

The Retired Prison Governors Newsletter

Founded by Arthur Williamson in 1980 - Now in its 45th year of continuous publication

Issue No 92 Spring 2025



IT'S BEEN A LONG WINTER

By the time this edition hits your doormat or your inbox, winter will be over. The clocks will have gone forward, the daffodils will be in full bloom, and cherry blossom will be brightening up your local park. It will not quite be time for shorts and T-shirt, but at least you can put your heavy overcoat away until November. As far as your pocket is concerned, no more glances at the smart meter, which if yours is anything like mine, will have seen you spending at twice the rate of your direct debit even during relatively benign spells of weather, depending on your need for warmth.

We would have to be honest and say that we are better equipped to cope with the loss of the winter fuel allowance than many pensioners. Indeed thanks to fiscal drag some members will have fallen into the 40% tax bracket, with more to follow for as long as the income tax bands are frozen. Nevertheless, we will all have friends and relatives who are struggling. For all the reasons that are obvious older people spend more time at home. We don't have the fallback of using our employer's energy. There are chronic medical conditions that adversely affect the ability to keep warm. Mechanical aids such as Kidney Dialysis machines or electric wheelchairs need electricity to work or power up.

However, the outcome that our civil service pensions cannot protect us against is the loss of power. I was shocked to learn that during the cold spell in early January there were just seven days' worth of gas left in store. This compares to eighty-nine days in Germany. We do not know how close we really came to power cuts in the winter, as officialdom guards that information jealously. What I can safely say is that power shortages will increase further public disillusion with the two main political parties. The Tories for decommissioning gas storage facilities, and Labour for taking the winter fuel allowance from 10 million pensioners.

The last edition went to the printers earlier than normal, so there were no items from the 2024 PGA Conference. Tom Wheatley has kindly allowed me to reproduce his speech in full. The increase in jail sentence discounts bought time, but prison cells are full to bursting again. The Justice Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, has admitted that even the 14,000 promised places will not solve the problem. Every egg is therefore in the basket of the sentencing review. A digest of Part One has been sourced by Brendan O'Friel, and David Gauke's report is fiercely critical of the unedifying competition between the two main parties as to who can boast of being the toughest on crime via massively increased sentenced lengths without providing the decent places and interventions needed to reduce reoffending.

Sadly, yet again, the Newsletter is dominated by the death of a gubernatorial colossus. The legendary Bob Duncan is no longer with us. His funeral service, eulogy, and words from his partner, Enid, can be found on pages 12-19.

PAUL LAXTON, editor

CONTENTS

- P 01 Editorial - Paul Laxton
- P 02 RPGA Email Register - Harry Brett
- P 03 Muriel Allen MBE R.I.P.
- P 04 'This Prison is an Airport' - A digest of an HMCIP report on HMP Garth
- P 06 President's opening address to PGA Conference Autumn 2024 - Tom Wheatley
- P 10 Spring 2025 Newsletter Quiz - Graham Smith
- P 11 Chairman's Notes - Graham Smith
- P 12 Robert Duncan: Eulogy - Stephen Duncan
- P 13 A Few Words from Enid: Robert's partner
- P 16 Robert Stephen Duncan R.I.P. - Order of Service
- P 19 Notice of 2025 AGM
- P 20 Memoirs Part Nine: Southampton - Bob Duncan
- P 25 Some Prison Service Developments since July 2024 - Brendan O'Friel
- P 26 Being Duty Governor - Graham Mumby-Croft
- P 33 From the Treasurer - Graham Mumby-Croft
- P 34 Donald Trump: A View from the Psychological Aspect - John Ramwell
- P 36 Extracts from the Programme and Guidance Notes Joining Course 270 Wakefield OTS - Paul Laxton
- P 38 A summary of Part 1 of the Independent Sentencing Review - Sourced by Brendan O'Friel
- P 40 Membership Report - Harry Brett
- P 40 Quiz Answers - Graham Smith

RPGA: E-MAIL REGISTER The E-Mail register has been operating for more than 21 years and has proved itself to be an effective means of rapid communication between members. It offers updates on current prison service developments and allows members to keep in touch with each other. Joining the RPGA does not automatically place you on the register. If you would like to join the register then please send an E-Mail from the address you wish to have registered to **HARRY BRETT** at **harry-brett@hotmail.co.uk**. 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

Angela Tilby: Tough old boots have a calling, too

BY [ANGELA TILBY](#)
10 JANUARY 2025

Muriel Allen MBE R.I.P.

THE Church seems increasingly these days to confine the notion of [vocation](#) to some kind of formally authorised ministry. Yet the [Prayer Book](#) Catechism sees vocation in much wider terms as “To my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me”. This an expectation that God intervenes, and calls and has an expectation of every baptised Christian.

I have been reflecting on the life of a member of our cathedral community who died, aged 93, on Boxing Day. Muriel Allen was the third of ten children brought up in relative poverty in Peckham, and with little formal education.

At the age of 16, she had a strong sense that God was calling her to the [prison](#) service. There was, though, a problem: the death penalty. Muriel made it clear to the Almighty that she would not be available until this was abolished — which it was, in 1968. Meanwhile, she worked with young offenders and ran a Borstal. Her first prison job was at Holloway. She later served as an assistant governor in Durham, before being appointed as the first woman governor of Kingston Prison, in Portsmouth, in charge of male prisoners, many of them “lififers”.

A few weeks before she died, Muriel told me how she refused to tolerate abuses of power, whether by prisoners or officers. She recognised that many prisoners came from dysfunctional homes and had never had the chance of a decent life. She ensured that prisoners had opportunities for education, and acquired computers and other aids to learning. She was proud that there were no suicides on her watch. In retirement, she supported plans for a hospice, raising large sums of money, while also supporting a family liaison centre that worked with troubled and homeless children.

Muriel was, in every sense, a tough old boot. She had never avoided conflict and even seemed to relish it, which may have helped in her pioneering work — she was deeply respected — but less so when she was dependent on others. Frustrated by age and immobility, she could be a trial: demanding, sometimes truculent. And yet, she told me, every day she began by saying the words of “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow”.

Reflecting on her life this week reminded me of Frederick Buechner’s wonderful definition of what it means to be “called” as a Christian believer: vocation is “the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep hunger”.

In her later years, Muriel was horrified by what had become of the prison service: the squalor, drugs, violence, and lack of care. She was a model of female drive, daring, and persistence.

It is good to know that the Lord calls tough old boots, who are ready to listen and to go (as long as certain conditions are met) where others would not choose to.

This article first appeared in the Church Times on 10 January 2025
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‘THIS PRISON IS AN AIRPORT’

Today’s [inspection of HMP Garth](#), a high security prison in Lancashire, makes clear the ever-increasing threat that drones pose to prison security. As police officers now, much of law enforcement in the 21st century is characterised by a technological arms race between those committing crime and those trying to prevent it or apprehend the offenders.

The issue of the delivery of drugs to prison by drones is well-known but there has been a huge increase in the problem over the last couple of years.

Last month, the Ministry of Justice published [information following a Freedom of Information request](#) about the number of drones sighted or reported in or around prisons in England and Wales for the five years between 2019 and 2023 (inclusive). The growth of drone activity is startling to say the least. There were 122 sightings in 2019, 248 in 2021 and a staggering 1,063 in 2023.

HMP Garth inspection

In today’s [report](#), prison inspectors highlighted the fact that the availability of drugs, alcohol and phones posed a considerable security challenge. In inspectors’ prisoner survey, 63% of prisoners said that drugs were easy to get compared with 44% at the previous inspection and 41% at similar prisons. Inspectors noted that the smell of drugs was evident throughout the inspection visit and that the impact of this easy availability could be seen in the increasing levels of violence, the full segregation unit and the large number of prisoners who wanted protection from their peers because they were in debt. Routine drug testing in the last year showed that a third of prisoners were misusing substances.

Both staff and prisoners were well aware that the main route by which drugs were getting into the prison were delivery by drones. Men were using the elements from their kettles to burn holes in their inadequately protected Perspex windows, allowing drones to drop off contraband.

One prisoner told inspectors: *‘This is now an airport!’*, referring to the number of drones coming into the prison. Senior leaders were well aware of the problem and had taken a number of steps to reduce the supply of drugs into the prison, such as removing paper, increasing patrols of the perimeter, delivering drone awareness training and searching prisoners at unpredictable times.

However, inspectors found that the prison was fighting a losing battle with these were initiatives not enough to address the substantial challenge that drones posed. Prisoners were continually burning holes in the prison windows at a faster rate than they could be repaired. On the first day of inspection, 13 cells had windows with holes, five still occupied by prisoners.

A widespread problem

Recent reports from across the prison estate show the scale of the problem. Great Manchester Police announced last month that the region’s gangs were using skilled drone pilots to deliver drugs.

GMP recently used dogs and a helicopter in raids outside HMP Forest Bank, a private prison in Salford, as part of efforts to crack down on the problem.

Det Supt Buckthorpe [told the BBC](#) that contraband goods are often suspended on lines attached to the drones and are dangled close to cell windows.

“These drone pilots have got a really high skill set. The way you fly drones now, you can pin point them to certain area via coordinates and other methods,”

He said the drones used were capable of delivering “huge payloads” of up to 7kg (15lb).

“The technology is improving all the time, it’s getting more sophisticated”,

he said, adding it was also becoming more accessible as drones became cheaper.

Prison Officers reported a range of items being smuggled into Greater Manchester’s jails, including tobacco, shampoo, shower gel, and even sachets of mustard and tomato ketchup.

Det Supt Buckthorpe said that the involvement of organised crime groups who were delivering drugs and other contraband to prisons across the country was one of the reasons driving the increase in the use of drones. He said that some gangs were recruiting previously law-abiding citizens with skillset and experience to fly the drones.

The response

In January this year the Ministry of Justice established 400 metre flight restriction zones around all closed prisons and Young Offender Institutions in England and Wales. These Restricted Fly Zones are intended to disrupt illegal drone use but are clearly having limited impact. The total of drone-related convictions since June 2016 amounts to just 70.

As long ago as 2017, Guernsey prison successfully piloted an [electronic fencing initiative](#) which blocks radio signals around the prison when drones are detected. The system uses a series of “disruptors”, which are sensors to jam the drone’s computer, and block its frequency and control protocols. The operator’s screen will go black and the drone will be bounced back to where it came from.

However, despite calls for its implementation across the mainland prison estate, there have been no official announcements to date.



President's Opening Address to Conference 2024 – TOM WHEATLEY

As all of you know this is my first opening address to conference. I want to thank you for the privilege of being your President and I would like the opportunity to reflect on the first few months of my tenure and offer some perspective on the changes that have taken place over the course of my career.

What it was like

I was promoted into the Governor Grades, albeit temporarily at first, as a Governor 5 in 2000 and six years later became a Governor in charge for the first time at HMP Nottingham. In 2006, as the Governor of what was then a small inner city Victorian local prison, many things were very different. My team at Nottingham were mine to deploy into whatever role I chose for them. The SMT could be as large or small as I liked, provided changes were properly consulted upon and I could afford the structure I chose. There were no considerations of job evaluation schemes, and I didn't have to choose from a restrictive list of job descriptions. Governor grades managed each other, with deputies in many functions which meant that teams were resilient and that the SMT was small and could be decisive and executive within the prison. The staff group was well established, experienced, confident and capable. They were also occasionally grumpy and intransigent where change was required. The prison was reasonably safe for both staff and prisoners. Where violence did occur, it was often low level and rarely resulted in serious injury. Many of the functions of the prison were directly line managed by me as the Governor and those that were not, were commissioned and monitored by me. I had far greater control than Governors do today of Estates, Healthcare, Education, Psychology, Finance, HR etc. I was even responsible for recruitment and selection of my own Prison Officers! Every year I went through a face-to-face process where I met with my boss, the Area Manager, and had a 'Budget Challenge Meeting'. This was where we agreed (argued) about how much money I was going to get to run the prison and what performance they expected for the public money that was devolved to my control. In short, I was made accountable to my boss and to the Prison Service for what I was responsible for achieving in the Prison. If I failed to achieve something, unless I was able to provide a detailed and evidenced explanation of the circumstances, and it was agreed that I couldn't reasonably predict and or control the position, then I was going to be in trouble. Mostly the feeling of having let people down, my boss, my team, partners and prisoners would be a real incentive to work hard and to get it right. We had a set of published standards, against which the prison was regularly audited by Standards Audit Unit, so I knew what I had to achieve and whether or not I managed to do so was checked by somebody outside of my control, but within the Prison Service.

