what!

We were appointed not only an interpreter (with whom I'm still in close contact) but also two officials whose task was clearly to watch and report back. Again we got on well with them: in fact we felt somewhat uncomfortable for them as they knew that we knew what their role was. Ultimately, they were to stay with us as our house guests back on the Isle of Wight (I was working as the Hospital Chief at HMP Parkhurst) prior to the expedition and they proved to be lovely people. My wife, Jen, came out with me on this expedition as the accountant. She, like myself, had taken Russian language lessons. With her easy way with people she was soon trusted and accepted by the locals. I spent my time in the field but Jen stayed in the village where she soon built a rapport with them. She was constantly being asked by these two officials about what she was doing, who was she seeing, what was she saying, what was being said to her. Although she found this annoying and frustrating she never allowed these emotions to show: in fact she understood their position only too clearly and remained sympathetic whilst she continued to earn the trust of the villagers. I was later to hear the story about when Jen was being led around Moscow on a series of sight-seeing trips. The two 'officials' clearly had sufficient status to enable her to be escorted to the head of every queue and no questions asked. Back to the present. Gradually we learnt more and more about the Russian way of life both from direct and indirect observation, all of which demonstrated that they were generally oppressed and were always very wary of officials higher up the pecking order. This explains why the Russians are fearful of Putin and his cronies. I think that fear of their own system of hierarchy is so instilled into their very being due to their history. We take our democracy and human rights for granted as we are born into them. Not so in other parts of the world. I acknowledge that I write from limited experience of the threats under which the Russians live. From the top to the bottom of their society, whether in politics, military, commerce, law & order, academia, etc; nobody, including Putin himself, is exempt from the fear of being thought of as being able to hold an independent and/or original thought, never mind the freedom to express it in word or deed. Their military, staffed by conscripts, has a culture of bullying and cruelty. Badly led as well as resourced, I'm not surprised that the Ukrainian military, trained, supported and influenced by western methods and practices, have been able to retaliate so successfully against the Putin invasion, sorry, 'strategic military exercise'.



According to current press reports, Vladimir Putin's "ghost buses" are said to be secretly shipping the war-ravaged dead bodies of teenage Russian soldiers out of Ukraine. The corpses of Russian soldiers are reportedly being taken back to Russia via Belarus in special planes, trains, and buses at night to avoid attracting attention. Of course this contrasts with how we in the west treat our war dead as well as bearing out the story told by my Babushka. Referring, briefly, back to my experiences on the BSES Expedition to the White Sea of Russia, I was asked by a local news journalist as we celebrated its finale if there was anything I'd

like to do before leaving. He was somewhat taken aback when I asked to visit a prison. He was less surprised when I explained that I worked for HMPS back home. Not believing for a moment that this request would fly: it not only flew it was an amazing visit; one that I wrote about for the Prison Service Journal soon after my return. The relevance of this visit is the affect it had on my appointed Russian liaison officer who was summoned to the local Kremlin (Town Hall). He came to see me immediately, ashen with shock, trembling like a leaf in a gale. 'What do they want with me,' he asked. I'd no idea and could not reassure him. Turned out it was in connection with my request to visit a local nick. They wished to further their background information. The fact that this simple request to attend the Kremlin had shaken him to the core was in total contrast to a similar request from our own local authorities back home, which we would have treated with nonchalant ambiguity.

As for what the Russians know, believe or suspect, this is almost irrelevant. They have a loyalty to their country, which we don't fully understand, a loyalty which has allowed them to be indoctrinated, to believe in what they're told, even though they're aware that they are being duped. This awareness is something they can't handle and so the safest course of action is to accept everything at face value.

I believe they know their government and hangers on are corrupt. That they do not enjoy the freedoms we take for granted. Try and employ an original thought and be caught or simply suspected of doing so and you could well be eliminated. They know that their oligarchs rip them off, they know their military is ineffective, they know their politicians are corrupt and they know their press tells them rubbish to the extent they don't bother to take notice of it. So, under these circumstances, if you want to survive you learn from infancy that the only course of action is take a low profile, have no opinions and go with the flow. Life under the a Russian state and system has been moulded by their history (eg.Stalin.) One has to live with freedom or with serious oppression for a long period of time before one is able to adjust to almost full acceptance.

I've had subtle discussions with a few members of the Russian hierarchy but they're scared to allow themselves these chats to be other than 'subtle,' skirting the reality of their circumstances. This is the tragedy of all oppressive states; states that often evolve in a historically short time but once formed, have to be endured by their population for ever, or until something happens to change their geopolitical world order, like a war or a massive geological eruption. This 'something' is usually accompanied by death, destruction and unimaginable suffering before we settle down for a while before similar 'somethings' occur again. History shows this cycle reoccurring in the past but without the possibility of blowing our planet of course with the complete destruction of humanity and 5.5 million years of unsteady progress. So be it.

We live and die in interesting times.

JOHN RAMWELL

Below is a shot of he prison I was escorted to and was able to visit in NW Russia.



Just Get on with it

New research (published 29 July 2022) shines a fascinating light on just how stressful a job being a prison governor is. **A research team from the University of Lincoln (led by Dr Lauren Smith) conducted a qualitative exploration of the health and wellbeing of prison operational managers and Governor grades on behalf of the Prison Governors Association (PGA).** The researchers interviewed 63 PGA members to explore how participants described their health and wellbeing at work, what mechanisms of support were available, and how they felt about their current role.

Findings

The researchers categorised their findings under five key headings explored further below.

The cycle of macho culture

The researchers use the term 'Macho culture' to refer to an environment where toughness and stamina are emphasised, and weakness should not be shown. Interviewees saw opening up as a sign of weakness or failure and feared the repercussions if they did share what they were feeling. There is a culture of presenteeism, with staff carrying unmanageable workloads.

Instead of talking about the challenges they face, participants referred to the need to adopt an 'impenetrable' persona and cope on their own, even when serious incidents occurred. Participants also felt the weight of expectations, from themselves (either explicitly or subconsciously), from the working environment and from other people, including prisoners, staff, peers, managers, headquarters, and ministers, as well as the public and the media.

The research team found that internal and external expectations fuelled the other, creating a vicious circle that feeds the perceived need for long working hours and the ability to be able to just get on with it no matter what happens.

Responsibility but lack of autonomy

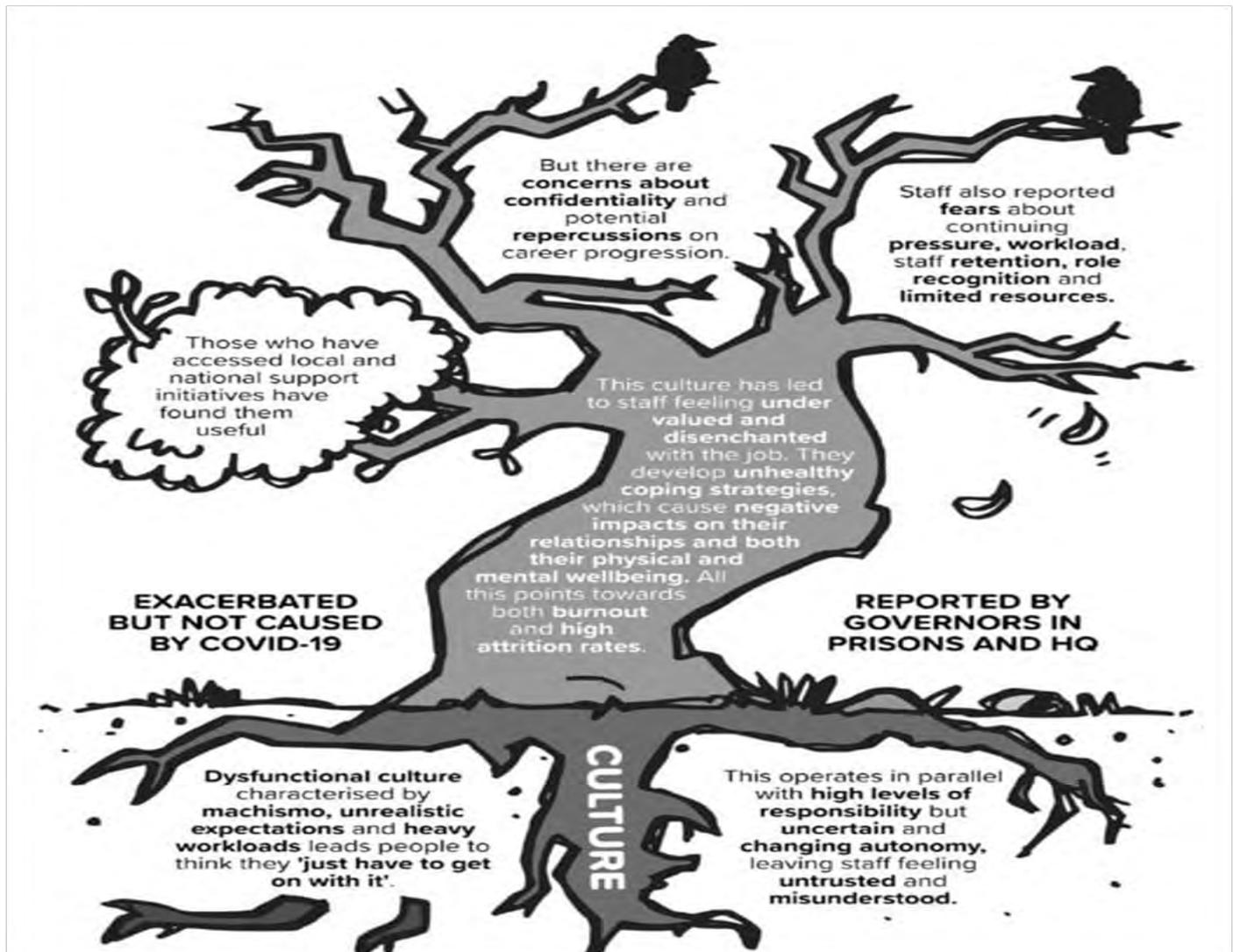
Researchers found a sense among governors that they were expected to take responsibility for the welfare of their staff and prisoners but that they were not given appropriate autonomy to do so. This was bound up with the perception that these staff were neither trusted nor supported to make the decisions needed to do their job. This had led both to a stifling of innovation and maverick decision making which, in turn, has increased stress and fear of negative repercussions.

Accessing support

A key feature of the research was to explore when and how governor grade staff accessed support. Where services like PAM Assist, the Employee Assistance Programme, and Trauma Risk Management had been accessed, interviewees were generally positive about their experiences. However, most felt that all these services were more geared towards their staff than themselves, and some reported significant concerns about confidentiality and the potential repercussions of using such a service, particularly in relation to career progression.

The path to disenchantment

Taken together, the three features summarised above – macho culture, lack of autonomy and lack of support – made interviewees feel disenchanting and disengaged. Staff talked about feeling exhausted, in some cases bullied, traumatised, and, in some cases, unable to go on.



Several spoke about using unhealthy coping strategies to deal with the relentless and intense pressure they face every day. Many also reported being unable to maintain a healthy work-life balance, damaged relationships, and physical and mental health exhaustion. People talked about being too tired to go on, feeling constantly worried, and at risk of burnout.

Looking forwards

Governors expressed two main concerns about the future. First, they felt fearful about how the service would look, whether anything would be learned from their experiences over the pandemic and whether there would be any end to the constant workload pressure. This links closely to the second concern, which was about staff retention and attrition across all grades. One interviewee described the current situation as the 'the perfect storm', with

'Inexperienced staff, poor leaders that are hiding away and a regime that's opening up'.

Many said they were considering leaving their job, either contemplating early retirement or finding employment outside of the service.

Overall, governors wanted a recognition of their stressful work environment and greater acknowledgement of their experiences, a review of roles and workload, increased appreciation of the different roles in prisons and headquarters and more appropriate and better resourced support services.

Thanks to [Workvisible](#) for kind permission to use the images in this post.



Treasurers Report to Retired Prison Governors Association AGM October 2022

I am pleased to report that 2021 was a stable year for the RPGA finances and although the country finally opened up following the Covid crisis, some of the practices that were forced upon us by lockdown, such as the use of ZOOM to hold meetings, have proved to be a much more economic method of holding committee meetings and one that we have continued to use as a way to meet as frequently as required, yet at little, or no cost. 2021 did see us hold an AGM for the first time since 2019 and once again

we continued the practice in which we join the PGA at their Annual Conference reducing our costs significantly, aided by the fact that members have the option to join the AGM via Zoom.

