

The Retired Prison Governors Newsletter

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



Issue No 93 Autumn 2025



SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT THE AUTUMN STATEMENT?

I started writing this editorial on the day of Angela Rayner's resignation. That same afternoon, the Prime Minister conducted a reshuffle that left Rachel Reeves in her post, which means that the Autumn statement will be delivered as advertised on 26 November. Much has been made of Torsten Bell's rise in the Treasury as he was full of ideas for increasing the tax take when he headed up the thinktank, the Resolution Foundation. On the trade union side and on

the Labour left, there has been a demand for a specific wealth tax. The demands on the public purse have grown since July last year, and there are only three ways these demands can be funded; spending cuts, tax increases, and borrowing, or a combination of them.

The government's own backbenchers have already had their say about spending cuts. The money markets are having their say about the cost of borrowing by government by raising the interest on government bonds to a level now higher than during the ill-fated tenure of Liz Truss. The nightmare scenario here is that the money markets pull the plug and the UK enters a full-blown financial crisis on a par with those of 1931 or 1976. Keir Starmer will have no desire to follow the example of Ramsay McDonald, and neither will Rachel Reeves want to follow in the footsteps of Denis Healey and go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund for a bailout in return for deep cuts in spending, from which few would be exempt. Given the likely impact on party unity with Jeremy Corbyn's new venture waiting in the wings, the government will be very keen not to get itself into that position. So that leaves tax rises, where Labour will either have to break its promises about raising at least one of the big three revenue raisers, or come up with alternatives, such as raising taxes on property, inheritance and capital gains.

The point needs to be made that wealth taxes already exist in the form of inheritance and capital gains taxes. The taxes on savings interest are also a form of wealth tax, as the tax levies money on saved earnings that have already been taxed at source. Taxes on savings bite much deeper than the seriously wealthy. So how might we be hit? The Local Government Association is lobbying for the end of the single occupancy discount in Council Tax. At our age, we have a disproportionate number of widows and widowers. Another idea being considered is the levying of Capital Gains tax on the sale of the main home. I've written about my experience of downsizing elsewhere in the Newsletter. Many of our members live in expensive homes because of inflation and geography, not because they are wealthy. With the freeze on tax thresholds, an increasing number of our members will be moving into the higher tax band. If capital gains tax is then levied at your income tax rate, who the hell is going to downsize? All will depend on where the threshold is set, and after that, for how long it is frozen. The nil rate band for inheritance tax has been frozen since 2009-10.

Of course if you believe that we are undertaxed and are happy to pay more tax, then you will not be worried about the Autumn statement. I'm only giving my take on what is coming down the line and why.

PAUL LAXTON, Editor

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT – OCTOBER 2025



Membership has remained steady at 341 since the last report of March this year (but is a significant decrease on the figure of 353 reported in October 2024). The current total comprises of 296 paying 'full members' and 45 non-paying 'Associate members'. I have to say, like Harry before me, I'm finding it a struggle to attract new members despite James Bryant of the PGA issuing a RPGA introduction letter to all members that notify him of their intention to retire. I then follow this up with an email from myself and an e-copy of our last newsletter.

Since March this year we have welcomed two new members; Kindur Sandhar and John Woolham, but have sadly had to record the deaths of three members; Steve Goodliffe, the Reverend James Anderson and David J. Elliott. We have had one resignation; Sheila French (Associate Member) and have lost contact with Morris Moore who is no longer at the address we have on our records with no forwarding address. We are also sorry to announce the deaths of Gary Walker, Bob Mullen and Albert Huxley. They were not members of the RPGA but I am sure were known to many of our members.

I have been working my way through our shared membership list compiled by Roger Outram last year. Following our usual data cleansing exercise in January when we check the accounts to establish which subscriptions have and haven't been paid over the previous 12 months, I have been amending the list with the help of the 'members past and present' list that Harry very kindly forwarded to me when I took on the post of Membership Secretary. After a lot of cross-referencing, I am satisfied that we continue to have an accurate record of membership, at least until January 2026 when we go through the whole exercise again.

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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

BOB DUNCAN'S MEMOIRS PART TEN - THE WEDDING

The wedding had now been planned, it was to be on a Sunday as Kent County Cricket Club where in the final of the Gillette Cup on the Saturday and I had tickets. This was not a problem as Father-in-Law to be was a Vicar in Littlewick Green with a large manse next door to the Church and a splendid back lawn which was quite cable of holding a good size marquee and still space to mingle. Also, I had chaplains from the Service on tap if necessary. The last exam finished on Thursday; I was passed a message by one of the tutors at lunchtime to say that I was going to a Borstal in Yorkshire called Pollington. There was little time to do much about that but at last, I knew where we were headed after the Honeymoon.

I had travelled up to Littlewick Green with my mother the previous night and we had a splendid meal at the rectory. It was a bright sunny day for the wedding which went well including singing 'Lord of the Dance,' as Jane's father had initially queried whether it was appropriate; all the other music apart from the traditional hymns was from West Side Story.

Jane's father had been a vicar in the East End of London during the war period and made a habit of visiting as many in his parish as possible. He came across two young ladies from Belgium who were living in temporary accommodation with very few basic appliances. He arranged for various basic articles to be provided. They both spoke very good English and had been sent by their well-to-do parents due to the German occupation of Belgium. One of them was employed by the BBC Overseas Broadcasting to speak to France and Belgium. They became very close friends of the family, and after the war, Jane used to visit them in Belgium. Jane's father was injured by a bomb blast during a raid by German bombers; he was in a bad way and rushed to the hospital. Penicillin which was developed in the USA was at its early experimental days, and not widely in use in Britain. As Pa had medical doctors in the family line, it was decided that it should be used in his case. That helped to save his life, but he retained permanent injuries and always wore a glove on his damaged hand. He returned to work eventually, but in the leafier environment of Littlewick Green.