What it's like now

Contrast that with now. Using HMP Nottingham as an example, I'm sure Paul as the current Governor would allow me to. The prison has doubled in population. That's true for many of our prisons over the same period. As the prison population has increased in the never-ending drive to lock up more people, for longer and make it more difficult to release them, prisons have become larger and more complex. We have added more capacity within existing prisons, as well as building new ones. This means that the volume of work for our members has also increased. As for the size and shape of Senior Management Teams, increased restrictions introduced over the years with 'Fair and Sustainable' and the current JES scheme, as well as various central projects and the imposed management arrangements that have come with them, means that Governors have to arrange their teams in a prescribed way that isn't as responsive to local circumstances. As Governor of HMP Wakefield last year, following the changes that were made to the SMT as a result of central programmes within HMPPS, I ended up with additional Senior Managers with responsibility for Offender Management and Education Skills and Work. There were three Senior Managers responsible for Offender Management, two for Residential and two for Operations. I didn't have a meeting room large enough to hold SMT meetings if everyone I was told was a member of "my" SMT actually turned up. That was usually ok because they didn't. Senior Manager roles with responsibility for HR, Finance, Estates (all part of the MoJ not HMPPS) Health and Safety to name a few were responsible for multiple sites and weren't able to participate in meetings in all of them. They also probably didn't feel as responsible for the individual sites as they would have when they actually worked there full time. This is not an ideal situation from my point of view.

Look at the state of our prison buildings and infrastructure. We have derelict buildings that used to operate as workshops, but due to leaky roofs or other issues relating to a lack of investment, they stand empty. We have accommodation that fails to reach the most basic standards of decency with heating that doesn't work and windows that don't close. How can this be the case in 2024? In a year when we have had a high-profile escape from one of our prisons, we have electronic perimeter security systems that are not fully operational in some of our prisons holding the most dangerous prisoners. How is this acceptable and, when public money is so hard to come by, what are you supposed to do about it when maintenance is contracted out and those contracts aren't even with HMPPS, but the MoJ under "Functional Leadership"? My plea would be that you make sure that senior officials are aware and that they report this to ministers so they can get money from the Treasury to fix it. It can't continue un-checked and unmentioned.

The Budget Challenge process is a thing of the past, Governors largely get what they are given and the connection between resources and performance is lost. When prisons are deemed not to be performing well, there is little discussion about the comparative resource position with those that are. Governors and their teams are however, still held to account. In some cases, they are blamed publicly for failing to deliver what may well have been impossible to achieve in the first place. That seems to me to be wholly unfair.

It has always been the case that some of our prisons have performed well and some of them haven't. We have had various ways of measuring prison performance over the years, and we have always managed to turn them into some sort of league table. When you have a league table something is going to be at the top and something at the bottom. Whilst the leadership that you all provide every day is an important factor in where the prison you work in sits in that table, it isn't the only factor. Some of you are working in an almost superhuman fashion, not to achieve great success but to simply slow, or halt impending disaster. You do not get the credit that you deserve for that because, quite simply, those people who haven't had to work in our prisons during such difficult times don't know what it feels like.

Some, including some of our most senior leaders, understand it intellectually, conceptually and have experienced the same circumstances from a different and undoubtedly very challenging perspective, but they haven't lived it. Some observers, whose opinion and judgement the press and public value, have watched with great interest from the sidelines. A bit like a pundit offering their view on a match, but they weren't running round on the pitch for 80 minutes getting tacked by an 18 stone player. Some of those that comment on social and other media last played the game 20 years ago, when the rules were different, and players weren't as big or as fit. They didn't even watch the match they just read about it afterwards but can't resist trying to relive their glory days and tell anyone who will listen how much better the game would have gone if they were still playing.

Prisons have become increasingly violent and staff and prisoners are more likely to be the victims of violence than they were in 2006. The official data paints a sad and sorry picture. There were 3,530 assaults on staff in prisons in 2006. That figure had risen to 9,204 last year the total number of assaults in prison had increased from 15,057 to 26,912 over the same time period. The type of violence has also changed, in 2006 12.3% of assaults were with a weapon, that figure was 25.1% last year. The chances of being hurt in prison, and hurt badly, have pretty much doubled.

One of the things that hasn't changed is that there is a prison population crisis where demand for prison places is on the very edge of outstripping supply. The End of Custody Licence (ECL) was introduced in June 2007 to help deal with prison overcrowding. Eligible prisoners were released up to 18 days before their release date. Does that sound at all familiar? Seventeen years later and successive Governments have failed to learn lessons and consider the impact of their policies on the prison population. They have wanted to make the vote winning, popular announcement without ever properly planning and accounting for the inevitable increase in the need for prison places. They have promised the world over and over, yet the current population pressures would indicate, fundamentally failed in their duty to the public to actually deliver. Will the current Government behave any differently? We have to hope so. Carl, Mark and I as your President and Vice-Presidents, have tried to get prisons on the political agenda and have been working hard to ensure that they remain in the public consciousness.

Our letter to the leaders of the main political parties prior to the general election, ably drafted by Carl, put prisons right at the top of the list of issues that the new Government would have to face. Having a credible public voice is, in my opinion, very important for the PGA. I hope that you will have noticed it is something that we have been working hard on and that have had some success. We have increased our capacity to respond to requests from the media by sharing the responsibility more widely but ensuring consistency of message, by agreeing it in advance. Our strategy has been about two things, the first, which I have already spoken about, is by providing comment on system wide issues in prisons so that the public understand the truly heroic efforts that are being made by PGA members all across the United Kingdom. Secondly, we are responding to media criticism of individual prisons, and by extension, sometimes individual PGA Members, by providing context and factual information. Criticism of HMP Wandsworth following the most recent HMIP report would be an example of this. This was in the absence of any response to such criticism in person by either the Minister responsible or any of the Senior Officials in HMPPS. I am fairly sure that the officials concerned could have ably defended, or at least contextualised, the criticism, but were not afforded the opportunity to do so for fear of criticising government policy. We will have to wait and see if this position changes. In the meantime, we will continue to speak out publicly for you.

Some of the early indications are good. The Prime Minister's promises of 'Fixing the Foundations' in his speech on 27th August bodes well at least. He knows the debt that is owed to you all for the amazing work that you have done. He said.

"During those recent riots, I made huge asks of the police and of the criminal justice system – People already stretched to the limit. They knew I was making big asks of them. And I'm not going to apologise for it. But let me tell you this – they delivered. They deserve our gratitude.... They deserve a government that trusts them. Supports them. And works with them. That is the sort of government we will be".

All members of the PGA are Leaders, we are all decision makers, and as such, our decisions are often subject to review or appeal. Sometimes they are upheld, sometimes not, but in order to lead we have to be free to use our judgement, professional expertise and the policy and guidance available to make them. Just because somebody else would have come to a different decision does not make one right and the other wrong. During the first few months as your President, I have seen a growing inability to accept this as a position. If I look out of the window in the morning and it looks like it might rain, and the weather forecast says there is a 50 percent chance of rain I might chose to take an umbrella to work. You might choose not to. If it doesn't rain does that make my decision wrong? Was it an unreasonable decision to make? Should I be removed from the position of making such decisions in the future? Or should we simply accept that it was a reasonable judgement based on the available information and that I was the right person to make the decision? This is what seems to be in some cases at the heart of some of the upward bullying cases that we continue to see of our members. They have made a reasonable decision within their authority, which others are simply unwilling or unable to accept. This leads to a perceived sense of grievance which is pursued through channels designed to support, in order to seek revenge or cause harm. We continue to see this and although HMPPS do not yet appear to have any clear guidance on how to manage it, they at least recognise what it is that we are describing. Indeed, I'm fairly sure they might have done something about it if they still controlled their own HR, rather than simply getting what they are given under "Functional Leadership" from MoJ HR Policy Teams. Your jobs are difficult enough as Prison Service leaders without having to second guess what 'hindsight test' may be applied to your reasonable decision making. We will continue to raise this issue on your behalf until the employer finds a way to deal with it.

The scale and scope of the issues that you all have to deal with as leaders in our prisons has also changed, but some of the expectation of you hasn't. Some of our staff and prisoners still think that you have more autonomy than you have, and they sometimes expect more of you than you are reasonably able to give. However, in many cases that doesn't prevent you from trying. Trying to support staff who are struggling to cope with the exceptional demands of their jobs, in some cases because they were unsuited for them in the first place. Trying to instil a sense of hope in circumstances that are evidently hopeless. Dealing with the death, sometimes self-inflicted of prisoners and colleagues, seeing the result of violent assault on staff and prisoners, helping colleagues through the huge variety of personal disasters that have

befallen them, illness, death, breakdown of relationships and so on. This is taking a personal and emotional toll on you and yet you carry on.

What Government needs to do

I don't think that the next year is going to offer much in the way of respite for us all. Government talks of accepting short term pain for long term good when you are working in an unprotected department that has been under so much pressure for so long fills me with a sense of dread. Let us hope that your delivery is not forgotten by the Government and that the "fixing of the foundations" involves proper investment in our Prison Services to enable us to cope with the prison population arising from changes to government policy. We need to have a proper debate about the purpose of Prison.

Unless Government are clear about the role and tasks of prisons, there is a risk that society will expect too much and be disappointed. In the process, we are likely to over-use the most intrusive and expensive punishment available to us - the medical equivalent of prescribing surgery for the common cold. We need to be clearer about what prison can actually do, for who, at what cost and with what risks.

The idea that punishment is simply the deprivation of liberty, and that the prison's purpose was not to punish further, suggests that putting a fence round a 5-star hotel and confining people to its luxurious facilities for the period of their sentence would be acceptable as a punishment. Prisoners are sent to prison as a punishment and their conditions have to be seen by society as amounting to a punishment - confinement within the perimeter, restricted contact with loved ones and family, adherence to a regular, but limited, regime, with no opportunity to use economic wealth to mitigate those austerities are obviously punishment. Too austere a regime with too much emphasis on deprivation and punishment carries risk. The first Victorian prison in the new style, "the model prison" of Pentonville, which had a regime based on separation and religious contemplation with very little freedom of movement or social contact produced, even for the Victorians, an unacceptable rate of mental breakdown.

There has been expectation from the earliest days of the use of imprisonment as a punishment that by interventions that take place in prison, prisoners will be "reformed" or "rehabilitated". The methods that have been used have varied over the years and depend very much on the prevailing views in society. We need to remember that for a prison to be successful it has to be survivable. This is a real issue - the number of suicides each year still indicates that surviving imprisonment is a real matter of life and death. Doing time, particularly very long sentences, is exceedingly difficult. To make imprisonment bearable we need to ensure there is sufficient variety and activity and sufficient social contact, both between prisoners and between prisoners and their friends and relatives outside to enable the process of imprisonment to seem endurable. Long periods of being locked up separately, no opportunities for recreation, lack of stimulation and lack of choice, all work against the smooth passage of time. Time is also always more bearable if there is a feeling of progress of things to be achieved and improvements secured. Education, the Arts, sport, ordinary social interaction are all necessary in some form to give this sense of progress and variety. All also need to take place in a built environment that isn't squalid or falling down around us. We know that good quality staff/ prisoner relationships improve rehabilitation prospects and are essential to our work. A prison which is a battle ground between prisoners and staff where prisoners feel rejected and mistreated is unlikely to provide the sort of fertile ground in which real changes can occur. It is instead much more likely to produce prisoners whose hatred of the authorities and resentment of what has happened to them makes them likely to come out feeling resentful, a resentment which may well be taken out on society and, as a result, create more victims. Prison regimes can only work if systems are seen to be fair and staff are seen to be reasonable and to be genuinely concerned about the individuals they lock up. Achieving this level of fairness, understanding and real concern for individuals without losing the necessary authority to control and maintain order is a difficult task for staff, it requires time to develop and staff that do it need to be properly rewarded if we are to retain them. Staff and prisoners need to be in a position where they feel safe if prisoners are to change for the better and staff are to help them.