Headline Figures for the 2021 Financial Year.

Total Income for the year	£5745.00 (Increase of £313.00 from 2020)
Total Expenditure	£4754.76 (Increase of £283.45 from 2020)
Surplus of Income/expenditure	£990.24 (Increase of £29.55 from 2020)
Cash Balance at year end	£15,218.76

Breakdown of main costs.

The main cost of running the association, in fact almost the whole cost, is in the production and publication of The Newsletter. The cost breakdown for 2021 is as follows. As you will see the

Newsletter-Spring21	Printing	Stationery	Postage	Misc.	Total
	£860.00	£65.00	£555.05	£45.00	£1525.05
Newsletter Autumn 21	£1095.00	£75.00	£560.45	£45.00	£1775.45
Totals	£1955.00	£140.00	£1115.50	£90.00	£3300.50

Represents 69.5% of total expenditure of the RPGA for the year 2021.

Travel and Subsistence £145.41 The entire cost is for Committee members to attend 3 meetings/year, includes AGM. All travel costs, no subsistence costs paid. This is much reduced due to the fact that throughout the year the committee meetings have taken place on ZOOM.

Room Hire and Catering £0.00 This cost is zero due to the fact that there were no meetings in the year except for the AGM the cost of which is very generously borne by the PGA.

Donations £525 This figure is higher than normal due entirely to the competition that we ran in the Spring 2021 newsletter where all the prize money and donations were passed to the Motor Neurone Disease Association at the PGA Conference. We continue to send donations to charity when requested to do so by the family of members who pass during the year.

Although these accounts are now 10 months out of date because of the timing of our financial year, I am content that RPGA Finances remain healthy. My recommendation to the committee, and to the AGM is that there is no need to increase subscription rates at this time, but with the caveat that the overall cost of living increase, and inflation in general, which is pushing up costs for printing, stationery and postage and the coming year will undoubtedly see a significant increase in the cost of producing The Newsletter.

Below are the audited and certified accounts for the financial year 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020. The actual signed documents are available to inspect on request, and I am happy to take questions either directly at the AGM, or by post, Graham Mumby-Croft, 15 Thirsk Drive, Lincoln, LN6 8SZ or email graham.mumbycroft@gmail.com

**Retired Prison Governors Association
Treasurers Report Financial Year 1/1/21 to 31/12/21**

Current Accounts and Benevolent Fund Account

**Barclays Community Account
(Current)**

£-----p

Carried Forward on 1/1/21 **£14,228.52**

Income from 1/1/21 to 31/12/21

Subscriptions £5,475.00

Donations £260.00

Interest £0.00

Other £10.00

Other £0.00

Sub Total **£5,745.00**

Expenditure From 1/1/21 to 31/12/21

Newsletter £3,300.50

Admin Costs £297.44

Travel/Subs £145.41

Refunds £17.00

Diaries £469.41

Donations £525.00

Miscellaneous £0.00

Room Hire/Catering £0.00

Total Expenditure 2021 **£4,754.76**

Totals

Carried Forward on 1/1/21 £14,228.52

Income 1/1/21 to 31/12/21 £5,745.00

Sub Total £19,973.52

Expenditure 1/1/21 to 31/12/21 £4,754.76

Sub Total £15,218.76

Bank Statement Balance at 31/12/20 £15,218.76

Minus uncleared cheques £624.00

Surplus/Deficit for financial year 2021 **£990.24**

Outstanding cheques

Cheque No 100808 issued to PGA for diaries.

£624.00

Total

£0.00

Miscellaneous expenditure 2021

Insertion fee for Spring Newsletter.	£45.00	
Insertion fee for Autumn Newsletter	£45.00	
Total		£90.00

Total Income 1/1/21 to 31/12/21

Barclays Acc		£5,745.00
Total Income for year ended 31/12/21		£5,745.00

Cash Balance @ 31/12/21

Barclays Account		£15,218.76
Total Current Account Cash Balance		£15,218.76

Breakdown of Costs and Year on Year Comparison.

<u>Annual Income</u>		2021	2020	Variation
Barclays Acc	(Subs)	£5,475.00	£5,432.00	£43.00
Other		£10.00	£0.00	£10.00
Donations		£260.00		£260.00
Total Income for year ended 31/12/21		£5,745.00	£5,432.00	£313.00

Annual Expenditure

		2021	2020	Variation
Printing		£3,300.50	£2,530.00	£770.50
Stationary	Now included in admin		£185.09	
Post/Phone	costs.		£1,591.22	
Travel/Subs		£145.41	£0.00	£145.41
Refunds		£17.00	£0.00	£17.00
Diaries		£469.41	£0.00	£469.41
Admin Costs		£297.44	£0.00	£297.44
Donations		£525.00	£75.00	£450.00
Miscellaneous		£0.00	£90.00	-£90.00
Room Hire/Catering		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Total		£4,754.76	£4,471.31	£283.45
Balance Income/Expenditure		£990.24	£960.69	£29.55

I certify that these accounts are correct and include all transactions.

Signed

G.S. Mumby-Croft Treasurer, Retired
Prison Governors Association.

Date

9th March 2022

N



JOHN MELVYN (MEL) DICKINSON 1941 - 2022

Husband of Lynda Dickinson, Proud Father of Helen and Kathryn and Grandfather to Wilf, the apple of his eye and of course younger brother of David and the late Ivan Dickinson. Mel was my friend, my mentor and I also considered him my big brother and judging by the number of people who attended his funeral and the messages of condolences received from all over the world, he clearly was a friend to so many others. I could talk for hours about Mel and not scratch the surface so I hope my words do him justice.

Mel was born on Boxing Day 1941, not during an air raid to the sounds of bombs but during a celebration ceilidh at the nearby Nurses home with Scottish dance music drifting into the ward. He was a twin brother to Ivan, many of you knew him too, but he sadly passed away 18 years ago. It was strangely coincidental that I also read the eulogy at Ivan's funeral.

Mel and I met when he was appointed Deputy Governor at Thorp Arch Remand Centre and I was delighted to see him again as I thought I knew him from Manchester. It turned out of course that I had met the other Dickinson identical twin, Ivan, at Strangeways. Mel and I formed a lifelong friendship during which he continually ribbed me for being a “sweaty sock” but I had the last laugh as many years later when Mel did an ancestry test his DNA was found to be “maistly Scots” something we both had a good chuckle about as it turned out he was more Scottish than I was. Mel was born and raised in Consett in County Durham and remained close to his roots all his life. Mel told me that “Although I had the benefit of a grammar school education seemed it was inevitable that I would either work in the mines or the Ironworks. I chose to serve my time as a mechanical fitter in the steelworks which was infinitely better than scraping a living in the pit.”

Mel met Lynda on a works trip in early June 1962. She was 19 and he was 20. Mel proposed after only 6 weeks and they were engaged on 1st September of that year. They married on 13th February 1963, two days before Lynda turned 20, during what was the coldest winter in 200 years. There was so much snow, a channel had to be dug through the snow to get to the entrance of the church. Mel always said it was the best thing he had ever done. They married and unusually for a young couple had a very comfortable life. They owned a car and had bought their first house. They had just started a family as their eldest Helen was born in Consett. Times were changing and rumours of closure were rife. Lynda, who was working as a hairdresser, had heard from clients whose husbands were in the prison service, that it was a great career opportunity, so she encouraged him to apply. Mel applied and the rest is history. Lynda ended up following Mel as his career took him all round the country.

Mel joined at Durham as a officer posted to Strangeways before moving to the island to HMP Albany. After promotion to Senior Officer he transferred to Leicester where his youngest daughter Kathryn was born. He had many stories to tell about his time in uniform. He became an Assistant Governor and transferred to Wetherby in 1976 and then to HMP Leeds. He was Deputy Governor at Thorp Arch from 1984 until his promotion to Governor 4 and subsequent transfer to Long Lartin. He finished working for the Prison Service at HMP Wakefield when he accepted Verse, the initial early retirement scheme.

Mel had a very long and distinguished career in the Prison Service most of it in the High Security Estate which I will not expand on as it would take too much time, but like his brother Ivan he became a legend. His wit and repartee were renowned as he regaled us all with stories. He had something you can't quite explain to the uninitiated, jail craft, a skill honed to perfection. I know so many of his former colleagues will all have a story to share about him

Mel had retired early from the Prison service and started a new career with the Salvation Army. His business skills and acumen helped him turn a failing enterprise into a successful thriving business. Lynda, as always was beside his side, working as an unpaid volunteer. It is the sign of a strong relationship and a remarkable woman, that they spent so much time together and that he survived. One of their proudest moments was when they attended a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace nominated for their excellent service to Crown and community which thankfully did not go unnoticed by some of us. But Mel was primarily the family man who doted on his children Helen and Kathryn and was very happy when they both settled down in their respective careers and with their respective partners Christine and Paul. He was so proud of both of his daughters as they carved their own careers and became successful in their own right.



Mel and Lynda retired to Upper Tean and soon settled into a life of constant change to the house, the garden and the addition of chickens which seemed like a good idea at the time. Mel knew what he wanted done and he knew that Lynda would and could do it. He was a great Superintendent of Works. They spent many years globetrotting on regular holidays to places that many of us just dream of. I used to love sitting in their garden enjoying one of their legendary barbecues as Mel recounted their travel tales. He also ensured that the family had regular holidays together latterly in this country as his health deteriorated but family was the most

important thing to him and he wanted to spend as much time with them.

Visiting Mel and Lynda was always a pleasure. They hosted great evenings which Mel and I usually finished supping whisky and other fine liquors while sitting in the company of the other woman in his life “Alexa,” while he requested obscure songs and we both sang along to them. We discussed many things, even faith, he told me the story of the Consett man who visited the Evangelist Faith healer and asked if he could help him with his hearing, the Faith healer placed his hands on his ears and rocked him back and

forth and asked if that had helped his hearing. 'Why nah', he said, 'I'm not in court till next Tuesday.'

Mel of course was also famous for his singing and for his alter ego 'Melvis' Presley.

He was the man who could make Santa appear at the children's party while he disappeared temporarily, and his Panto Dame would have graced any West End Theatre Company.

Mel had already shown great kindness to my children when he became their adopted grandfather after my



wife and I both lost our fathers in quick succession. His hopes of ever becoming a Grandad had begun to fade and the happiness on both Lynda and Mel's faces when Wilf was born to Kathryn and Paul nine years ago was a joy to behold. Wilf was the apple of his Grandad's eye and gave Mel new life and vigour. He found no greater happiness than sitting chatting to his grandson and spending time in his company. Wilf should always be proud of his Grandad who was a remarkable man.

As I said before Mel fought hard to win Lynda's hand and they were both lucky enough to have shared 59 years of marriage and as his health declined Mel was cared for by Lynda, who worked tirelessly to care and support him aided by his girls. Sadly Mel's health, after being diagnosed with cancer, deteriorated, but he remained in good humour as long as he could. When they were leaving the hospital immediately after he received his diagnosis, knowing how upset Helen was, he told her he was fine. That he was content to have reached 80 and wasn't afraid of dying. He then added - 'I won't bother getting my shoes soled now.' After fighting to win Lynda's hand it was fitting that he slipped away while holding her hands. He will be missed by all of his family and his adopted family but more especially his Prison family. We were all the richer for having known him.

Sadly Melvis has left the building.

GERRY HENDRY



YOUR LETTERS

Sadly, and once again, there has been no correspondence to me other than the regular and interesting communication from my good friend Bob Duncan, whose steadfast contact with his own circle of friends and colleagues is vast, but as he comments in his jottings the list is diminishing by the years and his contribution is becoming more difficult. If this section of the newsletter is to survive I need to have some content to publish on your behalf so once again I appeal to you on behalf of the page put your pens to paper or fingers to keyboard and let our readers, your friends and colleagues, have the benefit of some glimpse into your life in retirement. R

Your Correspondence - Bob Duncan

Firstly, I would like to thank all the colleagues who sent good wishes for my Birthday, I was very touched. Once you reach into the eighties you begin to look over your shoulder to glimpse at what be creeping up, especially as so many dear colleagues have departed, several younger than me. Retirement should be a time of relaxation and enjoyment. It is, but we need to face up to the fact we can no longer do as much, or not as quickly as we used to. It is not an easy transition but one that eventually dawns. Hence written communication is now critical to the RPGA, as travel to a gathering is no longer feasible for so many. It is but a memory only when one could count on over a hundred at a reunion! Oh, happy days.