The family in Belgium were financially well off. Madame Snoeck's husband had been a banker, and a young man came to him looking for investment in camera film he had invented, he needed capital to market it. He invested some of his own money and it had paid off. They lived in a very pleasant house in La Hulpe, south of Brussels near Waterloo with a large garden and its own tennis court. One of the daughters was for a while a tour operator and spoke at least 8 languages fluently. She was also involved in the Church where the priest had been under training when the Germans had invaded and occupied Belgium. His younger brother had been in the 'resistance' and was involved in blowing up railway lines. Unfortunately, he was betrayed and taken into custody by the local police. The Gestapo had not been involved at this stage, so his elder brother went to persuade the police to release him into his custody, as a potential priest, his claim that his brother would not be involved in acts of sabotage anymore was somehow persuasive and he was released. They remained fearful of his future and the brother was hidden in an attic room and watched over constantly for the rest of the war. From Dover, it was an easy trip over, and we went to stay with them on several occasions. Their children would come and stay with Jane in Dover, and I would assist with trips out in the car. It became the base later for longer trips in Europe. Jane had planned all the arrangements for the wedding and for the Honeymoon. I still had the flat in Dover; it was planned that we would arrive there late in the day, to spend the first night there secretly: it did not work like that. As the flat had been empty for a while, perhaps it felt damp, I do not recall. All I remember is that Jane switched every light on and both electric fires and the kettle, next moment we were in darkness as she had blown the fuse. I had to knock up a discreet colleague and ask to borrow a torch and some fuse wire. Next day we travelled to the friends in Ohain in Belgium for one night and they arranged for us to put the car on the night train to Austria, where it would unload us at Villach near the Ossiacher See. (A town I loved as I had travelled there previously by train to attend an ecumenical Christian conference on the lake shores.) I had swum in the lake; it was very cold but refreshing.



Wedding with Best Man Brother Leonard



Rev Morcom Harnes and our Mother



Wedding Party

We then drove to Vienna where Jane had booked the hotel near the famous Prater Amusement Park in the Leopoldstadt part of Vienna. We booked in and were surprised when we were informed we had two single rooms. Jane queried this but was told that is what is booked, and the hotel is full and not possible to change. I slept well! We took a boat trip on the Danube which played the Blue Danube Waltz throughout the trip which became a bit overwhelming as the Danube was not blue, but a murky brown and the scenery became tedious. But it was an experience. I managed to obtain tickets for the Opera House in Vienna. It was a Mozart opera, but I cannot recall which one, but it was one I did not know at the time. That's OK, I thought at the time. I will get an English copy of the programme and read the summary. We were held up over the evening meal and arrived a little later than planned, so decided I could read it at the interval. I had forgotten it is a tradition in Austria to play the whole opera through with no interval. It did not really matter as it is the total atmosphere of singing, acting and orchestra that enthalls you. I can remember going to Covent Garden with my close friend David Greenaway in 1972 to see the famous Beethoven specialist, Otto Klemperer, then in his 80s', conduct Fidelio. We had a small box seating directly over the orchestra, but still a good view of the stage. It was announced that due to frailty Otto would conduct throughout seated. Which he did, until the Opera was racing towards its crescendo, he raised himself to his full height and conducted with total vigour to its tragic end. The audience all rose to their feet and it felt the applause would never cease. That is the magic of opera.

Now it was time to travel back towards the motorway. It was a bright sunshine day, and as we passed through a delightful valley with a traditional Austrian guest house, with lots of people eating in the beer garden. We decided we would do the same and had a very good lunch. Being in no hurry we asked about accommodation and decided to stay two nights. After the heat of the day, we did not anticipate how cold it would be at night, it was so cold we donned every bit of clothing we could manage, including anoraks and only then did we get a little sleep. Nor was the evening meal the next day at the same standard, Sunday was clearly their speciality day.

Jane another year decided she would like to travel to Yugoslavia and visit Dubrovnik, the Pottsama Caves and Plitvick Lakes. So after a few days in Belgium, we set off for Dubrovnik. Jane had bought a new tent and kept informing me how very simple it was to erect that one person could do it easily. When we had reached the campsite for our first stop the tent was unloaded and Jane commenced the operation, I took it out of the car and one of the folding chairs from the car and sat to watch. Jane looked over and said, 'you do not plan to help?' 'No,' I said, 'I am intrigued to watch this simple one-person operation in practice.' It did not appear to be as simple as claimed. So I considered perhaps I ought to help, but before I made a move, two Dutch young campers came over and erected it in no time. I thought that was a nice twist that I might try again, but from the glares I got from Jane, I decided perhaps not!

Next day we drove in bright hot sunshine down the coastal highway, which is very twisty for most of its length so not quick and kept seeing lovely bays with the blue sea, but saw no access down and we also needed to get to our destination. On arrival in Dubrovnik, I was amazed I could park the car within 20 yds of the city walls with no charge. It would never happen again. On the return on the way back up the coastal road, we spotted a lovely bay with a peninsular jutting out into the sea with camping facilities, so we erected the tent there in the evening sunshine on the peninsular for an overnight stay. Halfway through the night, there was a huge storm with torrential rain and fierce winds, I feared the tent would be blown away, so had to go out in all to ensure the tent was securely fixed down. We did not get much sleep that night.

Continuing up the coast we now found that the road was littered with fallen chalk, and as it was a twisty road one had to drive with caution to avoid hitting a rockfall around the next bend. It was only a 2-lane road, and the scariest moment was when we rounded a sharp bend and almost hit a car and caravan just abandoned across the road! We made progress and knew we had to turn inland to reach our next destination and were amazed to find what looked like a brand-new tarmac road cutting through the hills, so we began to ascend. After about a mile we found a barrier across the road and an ancient local in an animal skin coat, waving to us to stop. Sign language indicated that if we crossed his hand with money, he would both allow and direct us down a track that joined the road at this juncture. It was in fact just a logging track created by the lorries that removed felled timber from what was a vast forest. We settled up, not realizing how bad the track was. It went on for about 28 miles and must have taken over 3 hours to traverse whilst giving us a constant shake up all the way. That meant we were behind schedule and it was beginning to get dark, but it did take us to the road we needed. It then started to rain heavily and get very dark so was driving on headlights when we reached a section of the road where thousands of yellow-coloured frogs were pouring over the road; there was no way of missing hitting some unless we stopped, but we had no idea how long it would on for, and we were already running very late, so I drove on very slowly, but knew some frogs must have perished. I still remember it clearly today.

We were pleased that we had booked accommodation there in advance and did not have to pitch the tent. Next morning started bright and sunny, ideal for viewing the vast expanse of the Plitvice Lakes. At that time you just bought tickets, were given a map, and left to wander at will. The area is very extensive and very beautiful and as it had rained the previous day the river's little waterfalls were running freely, and the lakes were full. We did a full circuit, but halfway it began to drizzle, and a thick mist descended. I had taken a lower path and I heard Jane shout 'I am lost, come and find me we need to get back to the entrance.' Visiting again many years later you had to be in a group and led by a guide. It was a set route and you only stopped when the guide decided.