Prisons do a complex job on behalf of society. Prison remains a very real punishment - doing time is difficult. Achieving success requires us to be realistic and to balance the competing pressures of punishment, order, security, humanity, in a way that is morally, publicly and politically defensible. Society also need to be prepared to pay for it.



Let us hope that, through investment, we can improve safety for staff and prisoners and reduce the level of violence in our prisons. But rest assured that whatever happens we will continue to do our best for you, our members and for those we manage and those in our custody. **Winston Churchill, offered some common-sense advice that I think applies well in our current position, "If you're going through hell, keep going".** Thank you and enjoy conference.

Newsletter Quiz Spring 2025

- 1) Into which sea does the river Jordan flow?
- 2) What is the zodiac sign for Gemini?
- 3) Which town on the south coast became a city as part of the millennium celebrations?
- 4) In the bible whose wife was turned into a pillar of salt?
- 5) Which writer was credited with the introduction of UK pillar boxes?
- 6) Which boxer was banned for taking a bite out of Holyfield's ear?
- 7) The Murray-Darling is the longest river in which country?
- 8) Why is a cheetah unlike other cats?
- 9) Who was known as the girl with the million dollar legs?
- 10) Who rowed through a storm in 1938 with her father to save 9 shipwrecked souls off the Farne Islands?
- 11) What size paper is half a A4 sheet?
- 12) Dublin is the capitol of which province?
- 13) After how many years do couples celebrate their Tin anniversary?
- 14) In May 2006 Belfast airport changed its name to honour which Irishman?
- 15) The Roman road Ermine Street ran from London to where?
- 16) What profession is followed by someone with FRCVS after their name?
- 17) What is the name of the sugar found in milk?
- 18) In Greek legend what is the name given to the creature half man half horse?
- 19) In which famous comic did Dan Dare fight the Mekons?
- 20) According to Mohs scale of hardness, what is the softest mineral?



From the Chair

Welcome to the spring edition of the RPGA newsletter produced by our editor Paul Laxton, and thanks to all those who contributed to this edition. As ever if you have a view, an experience or a bit of history that will interest our members send it to Paul who is always grateful to receive items. The last edition was excellent and we seem to go strength to strength with quality pieces.

It was pleasing to have a few members attending our AGM on the 17th November 2024 albeit via Zoom, and it was particularly good as we managed to recruit a new member to our committee, Barbara Treen, so welcome to you Barbara. Myself and Jan Thompson were re-elected to the committee and we look forward to taking the RPGA forward for the next 4 years. It was pleasing that our treasurer reported our funds to be in a healthy state which is down to good management. We have the usual recruitment of new members' issues and Harry Brett is now contacting retired Governors directly to offer membership, a job well done. One thing we always do at the AGM is to have a minute's silence to remember those former colleagues who have passed away in the last year. There were 16 members and 9 non-members on the list this time, many of them well-known names from the past.

There have been many reported problems for those serving in our prisons today with initiatives to reduce overcrowding, spending cuts and what must be stressful working conditions. For those of us who worked in the Service for many years it all sounds familiar but we never seem to catch up with what the job is supposed to be about and I wonder if we ever will.

It is early January, another year gone, a bright sunny day, 10 degrees on the Pennines and this following some awful snow and ice that has confined us to barracks for days on end. Poor us! Hope you have had the jabs and are in reasonable health, keep warm and keep safe, though by the time you read this it will be spring and we will be hoping for a warm summer, fat chance!

See you at the next AGM provisionally set for 13th October.

Graham Smith JP

Chairman RPGA

Robert (Bob) Duncan: Eulogy

For those who don't know me I am Stephen Duncan, Robert's son.

Firstly thank you all for coming today. This service was arranged at quite short notice and some of you I know have travelled a long distance. Today we gather to remember Robert, Bob, Duncan whose 84 years of life touched countless hearts and minds

Robert was born on 18th June 1940 in Cheam, Surrey where his Mother had gone to stay with her sister. But Robert grew up in Ramsgate. Like all of his generation, my father's childhood was overshadowed by war. But for him and his younger brother Leonard, World War Two had a particularly devastating impact, his father died a couple of months before his third birthday from injuries from a bombing raid. The two boys were brought up by their mother. She was dedicated to them and they remained devoted to her for the rest of their lives.

It's hard to sum up in a few words a life that spanned more than eight decades, a career that led him to run some of the biggest prisons in the country, and a home life that was in constant motion from London to Dover, Liverpool, Wakefield, Wellingborough, Leicestershire and Cambridgeshire, and finally back here to Kent. For anyone who wants the full details, there are still a few copies available of my father's autobiography – a slightly intimidating 392 pages

When he grew up and had his own children, my father could be a doting and indulgent parent. My sister, Nicola, remembers pestering him on car journeys to explain what the emergency exit ramps on motorways were for. In the end, probably fed up with his daughter's nagging, he drove off the motorway into the gravel to show what it was for - much to the surprise of our mother.

Maybe because he had enough pressure at his job, he didn't stress too much about parenting. We could both get away with things that our mother would never let us do. We are reminded of this from a picture of me, aged about three, clambering on top of my sisters bicycle to try and get to a bottle of weedkiller spray supposedly safely out of reach on the roof of our Wendy house. Probably to soak my sister with. Guess who took the picture instead of disciplining his son? Yes, it was my father.

Those moments were some light relief from a career which dominated everything else. As a devoted father, he was about to take Nicola to a university interview when a helicopter landed in the grounds of Gartree prison where he was the governor, in a brazen prison escape which made headlines on the national news. Two prisoners escaped, but were eventually recaptured. Our father had to rush into work. In his book, he writes about still taking Nicola to the interview. But he didn't manage to be in two places at the same time and our recollection is our mother took Nicola. An occasional theme of the book which is filled with wonderful stories, but it has to be said, was not rigorously fact-checked.

While he was at Wormwood Scrubs, London saw one of coldest winters in December 1981. The chairman of Queen's Park Rangers rang to say the club had an urgent problem. There was three feet of snow on the pitch ahead of a home match on Boxing Day, when few people were available to shift it. He asked if a party of prisoners and officers could come down and help the ground staff. He sent a coach to the prison to collect volunteers, who were rewarded with VIP seats at the match.

He was committed to staff and prisoners alike. He recognised the challenges that prison officers faced, and the demands that their jobs put on them, and he also worked to rehabilitate and improve

He heard about the child of a prison officer whose sight was deteriorating. He helped set up a braille unit that benefited staff, prisoners and a local school.

His commitment to public service won him the loyalty of many staff. As we were clearing out his study this week, we found a letter from a veteran prison officer who was retiring from Pentonville prison, where my father was governor. The officer said he was proud to have worked at Pentonville for 30 years, where he had seen many different governors. Some of them, he said, were good, and some were less so. "Mr Duncan," he wrote, "I can tell you that I would follow you into war."

My father was known to his family and friends as not being the most sociable, which was I think a reputation he slightly cultivated. But he could be very gregarious when he wanted, and very good host, as long as somebody else took care of the catering. When I was growing up his annual Christmas staff party at our home was one of the highlights of our year. My mother and later on with my sister and myself would spend the week before preparing the food and setting up the house. And in his retirement in Kent his summer birthday parties were great occasions, with Enid providing a marvellous spread. And I thank Enid for looking after my father here in Kent and especially recently during his ill health. We will hear a tribute from Enid shortly.

Finally thank you all again for being here today to remember and celebrate Robert's life.

STEPHEN DUNCAN

A few words from Enid, Robert's Partner

Many of you may wonder how our paths crossed.

Robert and I first met when he lived with his Mother and Brother Leonard in Station Approach Road Ramsgate. We both attended the Congregational Church and along with his brother and members of my family we attended the Youth Club there.

Robert was in the Scouts where my Father, Ron Baker was Scout Master. Robert always looked up to him as a Father figure as sadly Robert and Leonard lost their father when they were very young. Often on Sunday afternoons, Robert would be invited to join us for tea. I think my Mum had a soft spot for him.

When Robert moved to Dover we did still keep in touch and have occasional meet ups.

Among the things Robert liked to hoard, I came across a letter I had written to him dated 30th April 1968, informing him that I had been in hospital having had my tonsils removed on the 18th April. Two weeks later I was back in hospital having to have my Appendix removed. How he knew about that I don't know, but assume there might have been a bit of my mum's intervention) and what a surprise I had when he came walking in the ward at Margate Hospital on that Saturday afternoon. He loved writing letters and keeping in touch with people and this he continued to do up until a few weeks before he died.

During our times apart there were occasional letters and also brief meet ups if he was coming anywhere near Kent.

My Dad died April 5th 2008 and going from news I had of Robert previously, he was Prison Governor at Pentonville Prison. The only thing I thought of doing was to write to the Prison asking if they could help me locate him as I had some personal news I wanted to pass on to him. They forwarded me his home address (which I wasn't expecting because of breach of confidentiality) and also his e-mail address to which I wrote and informed him of my Dad's passing on the 5th April. He got in touch with me and asked for me to forward details of the funeral and he said he would try and get down.

It was lovely to see him at the Thanet

Crematorium on the 18th April. It was at the Wake that we had the chance to have a catch up and I learnt that he had sadly lost his wife to Cancer and he learnt I had recently been divorced, No need for me to say what happened next -an old friendship had been rekindled. He made several visits to my home in Ramsgate and as he was thinking of relocating from Cambridgeshire anyway, he thought coming back to Kent was not a bad idea. He was soon looking for a house in Thanet and settled on one in Dumpton Park Drive, Broadstairs where he wanted me to join him and set up home together. He was happy to be back by the sea. We had no intention of marrying at the time, although he did ask me on a few occasions but I thought it was going along ok as it was. It was a large house for just the two of us and so it was not long before we hosted leaders of students attending the Kent School of English. We spent great times having discussions round the meal table and talking about Robert's job and also them wanting to learn about our Royal Family. Some of these leaders returned many times and we formed good relationships with them and one in particular even brought his wife and two children over to meet us and although we didn't host after Covid, he still came to visit when he was over with his group in Broadstairs. He actually saw Robert in December. Lovely memories,

Since being together Robert has accepted my family as his too, my son Michael and his wife Jody and my daughter Ashley. Michael and Jody had just had my first grandchild Sam who was only a few weeks old when Robert saw him at my Dad's funeral. Then Sofia was born and Robert loved them and shared my Grandma duties with me. Looking after them, taking them out and later meeting them from school and watching them develop into who they are now. Along with the rest of my family, brother, sister, their families and cousins, he welcomed them all giving help and advice if needed.

He enjoyed helping people out and if he could help make a difference to people's lives, he would and he did. He also supported various Charities giving regularly to the Kent & Sussex Air Ambulance Service and the Salvation Army along with supporting children in Uganda as well as helping out friends and colleagues. His needs were not great, he enjoyed helping others.