I was saddened by the news of the passing of **Mel Dickenson**; we were together for awhile at Wakefield Prison, though I always had difficulty when Mel and Ivan were together deciding which was which. Mel had a reasonable laid-back approach to work, he was highly respected by staff, and he radiated in personality; any contact with Mel always made you feel so much better, he was so positive about life and lived it to the full. I have in my head that he took to gardening in retirement and was also involved it a lot of charity work. Just sitting back and thinking about Mel creates so many happy memories. It was a privilege to have known them both.

Two members from my staff course in 1964 at Love Lane, **Christopher Jarman and Kate Warburton**, as she was then, both left the Service after a few years. Kate became a Probation Officer, but in retirement was on The Board of Visitors at Onley Prison. Kit undertook training for the Priesthood, was made a Deacon in June 71 and ordained as a Priest June 1972 at Gloucester Cathedral. He had served at St. James Church near Cheltenham. In October 1973 he joined the Royal Navy as a Chaplain. He retired from the Navy in late 1993 and took up residence in Scotland and became the Rector of Holy Trinity Scottish Episcopal Church in Sterling. He was very ill for awhile and had to actually learn to walk again and was assisted in this by many volunteers. He is fully recovered and now as busy as ever. He met up with Kate, whose husband Brian had died of cancer, and they decided to get married which took place in a lovely college chapel in Oxford where Kate had been a student and to which I was invited. He has just celebrated 50 years as a Priest at a special service at Gloucester Cathedral.

I was invited, but the operation I had been waiting for 9 months to take place suddenly happened, and I was still in post Op Recovery. They kindly sent me a copy of the Order of Service which contained a page on the 'Breeches Bible'. I include it below for those who like to collect historical information.

THE BREECHES BIBLE

You will see a copy of the Breeches Bible on the altar.

In a search worthy of the television series "The Heir Hunters" it came out of the blue to Kit's late and elder brother, Robert in 1992 or 1993 from a branch of the family, unknown to either Robert or Kit, which had died out. Robert then legally transferred its ownership to Kit.

It was authenticated by Philips on 4 February 1993 as being a first large folio edition printed in 1578.

The Breeches Bible is also known as the Geneva version, being a full translation of the Bible into English prepared by a group of scholars including Miles Coverdale who had taken refuge in Geneva during the Marian persecution. They drew heavily on the earlier work of William Tyndale. The edition's popular name derives from the wording in Genesis 3:7 "and they sowed figge-tree leaves together, and made themselves breeches". (The 1611 King James Version preferred "aprons" to breeches). Between 1650 and the mid 17th century over 100 editions of the Geneva Bible were published.

This copy has been cropped, i.e. the paper above and below the text has been removed, for paper then was scarce and very expensive.

The binding is not original, and the volume, on arrival was in an overall state of disrepair. It was fully and beautifully restored by the British Museum in 1995 : this included photocopying the missing and damaged pages which are now housed separately.

It is a rare book. There are only 30 known copies in public places in the United Kingdom. How many copies there are in private hands is not known.

The Bible was gifted to the Cathedral by Robert and Kit on 18 June 2013.

A lovely little story posted on the social media by **Christine Duffin**:

'I know I should't have done this, but I am 83 years old and I was in the McDonald's drive through this morning and the young lady behind me leaned on her horn and started mouthing something because I was taking too long too long to place my order. So when I got to the first window I paid for her order along with my own. The cashier must have told her what I'd done because as we moved up she leaned out of her window waved to me and mouthed 'Thank you' obviously embarrassed that I had repaid her rudness with kindness. When I got to the second window I showed them both receipts and took her food too. Now she has to go back to the end of the queue and start all over again.

Spoke to **Veronica Bird**, she has kept well during these troubled times and has actually been even busier giving her talks on the Prison Service. At one several local Mayors attended as well as the Chief Constable. She has also been an adviser to a film company which is making a documentary about a female Prison, which will probably be shown on TV in August. Veronica wrote 'I hope it is not a lot of rubbish. The Producer says I was fine and it could not have been done without me.' We shall have to wait and see. All fees she receives from the talks are donated to the Ukraine at the moment instead of the Butler Trust and local Hospice. She has also met several refugees from the Ukraine and they are so grateful to be in England and are such pleasant people all of them want to find work to pay their way. She has also been in touch with Margaret Middlemas who is also well.

Editor's Note: The programme went out in August on Channel 5. Those who saw it will judge for themselves.

Post operation my Doctor has monitored the recovery by regular blood tests, I then receive a phone call or a text message to let me know the results which have been satisfactory, so I have not seen my Doctor for probably 2 years. On a recent blood test she was in the corridor, so I stopped to say 'hallo'. She did not appear in a hurry, and for some reason she enquired as to what I did before retirement. I told her and she replied 'How interesting, one of my nephews was the Governor of Canterbury Prison.' I looked it up, and it was **Major Stratford Tuke**, who was Governor there from 1983 until he retired in 1987. I knew of him but did not really know him but, some of our colleagues might.

In the last edition of the Newsletter I included a poem from material sent to me by **Shelia Blakey**. The renowned but rather overlooked poet, **Jim Blakey** decided he could do better and composed his own version about himself, and is happy to share it. **SEE FACING PAGE**

Dominic Raab, the justice secretary claimed that he was confident that the construction and establishment of the first 'secure school' within a prison, is the correct solution for the 'failing' youth custody system. It will give them a formal education and training so they can secure a job on release. I do not decry the aim, but do object to the pompous advocacy that this is a great and new innovation. From 1902 and rejuvenated in 1922 by Alexander Paterson, there was a well established national Borstal System totally dedicated to these very aims, with all staff in civilian clothes, well established Education Facilities, offering basic education as well as range of subjects at 'O' level. Also trade training workshops with skilled instructors in such trades as; painting and decorating, plastering, industrial cleaning, brickwork, motor mechanics, animal welfare, cooking and catering and jam making. Sporting activities played a major role and I can recall both playing in the Borstal Rugby team and training with the lads' cross country team from my unit. Many had sports days once a year when the whole establishment went to the sportsfield and parents were invited to come and spectate and in my time never created any problems or incidents. The central focus of Borstals was on 'the lads' and their needs. Staff were committed and cared.

I'M AWFULLY GOOD FOR THE STATE I'M IN

HAIR'S ALMOST GONE
IT WAS ALWAYS THIN
STILL GROWS IN MY EARS BOTH OUT AND IN
AND REALLY STRONG ON MY DOUBLE CHIN
BUT I STILL FEEL GOOD
FOR THE STATE I'M IN

MY NECK IS CREAKING
MAKING SUCH A DIN
SHOULDER JOINTS GOOD
NOW THEY'RE MADE OF TIN
PROBLEM IS RUST IS SETTING IN
BUT I'M AWFULLY GOOD
FOR THE STATE I'M IN

GALL BLADDER LIES
IN SOME HOSPITAL BIN
KIDNEY STONES
ARE BACK AG'IN
SPINE'S STILL STRONG
NO NEED FOR A PIN
HEARING'S GOOD
(LYING'S SUCH A SIN)
YET I'M AWFULLY GOOD
FOR THE STATE I'M IN

BACK STOPS ACHING
AFTER A GLASS OR TWO OF GIN
KNEES QUITE DODGY
CARTLEDGE POPPING OUT AND IN
FEET ARE GOOD
USING DAILY LANOLIN
BUT I'M VERY WELL
FOR THE STATE I'M IN

WE START EACH DAY
INTENT TO WIN
AND END EACH DAY
WITH A SMILE
AND A GRIN
AND WE ALWAYS TELL
OUR KITH AND KIN
WE ARE AWFULLY WELL
FOR THE STATE WE'RE IN

The trainees had to earn their date of release, so there was an incentive for them to tackle their individual training plans.

I was summoned 1981 to come to Headquarters on Christmas eve to see **Colin Honey** the Head of Personnel at the Prison Department. He was a person I held in high respect. He said 'I know you really want a posting in the Oxford area due to your children being at schools there. However, I have a specific request from the Board of Visitors at Wellingborough Borstal, and hence backed by the Regional Director, for a younger Governor. The last three governors were at the end of their careers and all retired from there, and the Board's view is they let the establishment get 'run down'. So, you are the perfect choice, and it not a bad road from there to Oxford.' That was a slight exaggeration on a normal day, and just chaos if Silverstone was operating, I recorded soon after taking up post. I had to admit that Wellingborough offered a fresh challenge, but where I felt refreshed, enlivened and optimistic. Here was an establishment where lives could be changed; if opportunities were taken up by the residents, they could give themselves a fresh start in life. One small example, I have kept in touch with the Chaplain there for 20 years into retirement. He advised me with great joy how one of his 'orderlies' who had been confirmed at the Borstal, had many years later trained to be a minister in the Church of England.

Then the bolt out of the blue was the idiotic decision by Senior Officials and Politicians to cease the concept of Borstal Training and turn them all into mini prisons called Youth Custody Centres, with the Courts passing fixed sentences. At the same time, it also removed the civilian dress of all Borstal Officers and placed them in uniform; not something 90% of the staff there happy about.

I wrote in my 1983 Annual Report to the Director:

'1983 saw the demise of Borstal and the advent of Youth Custody. This meant significant change, the more so for Wellingborough as it took pride in its traditional approach to Borstal Training. Perhaps the system required a 'shot in the arm', a degree of revitalization. When the Borstal sentence was 6 months compulsory and up to 2 years, inmates had to earn an early release by working with staff on all the areas deemed necessary, before the Discharge Board would recommend their release and this also had to be agreed by the Board of Visitors (as they were then) prior to release. That has now to be achieved within the confines of a more structured and regulated framework. Most of the work required by this framework, e.g. Earliest Date of release calculations, new pay system, the core day concept, and even parole documentation preparation was non productive in itself in terms of training and preparation for release: but was time consuming of staff resources.

Staff have all displayed great tolerance, ingenuity, resilience, and application to the demands of the formal changes required and to the change in the inmate culture since the advent of Youth Custody. Meaningful change cannot be imposed and be met with general acceptance. The ethos and culture of a living community is not imposed, it emerges out of the daily interchange of ideas and views of staff, inmates, and outsiders who come into the establishment. At Wellingborough there is a solid store of commitment, tradition and common sense on which to draw. This must not be lost by expecting too much too soon.

The young men are much the same, their sentences, nor is their image of themselves. Many have adopted the only other self perception they know, the stereotype of a young prisoner. They feel the need to be more macho, demonstrate violence more readily, are more demanding about material conditions and possessions, and now talk of rights and entitlements. The situation now has deteriorated even more with most young offenders serving their sentences in large overcrowded local adult prisons with little or no specific training related to their needs.'

Had a long chat with **Dave Simons** on the phone, he is keeping well but does not venture far these days, he says his car has only travelled 7000 miles in 6 years. He states his daughter is keeping 'an eye on him'; she works in Birmingham, and she managed to get 2 tickets for the swimming events. He was surprised at the number of seats at the pool that were empty, especially as it is so difficult to get tickets. He said the whole atmosphere at the games was electric and a credit to Birmingham. He confessed that he and Ann had different views as to what they liked watching on TV, so they had 2 sets in different rooms;

Ann's was in the room backing on to the garden. So, if he has been out there pottering and thinks of something he wants to tell her as he comes in now, he just talks away, then suddenly realises the chair is empty. I was touched for him and his deep love of Ann.

We naturally talked about Service days and people we remembered; he reminded me that his last post was at Highpoint. In those days we all had to retire at 60. Dave kept contacting Headquarters to ask when his replacement was going to be appointed, and the only answer was soon, you had better stay in post for another 3 months. He actually had to wait 6 months! It did though all add to his pension.

Now a piece of useless information, Sir Martin Narey, who was the Director General of the Service for a period and then chief executive of Barnardo's (2005-2011) was 67 on August 5, 2022.