Wedding - Me and Mother



Wedding day - Bob and Jane



Wedding Group



From the Chair

Greetings one and all. I hope you are enjoying the wonderful summer of 25. Of course, it may well be all over by the time you read this but hey, it might not.

Welcome to this autumn edition of the RPGA newsletter, and our thanks to our editor Paul Laxton and contributors as ever. More items are always welcome.

We are looking towards the RPGA AGM on the 13th October, which is to be facilitated in Nottingham by the PGA annual conference. Our thanks to them and as always, we would appreciate your attendance in person or via the ZOOM app.

HMPPS seems to be in the doom and gloom arena as ever, and headlines that appear are very similar to the ones I remember when I joined HMPS in 1969.

What have you been up to this summer? I hear you ask. Well, something new was a 7-night river cruise on the Rhine starting at Cologne in Germany and ending at Basel. There were 160 on the river boat with a crew of 46. Highly recommended, all-inclusive includes all drinks, food and daily trips out. We paid extra for a 3-night extension in Zermatt Switzerland which is stunning and included a 8-hour trip on the Glacier Express. Go on, book it!

My thanks to the RPGA committee who continue to enable the association to move forward each year. A couple of the are up for re-election this year and hope they stay for another term. As I always ask if any of you would like to join the committee, you are very welcome.

Graham Smith JP, RPGA Chairman

“Too Beautiful for Thieves and Pickpockets”

A History of the Victorian Convict Prison on Spike Island

By Cal McCarthy & Barra O'Donnabhain

2016 - Cork County Library

Spike Island is situated in Cork Harbour to the south west of Ireland. It is just over 200 acres and provides an obvious place for fortification to defend Cork harbour against enemy attack. The military began to construct fortifications there from at least the sixteenth century but to a much greater extent from the eighteenth.

In the nineteenth century, convicts awaiting transportation were collected in “hulks” – old warships - moored in Cork Harbour. It was only in 1847 that prisoners began arriving on Spike Island, using part of the military infrastructure as living accommodation. The prison was to accommodate some 2000 men for much of its existence – it closed in 1883 following critical reports from two Royal Commissions. This was a far greater number than the other Irish prisons or the larger English prisons.

The military retained a presence on Spike Island so there was considerable scope for conflicting interests between the prison and military authorities.

Decisions were taken to develop a naval dockyard within Cork Harbour at Haulbowline, close to Spike Island. The convict population was intended to provide the work force for building the new facilities. This mirrors the use of convict labour from Portland prison in Dorset to work on the Weymouth naval base.

The opening of Spike Island was shortly after the Irish Great Famine. This is reflected in the poor health of many of the convicts and complaints from the authorities about the work force. Spike Island was not a healthy place especially in the winter as it was battered by south westerly gales so it was not a place for the starving Irish convicts to recover.

This account of Spike Island convict prison provides an insight into the lives of prisoners and staff. It gives details of some of the more newsworthy clashes between individuals – few of which will surprise readers of the RGN.

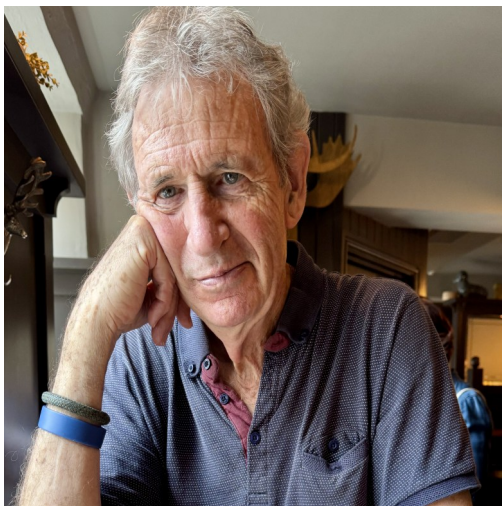
The Governors of Spike Island were few – and one Peter Hay served there from 1855 until 1883 when he moved to Mountjoy in Dublin. The authors describe Peter Hay as “the most successful and reforming” Governor.



In the twentieth century the military transferred responsibility for Spike Island to the Irish Prison Service and for some 20 years around 200 prisoners were accommodated there – the prison being retitled “Fort Mitchell”.

Today Spike Island is a tourist attraction with an adult entrance fee – including ferry ticket - of some £25.

REVIEWED BY BRENDAN O’FRIEL



It's not Over 'til it's Over

I was much taken by Graham Mumby-Croft's article in the Spring issue of the RPG Newsletter about the incidents he experienced as Duty Governor. A flood of my own stories came to mind as it probably did to many readers of the Newsletter. By no means the most celebrated but certainly one of the more interesting stories involving a category A prisoner called Derek Wallbanks, popped into my head from my early days at Wakefield prison. A few readers might respond, "oh, yes. I remember that bundle of trouble".

Derek Wallbanks was born near Gateshead in 1951. To say he was a handful right from birth would be an understatement. He became involved in crime from an early age, inevitably leading to a 15-year sentence for armed robbery and attempted murder of a Policeman, in 1976. On entering the prison system, he was given category A status and quickly began to cause considerable trouble to the authorities. He was losing his remission via numerous Governors adjudications with great rapidity. Amongst a number of moves around the Dispersal system, he entered the portals of Wakefield around 1980 half way through his sentence. What's that got to do with me?

One Sunday evening in 1983, I was Duty Governor for the usual 24-hour period, as it was my turn. The Governor was John Symonds. Around eight o'clock at night, I got a call from the Orderly Officer (O/O) to tell me that a Category A prisoner was bleeding heavily and needed an escort out to hospital. I was told he was a prisoner called Mr Wallbanks and, "...there was blood everywhere....", and he needed treatment. After Association he had returned to his cell and cut his haemorrhoids with a razor blade and was allegedly bleeding extensively. He had been moved to the prison hospital. Could I authorise the setting up of an escort that would obviously have required some armed police officers, given Mr Wallbanks' security status. Two things crossed my mind; first, setting up an escort like that on a Sunday night would be no easy task. Second, I was mindful that some months earlier a dangerous prisoner had been transferred to hospital out of another prison and some of his armed chums had jumped the staff, effecting his escape.