In our time together we enjoyed Trips to the Theatre him sometimes taking me to

ones he didn't really want to see, the one that stands out most to me was the Abba Musical. He couldn't understand why I liked it that much, but as a surprise present he took me . This music was going to go on and haunt him because when they went to the Dementia group and the group had to decide on a song they could sing at the end of each session it was an Abba song. When I went to meet him at the end of the session he was never singing it but at least patting his hand on his legs, trying to enjoy it. We had some lovely breaks away, our favourite I think being our trips to Croatia where on a couple of occasions we were joined by my choir friend Gloria and her husband and my sister and her Partner. Unfortunately our last holiday abroad was to Croatia in 2019. Covid then came along and halted our holidays abroad.

Robert had to get used to being invaded by many friends and family on my birthdays because he was to learn that I always wanted to celebrate my birthdays at home with friends having open house and he had the task of continuously serving teas, coffees, drinks and cake to everyone, he never complained, I think he actually enjoyed it, but the last two year were difficult for him and Sofia had to take over his duties. He wasn't feeling too well for his own Birthday in June, but he knew I would I would want to celebrate it and make it special for him, so he did sit in the Summerhouse and let us present him with a cake and candles, which he did blow out - (only 3 not the 84) and singing happy birthday to him.

Christmas we thought may be difficult, especially as all his family were in Dubai, but we knew he clearly wanted to stay at home, and who could blame him, so my family came to our house and everyone mucked in 9 of us altogether and we have some lovely photos of him trying to enjoy his dinner, just to make us happy. By this time he was losing his appetite, not really interested in food and it was quite an effort for him to eat. However he joined us at the table and we had an enjoyable Christmas dinner together, and then taking part in the present opening afterwards , all the time him probably wishing the day was over.

He had been unwell for quite a while, having various health issues and then being diagnosed in February 2024 with Alzheimers and Dementia and although his dementia was not too bad, it was all his other issues that contributed mainly to his death, having chronic kidney failure. He made it clear that he wanted to stay at home and not go in Hospital and because of that, plans were put in place for me to care for him at home and with the help of the District Nurses and in the latter week, carers and end of life team, I was pleased I could carry out his wishes and keep him at home, and although the last few weeks were difficult, with the help of my family, who sometimes got calls to come and help, we achieved his wishes. I was so grateful I was with him when he took his last breath at 7.40 am Sunday morning. He is now at peace and 'thank you Robert for being part of our lives.'

A Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration for the life of

Robert (Bob) Stephen Duncan

18th June 1940 – 2nd February 2025



Thanet Crematorium
13th February 2025 @3pm

Conducted by Canon Philip Musindi

Order of Service

Entrance music: Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring by Johann Sebastian Bach

Welcome: Canon Philip Musindi

Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we gather here today to remember the life of Robert and celebrate the life that he enjoyed here on earth and to thank you for each precious moment and memory that we have had with him. His life has touched so many, in so many different ways. We pray that your peace and presence will be upon us during this time and we pray this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen

Hymn:

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; To his feet thy tribute bring; Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, Who like me his praise should sing? Alleluia, alleluia, Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour To our fathers in distress; Praise him, still the same for ever, Slow to chide, and swift to bless: Alleluia, alleluia, Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us, Well our feeble frame he knows, In his hands he gently bears us, Rescues us from all our foes. Alleluia, alleluia, Widely as his mercy flows.

Angels help us to adore him; Ye behold him face to face; Sun and moon, bow down before him, Dwellers all in time and space: Alleluia, alleluia, Praise with us the God of grace

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

Bible Readings: 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Eulogy read by Stephen Duncan

Tribute to Robert from Enid - read by Jenny Lambert

Poem:

Death is nothing at All — Canon Henry Scott-Holland

Prayers by Canon Philip

The Lord's Prayer (said by all)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hymn: How great thou art

O LORD my God! When I in awesome wonder Consider all the works Thy hand hath made;
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder, Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee, How
great Thou art! How great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee, How
great Thou art! How great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander And hear the birds sing sweetly in the
trees; When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur, And hear the brook, and feel the
gentle breeze

Chorus

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing, Sent Him to die - I scarce can take it in:
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin

Chorus

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation And take me home - what joy shall fill my
heart! Then shall I bow in humble adoration, And there proclaim, my God how great Thou
art!

Stuart Hine 1899-1989

Prayers by Canon Philip

Commendation:

Final blessing

Exit music : Nimrod by Edward Elgar

Donations in lieu of flowers to Butler Trust via the funeral directors

**THE NEXT AGM OF THE RETIRED PRISON GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD ON: MONDAY 13
OCTOBER 2025 AT 13.30 HOURS. ANY MEMBER WISHING TO PUT A RESOLUTION BEFORE THE AGM
SHOULD E-MAIL IT TO JAN THOMPSON AT:**

janthompson370@gmail.com. PLEASE ENSURE YOU GET A SECONDER.

THE VENUE WILL BE THE DELTA HOTELS NOTTINGHAM BELFRY NG8 6PY

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

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

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

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



SOUTHAMPTON

The staff on 'C wing' took great trouble to point out the windows at the end of the wing which George Blake had escaped through; it was not just related as a historical fact but more as a kind of honour that it had happened on their wing.

The other event was one of the band of the Rolling Stones was convicted of drug offences and sentenced to prison. Keith Richards came to the Scrubs. The Governor personally arranged for him to by-pass reception procedures and for him to be located immediately in the prison hospital where his reception would take place and he would be under the direct care of the Senior Medical Officer. I was puzzled so asked why the exception. The Governor replied. 'Do you realize how many of

the staff here have teenage daughters who will all be pressing their father to obtain a lock of his hair; he would end up bald. He also has an appeal pending, and rumour had it that he was likely to be successful. I do not want him leaving here and facing the media like a scalped Indian!

I had arranged to go to Covent Garden with a friend to see an evening performance of The Bartered Bride by Smetana, so I left the prison early for once. I usually left my digs early and was only back mid-evening. When I entered my room to get cleaned up and ready, I sensed there appeared to be more luggage there than when I had left. Pondering this I noticed the bedclothes move then discovered a man was sleeping in my room and in my bed! By now he was awake and asked what I was doing here and was that my luggage. I advised him I had been already occupying the room for a fortnight, and what was he doing there. He said he worked nights and had hired a room to sleep during the day. Management was summoned; they offered no explanation but said they would find the other gentleman a different room immediately and would I care to have a cup of coffee in the lounge whilst arrangements were made, and the room cleaned, and the bed changed. Whether this had happened prior and the room tidied before I returned, I do not know. At least 50% was knocked off my bill!

At this at stage I was still naïve as to how the bureaucracy of the Prison Department operated so when the deputy governor approached me one day and said I had been selected for a new experimental course at the staff college to be run by psychologists, I said I am busy here, so I do not wish to go. He responded; you have to go you have been selected. So I went. The introduction made it clear that there were no rules, we had to decide on the task as a group and come up with solutions, the psychologist was available to monitor progress but not to offer any further advice. Well, the group went round in circles. There was another member of the course who was also a rugby fan; I said to him, there is rugby international on TV tomorrow afternoon why don't we disappear to a pub and watch. We can always claim we were endeavoring to come to the task set from a fresh angle. John and I spent a pleasant afternoon over a couple of pints and some good rugby. Nobody seemed to miss us and nothing was ever raised about our absence. John eventually immigrated to Canada and became quite senior in the Canadian Prison Service. Having survived the above course and gained little, at least we protected other colleagues as the course never saw the light of day again.

Within a few months of the above, I took a phone call from Colonel Jim (as he was known to everybody) at Head Office. "You went to University Bob", "yes, we are arranging to send some governor grades back to University to undertake the postgraduate diploma in Social Studies." "So get on to your old university and book a place for the coming year. Let me know how you get on, as we want to fill our quota!" so I applied to The London School of Economics and they arranged an interview. They gave me a place straight away. On the way out I noticed a colleague loitering there as if pondering his future. I greeted him, "ah Bob he said have you got a minute?" The gist of the matter was he had acquired a place at his previous University, Southampton but really wanted to go to the LSE, but had been told the last

place on the course had been allocated to me. Though there are many attractions to London it is also very expensive, and I had already experienced 3 years at the LSE and thought a new experience would be good, so I suggested we each get in touch with both universities and state that we want to swap places. Surprisingly, both were most cooperative, and so that is what happened. The only bit of the Jigsaw I did not know about was that in my case there was an added ulterior motive by the powers that be in Head Office. The Education Officer at Styal women's prison near Manchester had requested and been granted a year's sabbatical to undertake further study. So they required a temporary substitute and had earmarked Jane for the post as the new Head at Dover was now well bedded in. So my relationship with Jane which had developed into a prospective more formal situation was put on hold. She was provided with accommodation at Styal in the quarters there which were flats. The Governor there was Miss McWilliam, ex-army and a stickler for discipline, and was strict on no males being anywhere near the quarters; so on any visits, I made to Styal had to be secretive and I had to be smuggled in. This was by the fact that Kate, the only female on my initial course was also now on the staff there. Jane got to know her, and we became family friends. So in late September 1968, I departed to Southampton, where I had arranged bed and breakfast accommodation at 5 pounds a week with a Probation Officer, which much less than I would be paying in London.

In 1967 the LCC Staff Association announced it was hiring a charter flight to the USA and Leonard advised me as he knew I was in correspondence with a young lady there. So we signed up to take advantage of an organized flight. The problems then occurred. First the Hasbrouck's' got in touch to say that their daughter had eloped with some fellow to Columbia and would not communicate with them, but we should still come and stay with them. There was then a financial crisis due to a 'speculative run-on gold', which resulted in any traveler from England to America could only take £50 in cash. I had discovered you could buy tickets for the 'Greyhound buses' which traversed the whole of the USA, so I bought two books of vouchers in advance. I had also kept in touch with another female colleague from university days and had married and gone to live in the suburbs of Chicago, so I had written in advance to see if we could meet up while over there. The trip we had booked included two nights in a hotel in New York and two nights at the end of the three weeks. We set off on Monday 2nd September by driving to relatives in Kenley in Surrey and left the car there and the daughter drove us to the airport. The plane had 'stopover' in Canada, probably for refueling, but was of little use to us as all you could see were fir trees which surrounded the whole of the airport. We eventually arrived in New York at 10 pm that evening. We did all the tourist things in New York, including the Empire State Building and a couple of museums. We also had instructions from Jane's brother's wife (an American) to visit her brother. We did after mastering the complexity of the New York subway system, but he was not very interested and did not even invite us in. However, we had another address to visit and he was most hospitable, and we spent an afternoon there chatting and drinking. He had been in England during the war so was very pro-British. He had also on return been a New York policeman for many years and took great trouble to show us all his guns.

We then went to Washington and it was so beautiful, and calm compared to New York. We took in the Lincoln Memorial, which is a place of tranquility, a tour of the White House, and Capitol Hill. It was now time to get a Greyhound to Wethersfield, Connecticut and meet up with the Hasbrouck parents. They could not have been more welcoming, and we spent a wonderful three days with them catching up on all the news such as it was. I remember the breakfasts in particular, when a plate of pancakes, 20 high would appear along with Maple Syrup and honey's, just for us. My postcard home to mum said they had fed us like lords! We also made a trip to Boston, famous for its tea party battle which was in protest to the British Tea Act, when the tea ships were all boarded and the tea thrown in the sea. As further reprisals ensued from the British Government it led untimely to the War of Independence. It still is a large seaport and fishing area, and a very pleasant place to visit. Autumn appears to arrive early in Connecticut and all the trees were turning red, yellow and gold, it was very beautiful. It was time for us to move on and meet up with Donna & Manley (Rip) Olsby in Greeley, Colorado. How arrangements were made I do not recall, but we were driven to the bus station and caught our Greyhound Bus. We had several destinations, Buffalo, to stop off and see the Niagara Falls, Chicago for Fort Wayne to see my friends and then Denver in Colorado.