Saddened to hear of the death of **Colin Honey** but at almost 93 years of age, he had a good innings! I had quite a lot of contact with Colin over the years especially over my 2 postings to the Staff College which I did not want. He was able, efficient, but always gracious. You always felt that he understood one's position and had given it careful thought and explained fully why he thought you were the best person for that particular post. You left his presence feeling better all round for having spent time with him. I had more contact when he was a Governor 1 at Southeast Regional Office, and I was at the Scrubs. Later he became the Director there as he and John Sandy swapped postings. I kept in touch for awhile after he retired, but then John Sandy kept me informed as he and Colin were close friends.

I remember **Graham Clarke** well, though we never served together. He had been to Aberdeen, and I was returning from Leicester, and we happened to be on the same train, I spotted him, and we had a long chat about mutual interests, he was a true gentleman. When he was posted to Wandsworth he often phoned for a chat and to share his frustration at trying to move Wandsworth forward. That was the Service as we knew it, we were always all ready to help a colleague.

It is good to have happy memories of colleagues, but the numbers are dwindling at a greater pace, soon there will be so few I know. As a result, jottings will get thinner, so do make contact with **Roger** or myself however brief, so that we can share with everyone as we always told the 'the jottings is the section most of you turn to first.'

Let us hope those of us who live in the far South get a decent fall of rain soon!

Bob

As ever please take time to write something that will be of interest to all your retired friends and colleagues and send them to me. Nice short chatty letters will be published in this section of the newsletter longer with more specific content will be considered for a separate entry in the Newsletter.

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The Great Reform

Looking back at key moments in the Prison Service over the last 60 years or so, it's evident that there have been some critical instances that have provoked major reforms to the Service. The following decisive moments all led to profound change but there will always remain a debate as to which might have had most impact. By no means an exhaustive list, we can start with the end of the Prison Commission. The 1877 Prison Act created five permanent members, known as Commissioners, to oversee the administration of all prisons in England and Wales. Until 1963, the Prison Commission got a grip on the chaotic, compartmentalised, disparate confusion from which prisons had suffered for decades. The Home Office took over from the Commissioners following the 1961 Criminal Justice Act. There may be the odd RPGA member around who says, "Ah, I remember the Commission," but it is history to most of us. Before moving on, there is the lovely apocryphal story from Stafford prison during the 2nd WW, when the jail was shut but looked after by a couple of watchmen. These men had taken to allowing local people to look around the buildings for a fee, which was a nice little earner for them. One day, a member of the Prison Commission turned up at Stafford gate some time in 1944 and asked to be let in. The men said he would have to pay the usual fee and were unmoved by his emphasis that he was paying nothing because he was one of the Prison Commissioners. They had no idea what a Commissioner was. When the Commissioner returned the next morning with a police escort, the men were shocked to find themselves sacked on the spot.

A significant milestone and perhaps remembered by many RPGA members, was the April 1990 Strangeways Riot. The chaos at this one prison was repeated to a lesser extent in many other jails around the country leading to fundamental questions about how prisons were run. A lot has been written about the event but a useful television documentary was made by Sally Brindle on Channel 5 last March. It is fair to say that over 25 days, this horrendous rampage of destruction was a seismic jolt to the system leading to Lord Justice Woolf's Report with consequential fundamental change to the Service as a whole. Just at Strangeways alone, the shocking traumatic incident, the bravery of Prison Service staff and the dignity of Governor Brendan O'Friel, are firmly imprinted in many people's minds. Significant reforms followed which arguably led to a more composed Service.

A further substantial development that had great impact on the Service was the move towards privatisation. The 1991 Criminal Justice Act facilitated the first prison in Europe to go private in 1992. This side of the Atlantic, there had been nothing like it before. Stephen Twinn took over as Director at the privatised Yorkshire prison The Wolds, which paved the way for a range of other prisons either

going private or being specially built as private establishments. At the last count, six private companies operate fifteen prisons and it may be helpful to list them. Altcourse, Birmingham, Glen Parva, Wellingborough, Ashfield, Lowdham, Forest Bank, Rye Hill, Dovegate, Bronzefield, Peterborough, Doncaster, Oakwood, Thameside and the last to move into private hands Northumberland. The last one happened to be my final posting as Governor when the prison was then called HMP Acklington. Three further prisons got taken back into public ownership, Buckley Hall, Blakenhurst and The Wolds. The private sector currently looks after just short of 20% of the overall prison population of around 88,000. Two interesting events relatively close to each other in the mid 1990's had a profound effect on the Service, culminating in Parliamentary debate and a real shock to the system. In September 1994, five IRA prisoners along with an armed robber escaped from the Special Security Unit within Whitemoor prison. The highly respected Brodie Clark was the Governor and came out blameless from the Inquiry, particularly as he had not been there very long. In the escapees' possession were two workable pistols, a rope ladder, wire cutters, tying string and poles. The Special Unit only held ten prisoners at the time and over half of them made it over the wall. One escapee astride 'the beak,' used a gun against a pursuing officer. Within a brief period and following much bravery from staff, all prisoners were caught. Michael Howard was the Home Secretary. Following on behind this dramatic incident, was the more incendiary escape in February 1995 of three prisoners from Parkhurst. The three inmates, Messrs Rogers, Rose and Williams had fashioned a ladder and a gun and had acquired money before cutting their way through some wire and scaling the wall. The prisoners were caught days later at a local airfield trying to hijack a small plane. There was a clumsy attempt at trying to scapegoat Governor John Marriot, but the eventual 'fall-guy' was the Director General of the Prison Service, Derek Lewis, who lost his job. Michael Howard was still the Home Secretary and took part in the now famous Jeremy Paxman BBC Newsnight interview where he was asked twelve times, "Did you threaten to over-rule him," him being Derek Lewis. The Paxman interview is still available on YouTube. For those who are not familiar with the details of these two escapes I would recommend you look up the former Chief Inspector of Constabulary Sir John Woodcock's report into Whitemoor, as well as the former Army General Sir John Learmont's report into Parkhurst. They both make fascinating reading.



There are obviously other issues that seriously affected the Service like overcrowding, the installation of integral sanitation and Covid, but I have left out one more major development and it is this one that I would argue had the most profound, positive impact on the Service. To what will inevitably be some groans of anguish and horror, I can put off no longer mentioning Fresh Start. Let me unpack my thesis before I get booted off court. In May 1986, the then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, announced the

publication of a report by the Prison Department and PA Consultants that examined the glaring unproductive nature of the then uniformed staff shift systems. Out of this, Fresh Start was born, that in so doing scooped up such issues as prisoners having to earn their privileges and staff adopting an effective control and restraint system. A point had been reached where industrial relations had been a running sore for years. Levels of overtime were at an all-time high, many governors could not understand their own V Scheme and FGS shift patterns and prison staffing levels were out of kilter with what was necessary to maintain effective control. Could Fresh Start tackle these issues?

Without getting bogged down in too much detail, Fresh Start was defined in a 28-page document called Bulletin 8, including five appendices and three annexes. It dealt with a whole range of thorny issues. Agreed between senior Prison Officer Association officials and senior Prison Service managers, it amalgamated all the operational ranks into an 8-grade tier from basic Officer to Governor 1. It amalgamated Chief Officers 1 and 2 with governor grades AG1 and AG2. It defined and standardised five functional heads of Custody, Medical Services, Inmate Activities, Management Services and Works. It laid out clear procedures in the event of disputes. It established an Annual Staff Appraisal system across all ranks. It devised a comprehensive but simple method for Governors to design a bespoke staff shift system for their prison, underpinned by an agreement on Minimum Staffing Levels and by so doing it abolished paid overtime. Finally, a significant pay rise was awarded to all grades with defined pay bands, delivered by monthly payments. The intention of all this was to enrich prison regimes, improve management control, develop work force relationships and streamline working practices.

Sixteen establishments trialled Fresh Start to begin with, starting in July 1987. It was rolled-out across the rest of the estate, ending with Chelmsford in August 1988. The agony mentioned earlier came in two forms. Along with two others, I was a trainer for the new assistant governors at the Prison Service College in Wakefield during that period, delivering their two-year programme. Apart from our group of trainers, all the other tutors on the entire range of courses at Wakefield were told to abandon their courses and deliver a continuous run of Fresh Start training from a huge, prescriptive manual. Every management grade across the Service were obliged to attend the four-day training. The College Tutors were less than pleased to be assigned this repetitive training, and many of those who had to attend as trainees were likewise less than enthusiastic. The second source of anguish came for the Chief Officers who had to abandon their uniforms and don a suit and tie. It was often said that many Chiefs would have preferred to report for work naked, rather than appear in front of their staff in a suit like their governor colleagues. The transformation across the Service was substantial, and when coupled with the development of Control and Restraint techniques and the later introduction of the Incentive and Earned Privileges system for inmates, it would be my contention that the Service successfully completed a massive transformation.

My experiences may be similar to many others, but I will relate three simple illustrative stories, that in a modest way, demonstrate some of the benefits of Fresh Start. Being given a reduced annual budget whilst Governor at Deerbolt, I agreed with the local POA that we would re-arrange our work profile to match staff resources against the desired regime delivery. Using the Fresh Start staff profile model that was easy to understand, we ended up with a new working arrangement that put the right number of staff in the right places to deliver the right regime for inmates, whilst meeting our reduced staff budget. The second story occurred at Lindholme when I was Deputy Governor to Dai Thompson. Some may remember that Lindholme functioned as the main northern C&R training hub in one of the old RAF hangers just outside the Gate and hence the staff were well up to speed with the techniques. C&R was new at that point as a safe and effective restraining method for any inmate who required to be physically controlled. One such Lindholme inmate became extremely agitated outside one of the wing offices just as I came onto the Unit one lunch time. Other prisoners were beginning to show an interest in the commotion, just as a C&R trained three-man team arrived to deal with the disturbance. Without me needing to do anything, the wrist locks were applied to the stressed prisoner who was then gracefully led from the area watched by about a dozen inmates and me. I am not exaggerating when I say that the prisoners witnessing this event, appeared to be reasonably impressed, in that a noisy member of their fraternity was marched away without brutality and only a minimal loss of dignity. Having looked on with interest, the watching inmates then quietly shuffled off. My experience until then would have prompted me to believe that such a public outburst by an inmate could well have been a dangerous point when inmates might have joined in with harm and danger to all. Not anymore.

The third experience involved a difficult officer at Deerbolt who seemed compelled to challenge authority and offer disrespectful remarks about the Service in general. After a particular episode where he voiced some scorn about the Prison Service in front of me, I took him on one side and reminded him that through the Fresh Start Agreement, he had implicitly signed up to the vision, goals and values of the Service, of which he was a member. Any more deprecating expressions about the Service would result in adverse Annual Reports which could eventually lead to dismissal. Prior to Fresh Start, such recrimination would have carried no weight. The officer subsequently controlled his hostile sentiments or at least kept them to himself and I heard nothing further from him. These examples are indeed anecdotal but I guess other governors had similar post Fresh Start experiences.

The Service of course continued to experience difficult problems after the introduction of Fresh Start, but the task of running a prison post 1988, was a lot easier than it had ever been in the early 1980's when there existed the dark arts of the staff shift systems, the manipulated levels of overtime and the regular industrial relations battles. I can remember serving at Stafford as a junior governor grade in the early 1980's and witnessing what some might describe as regular staff rebellions when poor old

Governor Ernie Stratford was in the chair. I recall thinking that if that was what it was like being an in-charge Governor, then I had no ambitions to work my way up the ladder of command.

I have often wondered whether Fresh Start was either so cleverly designed in brilliantly achieving all its aims, or whether it just happened to work so well by good fortune. Perhaps it was a combination of both. To try and get their reflections all these years later, I recently wrote to the three key participants in Fresh Start, David Evans (former General Secretary of the POA), Professor Eric Caines and Sir Philip Mawer. Unfortunately, David said he was not available and I wasn't successful in getting a response from the other two. That just leaves us to ponder alone on whether Fresh Start stirred one of the Services most inspired cultural changes, or whether there was something else that befell the Service, which others may think trumps it.

Peter Atkinson

Former Governor.

July 2022

John Prince MBE 1940 – 2022 **Obituary**

It is with great sadness we announce the death of John Prince on Monday 26th July 2022. John served in the Prison Service from 1967 until 1997, his sudden and unexpected death has been deeply felt amongst his family, friends, and ex-colleagues.

John joined British Rail in 1956 as a Steam Locomotive cleaner, progressing to fireman.