I told the O/O, to give me a moment whilst I checked something out. My wife Catherine had been a very experienced operating theatre sister and I asked her what were the implications of a person cutting their piles and bleeding a bit. She said that it was unlikely to be life threatening as piles are veins not arteries, and if a doctor attended, he would probably "pack the wound" which could be left until morning. I had in my head that Mr Wallbanks was engineering a pre-planned escape and with this in mind, along with the advice from Catherine, I told the O/O that he was going nowhere and should remain where he was until our prison Doctor was called in to assess whether the situation was grave or not. Catherine was somewhat aghast that I had based my decision on her unseen assessment, but I had sufficient confidence in her medical experience. The O/O was far from happy and tried to persuade me that Mr Wallbanks should go to hospital immediately. I stuck to my guns and said I was coming into the prison.

I arrived at the prison and went up to the Control Room (CR) above the main gate and spoke to the O/O. He was agitated and far from happy and told me that he had called in the Chief Officer, Denis Ryan. Denis was a nice man and when he arrived he told me that he had spoken to the Governor who had agreed that Mr Wallbanks should be taken to hospital.

1983 was pre-Fresh Start and the authoritative definition of who had final say in a decision between an AG11 and a Chief 1, was decidedly unclear. I was the official Duty Governor and I thought I was able to pull rank. I suggested this was an escape attempt and we should keep him inside. At that point, with the help of the CCTV cameras, one of the operatives saw that the doctor had just made his way into the prison. I managed to persuade the anxious group in the CR to wait and see what the doctor had to say. Reluctantly that was agreed. We watched the doctor on different cameras as he made his way through the prison and into the hospital.

It was a very long 15 minutes before the CR phone rang and the O/O answered. The rest of us stood around anxiously whilst the doctor relayed his decision that it was not a life-threatening situation. The prisoner's wound had been "packed", and the prisoner's treatment could wait until the next day. I instructed that an escort should be set up for the following morning. With plenty of time to arrange the details, and I left for home. Phew. I was mightily relieved that the doctor had done what Catherine had suggested, and Catherine was just as relieved as me.

Interestingly, the story doesn't end there. I had been posted to Cat C prison Lindholme as Deputy Governor to Dai Thompson in 1988. Just before I got my first in-charge posting to Wetherby in 1991, I was walking across the prison yard one afternoon. A slightly built, medium height, athletic looking prisoner approached me for a chat. In a Geordie accent, he asked if I had been at Wakefield prison some years earlier, because he thought he recognised me. I said I had but why did he ask. He said his name was Wallbanks and he had been at Wakefield as well. I asked him what he was doing at Lindholme and he told me that he had four weeks left to serve and the authorities wanted him to experience a jail away from the dispersal system before his final release. I confirmed with him that we had never met but I said I remembered the incident when he cut his piles. I said I wanted to ask him about that incident and whether his amateur surgery was an effort to try and spring an escape. I told him that it was me who had stopped him going to outside hospital on that Sunday night because I was convinced that he was going to have it away. I told him that he could tell me the truth as it didn't matter any more. He replied that his intention was not to escape but he just, "...wanted to jump the queue for some treatment because my piles were giving me jip...". Whether rightly or wrongly, I believed him. He had lost every day of his remission and was just weeks away from the end of his sentence. He said he had been judged as unsuitable for Open prison so had been sent to Lindholme instead. It was a cheerful chat and I wished him well on release and we went on our separate ways.

Interestingly the story didn't end there. Having settled at Wetherby YOI, I happened to read a newspaper article in October 1991, describing an incident at a house in Brunswick Grove, Newcastle. An old couple who lived in a small bungalow had been taken hostage and a siege had ensued with a police presence. There were reports of a gunman holding out. After nine hours, the gunman suddenly left the bungalow wielding a hand pistol. He fired two shots at the ground and then pointed the gun at the armed police surrounding the property. Believing their lives might be in danger, one of the police marksmen shot the gunman dead. The individual concerned was the 40-year-old ex-offender Derek Wallbanks, who had only been out of prison a matter of weeks. The gunman's weapon was an athletic starting pistol.

PETER ATKINSON

APS 1 SPRING 1991



Left to right back row: David Cornwell (course tutor) Alec McCrystal, Dave Hoskins, Ferdie Parker, Chris Peck, Andrew Cross, Rob Kellett, Andrew Lattimore, can't remember, Peter Bolton, Pat Midgley (course tutor)

Left to right Front row: Paul Laxton, Colette Kershaw, Mick Farrington, Jim Lewis, Ingrid McAlpine, Andy Ainsworth, Roger (surname escapes me)

My apologies to two former colleagues whose names I cannot remember.

The Accelerated Promotion Scheme replaced the Assistant Governor scheme and the first cohort assembled at Love Lane for a sixth month management course in October 1990. We had all passed the Principal Officers' promotion board in addition to the scheme qualifying exam and the selection process held over three days at PSC Newbold Revel, before we reached Love Lane. Readers will have noticed that the first cohort was entirely white with only two female course members, this as late as 1990.

Of the original sixteen, only two, Andrew Lattimore and Andy Ainsworth, were graduate external recruits. Colette Kershaw and Rob Kellett had been Treasury Grades, and the rest of us were originally recruited as prison officers. Mick Farrington and myself attended the same school, but did not know each other. We were the first two to leave the scheme. Mick opted to revert to his previous rank of senior officer, I dropped out through being unable to pass the GV board, but got my career back on track without the scheme a couple of years later. Sadly, neither of the two women lived to see their 50th birthdays. Colette was the first course member to become an in-charge Governor. Ingrid was forced to leave the service due to injuries sustained in an accident unconnected with her work.

Our fortunes in the service varied widely, some having stellar careers up to and including the senior civil service, the rest of us further down the food chain. I believe a couple are still labouring at the coalface!

PAUL LAXTON

RPGA Quiz Autumn 2025

1. Where did Indian Ink originate from?
2. Where did Larry the Lamb live?
3. Where did the Norse Gods live?
4. Where did the Vikings originate from?
5. Where did the first controlled nuclear reaction take place in 1942?
6. Where do the Greek gods live?
7. Where does "Bulls Blood" originate from?
8. Where does Miss Marple live?
9. Where does the Lhasa Apso dog originate from?
10. Where on a horse is the coffin joint?
11. Which politician is an anagram of "random advice"?
12. What month was last month if February is in 3 months?
13. I have 2 coins in my pocket totalling £2.05p and one is not a £2 coin. How is this possible?
14. Which of the following is a palindrome? yacht, aeroplane, racecar, train?
15. True or false- your left-hand glove will fit your right hand if you turn it inside out?
16. Where in the cell is DNA stored?
17. Where in the world can the largest cannon be seen?
18. Where is Charles Darwin buried?
19. Where is the Devils Tower?
20. Where is the Sea of Showers?