On one stage, I wanted the night bus so we could save on hotel costs. That caused an argument with the booking clerk, as I wanted the night bus I think to Chicago. He said it was full, but we could still catch a daytime one. I replied that the terms and conditions said if a coach was full you had to put on an extra one. In the end, I won, and there were probably 6 of us on it. The relief driver was not pleased with the situation as at every rest stop, instead of letting us stay on the bus and snooze, he ordered everyone off and locked the bus. The USA is huge and once out of any city the roads are dead straight for miles, with fields of crops or cattle grazing mile after mile. So the journey got pretty tedious, and the only interesting diversion was whenever the coach stopped to pick up some Amish travelers. The Amish were from a traditional Church fellowship with Swiss German Anabaptist origins and some had settled in the mid states. They were known for their simple living, plain dressing and reluctance to adapt to using the convenience of modern technology. They would never own a car, so used the Greyhound buses as their means of transport.

We had really enjoyed our visit to the Niagara Falls and on the USA side had descended to the lower level so that we were looking up at the cascading water and getting wet from mist thrown up by the crashing water. We then decided we should also view it from the Canadian side, so preceded to the bridge connecting the two sides, only to find we had to pay the equivalent of a £1 each to enter Canada, whilst the Americans went free. I thought that was a cheek as Canada was a British colony, and it was another drain on our tight budget. The Canadian side gives a very different perspective, especially the real power of the water crashing down the falls. We had a brief spell in Chicago but were not overly impressed as it was all high-rise buildings and bustling traffic.

We eventually reached Denver, a pleasant town, and were met by Donna and taken for a meal and then to their home. They later took us on a car trip into the San Juan Mountains, which were beautiful with a variety of plant life and wild animals. We also made a trip to a preserved Indian Reservation north of Denver. Our stay with Donna was pleasant and friendly and I encouraged her to make contact with her parents, which she claimed she would. We then had the long journey back to New York which is a complete blank in my head! On arrival back at our hotel, we discovered there was a delay to our flight back to England due to our aircraft having developed an engine problem. As the hotel did not serve food, we had to dip into our last cash to eat and contact home about the delay.

Before I left Dover, the Deputy Governor had passed the next Promotion Board and was waiting for a posting. All governor grades now attended the Governors' morning meeting at which, along with other matters, he dealt with incoming mail. Every time there was an official letter from the Department, the Governor would turn towards Bernard and with a light smile would observe, 'I wonder if this could be, you're posting', Bernard would sit up in anticipation. This went on for at least four weeks before the awaited letter came posting Bernard to Send Detention Centre. When he took up the post, his quarter was not immediately available, so he resided in the bachelor quarters, which were close to the parade square. Each morning all the lads had to assemble on the parade square where a formal roll check was taken. The Principal Officer in a loud voice called them to order, as there was always a hubbub of loud chatter. Bernard must have had a quiet word with the Orderly Officer, for the next morning he heard no significant noise. He rushed to get dressed in a panic fearing all the lads had escaped. He discovered that the parade had been moved to the far side of the Parade ground and everything was being done in almost whispers. Not the normal tone for a Detention Centre.

I enjoyed my year at Southampton. It was much more relaxed and spacious than the premises at LSE. In addition to the theoretical component and tutorials, there were two long attachments of about 5 months each. My first was to a young offender psychiatric residential centre run by a renowned Psychiatrist. I attended all therapeutic sessions but also had an outreach role to support those who had been discharged. To facilitate that I was allocated a Morris Minor Traveler, which from memory I believe you had to change lights by foot as well as the clutch which I never got used to. I always then had to drive back to the Unit and park it, and drive to my digs in my car. None that I supervised had to be recalled during my time with them, which was very satisfying. One patient at the centre had become too difficult for them to handle due to his disruptive and violent behaviour; so he had to be sent to a closed adult

unit. I was asked to accompany him on the transfer. The contrast was vast, he was bundled out of the car, and virtually frog-marched to his accommodation with hardly a word of welcome or any kind support offered by his new 'carers'. I was quite shocked.

The other attachment was to Southampton Probation Service, which was a well-run, caring and efficient service at that time. The Probation Officer I was shadowing had a car crash a week after I arrived and remained off duty sick throughout. I was told to take over his caseload and ask questions if stuck. I had not realized how many different aspects there were to a probation officer's work, but I faced all of them whilst there including court work. One morning in magistrate's court I was there in support of the Home Circumstance's Report I had written. The defence solicitor asked me to state my name, which I had already done earlier when I first entered the witness box. So I just said Mr. Duncan, he responded in a sarcastic tone, I do not believe you are the only Mr. Duncan in England, Full names! so I replied I agree I am probably not, but I am the only one standing here with the report in my hand that you wish to ask questions about. The Magistrate had a small smile on his face but asked if I would indulge the solicitor by repeating my full name.

Courts are funny places at times; one morning there was a young American in the dock for allegedly stealing a rowing boat in the docks. His defence was that he had no money, and the embassy was being no help, so he took the rowboat to get to the larger ships to see if any of them would offer to get me back to the USA. I did not actually steal it; it is still there; I just borrowed it. The Magistrates pondered over all this, and in conclusion, said they found him guilty as charged but would only fine him £50. But that is the whole issue he said, I cannot get home, have no money, now I have to pay you £50, where am I going to get that. Magistrate said, "well, ask if the court poor box has enough in it to pay your fine!"

Renault cars were imported through Southampton and there was a large dock area where they were held prior to onward transport. The low wooden fence was broken in places, and all the cars had the keys left in them. Two young boys (11& 12) when bored one day, walked in through the broken fence and discovered it was easy to get into the cars and to even start the engines although their legs barely reached the pedals. So they simply played dodgem cars and crashed several into each other, causing thousands of pounds of damage. The court put them on Probation, under my supervision. When I made my first home visit after the sentence, I met the father for the first time. He was a large man and towered over me, he also worked in the Docks. We chattered for a bit, and then he suddenly said, those two need some discipline. I agreed, asked what he had in mind, 'me' he said, 'I cannot do it, I thought that was your role.' I was a bit taken aback, but we talked it through and made tentative plans. In the period I was with the Probation Service they did not offend again.

The Probation office had arranged to take 20 young offenders on probation for whom they felt it appropriate, 10 of each sex, on a week's residential experience in an isolated Accommodation Centre that catered for such events. It was cited in an isolated sunken field somewhere in Devon. I had agreed that I would be happy to be one of the four Probation Officers overseeing the event. What I did not know until the day of the departure was the officer off sick was one who would be driving the hired minibus. One of the others suddenly said 'it looks like they are all going to turn up; Bob you had better go and collect the minibus.' I was a bit nonplussed but suddenly realized the whole trip depended on me. There appeared to be no rules or regulation about driving a minibus or non-I was aware of, so just got on with it. I was anxious about the responsibility but once we were out of the city traffic after a few miles you seem to drop into a rhythm and adjust to the extra size of the vehicle. Anyway, we arrived safely and ensured all the provisions and other equipment was ferried to the living quarters before it got dark.

The accommodation was 2 large dormitories and two smaller ones with two bathrooms in between so that the leaders could form a buffer between the sexes. The noise level amongst the youngsters at bedtime went on and on: we determined to tire them out the next day. As we were in the middle of nowhere there was a need to make a trip into town for essential provisions such as milk and bread. On the first two days, the two female officers undertook this, whilst we organized a long walk or organized games. It was then suggested that the men should go to town to give a break. When we returned to

camp there was an eerie atmosphere; we found the youngsters milling about outside but giving us a strange look. We carried the fresh provisions in and found our female companions closeted in their room. Apparently, the youngsters had 'gone wild' and would not heed anything the ladies told them. They said it was really like a scene out of William Golding's classic novel 'Lord of the Flies' where a well-behaved party of schoolboys behaviour turns more primitive and almost like murderous savages.

We ensured that supervision was more pro-active from then on. Also, we knew that they all wanted to go to the funfair at a nearby seaside resort, and made it clear that was at risk if such behaviour repeated itself. However, it was an insightful lesson into how they might behave when unsupervised and very different from the more obedient and respectful image displayed at interviews in a probation office.

During my period at Southampton, other matters had not stood still, and Jane and I had agreed we would get married over the weekend when I finished the course. It was traditional to serve at two establishments prior to being considered for promotion. Having had a year's break from Dover (much as I loved being there), and the fact that there was a new governor, Frank who was a bit eccentric and thought that all the lads should play table tennis.; it was time to be in touch with the Personnel Officer re a posting: I advised him of the crucial dates and that I needed to know in advance as we needed to make plans. Waddilove was a rather insipid man with a handshake like a wet lettuce, so I knew I would have to badger him. So in the last 3 months at Southampton I phoned frequently only to be told it each time, it was in hand. The decision to move on having been made, looking back at my time at Dover, both Governors had treated me as an almost equal and confided in me on many matters. I kept in touch with the colleague who was also posted to Dover as we proceeded on our careers. About 15-17 years later he asked if he could tell me something, he said, 'I doubt that you know how much I resented you as you were always both Governors' favourite, there, he said I have got that off my chest, and feel better for it.' We did, however, remain friends. I had been treated so well by both Governors that I had learned a lot that I could use in my career later.

BOB DUNCAN

PART TEN of BOB's MEMOIRS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN ISSUE No 93, AUTUMN 2025

Editor's Note: On the pages preceding this extract you will have read the Order of Service, the Eulogy, and the words of his partner, Enid, for Bob Duncan who died on 2 February this year, aged 84. Another gubernatorial legend has gone to the great gate lodge in the sky. Bob was also one of the founding fathers of the PGA, and a stalwart of the RPGA. He died peacefully with his partner Enid by his bedside.

Bob was not well enough to produce his 'Your Letters' column in the last issue of the Newsletter. So Issue No 90 marked the his 46th consecutive, and final column, which now sadly dies with him. Bob was the heartbeat of the Newsletter. However, Bob will live on in the Newsletter through the extracts from his voluminous memoirs that are in the safe hands of Roger Outram, and will be winging their way to the editor biannually for some time yet. I am advised that the memoirs are 392 pages long so even with judicious editing by Roger, they should comfortably last the decade. A fitting tribute.

If any member is able to provide a more succinct obituary for Bob I would be very much obliged. It would feel a significant omission if his long life of service was not marked in this way. I realise it will be a difficult task to draw everything together as Bob served at so many establishments. The upside of that is that so many of us had the privilege of working under him at some point in our careers.

My own favourite story is of Bob commandeering a bus to get to work at HMP Wakefield after he had been forced to set out to walk on a snowy winter's day. They don't make them like that any more.

PAUL LAXTON



Some Prison Service Developments since July 2024

The arrival of the Labour Government in July 2024 appears to be having a number of potentially interesting developments for the Prison Service. As most readers will know – the Service has been struggling with rising prisoner numbers, staff shortages and financial pressures – as well as the many issues created by prisoner misbehaviour – the use of drones to deliver drugs for example. Some of us might reflect – what changes over the decades!

One of the more unusual appointments in the first days of the Labour Government was that of James Timpson as Prisons Minister – with a seat in the House of Lords. Lord Timpson had extensive experience of employing ex-prisoners in his family businesses and is therefore the first Prisons Minister with considerable knowledge of the opportunities and problems of working with prisoners.

The new Government was faced with the crisis of the Service running out of space and agreed to early release considerable numbers of prisoners in the autumn. Many of those are – perhaps not surprisingly but unfortunately - already back in custody.

The new Government also had to face the unexpected summer riots and the consequences for the whole of the criminal justice system in dealing with the considerable number of extra cases coming before the courts – many receiving custodial sentences. Having sufficient prison places clearly went up the political priority list.

Towards the end of the year, the Government set up a Review of Sentencing Policy under the former Justice Secretary, David Gauke. That was given wide terms of reference and asked to report in the first half of 2025. The possibility of trying to match sentencing to the capacity of the system was clearly being taken account of.