In 1967 he joined the Prison Service, his first establishment being HMP Hindley, then a Borstal, before transferring to HMRC Risley in 1971. In 1975 on promotion to Senior Officer John transferred to HMP Lincoln. In 1980 on promotion to Principal Officer he transferred to HMP Ranby, returning to Lincoln in 1983. In 1991 he transferred to HMP North Sea Camp on promotion to Governor Grade 5, becoming Deputy Governor three years later. John retired in 1997 and was awarded the M.B.E. *for Service to HMPS* shortly afterward.

For the next 10 years he was a sales negotiator for a local housing developer, working part-time, finally retiring after 51 years of working life. A keen motorcyclist from the age of 15 to age 79, sharing his hobby with a small number of friends and his son. His other interests included Heritage Railways, gardening, and supporting the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

John was born in Yorkshire and although leaving the county in 1968 he never lost the characteristics of a true Yorkshireman, he was a man of principle and good to his word. Integrity, honesty, fairness and justice were important values to him, and those that he lived his life by. Whilst he was a very resilient character there was also a softer, kind and caring side to him. He was charismatic and a real gentleman, devoted to his family. His humour, loyalty, and friendship will be sorely missed by his family, friends and all fortunate enough to have known him. John is survived by his wife Sheila and their son and daughter.

IAN PRINCE

RPGA Newsletter fun quiz Autumn 2022

1. What is the term for a group of ducks?
2. What is the term for a positive electrode?
3. What is the theme song for “Absolutely Fabulous”?
4. What is the third book of the Old Testament?
5. What is the third letter of the Greek alphabet?
6. What is the top rank in the Royal Navy?
7. What is the traditional name for the 3 wood in golf?
8. What is the unit of currency in Iran?
9. What is the upper age limit for an MP in the UK?
10. What is the US military academy called?
11. What is the viral disease of rabbits?
12. What is the vitamin Riboflavin?
13. What is the Welsh name for Wales?
14. What is the wife of an Earl called?
15. What is the word for a condiment container?
16. What is the word for a group of porpoises?
17. What is the word that links “Madam I’m Adam” and “Ma, I am”?
18. What is the world’s fastest moving insect?
19. What is the USA largest oil concern?
20. What is the surname of the underwater film makers Hans and Lotte?

Answers on the back page

When I met Jimmy Savile

A recent programme on TV about Broadmoor Special Hospital recalled a curious incident in my working life over 30 years ago.

I had been Governor of Grendon Prison for about 5 years. Previously a Medical Superintendent had been in charge and this experimental psychiatric prison had utilised the "Therapeutic Community" as the treatment method, designed by Dr Maxwell Jones. The sudden death of the Doctor in charge of Grendon, followed by a gap of a year, resulted in my appointment as Grendon's first non-medically qualified governor. The mixture of medical and non-medical staff, all concerned with therapy, required a redesign of the management structure. This was successful; the therapeutic regime had settled and was prospering. This is always a dangerous time for me as, temperamentally, I prefer a crisis to monotony. Temptation came my way whilst I was attending a conference at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park.

One of the fellow delegates took me for a walk in the Park. He was a Deputy Secretary at the Department of Health responsible for, amongst other matters, Broadmoor Special Hospital. He sought my advice about its management structure.

I gathered he thought it chaotic and he had recently sacked the Medical Director.

A decision had been made that, in future, a General Manager (i.e. not a medical person) would be in charge and he asked me how this should be organised. He considered that my experience of being the first non-medically qualified person in charge of Grendon was relevant and could be useful. We had skipped an entire session of the conference during the course of this conversation and long walk and it became clear that his intention was to invite me to put forward my name.

There followed some weeks of consideration. Clearly a visit would help, so I invited myself and spent the day with a Doctor who was a thoroughly caring person and it was significant that several patients came up to consult her. It occurred to me that the normal opportunities appeared to be limited. The design of the Hospital was enlightened Victorian, solid, unimaginative but surprisingly unpenal. It was built on an escarpment so that the land falls sharply away. Thus the surrounding wall is not oppressive and the view stretches across a delightful countryside near Crowthorne in Berkshire.

It was visiting day and the visits were taking place in a large room with open, unbarred windows in the pleasant summer sunshine. There was a patio and I asked the Doctor why the visits did not take place outside in the summer sunshine. "An interesting question, I'll ask". So she asked a 'nurse,' a big man with a thrusting chin, his reply was: "Nobody has asked..., Doctor", and nor would they dare, I thought. It epitomised one of the main problem: what were the staff? Nurses, guards? Participants in therapy? Hum...hardly and that their union was the Prison Officers Association and not a medical one, gave pause. A remark by a recent group of visiting Danish Psychiatrists came to my mind; the leader had said "We visited Broadmoor yesterday and Grendon today and as far as we are concerned Broadmoor is the Prison and Grendon the Hospital."

One other significant remark, I asked the Doctor what was Broadmoor's TASK?

"What do you mean?" she asked. My reply was, "...for example, that on every member of the Grendon staff's Job description was the statement, "Your task is to enable therapy to take place." "What a good

idea!" was her enthusiastic response. I thought, how long has this place been going and what would my first task be if I took the job?

So I applied, it would enable me to work past the age of 60 and I didn't feel like retiring then. Was this despite, or was it because of, the chaos? An unspoken problem concerned me, the elusive yet pervasive presence of Jimmy Savile, but I could not get a direct answer. I was aware of his voluntary work and influence in Stoke Mandeville Hospital and the importance of his fund raising, but what was he doing at Broadmoor? By repute his unofficial League of Friends was the sticking plaster that kept this place together..... just. Furthermore the acting manager, L, was a person he had brought down from Leeds as his selection.

A professional H.R. firm was in charge of the selection process. A medical examination was required in London and all I can recall was a hearing test conducted by a Japanese lady with an incomprehensible accent who discovered wax in my ears, thus the day was not entirely wasted. The selection process took 3 days. Assembly the first day, then tours and tests and the interview on the 3rd.

6 candidates, all men, met and we enjoyed each other's company, I was the only one from outside the Department of Health. L., for whom we felt some pity, as he clearly was a stop-gap of limited ability, had been included in the candidature.

Earlier in the afternoon, during the tour it was clear that whilst a great deal of money had been spent on office and staff facilities, little had been spent on patient accommodation. The dormitories were crushingly crowded.

Security. I pointed out that the curved topping on the perimeter wall would hold and retain a bucket handle attached to a rope. I was aware that the Home Office had known of this defect 20 years ago and had provided an alternative design for prisons. Why had this not percolated here?

There was little consultation about patient progress with those who had daily contact, like the instructors in the various workshops. I asked them. However it was the visit to the women's living quarters that raised my ire. There was the sitting room and to accommodate us the women were expelled, just like that. We were crowding into their space. I asked the manager about the patients' choice for their environment and was reassured that this was catered for. "And the decorations?" I asked "Oh yes," was the reply. "So" I said "take this room which is theirs, the wall paper is in the Regency style designed in the 1950's and those two prints are Doris Zickerstein done in 1945, are you saying they chose *that*?" There was an angry growl on my left from the representative of the organisation running the selection process "You're not in charge yet".

However I did meet a former Grendon inmate now a patient and he appeared happy to see me but was guarded about the regime.

The formal dinner on the second evening was attended by Jimmy Savile, the guest of honour, in his estimation. He dominated proceedings with endless personal anecdotes where he came off best in every encounter. I was placed beside him at table. Was this significant? Jangling with gold he spoke only of himself and did not drink alcohol. His role was still undefined.

On the morning of the third day it came to the interview. I cannot recall the identities of those who formed the panel, except that it was all men, curious, considering the women both patients and staff, chaired by a senior civil servant from the Department of Health and on his right... Jimmy Savile! Nobody had warned us. What was he doing there? What right had he to be part of this selection process? So the opportunity for me was to walk out. To my subsequent regret I remained seated. I wanted to establish that I would not take a drop of £10,000 pa in pay if selected. Why was the post so underpaid? The chairman winced "I hear what you say". The questions of the Board were superficial and Saville's one question jejune.

So I drove home. Later that evening I received the phone call informing me that I had *not* been selected. I asked who had been. The reply was L. I snorted that he was unfit for the task; there was a pause, then the phone went dead. Now it was clear *why* Jimmy Savile had wormed his way onto the selection board but it was to be many years before I was to learn *how* he had done it.

It was an article in the Sunday Telegraph, never denied nor contradicted, which stated that at a dinner in the Athenaeum, hosted by Jimmy Savile and attended by various interested persons, the selection was settled. This was 3 months earlier and consequentially the whole process that we candidates had undergone had been an expensive and illegal charade but it enabled L. to claim that he had been selected for the task through open competition, but not that he was subsequently sacked.

What none of us knew at the time was that Jimmy Savile had been issued with a key enabling him to wander at will and lust throughout the Hospital. Permission granted by the Minister of State. No wonder there was a sense of discomfort.

The conclusion is that, throughout, the needs of the patients had been ignored.

Post Script:

As Dr Jack Wright, Grendon's Senior Medical Officer, said "You're well out of it. Anybody who's bright enough for that job is smart enough not to take it."

Furthermore, not long afterwards, the exacting needs of Grendon requiring a full evacuation, four days before Christmas, demanded full time effort.

Michael Selby

RPGA Committee Elections: Update

Roger Outram was the only committee member due for re-election, and he was duly re-elected for a further four year term.

Kevin Billson has been newly elected to the Committee following his retirement from the service. We welcome him to the team. The PGA's loss is our gain.

Our Secretary, Ray London, has had health issues recently. We wish him well for his recovery.



The Strangeways Riot and My Small Part In It

One of the interesting things that I found during my short stint as Editor of The Newsletter last year was reading the stories that people submitted of their time in the service, and some of the memorable moments that have stayed with them, even after years of retirement. I have also noticed that there have been a recent spate of documentaries on the television of late, looking either at particular events, e.g. The Strangeways Riot, or at a particular prison, e.g. the recent documentary on HMP Wakefield.

Watching these programmes was interesting from a number of perspectives; firstly because in both programmes there were several people in the role of “talking heads” that I knew from my time in the service, and indeed some of whom I am still in contact with today. Secondly, and specific to the Strangeways Riot programme, is a much more personal interest, as I am in the position of being able to say, “I was there”. Seeing the Strangeways programme again brought back many memories, both of the event itself, and of how years later I would watch the documentary and think to myself that in respect of some of the things that were shown and commented on, that that was not how I remembered it at the time. The other thing that struck me was that being so closely involved in what was happening at the coal face, I was unaware of the bigger picture, especially of how the riot fell in with what was happening in the rest of the country at the time. In fact during the whole incident I never saw any of the news coverage either on TV or in the papers.

Over the years much has been discussed, and indeed debated, about the events of April 1990, most of it concentrating on the bigger picture of what was the cause, could the outcome have been different if another course of action had been taken, and of course the repercussions that came in the aftermath, not least the tremendous cost of having allowed a whole prison the size of Strangeways to be so badly damaged as to require closure and multi-million pound repairs and refurbishment. It was with this in mind that I decided, after all these years, to write down my memories of the things I either did myself, or was actively involved in, during those 26 days at Strangeways. My memories are of the day to day work that went on, from the initial reaction to a rapidly developing situation on that first Sunday, to the gradual development of methods and techniques, and indeed policies, many of which I understand are still in use today. I was very lucky that being a Works PO, and also fully C&R trained, put me into a unique position, so much so that throughout the whole duration of the incident I was never restricted to just one location, or one particular task, and working with a team of Works staff, and under the direction of my line manager, Mick Bell, we developed the ability to come up with a workable solution to any problem that senior management, the C&R teams, or we ourselves, came up against.

One of the main memories that remain with me was how, after the situation was ended, and everyone started to deal with the aftermath, I was involved in two major events. The first was the long and detailed police enquiry into the riot itself, that involved several long interview sessions with the investigators, and would eventually lead to me appearing as a prosecution witness at the trial of the main perpetrators of the riot. The second was my involvement in the internal prison service debriefing that was provided to all the Strangeways staff who had been directly involved in the events. I can remember being instructed that I was required to present myself at the Training Unit for a debriefing session on such and such a day, and at such and such a time, and duly turning up to find myself in a mixed group of staff of all grades, and disciplines, to be taken through a debrief session led by a senior psychologist. The thing that struck me most was that as the session progressed, and people started to open up about what they had seen and done over the last few weeks, was that many of the staff, whose background was in working the

wings and landings, expressed strong feelings of guilt that they had not spotted any advanced warning signs of the impending events, or worse still, with hindsight they now realised that the signs were there, and they missed them.