QUESTIONS SET BY GRAHAM SMITH



TRUMPISM AND DEMOCRACY

My brother wrote...

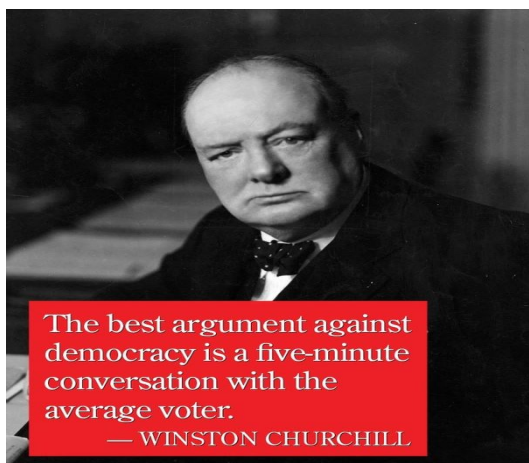
The more I read the more it appears we have America to thank for much of the world's troubles. Their obsession with democracy and xenophobic distaste for all that represents socialism helps, in my view, to create situations as we have today. Should we have gone into Iraq? NO, Should we have deposed Gaddafi? NO, but we did, creating the immigration problems we have today. At the same time we in the West stood back and watched Assad (Syria) use chemical warfare *against his own people*. Now Trump believes he can stop the war in Ukraine, how does that work without Ukraine at the negotiating table? Putin is playing the West and Trump like a fiddle. Until we have some one who is willing to put their head above the parapet and avoid the bullets, i.e. a strong leader, the world will continue to a precipice. Oh and if just to make fools of us, Starmer believes he has stabilised the economy. His definition of stabilised and mine are polar opposite.

My response...

As a starter I can't but agree with you. I've been a fan of You Tube for a while. It regales me with a variety of videos from the history of WW1 & railway journeys to the Meidas Touch. (I'm a subscriber.) I was watching a video recently about Winston Churchill. He was clear about the shortfalls of democracy. He was certainly not anti-democratic, but he was a complex figure, part romantic constitutionalist, part pragmatic imperialist. His legacy on democracy is best understood as a blend of genuine belief in representative government and a cautious, often elitist approach to its expansion and application. He was definitely a pragmatist. For example his stance on democracy, while often celebrated, has also drawn notable criticism, especially when viewed through the lens of his actions and attitudes across different phases of his career. I loved the part in the film when he dodged his security guard and dropped on to the London Underground where he engaged an initially surprised group of travellers in order to ascertain their take on the war. He soon discovered that they were all enthusiastic supporters. But the quote that really resonates with me is the one below.

The Americans must be wondering what the hell happened as the majority of them didn't expect that Trump would really make it. But make it he did, much to everyone's embarrassment... well almost, as there remains a MAGA hard core of fanatics. Hey Ho! If this idiot doesn't take us into a nuclear war...!!

JOHN RAMWELL



Editors note: Some historians dispute that this quote is attributable to Winston Churchill. However, he is known to have said that democracy is the worst form of government, save for all the other options.



THE PERILS OF DOWNSIZING

Around about this time last year, I decided to downsize. The former marital home and garden had become too big to manage alone, and I had finally reached the point where I could leave the home that held so many memories. Before putting the house on the market, I engaged a handyman to do various minor repairs and improvements such as cleaning the gutters, staining the decking, and demolishing an old shed. I also made a tentative start on getting rid of stuff from inside the house. My late wife would have been much more ruthless. By early October I had found a suitable flat and a buyer for my home, sold for the full asking price to the first person to view, and it would become a family home again. At this point I am delighted with the turn of events and also feeling virtuous about selling my home to people who need the kind of space that I don't.

As a former Prison Governor, I was used to moving home. Our terms and conditions contained a mobility clause, and if the service wanted to relocate you, it paid for the privilege. Whether it still does, I don't know. There was even a generous relocation scheme which effectively made you a cash buyer. Along with the brilliant organisation skills of my late wife, much of the stress was taken out of the process. For the first time, I would be doing this without either. I am sorry to say that it was immensely stressful, and at times had me wondering whether or not just to simply abort and stay put.

The first of many pitfalls was stamp duty. I had worked out in advance that Rachel Reeves would end the Stamp Duty 'holiday' on 31 March 2025. Surely with no chain on both sale and purchase, six months would be more than enough to complete with time to spare. Well, I got that one wrong. The pace was glacial. I did not complete my purchase until 30 April, leaving me with a £900 Stamp Duty bill, modest by comparison to those who missed the deadline in more expensive parts of the country. I had to complete my sale by 31 March in order to avoid being gazundered at the last minute as my buyer was not enamoured at the prospect of a £1700 Stamp Duty bill. On the basis of a mistaken belief that my purchase would complete a few days later, I decided to move out and complete the sale. A few days' hotel bills would not hurt, I reasoned. Well, I got that wrong. A month's hotel bills cost me just under £2k, and storage costs came in at £12 per night. In the end the total cost of my move was £13,400.

Once you begin the process of buying and selling you realise that everything is now digital. If you do not own a computer, you have got big problems unless you can resort to the grandchildren or the public library. A printer with a scan function is also needed as there are some documents which have to be signed and returned to your solicitors as a hard copy. If you haven't sent a registered letter for next day delivery recently, I can tell you it now costs £8.75. If exchange of contracts and completion are close together, or even simultaneous in the case of my purchase, this will give you problems with removal companies. They need notice so that they can organize their work. My removal company originally proposed a delivery date from storage six days after completion. In the end we got it down to two, but that was still two more nights' hotel bills. Hotel dwelling also plays havoc with your diet. Room only saves money if there is a Wetherspoons nearby, but it soon ceases to be a novelty.