The Government also set up an independent review of the Criminal Courts under Sir Brian Leveson. This also had wide terms of reference looking to find some way of dealing with a huge backlog of cases – and for the Prison Service a huge number of remand prisoners.

Early in 2025, a further review was set up – under the former Chief Inspector of Prisons Dame Anne Owers to review the “handling of prison capacity”. Towards the end of 2024, the Government had committed to publishing annually a statement of prison capacity.

Meanwhile the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee had started hearings to examine “Prison Culture, Governance, Leadership and Staffing”. The PGA was involved in giving evidence to the Committee.

Many of us have seen new administrations make an energetic start on the problems of the prisons – this does feel a little different and in some ways more radical than previous attempts.

But the proof of the pudding - as we all know – will be in the outcomes – what is recommended and then crucially what the politicians decide to do – if anything.

Brendan O’Friel

February 2025

Being Duty Governor

Graham Mumby-Croft



I have followed the series of articles written by Peter Atkinson about some of the more notorious prison escapes over the years, with interest and fascination. Thank you to Peter for a well-researched, well-written and very interesting contribution. In reading Peter's piece, I did however find myself reminiscing about the escapes that I personally had some involvement with, not always actually being present at the event, but certainly serving at an establishment when an escape has taken place, and being involved in all the work that such an event causes for staff at almost every level. As I thought about this it occurred to me that the most memorable of these events coincided with my being Duty Governor, so I thought I would write some of them down, and through the pages of The Newsletter share some of the "interesting things" that happened to me whilst in the role of Duty Governor.

There are two escapes that immediately spring to mind and both occurred at HMP Stocken, where I served from 1991 to 1997, during which time as a Governor 4 I worked one weekend in three, and for that weekend I was the Duty Governor from lunchtime on Friday through to handover at the Governor's morning meeting on the following Monday morning. As you will appreciate, as a busy Cat C establishment the weekends at Stocken could be very active, as for long periods over the weekend the entire establishment would be unlocked, and this included on Sunday mornings when after breakfast the whole establishment was unlocked and allowed out onto the sports field for open association.

It so happened that on my last weekend as Duty Governor before being posted out of Stocken my Sunday peace was shattered by an urgent message over the radio stating that an escape was in progress on or from the sports field. Fearing that I could be facing a potential mass escape, and the potential career impact that could have, I ran from one end of the prison to the other to arrive at a scene of organised chaos, as the sports field was cleared of prisoners who were being returned to their cells for a full roll check. The Orderly Officer, a very experienced and capable PO, had taken charge of the situation and the Control Room had already alerted the local police of the situation.

Some months prior to this escape Stocken had, along with most other Cat C establishments, had its perimeter security upgraded with the addition of steel plates fitted to the bottom of the mesh fence panels. This measure had been implemented nationally following a series of escapes or attempted escapes that had been instigated by cutting the wire, sometimes from inside, and sometimes from outside. The upgrade was supposed to prevent this from happening. At Stocken the perimeter fence was huge, as I recall somewhere in the region of 2.5km in total, and this included the extensive sports field at the rear end of the site. The whole site was sloping from front to back and if you were standing at the top end of the sports field, nearest to the wings, the bottom of the field was some way below you, so that only the top meter of the 5m fence was visible.

As I walked down the site on that Sunday and came close to the point of the escape, it became clear what had happened and subsequent investigation revealed the details. Overnight on the Saturday/early on Sunday, a group of men had driven up a track on the farm that bordered the prison estate.

They had then removed a gate from the field boundary and lodged this against the prison fence, giving them access to the mesh area above the steel sheeting. They had then cut a large flap in the mesh, but left it in place, and then waited. In the morning, before the field was opened up to allow prisoners to access the area, a patrol was detailed to carry out a fence inspection. Sadly the person who carried this inspection out on that day failed to notice that the fence had been cut, and because of the steel sheeting, could not see that outside the fence was a group of men and vehicles, waiting.

Once the all-clear had been given from the Fence Patrol the prison was unlocked and staff lined the route to direct the prisoners to the sports field. Amongst the first onto the field were 3 men who had only been transferred to Stocken two weeks before, as part of an overcrowding draft from HMP Bedford. As soon as these three got onto the field they made their way very quickly to the bottom corner of the site, which was out of sight of staff, who were perhaps not so quick to take up their positions as they might have been. On arriving at the point where the fence had been cut, the prisoners signalled to those on the outside, who immediately placed the gate back up against the fence, fixed hooks and rope to the top of the flap they had cut, and pulled the flap open bending it down to the outside. The prisoners then legged each other up into the gap, and they were out, into the waiting vehicles, and gone. The whole escape took 2/3 minutes: my part as Duty Governor would take up much of the next 14 hours.

This, of course, included the dreaded call to the Governor, who at the time was Ron Curtis, to tell him that we now had three fewer prisoners than we had started the day with. It also included liaising with the entire Rutland Constabulary, both of whom attended the scene, later bolstered by backup bought in from Leicestershire, led by an Inspector. The day culminated later that evening, in fact considerably later in the evening, when I took a phone call from the Duty Officer at HQ, to inform me that a cameraman from ITV would be coming to the prison to take pictures and details from the prisoners' records to put out on local news bulletins. When he arrived the prison was already in Night State so he had to film the mugshots and details as I held them up against the glass screen in the gate lodge.

The second call that I received was from a member of the public who had picked up on the news that there had been an escape from Stocken, naming those involved and asking me if it was true. Not really knowing who I was dealing with, in my best diplomatic way I said that all I could confirm was that the news reports were correct and that indeed three men had escaped earlier that day. The caller then threw me the curve ball that at that point added the final element to what had already been an horrendous day, when he said, "You do know that it was me that grassed them up and put them inside, and they have escaped to come and kill me?" He then spoke to someone else in the room and said, "I'm on the phone to the prison, it is them, what are we going to do?" She then went hysterical, and he hung up the phone. Because the call had come in via the control room there was no way of tracing the call and so I contacted the police and spoke to the Duty Inspector and in the great tradition of buck-passing, once I had passed this on to him, it then became his problem, and not mine. I was ready for my bed.

On the subject of buck-passing, on one occasion I had a Police Superintendent do exactly the same thing to me, and as he did it he made no bones about the fact that this was exactly what he was doing. Nottinghamshire police called the prison and asked to speak to the Duty Governor and the switchboard put them through to me. The caller then introduced himself as Superintendent So-and-So of Nottinghamshire Police Vice Squad. He then asked me if I knew a certain person who he then described, and named, and I confirmed to him that I did indeed know that person. He then asked how I knew the person in question.

I told him that he was the Prison's Chaplain. "Why do you ask?" I said, to which he replied, "we picked this gentleman up on a raid in Nottingham's Red Light District last night and we are holding him whilst we check out his details, and he did indeed tell us that he was a prison chaplain". I then asked, "What are you going to do with him?" to which he replied, "Nothing. We will give him a talking-to and release him. What you chose to do is up to you, as he is your problem now".

My response of, "Cheers mate, thanks for that" was answered with a chuckle.

Yet another awkward telephone conversation with the Governor. "Governor I have just been on the phone with Nottinghamshire Police, you'll never guess what the Chaplain's been up to now? It seems he has opened up a side line in saving fallen women, but only for himself." This also backfired on me later, because the Chaplain believed that I must have put a good word in for him with the Superintendent, that resulted in him being released without charge. In his subsequent disciplinary hearing he named me as a character witness and it took a long interview with the Chaplain General for me to explain that the Chaplain really was not my friend, and I had no intention of acting as his "friend".

The second escape at Stocken that sticks in my mind was one that took place overnight, for which fortunately I was not the Duty Governor, however it is a really good story.

Stocken was originally built as a YOI in the early 1980s from a design first laid down in the 1960s. On completion it was opened as a Male Cat C. In the original cell blocks the windows were what were known as Crittall Windows, an all-steel window set in a concrete frame. The window was a number of glazed full-height panels each about 100mm wide and the two outside panes were opening casements.

In about 1994/5 a prisoner decided that he could escape from his cell through the window and set about collecting all that he needed to achieve this. He devised a plan that involved using a wet towel and a piece of wood as a windless to pull the window bars apart far enough for him to squeeze through. To aid his passage through the opening he planned to save up his butter ration, strip naked and literally butter himself up and slip easily through the gap. He also planned to manufacture himself some "hand hooks" in the workshop where he worked, that would allow him to scale the perimeter fence. Once he had everything he needed he decided on the night and set himself up ready to go. He was just about ready to start when he heard staff movement in the corridor outside his cell, so jumped into his bed just as an eye appeared at the spyhole looking in on him.

Once this had passed he began his plan, but as with all plans it started to go wrong quite soon: however, he was a resourceful type and he managed to overcome each obstacle. He started by working on the window and with his home-made windless managed to pry the bars apart. Once he had opened the gap he thought he would try it out, so stripped off, buttered himself up and found that he slipped through the bars easily, in fact too easily as he had not expected to get through on the first try, and had not taken his clothes that he had tied in a bundle, and were still on the floor of his cell. So he found himself very cold and naked standing outside what up to then had been a nice warm cell. He was therefore forced to knock on the window of the cell next door and borrow a towel to un-butter himself and a set of clothes. Once he had these he managed to reach into his cell and recover the hooks he had made for climbing the fence.

I never cease to be amazed at the risks some people will take to achieve something, and in this case to avoid the two rolls of Dannett wire on the top of the inside of the fence he climbed a set of internal gates and then, in the style of a tightrope walker, made his way along the top of the internal section of fence, over the triangular joint with the main fence, thereby circumventing the Dannett wire, and

lowered himself down the outside, and away. He was recaptured some weeks later and returned to Stocken and the story of his escape is pretty much as he told it to the Deputy Governor who undertook the investigation. The final irony was that the eye that had looked in on him through the spyhole only moments before he escaped actually belonged to the Number One Governor who just happened to be carrying out a night visit, and perfectly randomly chose that cell to check on the occupant. So in the investigation it clearly stated that the last person to see this prisoner before he escaped was The Governor.

During my time at Stocken we prided ourselves on being the first to introduce some of the things that are now commonplace in prisons, one of which was in-cell TVs. Just before I arrived as Head of Works a new wing had been built, and, as part of the construction, provision had been made for a power supply and TV signal feed to each cell. It was decided locally that we would seek authority to take this a stage further and wire the cells up to provide enough power for a portable colour TV and a centrally-distributed TV signal. Once we had received the go-ahead it was also decided that the TVs would form part of an enhanced regime and that prisoners would be charged both for the TV, and the electricity, and that this would all be part of a national pilot.

Once the system was installed and up and running, there was a great deal of interest from Headquarters and other establishments into how it worked, and what were the benefits and drawbacks. This interest went right to the very top of the Service as the DG at the time was Derek Lewis, who you may remember was the first DG appointed from outside the Service, and who before his appointment was a Director of a TV company. As I have already indicated, as the Duty Governor my duty began on Friday lunchtime and ended at the Monday morning Governor's meeting. Over the lunchtime I would make use of the gym facilities, usually playing a game of Paddle Tennis, and on a particular Saturday at just past 1pm, I had returned to my office in the Works Department, which was outside the main prison perimeter, and had just showered, when my phone rang. It was Joyce, one of the OSGs who worked the gate, "Mr Mumby-Croft" she said, "I have Derek Lewis, the Director General asking for you". "What, on the phone?" I said. "No, he is standing here in the Gate Lodge" was her response. I then told her to stop taking the piss as I was not in the mood for jokes and she assured me that Derek Lewis was indeed standing in the gate lodge and wished to visit the establishment.

After I had very hurriedly dressed, but before I set out for the gate, I phoned the Governor who at the time was Dennis Hall. Unfortunately, I caught him just as he was leaving the house to play a round of golf, so his instructions to me were, "Show him anything he wants to see, and tell me all about it on Monday," On my own then. When I met the DG and his bag man, and the introductions were over, he explained to me that he had been passing on the A1 and had decided on the spur of the moment to stop off to see our TV system for himself. So off we went to F Wing where the system was in operation.