At one point in the proceedings the psychologist turned to me and asked, how come I was so quiet, as during this time I had said very little. I was encouraged not to bottle up my thoughts, but to speak out and share with the rest of the group exactly what I was feeling. My response was that I too was feeling guilty, but for an entirely different reason. I had just had the most intense, exciting and enjoyable period of my whole service career, and the reason I felt guilty now was because I realised that I was with people who had worked at Strangeways for all of their service, and who in some way blamed themselves for not spotting the signs of the chaos that was to come. Whilst here I was, I still on a high from all the things that I had been personally involved with, things about which I had no guilt or regrets, but which I knew it was highly unlikely that I would ever get the opportunity to do again.

So let's turn the clock back just over a year before the events or the riot and to how I came to be at Strangeways at one of the most critical times in Prison service history.

I was posted to Strangeways on promotion to P.O. (Works) from HMP Lincoln, and took up my post on Tuesday 28th of March 1989, the Monday was the Easter Bank Holiday. The Works Department at Strangeways was a large one, indeed one of the largest of any prison establishment, and I was proud, to find myself as the PO in charge of the Mechanical and Electrical department. Of course, as well as settling into my new establishment, and new role, there was the small matter of finding a new home for myself, and my family, something that would turn out to be a financially challenging period, as there was a slump in the housing market at the time, (it seems there always was when I had to move house), and selling my house in Lincoln was proving to be difficult. So when I did find a house in Bury, at the northern edge of Manchester, I needed to arrange a bridging loan facility, and of course receive authorisation from the Prison Service in order for them to fund it. That in itself was a very interesting time. As both my children were of school age, the pressure was on to complete the purchase and to get moved and settled into the new property in time for my boys to start at their new school in September. So a quite hectic time, but we did manage to move into our new home in Bury during the first week of August 1989. Failure to sell my house in Lincoln, the bridging loan and the state of the housing market would all come back to haunt me afterward, but I will come back to that much later in this memoir.

One of the things that I tried to do in my time at Strangeways was to not be isolated as just a "Works" PO, and so I volunteered myself for C&R training. The initial training took place at Strangeways in the gym, and a disused workshop, but as I advanced through the different levels the training moved to the very recently closed Buckley Hall. So recently closed that as we were undergoing C&R training, other establishments were on site stripping out catering equipment, and anything else that could be removed, and re-purposed.

Being a PO and trained in C&R, led me to the situation that on a number of occasions I received a call requesting that I attend on a wing in order to take the supervisor role in a "Cell Removal". In a large establishment such as Strangeways cell removals using a 3-person team, and whilst not an everyday occurrence, it was something that was used regularly and the PO/PEI Pat Coleman, who usually got called on to take the lead, was always happy to suggest my name instead.

Now I used the term 3-person team very deliberately, as I recall on one occasion the team that I was given for a cell removal was in fact entirely female, and the prisoner to be removed was a particularly well built, and extremely nasty individual. "The Team" took him out in textbook style, and I will never forget the look of defeat on his face when they took off their helmets to reveal to him that it was 3 women who had not only subdued him, but had him crying like a baby.

Those of you who have any knowledge of the Strangeways Riot, or who have seen the documentary, or indeed may even have read the report, will know that one of the key factors at the time was that the whole central rotunda area of the establishment had been scaffolded out so that essential high level maintenance could be carried out. Whilst I was not personally involved in that specific project, I was obviously aware of it, and indeed had been involved in several meetings to discuss the impact of the work, and most specifically the security implications. What is not so well known, and in view of the subsequent events, sadly overlooked, is that at this time there was a great deal of major work going on within the establishment, all aimed at improving the conditions for prisoners.

This meant that it was not only the centre that was scaffolded up, there was also a scaffold half way down G Wing that went from the 1's right up to the roof space. In addition we, The Works Department had started work on B Wing to install In-Cell sanitation, initially as a trial, but if successful to eventually be expanded across the whole establishment. At this time there were so many contractors on site that to ensure that their movements in and out of the establishment, including their deliveries, did not interfere with the operational capability of the establishment a temporary gate and contractors compound had been created in the perimeter wall, at the corner of Southall Street and Empire Street. This gate and compound would prove to be invaluable during the events to come.

One of the main security precautions for scaffolding in a prison environment was that wherever scaffolding poles were exposed, and therefore presented a climbing risk, they were clad in corrugated steel sheeting fixed securely to the scaffolding poles. Because the "Centre" at Strangeways was built as a traditional hub with wings radiating off from it, there was a walkway all the way around the central hub at the 2's 3's and 4's levels. These walkways were "fenced in at the sides, and overhead, to prevent climbing, and so, where the scaffolding passed outside them it was not clad as it was assumed that the mesh on the walkways would prevent prisoners gaining access, an assumption that proved to be wrong.

One evening, in the week preceding the riot, I had finished my shift and was at home when at about 19:00 I received a call from the establishment control room asking me to attend, as there was an ongoing incident that required a "Works presence". On arriving at the establishment I was met by The Governor, Brendan O'Friel, who briefed me on the situation, which was that 4 or 5 prisoners had managed to peel back the mesh on one of the walkways allowing them to be able to gain access to the scaffolding. They had then climbed to the top of the scaffolding to the Rotunda where they kicked the windows out and then climbed onto the roof by hanging on to the frame and dropping to the roof level below.

It seemed quite clear that this had been a spontaneous and not very well thought through action, as having reached the roof they found that they had nowhere to go but down, and the route down was a direct one ending in almost certain death. At the time of my arrival the prisoners were huddled together at a point where the roof of A Wing and The Chapel (F Wing) met, and where the brickwork of the lantern light formed a steep wall preventing them from moving anywhere. It was also a cold, damp March evening, so very unpleasant to be sitting on a roof.

My briefing from the Governor was that the prisoners had already indicated that they wanted to come down from the roof, and my task was to get them down, safely.

The chapel at Strangeways was a large one that took up 2 complete floors of F Wing and slopped down from the back to the front dropping 2 floors in the distance from the entry from the centre to the altar. At some time in the past a full suspended ceiling had been installed, and this meant that at the back of the chapel, the ceiling was actually at its lowest with only about 2.4m (8ft) headroom. Above the ceiling at the back of the chapel there had been a water tank that had been removed some time previously, and a wall had been demolished to facilitate this. This area was directly below where the prisoners were now huddled.

It was suggested to the Governor that as these prisoners were at a point where they could not be reached either by ladder or by a hydraulic platform, the quickest and safest way to bring them down was to simply create a hole in the roof close to where they were and bring them back into the prison via that route. This would however involve cutting a hole in the roof security mesh that was fixed to the rafters, large enough for a person to pass through, and the removal of sufficient slates to create the hole. This was agreed. With the assistance of two of my Trades Officers we then set about the task and by about 23:00 hours we had all the prisoners safely back inside. The damage caused to the roof, and the breach of the security mesh, were only temporarily repaired, as access to the outside was very difficult. This would prove to be critical in the following days. The riot began on Sunday 1st April 1990, and as most people are aware it started in the chapel, and many of the first prisoners onto the roof found their way there via the very route that had been created to bring in the failed escapees the week before.

The weekend of the 1st of April was my weekend off, and I was in Derbyshire with my family on a caravanning weekend at the time, and knew nothing of events at work until I was on my way home. In order to get to Bury I had to pass by the prison, except of course I couldn't get passed for the police road blocks. Having explained to one of the officers that I worked at the prison and needed to get home in order to be able get back and report for duty I was allowed through, and must have been a strange sight on roads that contained nothing but police cars, ambulances and fire engines and there was me, my family and the caravan making our way through.

Having dropped the family at home, and leaving the car hitched to the caravan, I quickly changed into my uniform, jumped on my motorbike and made my way into work, arriving at the main gate at about 19:00 hrs. I would not get to home again until the following Friday, 6th April. During my police interviews I was asked to explain what my role had been, and everything that I had done, seen and heard, during the 26 days of the incident. As I explained to the police then, and even today I am the same, is that I could remember almost everything that I did, and much of it in great detail, but I simply could not put them into a clear chronological order, either then, so close to the actual events, or now 32years later.

What I do know is that having reported to the Command Centre, and been greeted by Brendan O'Friel and the incident team, the first task I was given was to try to provide some protection to staff who were entering and leaving the prison via the main gate, which was under almost constant bombardment from prisoners throwing slates, bricks and whatever else they could from the roofs. So using scaffolding poles and corrugated sheets, ironically from the same scaffolding stock used to scaffold out the centre of the prison, myself and a team set to work creating a safe passageway between the gate and the entrance to the security department where the command post was located. During this time I had need to make my way to the Works Department that was located on The Croft.

For those not familiar with the layout of Strangeways it is actually a split site with the original prison, and all prisoner accommodation on one site, and the Stores, Workshops, Works Department, Gymnasium and staff car parking located on the other side of Sherbourne Street. This area was known as The Croft. Access from one part of the site to the other for prisoners was via a secure bridge across Sherbourne Street, or for staff to get to the car park, involved a long walk from the main gate to the secondary gate that gave access to The Croft. With access to the Croft via the bridge not possible my route to the Works Department was out of the main gate and a walk round to The Croft. The sight that greeted me there was incredible.

At the beginning of the riot many prisoners had decided that they were not going to become involved and sought safety with staff. There was also, without doubt, several prisoners who were involved, but had a quick "bit of fun" getting out before things got out of hand, or before they could be identified. Either way, many of those prisoners had been escorted across the bridge to The Croft, and held in any space available, while plans were put into place for what to do with them.

The plan was for there to be a mass “shipping out” of prisoners and when I arrived at the Works Department this plan was well underway with buses everywhere, and several Governor grades simply loading buses with prisoners, trying to keep some sort of tally, allocating escorting staff and sending them off to various prisons around the country. It would be several days before a final roll could be confirmed accounting for every single prisoner who was in Strangeways at unlock on the morning of the 1st of April 1990. As I recall it was somewhere in the region of 1650.

Among the many strange things that happened on that first night there are several that have stuck with me. One was that I remember being called on the radio to report to the main gate to meet with two guys who seemed to have some sort of Home Office approval to offer help. It turns out that they were from the company who supply the C&R equipment such as the shields, helmets and armour. They told me that they had “Blue Lighted” all the way from their factory in Lincolnshire with a boot full of equipment, and when I asked what they meant by “Blue Lighted” it turned out that they had somehow acquired a flashing blue light and attached it to their car, and had driven at high speed across the Pennines, totally unchallenged.

A little later I was called to the visits building as there were staff located in the building awaiting instructions and who needed equipment. However this was in very short supply and I was unable to help them. Moreover, it turned out that they had been there for several hours without food and very little water. I was able to help them with this, as I had with me a universal key, also known as a large hammer, that I used to open the vending machines for them to help themselves to the contents. I also recall that on leaving this building a large coping stone that had been thrown from the roof landed on the ground only feet from where I was passing. A reminder, as if needed, that this was actually serious stuff.

It very soon became apparent that there was a severe shortage of C&R equipment. I recall that this was so bad that those of us who had our own kit, and particularly members of Tornado Teams arriving from other establishments fully kitted-up, had to hang onto it very tightly as there were a number of cases on that first night of people who took off their helmets and put down their shields to have a break, only to find them gone, if they looked away for only a moment.

I also remember that as things started to become organised we were issued with food that came in the form of individual tins that contained either Stew or Curry. Around the outside of the can was a jacket that contained a chemical that you activated with a stick that was fixed to the side. You pierced this layer several times, around the top, starting a chemical reaction that heated up the jacket, and supposedly the contents of the tin, which you then opened and ate. The trouble was that people were so hungry, and the chemical process so slow, that most did not wait for the food to heat up, but ate it cold. Later, several people burnt their hands when picking up the empty cans and finding out that the chemical reaction would continue for about an hour, and with no food in them, the cans actually got very hot indeed.

The following morning there were about 22 full C&R teams lined up, and briefed, ready to storm the prison. I remember the feeling from everyone that it was going to be a very tough day indeed, and also the feeling of deep disappointment when we were stood down. The general feeling was that although it would be tough, and that there would be significant casualties on both sides, that we would have prevailed in the end. But it was not to be, and from that point on the incident became a war of attrition and my role became that of floating Jack of All Trades.