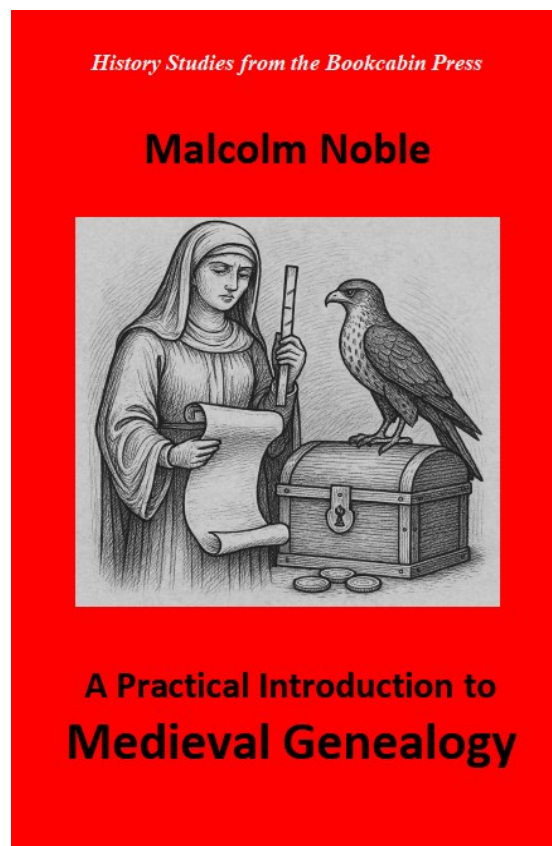
After that, you have the cost of putting your own stamp on your new home. Improvements that include total recarpeting and redecorating have so far cost me around £9k. You have been warned, but despite the hassle, I have no regrets. The flat is perfect for me, and I wish I could have done this three years ago.

PAUL LAXTON

Malcolm Noble

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Malcolm Noble's work has been published by the Society of Genealogists and the Register of Qualified Genealogists. He has written local history of Nottinghamshire and Cambridgeshire, and has hosted the *Talk Genealogy* podcast for twelve years.

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Treasurer's Finance Report March 2025

The clock ticks by for us all and before you know it here I am putting together my 13th Treasurer's Report for the RPGA. As they say, "where did those years go"? I am happy to report that the financial situation for the association at the end of 2024 is very sound and once more we have a healthy cash balance in the bank to carry forward. The detailed accounts are attached to this document and so I intend to just highlight some of the key elements for you in my report.

This year, for the first time, the RPGA account has operated for the entire financial year with all payments in and out of our account being electronic, with no cheques or cash transactions at all. To add to that I have also been able to submit the accounts to the auditors entirely electronically, as well. This is due to a number of factors not least of which is that although I live in a city, there is no branch of Barclays close to where I live and so banking in person has become something of a difficult adventure. However, considering that all of our income comes to us via Standing Orders, and very few suppliers now wish to accept cheques, it certainly suites me to be able to receive and make payments entirely from home.

Since last year the good news is that I finally managed to provide the bank with all the information they needed to confirm that the RPGA is a genuine organisation, and to allow both Jan Thompson, The Secretary, and Kevin Billson, who now takes care of membership, access to the associations bank account, and be able to carry out transactions from the account. Once this was all sorted throughout the rest of the year the account has operated smoothly and without problems.

At the end of the year, working in conjunction with Harry, Kevin and Roger, we undertook a reconciliation process to match the list of paying members for 2024 with the membership list. This was based on my list from the bank statements, and Harry's/Kevin's membership list. Unfortunately as in previous years, there were several anomalies, based mostly around names that Harry had as members, and who did not appear on my list of subscriptions received, and people on my list who had paid in 2024 but who we know are no longer alive. I undertook to contact those people who Harry had listed as members, but had not paid in 2024, and also the odd one or two people who had been paying incorrectly, in a couple of cases, twice.

From the responses that I received we discovered that of the non-payers for 2024, of which there were 6, two have sadly died, two wished to resign and two have not responded to our correspondence to them. We agreed that where people have failed to

respond we will remove them from the membership list. Therefore the membership list (that is fully paid members) for 2025 will be based on the figure for those who paid in 2024, minus those who we know have died, and of course plus any new members who join during the year. As always we have one or two people who are paying but who we cannot contact. Therefore could I ask for the assistance of any member who knows of David (Dave) Lockerbie or Margaret Tee, and knows how to contact either of these, to please ask them to make contact with me. My details are at the foot of this report.

The headline figures for the accounts for 2025 are as follows:

2023's deficit of £559.96 is in 2024 a surplus of £646.30. An improvement of £1206.26 year on year. This was due to the fact that our decision to reduce the print run of the Newsletter, and to offer an emailed version has paid dividend with the cost of the newsletter reduced by £619 year on year. We also saved money on postage with a reduction of £187.79 in the year which is better than it seems because this is skewed by the fact that postage costs for the diaries went up, whilst the cost of postage for the newsletter went down.

Due to the fact that the 2024 AGM was a Zoom meeting and the committee did not actually meet face to face in 2024, there is no T&S. However the cost of Zoom increased and I am in the process of seeking a cheaper option.

At the beginning of the year the bank account stood at £14,981.77 and at the end of 2024 it stood at £15,628.07. With this in mind I see no need for an increase in basic subs for 2026. However, keeping an eye on trends, sadly the cost of posting items is not just increasing, it is going through the roof. At the moment we are covering these costs but it looks increasingly likely that we will need to increase the membership subscription for those receiving a diary based on the twin facts that the actual cost of the diaries is increasing, but not quite so quickly as the cost of posting them.

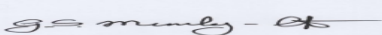
The full accounts for the year are attached as a separate spreadsheet file.