One of the things that we noticed very early on was that when the prison was unlocked for association, whereas on the other wings there would be lots of prisoners milling about and in and out of each other's cells, on F Wing where every cell had a TV, prisoners tended to keep to their own cells, and even at busy times in the rest of the prison, F wing would be quiet.

And so it was when I arrived on the wing with the DG, although the gate had pre-warned the staff we were coming. The wing SO then showed us round and explained how the system worked from an operational point of view, and I explained some of the technical details of how we had installed it. In particular the DG was interested in the use of in-cell TV as part of an enhanced regime, and as an incentive for good behaviour. So it was explained to him that in order to be able to have a TV prisoners had to be considered as enhanced. This meant that they had to be in work and prepared to pay for both

the TV and electricity costs. If anyone was disciplined, or lost their job, then they would lose their TV. So much for the principle.

The DG then wanted to go into a cell and speak with the prisoner, who, as we walked in was sprawled on his bed, watching his TV. The DG told him not to get up, but from where I was it was clear that he never had any intention of doing so anyway. The DG then asked him some questions about the TV system and how it worked for prisoners, and if he liked it, to which he received good positive responses with the prisoner backing up what had already been said about how it was a privilege and if you broke the rules then you would lose your TV.

Before departing the DG looked around the cell and commented that it was a very nice cell with everything neat and in its place and saying to the prisoner that he kept it very clean and tidy. It was at this point that I wished the earth would open up and swallow me, as the prisoner's response without batting an eyelid, was that it wasn't his cell, it was his mates who worked in the kitchen. He was in here because he had been charged with a disciplinary offence and his punishment was for his TV to be taken away from him, and so he was watching his mate's set instead.

It was at times such as this that I was acutely aware that being Duty Governor was great, apart from two things, the prisoners and the staff.

My final story involved a hostage situation that began on a Sunday morning, and of course I was the Duty Governor. It began at about 9:30 when the phone in my office rang, and it was the Orderly Officer who said to me that he believed that we may have a hostage situation, prisoner on prisoner. I asked him why this was only a "possible hostage situation" and he told me that he only had a very sketchy report from a prisoner that he had seen another prisoner being dragged into a cell and that he was trying to get this checked out without creating too much fuss. In the time it took me to get from my office, outside in the Works Department to the Centre, the possible had become the definite, and the whole contingency plan for a hostage situation kicked in.

Leaving the Orderly Officer to start getting the area around the cell cleared of prisoners, and to get a hostage negotiator into place to try to begin a dialogue, I went to the admin. building to begin the work of making the calls that needed to be made, and to set up the Command Suite. Of course one of my first calls was to the Governor, but I could get no answer. I then contacted the Control Room and asked them to call the Governor's home number every 5 minutes until they got hold of him. In the meantime, as it was a Sunday morning with not much else going on in rural Rutland, the police were on site very quickly, and I was just briefing the Inspector who had arrived to take charge when the Fire Service arrived, and I started again to brief their Senior Officer, when the Ambulance Service arrived, and I started my briefing again. In between this I kept checking with the Control Room if they had managed to contact the Governor, and the answer was 'no.' Just after I had briefed the emergency services, and whilst I was on the phone to Gold Command in HQ, the Governor walked into the Command Suite. Having briefed him on the situation, and as by this time more staff were arriving for the Command Suite, he sent me down to the wing to act as the Bronze Commander on the scene.

The situation actually turned out to be a very nasty one, as indeed a prisoner had taken another prisoner hostage, and it soon became clear that he was treating him very badly. The whole situation lasted for 4 days and was ended with a full scale intervention when it was believed that the hostage was

very close to death. As you can imagine with a situation such as this the prison was very soon overrun with all sorts of support teams drafted in by Gold Command to provide assistance in a situation that soon developed into a stand-off. Some of the support included technical people who were tasked with providing sound and, if possible, vision into the cell to provide as much information as possible. With this in mind it was decided that some equipment needed to be installed that would require holes to be drilled, but the question was, how to do this without being heard?

Those of you who know Stocken will appreciate that it is located very close to the A1. And that in the 1990s it was very close to two RAF bases. Just across the A1 was RAF Cottesmore, the home to the conversion squadron for all NATO nations that flew Tornado aircraft. Also, a few miles up the A1 was RAF Wittering, the main UK base for Harrier Jump-Jets. As part of their training the Tornado pilots would start with slow speed circuits and bumps where they would take off and remain at low altitude, and low speed to make circuits that were based on Stocken Prison. This meant that during the week there was always aircraft noise over the prison as the Tornados went round and round on their circuits. With this in mind, someone had the bright idea of contacting the Ministry of Defence and asking if their aircraft could provide noise cover over the prison for a period to allow the delicate work of the technicians to take place. It was also suggested that the best aircraft would actually be a Harrier from Wittering, as they could almost hover over the prison, and maintain the noise cover nearly continuously.

It seems that, as with the best-laid plans, the communications was not as good as they might have been as the call went out to RAF Cottesmore to provide this covering noise. It also seems (as we found out many months later), the Commanding Officer at RAF Cottesmore had only recently taken up post, and in doing so it marked the end of his flying days. However, when he received the call from the Ministry of Defence he saw it as his last chance of a spin in a Tornado, so rather than delegate the task, he donned his flight kit, and took off, almost in a "Scramble". The Command Post at the prison had been informed that an aircraft had been dispatched, but they were not in any way prepared for what happened next.

A single Tornado was spotted approaching the prison from the west at high speed and he passed over the establishment at what was estimated to be just under the speed of sound, and on full afterburners. The sound hit the prison about 2 seconds after the aircraft, and had the immediate effect of setting off the alarms of every car on the car park that had one. I was on the first floor of the admin. block when this happened, and you could feel the shockwave inside the building.

You may recall that earlier I had explained that the site at Stocken sloped away quite markedly? In fact this slope continued outside the perimeter, dropping down into a shallow valley. Having passed over the prison, the high speed Tornado executed a steep climb, turned 180 degrees and dropped down into this valley, and out of sight, before popping up and over the fence to once more pass over the prison on full power. This continued for a full ten minutes as we were treated to a display of flying that you would not get anywhere else, even at an air show, as I understand the pilot was given full authority to ignore all rules regarding minimum heights, and maximum speeds.

Unfortunately this created two problems. The first was that because the pilot kept coming over on high speed passes, although it was indeed loud, it only lasted for a few seconds, so the technicians had to time their work to coincide with his passes, and they were never sure when his next pass would come. They would later comment that his intervention had been more of a hindrance than a help. The other problem was one that lasted for several months, dealing with all the complaints and claims for compensation from the neighbourhood about the noise, and the claims from farmers for livestock that

had been scared witless by the noise. It seems that any complaints to the RAF were redirected to HMP Prison Service. As I said, the situation was brought to a close via a full intervention and, whilst seriously injured, the hostage did survive, although it really was touch and go at times. But everyone always remembered that Tornado.

As you will appreciate, after an incident such as this there is always a de-brief, and a few weeks later we had a large session that involved representatives of all the different elements involved, although not the RAF. I was invited to this de-brief as I had been the Duty Governor at the start, and as the Head of Works myself, and my Department had also been heavily involved. It was at this de-brief that I got my big shock. You may recall that at the beginning I was trying desperately to contact the Governor to let him know what was happening, and that I failed to do so. When he did appear I thought no more about it, and it was only at the de-brief, as we went round the room and each gave a brief account of the part we had played, that the Governor revealed that he was actually in the prison when the whole thing started. He had come in early to attend the church service and it was only when he was leaving that he was informed that there was anything wrong.

Later in my service I did get to govern a prison, although only on a temporary basis for some 5 months. However, during this time I did have to deal with a Death in Custody, a Concerted Indiscipline that involved calling out Tornado Teams, and the suspension of a member of staff for an assault on a prisoner. But perhaps they are stories for another time.

I am sure that many of you will have some equally or even better stories to tell about your time as Duty Governor and I am also sure that your colleagues in the RPGA would love to read about them. So having read this from me, if you feel you could do better, either in content or style, then let us have your stories and we will ensure that they get published and shared.

Editor's Note: I fully endorse Graham's comments in his final paragraph. Being Duty Governor could become a regular feature in The Newsletter if we get the contributions.



HMP Stocken aerial view showing the vast perimeter described by Graham

From The Treasurer



Is it me, or are the Spring Newsletter deadline dates coming around even more quickly? To me it seems as if I have only just finished writing about the 2023 financial year than I am now looking at reporting on the 2024 end of year results.

As I am writing this, and checking the dates, I cannot help feeling somewhat amazed that it is now 25-years since we all thought the world would end as all the computers refused to recognise a date of 2000. Looking back on the past 25 years I think it fair to say that the first quarter of the 21st century has been interesting to say the least, and it certainly seems that the next few years at least will be equally, if not more “interesting”. The trouble is that the current world situation makes me feel that I would like to move to a remote cottage, on an island, and just shut the door to the troubles of the world.

However, in the more calmer waters of the RPGA I am pleased to report that the changes that we have implemented in the past few months, with regard to how we operate as an association, have now come to fruition and I am quietly confident that we can face the next few years from a relatively stable financial position. The final piece of work that the committee has undertaken was the introduction of producing the Newsletter in both printed and electronic format. In the past year a total of 90 members opted to take the Newsletter via email, allowing us to reduce the print run, and just as importantly from a cost perspective, to reduce the postage costs.

The result of bringing our costs under control has meant that the deficit of income over expenditure of £559.96 in the 2023 financial year has now turned into a surplus of £646.30 for 2024, a difference of some £1206.30. This turnaround has come almost entirely from a reduction in expenditure and despite the fact that our income is gradually reducing year on year, although for 2024 this was a reduction of just £47. However we do know from the work that we do at the end of the year to reconcile the subscriptions received against the membership list that our membership is reducing each and every year and that the reality is that we are not recruiting new members at anything like the rate we are losing people, most sadly to old age, and age related illness.

We ended the financial year with a cash balance in the bank of £15, 628.07 and given that, my aim as treasurer is a very simple one, in that I am looking to hold the basic subscription rate of £13/year at this figure for as long as I possibly can. However, as you will appreciate the cost of providing diaries for those members who have chosen this option, continues to increase and it is likely that this year the cost of postage alone will exceed the £7 premium that members pay for this option. We could also freeze this subscription rate but the question here is about the fairness of those on a basic subscription subsidising those who receive a diary. **Let us know if you have any particular view or opinion on this issue.** We will look to hold this subscription rate at £20 for 2025 but it looks certain that we will need to increase this in 2026.

Finally a personal appeal. If Dave Lockerbie is reading this will you please make contact with me at graham.mumbycroft@gmail.com or call me on 07597 397425? I need to speak to you about your subs as I think you are paying too much.



DONALD TRUMP

A view from the Psychological aspect...

The presidency of Donald Trump has been unique in the modern history of the U.S. Trump's unorthodox strategies, his thin skin and harsh attacks on his critics (some would call it "bullying"), and his impulsivity, offer important lessons for leaders if we combine his tactics with research on what makes leaders successful and unsuccessful.

First, we have to distinguish between obtaining a leadership position, and actually being successful in a leadership position. The factors that get you into a leadership position are somewhat different than those that make you an effective leader. Trump is White, male, and confident. These attributes likely helped him get elected. Being extroverted and appearing powerful also help in attaining leadership positions. Again, Trump benefits. But here's where it gets interesting.