As with most incidents where prisoners riot, one of their favoured weapons is fire, and Strangeways was no exception to this, and indeed over the course of the incident there were many many fires, several of them very serious. At the beginning Greater Manchester Fire Service attended the establishment, and fought several of the fires. However they came under serious and sustained attack by prisoners, and were forced to withdraw, meaning that several sections of the prison were completely destroyed by fire, including the Roman Catholic Chapel.

Eventually the Fire Brigade Union, and Senior Management of the Fire Service decreed that their staff were not to be put into danger of attacks from prisoners and they were not allowed to use their powerful hoses as a means of protecting themselves, or prison staff, and they withdrew from the prison. To counter this it was decided to provide the establishment with their own means of fighting fires by the deployment of a Green Goddess Fire Engine, and one was dispatched from the Home Office Store at Burton on Trent. This unit arrived at the establishment late one afternoon in the first week and I was dispatched to the Croft area to take possession of the unit, and, as it turned out, to be trained in how to use it. The whole business was quite comical from the start, as the two chaps who had driven the unit up from Burton were, both in look, and attitude, something like typical British Workers from a 1950's Ealing Comedy, all long brown coats, flat caps and a serious "not my problem attitude". They were also very keen to not be there, and so my training lasted no more than 30 minutes and consisted mainly of being instructed how to connect the hoses, both supply and delivery, and how to set the gearbox from driving the wheels to driving the pump. The one clear warning, when pumping and operating with two men on a hose was, DO NOT EXCEED 3000RPM on the PUMP. And with that they were gone.

It now fell to me to pass on my vast knowledge of how to operate a Green Goddess to several members of Works staff, and the establishments Fire Officer, who had been "volunteered" for Fire Duty. So we proceeded to rig up the engine with a water feed from a hydrant and ran out two hoses from the back with two big and burly members of staff on each hose. Being "the expert" my role was to manage the machine, control the water flow, and the pump speed. With everything in place and running, I turned on the water and slowly increased the engine revs to the pump. Here began lesson one: As water made its way into the hoses they expanded, and as the pressure increased they became solid, in fact like iron bars. The trouble was, if the hose had a kink in it, as the water pressure increased it pushed the kink in front of it, and when it reached the nozzle end it would give a quite vicious kick. So much so in fact, that on the first attempt at running water through a hose, this kick took both men holding the hose completely by surprise, and knocked them over. Attempt two went better, as I now realised that if I let the hose pressurise slowly, the final kick was small enough to manage. Once running I slowly increased the revs and the result was truly impressive, with the hoses throwing water a seriously impressive distance, as the two men struggled to hold onto, and direct it.

Any fireman will tell you that by modern standards the Green Goddesses were truly awful Fire Appliances, but the pump that they were fitted with had no equal. They would pump thousands of gallons of water, at high pressure, for hour after hour, and high pressure really was high pressure. So, as a newly trained "expert" in Green Goddess technology, I was of course keen to see what my new toy could do. That meant pushing the revs beyond the stated 3000rpm as I wondered what would happen if I pushed it to 4000rpm. Well I can confirm that what happens is that at 4000rpm the force at the nozzle end is so powerful that it can, and indeed did, take two fully grown men clean off their feet, and no matter how hard they tried, they could not hold onto it. When they let go, or to be fair, when the hose was ripped from their hands it released a writhing serpent that was intent on destroying everything within its range, before I managed to kill the pump. I had just discovered how truly powerful stuff, water, can be.

By the end of the incident we had 4 Green Goddesses on site, and with help from the friendly guys from Greater Manchester Fire Service, who provided unofficial guidance and support, they were successfully used to extinguish several fires. However their main use was to be in providing tactical support, which, although we were under strict orders that we were not allowed to aim the water at prisoners, certainly proved useful in deterring them from being where we did not want them to be, simply by putting a hose on that spot. Over the course of the next two weeks these 4 units pumped tens of thousands of gallons of water into, and onto the building, and on the last day they were used in unison, at one point pumping so much water that I was told later, North West Water asked us to stop, as they could no longer sustain the water supply to the surrounding area.

One other funny story relating to the Green Goddesses is regarding filling them up with fuel. The engine of a Green Goddess is a 4.9 litre 6-cylinder petrol unit, that consumes fuel almost as fast as you can pour it into the tank. They are also notoriously difficult to drive, and positively lethal if you attempt to drive them on the road with a full water tank, as this is located high in the body, and means that they are very easy to tip over.

Once we had 4 of these units on site we developed a system whereby we would take them out of the prison at night to a 24-hour filling station about 2 miles up the Bury New Road to fill them with petrol and use the establishments fuel card to pay. One night I was driving the lead engine, and was also responsible for all of the units, as I had possession of the Fuel Card. I can still recall the look on the cashiers face from behind his security screen as I went up to pay, and he asked me which pump, to which I replied, "all of them" I think it was something like 160 gallons of 4 star, with petrol in those days at about 40p/litre, so around £1.80p/gallon.

The design of the Bedford truck on which the Green Goddesses were based was unusual in that the engine was mostly in the cab, accessed by a cover that was removed by a single lever and a good strong pull. On the way back to the prison after filling up with fuel, my passenger informed me that he could smell burning, and as soon as he said it, then so could I. I stopped the vehicle and we quickly came to the conclusion that it was coming from under the engine cover, so off it came, and ooh, bugger, out jumped the flames. On the engine the carburettor sits right on top and the air filter is connected to it with a large hose. This hose had worked loose, and come off, so that petrol from the carburettor was splashing onto the exhaust manifold, and had soon ignited. Luckily it was only a small, and after all we were in a Fire Engine, and so we managed to put it out and we returned to the prison without further incident. However I suspect that I am to this day the only member of prison staff who has the dubious record of having managed to set fire to a Fire Engine, while being on official duty.

In the third week of the incident I recall coming in to work at about 6:30 one morning and as the prison came into view I could see smoke rising from one of the wings. When I arrived it was clear that a fire had been started on D Wing and in order to get at it we were going to need to fight it from inside. A team were dispatched to gain access from the rear of the wing from a single storey flat roof, that gave access to the windows of the library. I was sent with a Petrol Disc Cutter, with the idea that I would cut out the steel frame of the window to provide a means of entry. We also had a Green Goddess with us to provide the fire fighting support.

Stood on this flat roof we were in clear view of prisoners, who were at the windows at the very top of the central rotunda, and who started to throw objects down at us, including scaffolding clips, each about 1.5kg of solid steel. On stepping back from cutting the window I happened to glance up and saw one of these clips begin its journey from the hand of a prisoner, and in what seemed like slow motion descend in an arc toward me. I must have been mesmerised as I watched it fall, and it was only the quick thinking of the guy stood next to me with a short shield, who stuck it in front of me a split second before the clip would have hit me. His quick action saved me from serious injury, or possibly worse. The almighty bang as this thing hit the shield snapped me back to reality, very quickly. To this day I do not know who it was with the shield, but I know I owe him a great deal.

When we had cut out the window a team of us entered the building and started to feed in a fire hose so that we could try to get at the fire from inside while others, including the Fire Service attacked it from outside. The fire was very severe, and it was discovered later that the prisoners had scoured the whole prison for anything that would burn, and stuffed it all into 2 cells about three quarters of the way down the wing. These items included every toilet roll that they could find, newspapers and magazines, and every single tin of shoe polish to act as an accelerant. And it certainly did, because the fire was horrendous and generated so much heat that the ground floor of the wing actually buckled, and was raised by almost a foot, and the brickwork of the wing cracked in several places, with some of the cracks



PRISONERS ON THE ROOF AT STRANGWAYS APRIL 1990 - SCENES THAT WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN

large enough to stick your arm in.

Inside the wing fighting the fire was an “interesting experience” as not only did we have the sheer physical effort of trying to drag heavy hoses in through a window, across the room we had entered and out onto the landing, but once on the landings you had to be extremely careful as there were no handrails, and in many places the landing deck itself, many of which were of the old slate type, had been smashed, and so there were some significant gaps. One of these prevented us from being able to get close to the seat of the fire, however they also worked in our favour in helping limit prisoners from being able to get to us.

Obviously the prisoners had seen us cut our way into the building, and feed in fire fighting equipment, so several of them came to try to dissuade us from attempting to put out the fire, and would you believe it, their chosen method was to throw things at us. Earlier I mentioned that we were all under strict instructions that the tactical use of water needed to be approved from Head Office, and throughout the riot that approval was never issued. However, on this particular occasion we worked on the principal of what Head Office can't see, they can't bollock us for, and after all these years I am now ready to admit that inside D Wing on that particular day at least 2 prisoners felt the full force of what a fire hose connected to a Green Goddess could do, and they all soon withdrew, once they realised what a potent weapon we possessed.

To be continued...

GRAHAM MUMBY-CROFT



JOINING THE PRISON SERVICE: BOB DUNCAN

I joined the Prison Service on the 28th September 1964 at The Imperial Training College, Love Lane Wakefield, West Yorkshire, along with 20 other trainees either on the 'direct entry scheme' as in my case, and some via the 'country house test' for officers. All of us were training initially to be a junior Governor. There were 5 grades of Governor, with one being the most senior, usually in charge of a large local prison, or top security prison, and 5 being the lowest, and generally referred to as AG2. On the course were 6 ex-prison officers, one female, and 14 from various walks of life, several ex-colonial police, ex-teachers, and about 6 graduates from various occupations including one Methodist Minister. It was a requirement in those days that you had to have reached the age of 24 and had employment in a different capacity. I fell into the youngest age group of having reached the age of 24 that June. All having had work experience gave us something to talk about amongst ourselves.

Most had travelled by train, as only about 6 of the group owned a car. We were all allocated a study bedroom, and given time to unpack and get our bearing, as we had been told we were all to be in one of the lounges at 4 pm sharp. We all dutifully attended on time and were introduced to the 3 lead tutors who outlined what we would be doing. It was made clear that this was a disciplined service, and though we were committed to a 12-day attendance at the college (with one weekend off a fortnight.) it was stressed for the first 3 weeks we would be on attachments and there would be no weekends off. A hand shot from Paul (probably the brightest intellectually of us all, but personality-wise 'a bit warped') he stated he needed the weekend off in 2 weeks. The lead tutor boomed, 'Mr. P, I have already explained this is a disciplined service, I expect your best attention at all times; I do not expect to have to repeat myself, but as it is the first night for all of you, I will re-cap, there is NO time off duty for the next 3 weeks.' An arm shoots up; Mr. P says 'I need the weekend off in 2 weeks.' Tutor, 'We are not getting off to a very good start here, this does not bode well for your future in the Service.' A hand shoots up, 'I am getting married to Tundi in 2 weeks; she is jet black, the daughter of a rich African Chief and is 6 months pregnant.' 'Mr. P see me after this session closes.' He did get the weekend off!

We were advised that the next event was our evening meal at 6 pm. The college was in Love Lane directly opposite Wakefield Top Security Prison, from where specially selected long-term prisoners were used in positions of trust, most were nominated as 'red bands' but the really trusted were 'blue bands', so-called because of the colour of the armband they wore. We were advised, we would be asked to give our name and the course we were on, if we were on his list we had passed the first hurdle, the second was whether we were properly dressed to his satisfaction, if we were not we would be refused entry.

How this was enforced is unclear, but in light of the kerfuffle at the earlier briefing, no one dared challenge him. Within a week when we knew the drill and he was conversant with us, he just waved us in. The evening meal was 3 courses, and every table had a menu with up to 3 choices for the main meal, the waiters were 'red bands' from the prison. They took the orders and brought the food. We soon got to know them, and they knew we were the longest stay residents training at the college. We were soon on good terms. The meals were varied, appetizing and of reasonable portions. One of our course had a 'very healthy appetite, and after a couple of weeks he said to the orderly, I really cannot choose between A or B, what do you suggest,' he thought for a few seconds, and then said 'Why not have them both sir.' And so he did, but not just that night, but every night thereon. One or two of us joined in occasionally! Well if you were going out drinking in the evening, one needed a good lining to soak it all up!