Graham Mumby-Croft

Treasurer, October 2025

Email graham.mumbycroft@gmail.com

Tele. 07597 397425

Retired Prison Governors Association			
Treasurers Report Financial Year 1/1/24 to 31/12/24			
Current Accounts and Benevolent Fund Account			
Barclays Community Account (Current)			£-----p
Carried Forward on 1/1/24			£14,981.77
Income from 1/1/24 to 31/12/24			
Subscriptions			£5,074.00
Donations			£0.00
Interest			£0.00
Other			£0.00
Other			£0.00
Sub Total			£5,074.00
Expenditure From 1/1/24 to 31/12/24			
Newsletter			£2,083.00
Postage			£1,412.10
Stationery			£173.00
Admin Costs			£155.88
Travel and Subs			£0.00
Room Hire/Catering			£0.00
Refunds			£60.00
Diaries			£262.97
Donations			£150.75
Miscellaneous			£130.00
Total Expenditure 2021			£4,427.70
Totals			
Carried Forward on 1/1/24			£14,981.77
Income 1/1/24 to 31/12/24			£5,074.00
Sub Total			£20,055.77
Expenditure 1/1/24 to 31/12/24			£4,427.70
Sub Total			£15,628.07
Bank Statement Balance at 31/12/24			£15,628.07
Minus uncleared cheques			£0.00
Surplus/Deficit for financial year 2024			£646.30
Outstanding cheques			
Total			£0.00
Miscellaneous expenditure 2022			
Now included in total cost of producing and distribution of Newsletters.			
Total			£0.00
Total Income 1/1/24 to 31/12/24			
Barclays Acc			£5,074.00
Total Income for year ended 31/12/24			£5,074.00
Cash Balance @ 31/12/24			
Barclays Account			£15,628.07
Total Current Account Cash Balance			£15,628.07
Breakdown of Costs and Year on Year Comparison.			
Annual Income		2024	2023
Barclays Acc (Subs)		£5,074.00	£5,121.00
Other		£0.00	£0.00
Donations		£0.00	£0.00
Total Income for year ended 31/12/21		£5,074.00	£5,121.00
Annual Expenditure		2024	2023
Newsletter		£2,083.00	£2,702.00
Postage	Newsletter	£1,412.10	£1,599.89
Stationery		£173.00	£290.00
Admin Costs	Zoom Fee	£155.88	£143.88
Travel and Subs		£0.00	£22.20
Room Hire/Catering		£0.00	£0.00
Refunds	Overpayment of Subs	£60.00	£367.00
Diaries	Postage Costs	£262.97	£394.99
Donations	In Memory donations to charity	£150.75	£161.00
Miscellaneous	Newsletter	£130.00	£0.00
Total		£4,427.70	£5,680.96
Balance Income/Expenditure		£646.30	-£559.96
I certify that these accounts are correct and include all transactions.			
Signed			
G.S. Mumby-Croft Treasurer Retired Prison Governors Association.			
Date 			



CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONERS ALLIANCE
REPORT for RPGA COMMITTEE
MEETING & AGM
13 OCTOBER 2025

Membership

CSPA membership stands at 33,655.

1,597 members 'lost' since January 2025 of which 971 (60.8%) are deceased. 517 new members gained (398 joining online). The median age of CSPA members is currently 80 years (124 members are recorded as aged 100 or above)

Campaigns

Pensioners Budget: Plans for a Later Life Ambitions (LLA) parliamentary event to launch a 'Pensioners' Budget' are progressing well and a room has been booked for the 28th of October with the kind sponsorship of Kirsty Blackman MP (SNP, Aberdeen North) in the House of Commons. There will be a lot of emphasis on the work that the Deputy GS David Luxton has done regarding the freeze of tax allowance. If the personal allowance, which currently stands at £12,570 had been allowed to rise with inflation it would be £15,518 as opposed to being frozen until 2028. The result is that pensioners are already losing £657 per year, directly due to the freeze on tax personal allowances. It is also quite likely that by 2028, when and if the personal allowance is unfrozen, that pensioners will be paying tax on their basic state pension, assuming we continue to receive rises under the triple lock system. Next year's is likely to be 4.7% due to the rate of average earnings aspect of the Triple Lock. Our Civil Service pensions should rise by 3.8%, in line with September inflation figure which is used for uprating purposes..

Social Care: Officers have continued to support CSPA's social care campaigns through work with the Care and Support Alliance (CSA) in recent months. Several organisations have had introductory meetings with members of the Casey Commission's team. The Terms of Reference for this inquiry were published on 2 May 2025.

Postal Services: In response to recent AGM motions the General Secretary has emailed the CWU union (23 July) to express CSPA's support for their campaigns on the need to preserve the Universal Service Obligation (USO) and to find out more about how we might engage with their campaigns in this regard. **(continued next page)**

Women's State Pension WASPI Campaign: The CSPA are concerned about the DWP's dismissive responses to recent parliamentary questions on this issue. WASPI now has permission for judicial review of the Government's rejection of Ombudsman findings. The CSPA continue to support and promote the campaign.

Meeting With Cabinet Office 9th September 2025

CSPA expressed grave concern about the service our members are currently experiencing from MyCSP.

Cabinet Office colleagues, at the last meeting, acknowledged the difficulties facing members but then it looked like things were improving. However, PCS are currently on strike and service delivery has deteriorated. Consequently, only priority work is being processed.

Retirements have gone up by 8-9% year on year, which is adding to the MyCSP workload.

There is a note on the CS Pensions website saying only urgent cases are being processed,

The Cabinet Office reported that the transition to Capita as CS Pension administrators was on track for December 1st. Everything might not be ready, but the front facing website will look like the new contract has started. There are plans in place if contingencies are needed. The contact phone number will remain the same.

Once the new website is up and running, Capita intend to discourage emails and will try to get people to use the online contact form instead, because it elicits more information in an intelligible format.

Regarding the McCloud Judgement Remedy, around 44% of the 'Immediate choice' options letters have gone to people who had service during the Remedy period (2015-22) and who have subsequently retired (I'm in the 66% still waiting). Once the Remedy is applied, the average change in members' pension payments is around £200 per annum, but it can be many thousands or a lot less, in one case just 74p.

They are 67% of their way through the returned 'choices', in terms of making payments.

At the end of this month, no new cases will be taken on by MyCSP, as the work on the transition to Capita will start behind the scenes. Capita had not planned for the work on the Remedy implementation, as all this was meant to be completed by March 2025, so it had not been included within their main contract. They are to be given a 'lead in' period, prior to commencement of this work, to enable them to establish the necessary processes.

Kevin Billson



“Leading through crisis: Refreshing the PGA for a stronger future.”

Good morning conference. It's a privilege to be with you today, the leaders who keep our prisons safe, our staff supported, and our communities protected.

We are pleased to be welcoming Lord Timpson, Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending back to our conference this year. When he spoke to us last year he said

“I want you to judge me on my actions. When I’m back here next year, and the year after that, let’s see where we’ve got to”.

Well, he is back, and I am sure that we can all reflect on what's changed over the past 12 months. One thing that springs to mind is that although Lord Timpson has returned this year, others that were in the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS Senior Leadership haven't. Both our previous Lord Chancellor and the Permanent Secretary have moved on to the Home Office and of course the DG CEO Amy Rees and DG Ops Phil Copple have left, or are leaving, the organisation.