Research on people's "ideal" styles of leadership suggests that the majority of people's ideal leader is intelligent, hardworking, honest, and compassionate. Not surprisingly, these ideal leader qualities are those that are actually related to leader effectiveness. Trump doesn't seem to be particularly strong in any of those areas. **(A gross understatement)**

However, a subset of people view "strongman" leaders — those who are pushy, manipulative, conceited, and selfish — as ideal leaders to follow. Possessing these leadership qualities is labelled "tyrannical leadership" (although that term may be too strong). President Trump fits the strongman, tyrannical prototype. This type of leader may be successful initially, but over time, followers' support may diminish, as the leader bullies and overreaches. However, a core of loyal followers will remain. This seems to fit the bill for President Trump. A key element of effective leadership involves delegation of responsibilities to followers. This serves to free up the leader to work on important projects, but it also helps develop the followers' own leadership capacity. A truly good leader develops followers by giving them increased responsibilities and supporting their efforts. This is a cornerstone of transformational leadership.

President Trump uses more of the "sink or swim" type of leadership, what is referred to as "management by exception." this type of leader allows followers to take on responsibilities, but only intervenes to correct poor performance. In fact, Trump seems to allow subordinates a lot of leeway, but if they step out of line, or disagree with him, **"You're fired!"**

Psychological Interest in the Trump Presidency

President Trump has defiantly flipped the presidential script, making chaos and deliberate combativeness the new normal of White House operations, manifest in hostile briefings, high rates of staff turnover, and cultural exchanges that appear aimed at dividing the nation.

There is widespread debate about the degree to which Trump should be held directly or indirectly accountable for changes in civil discourse, with some citing his rhetoric and policies as a spur to hate crimes while others claim he has been unfairly demonized by the press.

Millions of people around the country and the globe have expressed bafflement at the nature of the personality at the centre of it all, and many are alarmed by tactics and policies that appear not only

erratic but often retrogressive and undermining of long-established democratic practices. Chief among them is a well-documented distortion of facts if not outright lies about everything from crowd size at the inauguration to discussions with foreign heads of state. Throughout his term, a large segment of the population sought to quell their emotional reactivity to the chaos of the presidency and to rationally navigate the civic, legal, and ideological battles that play out daily, from Twitter to the Federal courts,

Why has Trump changed ideas about leadership?

President Trump is like [no other leader the nation has elected](#)—bold, impulsive, turbulent, and divisive, with no political experience whatsoever. The traits most people value in a leader, research suggests, include intelligence, diligence, humility, honesty, and compassion. Fewer people prefer a “strongman” leadership style that encompasses selfishness, aggression, and manipulation (although this preference can diminish with time under such an administration). President Trump’s ability to frame himself as a populist, and succeed with authoritarian traits, has altered the template for leadership.

Why has President Trump changed ideas about truthfulness in public life?

The president’s falsehoods have fundamentally shifted society’s relationship with the truth. Past politicians have lied—but the Trump administration eroded the very notion that an objective truth exists. Instead, people seem to think that they’re entitled to their own truths. In addition to President Trump’s rhetoric of “fake news” and “alternative facts,” this shift is due to factors such as the creation and calcification of information silos and the [evolution of the ability to believe things that can’t be seen](#).

- A 2016 study found that “...the racial and ethnic isolation of Whites at the zip-code level is one of the strongest predictors of Trump support.”
- A 2016 survey found that high authoritarians greatly favoured then-candidate Trump.
- An analysis estimated that the median annual income of Trump supporters was \$72,000, which disputes that Trump supporters are "working-class."

The lightning-fast ascent and political invincibility of Donald Trump has left many experts baffled and wondering, “How did we get here?” Any accurate and sufficient answer to that question must not only focus on Trump himself, but also on his uniquely loyal supporters. Given their extreme devotion and unwavering admiration for their highly unpredictable and often inflammatory leader, some have turned to the field of psychology for scientific explanations based on precise quantitative data and established theoretical frameworks.

JOHN RAMWELL

DISCLAIMER

Members are reminded that the opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the contributors. Publication of a piece does not imply an endorsement either by the Editor or the RPGA Committee.

PAUL LAXTON, editor

I was having a clear out in January getting ready for my downsize. Surfacing for the first time in as many years as I can remember was the **Programme and Guidance Notes for my prison officer joining course, 270W**. I was a member of D Section. I've reproduced below the programme for Day One and the calendar for the eight week course. On the page opposite is a list of college staff. Some are sadly no longer with us but I'm sure Terry Bone and Mick Roebuck will be delighted to see their names in print.

Back in the day there was an end of course dinner. The late Jim Blakey was the guest speaker, and very witty he was too. Yours truly did the reply on behalf of the course members. **PAUL LAXTON**

270W COURSE
PROGRAMME FOR JOINING DAY

Course assembles for reception procedure: Monday 4 June 1984

Meet Tutorial Teams at 1540 hours:

A Section	Classroom 2
B Section	Classroom 3
C Section	Classroom 4
D Section	Classroom 5
E Section	Classroom 6
F Section	Classroom 7

Principal's Opening Address: Lecture Theatre 1625 - 1635 hours

Chief Officer's Domestic Session, Fire Instruction and Drill: Lecture Theatre 1635 - 1720 hours

Evening Meal: Dining Hall 1745 hours

270W Course:

Week 1	Monday 4 June 1984 to Sunday 10 June 1984
Week 2	Monday 11 June 1984 to Friday 15 June 1984
Week 3	Monday 18 June 1984 to Friday 22 June 1984
Week 4	Monday 25 June 1984 to Thursday 28 June 1984
Week 5	Tuesday 2 July 1984 to Friday 6 July 1984
Week 6	Monday 9 July 1984 to Friday 13 July 1984
Week 7	Monday 16 July 1984 to Friday 20 July 1984
Week 8	Monday 23 July 1984 to Friday 27 July 1984

PRISON SERVICE COLLEGE, ABERFORD ROAD

S T A F F

Principal	T A BONE
Governor IVs	G E TOWLSON R J CROUCH W A WOOD P T DEVLIN J V SEAMARK
Chief Officer I	L L CHAPMAN
Principal Officers	M ATKINSON H E BARNES T COOLING A R DOLLERY (PEI) D GANT (Radio) W GALLAGHER J A HOUGHTON E MALLETT M MIDDLEMISS E PEARSON D P PERCIVAL M J ROEBUCK T W SANDERS V F SKELTON W WRIGHT
Senior Officers	J ROTHERHAM (PEI) A WARD (PEI)
Hospital Officer	D DENISON
Adviser in Studies	D A WILLIAMSON
Chaplain	REV I G HALLIWELL
Executive Officer	MRS G BURTON
General Manager (CBC)	MR E J HAYWARD
Housekeeper (CBC)	MISS M F PEACE



History and Trends in Sentencing

On 18 February 2025, David Gauke published Part 1 of this Independent Sentencing Review. [“History and Trends in Sentencing”](#) explains why we have reached the current crisis in prison overcrowding. In his foreword, he provides this summary: ***“The reality is that our prison population has grown very rapidly over the last 30 years and the principal cause of this increase is***

that prison sentences have been lengthened substantially by successive governments. It is an approach that has emphasised the importance of punishment understood primarily as incarceration – an important aspect of sentencing policy – but has been insufficiently focused on the most effective ways to reduce crime.”

Part 1

This paper sets out the details of the increase in prison population, the drivers for longer prison sentences and examples of places where the trend of an ever-growing prison population has been reversed while seeing crime fall. Part 2 which will set out the eagerly awaited proposals for reform, is expected in “Spring”.

Much of the contents of this review will be more than familiar to regular readers.

Chapter One shows how the prison population has grown by over 40,000 people since 1993, with adults sentenced for indictable offences now serving longer sentences, noting that England and Wales also have one of the highest prison population rates in Western Europe.

Chapter two summarises the drivers behind the increase in the use and length of custody. It concludes that the increase ***“is not the consequence of a considered strategy as the most effective measure to reduce crime”***. Nor can it be explained by rising crime levels. In fact, latest estimates from the Crime Survey showed there has been an overall general decline in incidents of headline crime since 2017.

Mr Gauke has not been afraid to name the elephant in the room, the political desire to be tough on crime:

“The increase has been the result of many decisions made by successive governments and a “tough on crime” narrative that has focused primarily on punishment – understood as incarceration and longer sentences – on occasion responding to embedded misunderstandings about sentencing and high-profile individual cases. In tandem, there has been an underinvestment in probation and other alternatives that can provide rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.”

Chapter three outlines the need for change, and advocates for a system rooted in all the current statutory principles of sentencing. The former Lord Chancellor sets out how the emphasis on longer-term imprisonment has placed significant strain on the system, forcing successive governments to adopt costly and high-risk emergency measures.

He shows that these emergency measures have attempted to both increase short-term capacity (often in ways which are expensive and risky) and reduce demand by expediting the release of prisoners, such as the measures we saw in the autumn of 2024 when prisoners were released 40 per cent (as opposed to 50 per cent) of the way through their sentence.

Importantly, this incoherent approach is incredibly expensive as the “tough on crime” narrative leads to politicians of all parties committing to increasingly expensive prison building programmes; the current plans adopted by the new Government are costed at £9.4 – £10.1 billion.

Conclusion

Mr Gauke makes it clear that the political impetus to simplify criminal justice policy to a “lock them up and throw away the key approach” is costly and ineffective:

“The piecemeal and unstrategic manner in which sentence lengths have increased in recent decades has meant that there has been insufficient consideration of all of the statutory aims of sentencing: punishment, crime reduction, reform and rehabilitation, public protection and reparation. Punishment is an important aim for the criminal justice system and prison plays a vital role in delivering punishment. But too often decision-making has been based on an approach that punishment is all that matters, and that the only form of punishment that counts is imprisonment.”

He notes that the consequences of this approach ***“has left England and Wales with a very high prison population by historic and international standards, which has diverted resources from other parts of the criminal justice system that could contribute more to reducing reoffending”***. He argues that a more balanced approach would enable resources to be ***“more effectively deployed to reduce crime and the number of victims.”***

Of course most people, certainly Government ministers, will be impatient to see Mr Gauke’s recommendations in Part 2 for just how this could be achieved.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Thanks to Brendan O’Friel for sourcing this digest of Part One of the Independent Sentencing Review.

Membership Report – March 2025

Membership continues to fall, I'm sorry to say, we now have 341 members, down from 362 last October. This is partly due to a high number of deaths plus the annual reconciliation exercise undertaken by Graham, and we have to remove a number of members who have not paid subscriptions in 2024. All have been written to and sometimes it's only then we find out that members have deceased. We don't seem to be attracting new members, even though both myself and James Bryant now send an invitation to join.

Having said that We are please do welcome new members – Mike Gosden, Mathew Cunningham, Alan Williams and Iris Young (widow of Robert). We are sorry to announce the deaths of Denis Moseley, Mrs R J E Wright, Frank Robinson, Arnie Stapleton, Raymond Nash, Bob Duncan, John Lynch, Robert Young and John Cooper, our deepest condolences go out to their family and friends. We have also heard of the deaths of Rod Jacques, Brenda Brookes and Muriel Allen, who may also be known to many members.

The following members have resigned – Pat McLuckie, Sir Martin Narey, Jeff Heenan, Ria Rys-Reuton, A Punchard, Peter Smith, D C Smith and Mike Smith.

If anyone knows an ex-governor that would be interested in joining the Retired Prison Governors Association, then please let me know.

Kevin Billson – kevinbillson@ntlworld.com 07827 320413

Newsletter quiz answers Spring 2025

- 1) Dead Sea.
- 2) Twins.
- 3) Brighton.
- 4) Lot.
- 5) Anthony Trollope.
- 6) Mike Tyson.
- 7) Australia.
- 8) They cannot retract their claws.
- 9) Betty Grable.
- 10) Grace Darling.
- 11) A5.
- 12) Leinster.
- 13) Ten years.
- 14) George Best.
- 15) Lincoln and York.
- 16) Veterinary surgeon.
- 17) Lactose.
- 18) Centaur.
- 19) The Eagle.
- 20) Talc.