The next morning, we were given an outline of the course which was mainly lectures and tutorials all morning and again in the afternoon. These were given by the Tutors and by the Professor of Criminology from Leeds University, Norman Jepson. The lectures from the established Tutors and Norman Jepson were excellent. The 'new boy' Ted's was less so. We were also divided into 3 groups of seven for tutorials and we all wanted to be in the established tutor's group, but I ended up with 6 others in Ted's group. Lectures concluded at 16.30, we had only one weekend off a fortnight; there was a fast train to London at 16.45, and we needed the lecture and questions to finish promptly or early if we were to catch it. There were 2 problems, firstly Joe was a persistent questioner and always wanted to know whatever had been said related to Liverpool. Group pressure eventually curbed Joe's questioning on Friday. The established Tutors were aware of this train and brought their session on Friday to a prompt close. Ted did not and encouraged questions and seemed to be unaware we were all straining at the leash to make a quick exit. I suppose he was trying to exert his authority, but he eventually he did cotton on to the lack of questions on a Friday, and announced, you can sit in silence if you wish, but I am not going to finish early, so ask away. We sat in silence, after 2 months he gave in and finished sharp or even early sometimes.

We were also informed that we would all be allocated a 'prisoner' in Wakefield prison whom we would interview weekly in the evening, about his criminality and discuss what he was doing to reform from crime. This would have to be written up and submitted to your tutor. Then came the bombshell, 'When I say written, it will be typed, so your next task when you return from your attachments will be to go out and purchase a typewriter, we can offer advice on where best to shop.' so that was the first month's salary disappearing!

We were split into small groups, and three of us went to 'Strangeways Prison' in Manchester for our 3 weeks of observation. The first morning was a little daunting as we arrived and tentatively knocked on the huge main gate; a small grilled window in the gate opened and a loud gruff voice said 'Yes', we responded that we were the new recruits and had to report to the Governor. 'Right' was the only

answer, and a smaller door built into the main gate opened and we were told to step through. More waiting only added to our anxiety whilst an escort was found to take us to the Governor's office. We were eventually ushered into the office of the Governor, who in fact greeted us warmly and explained we would spend most of our time with the Deputy who had organized a programme. The Deputy was a fine man, he had been a tank commander during the war, and had suffered serious burns and other injuries when his tank came under fire. As a result, he has serious scarring to the face and only one ear. He was affectionately known as 'one-eared Brown'. He was strict but fair. His first task on his programme was for us to observe the reception process of those sentenced that day, and then to sit in on the reception talk and review he conducted the next morning.

Manchester Prison (Strangeways) was holding about 1600 prisoners, including remands and debtors so there was a steady trickle of releases each morning, replaced by a flow of new arrivals from the courts from late afternoon, most were just shell shocked or bewildered, but the odd 'more sophisticated regulars' were amongst them, and there was always one who wanted to shout the odds and laud it over the others. When this behaviour was over the top, three of largest and well-proportioned officers would appear, and quiet and tranquility would return. Sentence dates were calculated that evening (there were only 2 dates then 'earliest date of release' which allowed one third off for good behaviour, and 'latest date of release'; no parole release existed then except for life-sentenced prisoners, no home detention curfew releases).

The next morning a reception board would be held, chaired by the deputy governor, this announced the relevant dates and allocated the prisoner to work (all sentenced prisoners were required to work under the Prison Rules). Two interviews stand out; the first was an older man who complained that his date of release was wrong, the Dep. Governor looked at the paperwork and said yours is a short sentence and I can see it is a correct calculation. No, no said the prisoner, you are releasing me on December 20th, where am I going to get my Christmas dinner! I will have to go straight out and commit another crime to be back in time for Christmas.

The other claimed he was an actor, a small-time role in 'Coronation Street'. He said he could not work as he had to preserve himself until he could return to his audience and fans. The Dep quietly replied, 'I am the only actor in here and the rules require you to work, you will be on centre scrubbing where I can keep an eye on you,' Manchester being a 'radial design prison' had 4 wings which all met at the centre. The floor was highly decorative and was kept spotlessly clean and no prisoner was allowed to walk across it only around the edge.

On August 8th, 1963 what was to become known as the Great Train Robbery took place when a gang of 15, organized by Bruce Reynolds, stopped and robbed the Royal Mail train from Glasgow to London of sacks of paper money to the tune of £2.6 million. There was a massive manhunt for those involved. Even

before arrests were made Buster Edwards and his wife had escaped to Mexico. Those convicted received sentences of 30 years, the longest ever except for a life sentence. They had influence, were revered by other prisoners and had money so they were regarded as a high risk of escape even before the escape of Charlie Wilson on the 12th August 1964 when several men broke into Winson Green Prison in Birmingham and freed him. He was only four months into his sentence. He remained 'on-the-run' for 4 years and was finally recaptured in Canada on January 24, 1968 and was returned to England where he served out the rest of his sentence. The other notorious escape was that of Ronnie Biggs from Wandsworth Prison in 1965.

Manchester was holding at least two of the train robbers on remand, including, Bruce Reynolds and Gordon Goody who despite their notoriety amongst their peers was perfectly polite and no trouble to the staff, I can recall talking to Gordon Goody and he was able quite affable and more concerned about his family than his prison conditions. The prison staff, However, was quite tense; this was because of another prisoner who had arrived at the prison. He was a Londoner and a constant petty burglar. His nickname was 'rubber bones Willy', due to the fact that he had escaped on two previous occasions from Dartmoor Prison, using sewerage channels etc. He was not known in Manchester and was in for stealing a car. The intelligence suggested he had got himself into Manchester Prison to survey it for means of escape. Nothing came of it, but it did create a huge nervousness amongst the staff during the time we were there.

My other memory of Manchester, though we learnt a great deal, was the Sunday Service, which all registered Christians of all denominations were required to attend their respective service as it was still compulsory in prison rules, (A hangover from Victorian days.) so the Deputy Governor and all other governor grades attended the C of E- service and sat in rank order at a reserved pew at the back of the large chapel. After which the Deputy (and us) retired to the prison Mess Bar and drank solidly for the next 2 hours. The deputy never seemed to suffer any ill effects from this. Though we tried to lighten the amount we consumed, I doubt we took in much else of the rest of the day's activities.

On returning to Love Lane College we continued our studies including visiting our prisoner and typing up our report one-fingered (copious Tippex was involved). My allocated prisoner, although grudgingly cooperative at first, was not really interested. After a few weeks, he said 'I do not really feel up to it tonight, so I have put something in an envelope for you take away with you.' Being still naïve in the way of prisoners I took him at his word; when I was back at college I opened the envelope and found it only contained some of his hair from his last haircut. When next in the prison I spoke to the resident governor grade for that wing about it. He merely shrugged and indicated 'that is prisoners for you.' I also suspected he did not have much time for us' young sprogs' and had allocated me this prisoner on purpose. **TO BE CONTINUED: AT DOVER BORSTAL**

PRISON GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2022

Andrea Albutt delivered her eighth Presidential speech at the 2022 Conference, making her comfortably the Association's longest serving leader since Brendan O'Friel, and a great job she has done too. Space precludes reproducing her speech in full, but I will give you the highlights and other significant events from what was not the best attended conference I have ever seen, which speaks volumes about the workload pressures on those still in harness. The card voting strength of conference was just 425, against a membership of 1025, so just 42% of members were represented by a delegate.

Andrea spoke of the constant change at ministerial level that afflicts the service. She noted that the new Secretary of State is the ninth incumbent since 2010, and all have their own ideas about micromanaging a service in a way no Defence Minister would ever attempt with the military. The President described the dire state of recruitment with only 19 prisons boasting a 'Green' traffic light rating for prison officer posts filled. It is hoped that the significant investment in prison officer pay this year will boost both recruitment and retention, but Andrea voiced her fear that with the pay award not being fully funded by the Treasury, leading to a £65 million shortfall this year, and £85 million the next, there will be intolerable pressures on already tight budgets. At the time of writing, the government still plans capital investment in 20,000 new prison places. Can it be afforded? What does that mean for the future increased use of custody? 'How will the circle be squared?' she asked. Not by further overcrowding, which would be indefensible. Conference went on to pass a Motion of Urgency calling for a Royal Commission to interrogate the failings of government in respect of the prison system and to make appropriate recommendations. The press release is reproduced on the next page.

The Centre for Social Justice has floated what could be described as 'virtual imprisonment,' serving the sentence under house arrest monitored by electronic tagging. How that fits with work or going to the Doctor, and a myriad other niceties is yet to be fleshed out, but it is certainly radical and cheap. The usual backbench populists will take a jaundiced view, but it certainly gives a whole new meaning to 'doing your bird behind your door.' The new Prisons Minister, Rob Butler, is according to Andrea, reputed to be interested in the idea. It would certainly have a massive impact on the 14,000 strong remand population. Anyway, the idea would need to interest the new Chancellor, Mr Hunt, to have any legs.

There was no ministerial speech to conference, but HMCIP, Charlie Taylor, and Phil Copple, Director General of Operations at HMPPS, both addressed the gathering and took questions. Again I can only give brief highlights. Charlie Taylor has contributed a welcome reduction in bureaucracy by getting rid of the massive list of often pettifogging recommendations. Instead HMCIP sets out the priorities in order to meet the four healthy prison tests. HMIP now inspects leadership without which successful governance is impossible, but it also looks at leadership further down the management chain. The Chief Inspector informed conference that there are now just 400 children in custody, down from 1500 in 2015. Unfortunately not being a delegate precluded me from asking a question about the numbers of elderly prisoners in custody, and what view HMIP takes of that particular growth area. Phil Copple spoke about the pressures in the system and said that recruitment was vital to stability and progress. He said that relations with the PGA were good and that they could 'disagree without rancour,' which was certainly not the case in my time on the NEC. The Director General said there would be a greater focus on the frontline, devolution of decision making, and a smaller HQ(!) There will be deeper co-operation between prisons and probation. Perhaps most interesting was his clear view that there is no scope for savings on the front line and ministers have been advised accordingly. We shall see how things play out.

The PGA's long serving recently retired membership secretary, Kevin Billson, was awarded richly deserved Distinguished Life Membership by acclamation at conference. Graham Mumby-Croft once again chaired conference with great aplomb, and yours truly was a last minute substitute for the Gerry Hendry as Chair of Standing Orders. Gerry is unwell at the moment, and we send him our best wishes.

PAUL LAXTON

PGA CONFERENCE - PRESS RELEASE

TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2022

A BROKEN PRISON SYSTEM

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The Prison Governors Association are currently holding their 34th Annual Conference at the Radisson Blu Hotel, East Midlands Airport. Delegates have voiced their concerns over what has been described as a complete failure of Government to halt the present decline in prisons. Recruitment and retention has seen the worst level of resources in living memory with some prisons delivering restricted regimes which do not support prisoners in our care or serve our communities in reducing risks prior to release.

There remains a distinct lack of investment with our Prison Service, buildings are not fit for purpose and Governors, who care deeply about their prisons, lack the real autonomy to make any tangible difference. Much of this is impacted by severe politicisation of prisons. We do not see such ministerial micromangement within health or armed forces, so why prisons which are constantly buffered by politics?

Conference is appalled at the complete failure of Government to prevent the decline in prisons. The numerous White Papers and initiatives from eight Justice Secretaries since 2010 has done little to halt this decline and may in fact have exacerbated it.

The abuse to the public purse on these political wishes is unacceptable and it has been an abject failure.

Prison Governors call on Government to appoint a Royal Commission to interrogate this failure and make long term recommendations on the future of prison.

RPGA Newsletter fun quiz Autumn 2022 – answers

1 A paddling. 2 Anode. 3 Wheels on fire. 4 Leviticus. 5 Gamma. 6 Admiral of the fleet.

7 Spoon. 8 Rial. 9 No limit. 10 West Point. 11 Myxamatoxis. 12 B2. 13 Cymru.

14 Marchioness. 15 Cruet. 16 School. 17 Palindromes. 18 Tropical Cockroach. 19 Exxon

Corporation. 20 Hass.

RPGA: E-MAIL REGISTER

The E-Mail register has been operating for around 13 years and has proved itself to be an effective means of rapid communication between members. It offers updates on current prison service developments and allows members to keep in touch with each other.

Joining the RPGA does not automatically place you on the register. If you would like to join the register then please send an E-Mail from the address you wish to have registered to **HARRY BRETT** at

harry-brett@hotmail.co.uk. E-Mail addresses may not be passed to third parties without permission

from the person(s) registered to that specific E-Mail address. Please remember that if you change your E-Mail address you must inform **HARRY BRETT**, otherwise you will cease to receive further updates.