Phil and Amy, or Amy and Phil if you prefer, led this organisation through a prolonged capacity crisis, through Governments that didn't appear to understand the gravity of the issues they faced, or if they did, were unconcerned about the consequences of them. Their joint effort was truly remarkable and as a team they kept the show on the road. To find ourselves heading into a no less uncertain period without their expertise, knowledge and deep understanding of how our prisons operate is a worry. I want to note our thanks to both of them for valuing your voice and working hard to ensure you got the best chance that they could give you to run safe, decent and secure prisons. As our new DG CEO James McEwan joins us, we hope that he too will value operational expertise from leaders in both prisons and probation and will take counsel from those that know what it means to do the jobs that you do.

Prison governors carry one of the toughest leadership briefs in public service. You balance security and humanity, logistics and law, risk and rehabilitation—often in the same hour.

I think that the complexity of your role is often underestimated, by the public, by politicians, by our employers and often by ourselves. The best description of our current operating context I have seen was in a written evidence submission to the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee from Dr Kate Gooch, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Bath. I thought that it was worth sharing part of it with you.

“The role of the prison governor is extensive, complex, and diverse....

Over the last 20 years, the role has been fundamentally altered by: intensive managerialism; chronic underinvestment; the continuing politicisation of prisons (and Ministerial interference with operational decisions); the reconfiguration and haemorrhaging of the workforce; perpetual organisational change and re-structuring; the centralisation of core functions (e.g. finance, HR, officer recruitment); and, the privatisation of core services (e.g. prison maintenance, education, healthcare). In addition, the prison population has increased exponentially (primarily due to criminal justice policy, sentencing decisions,

court backlogs and the culture regarding recall decisions), the nature of criminal culture and criminality has evolved (including the threat, dynamics and nature of ongoing criminality within prison), and community services have been depleted (with the effect that prisons are often dealing with acute and chronic need)”.

That is a pretty good description of the world in which you are operating. To be able to continue to do so is truly heroic. Looking at you all, my colleagues, makes me very proud to represent you and in awe of what you are able to deliver in the circumstances in which you find yourselves. Since conference last year, Charlie Taylor and his teams have issued further Urgent Notifications at Winchester and Pentonville, pointing out at Winchester that *“poor outcomes we found at Winchester represent systemic failings under the oversight of HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice and will require sustained support and investment if the prison is to provide decent living conditions, improve safety and security, and operate effectively”*; and at Pentonville that *“The governor will need significant support and investment from HMPPS, including strengthening his senior team, to make measurable improvements in the future”*. In his speech to conference last year, Charlie Taylor was candid and direct in his conclusion that these are difficult times for prisons and that being a governor is a tough job.

That’s a point of view that I echo and that should not be forgotten by the leadership of HMPPS, especially those that have never shared your experiences. Since conference last year, the pressures on the estate have been intense. You’ve held the line through capacity emergencies, failing infrastructure, staffing strain, and rapid-fire policy and leadership change. Today, I want to take stock of what has changed since October 2024—because the landscape has shifted.

Capacity

Let’s start with capacity. For many this has become “the only show in town”, pushing other much needed changes down the priority list and dominating the agenda. Last autumn, the estate ran within a hair’s breadth of full. Pressures have eased and tightened in waves since then, but the core picture hasn’t changed enough, and we continue to operate prisons under extreme pressure. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland are in similarly precarious positions in terms of available prison capacity. Risk is being loaded into parts of the estate that are not effectively equipped to deal with it. The remand population remains stubbornly high in England and Wales—a stark proxy for court backlogs and slow case progression. Reception prisons are choked with remand prisoners, who are often immediately released on sentencing having done all their time on remand. Training prisons are dealing with hugely increased churn as those prisoners that would once have completed short sentences in Reception prisons are moved on to make space. There is very little training that can be delivered to prisoners with days left to serve and the ethos of the training estate can get lost. Open prisons are dealing with a profoundly different risk profile as various schemes that remove proper risk assessment simply to fill every bed impact on populations there. As a friend of mine said to be “You’ll be top and tailing them next”.

This cascades into everything you manage: safer custody, segregation, access to healthcare, legal visits, education timetables, and simply getting people to work, showers and association. When headroom vanishes, discretion vanishes. That’s not sustainable for public protection or staff wellbeing.

Because the system was so tight, emergency tools were repeatedly invoked, which led to rapidly changing policy all of which had to be implemented in your prisons at breakneck speed and with no room for error.

That put you and your teams under sustained pressure for much of the last year.

Prison governors are crisis managers in a system stretched to breaking point. These are not long-term levers; they are stopgaps.

Working Hours and Conditions

We recently surveyed our members in relation to their working hours and as you may have anticipated there were very few of our members who could say they were able to complete their work within the hours they are paid for. At one point the flexibility that our members enjoyed meant that being told it was “swings and roundabouts” had some validity. If you needed to work longer hours to get the job done, there was opportunity to get the time back later. That ship has sailed for many of you. Add to the 48 hours, which was the average that you reported you were at work per week, time spent ‘on call’ and time commuting to and from your place of work and it is no surprise that people are trying to get out of prisons into roles where they have greater autonomy and flexibility. This isn’t what we want to see. We want to see a future where roles in prisons are the ones that people want the most, and where they are appropriately rewarded for what they do. You are the only people working in prisons that do not have any sort of paid overtime or flexitime arrangements.

Sentencing Bill

The past year has brought significant policy movement aimed at stabilising demand for prison places:

The Sentencing Review promised reform. What we got was a rebrand of the status quo. That’s not progress—it’s procrastination. It simply didn’t deliver on its brief to review the framework around longer custodial sentences, including the use of minimum sentences, the range of sentences and maximum penalties available for different offences, and to push back on the “sentence inflation” of the last two decades which has driven the increase in the prison population across the UK.

The extensively trialled ‘earned progression’ model that the previous Lord Chancellor saw in Texas has metamorphosed into something that looks and sounds very much like what we’ve already got. There is something that’s fundamentally different in spending more time in prison for poor behaviour, rather than less time for good behaviour. This feels like an opportunity lost.

The government has accepted, in principle, reforms to replace most short prison terms with tougher, concrete community penalties—with bans, curfews, exclusions and intensive supervision—recognising that very short custody often fuels reoffending and consumes scarce prison headroom. The Sentencing Bill is in train to give courts the tools and the confidence to use those alternatives for suitable cases.

Home Detention Curfew has been extended up to 365 days for eligible prisoners. At the same time, recall policy has been tightened to cap some low-risk, technical-breach recalls at 28 days, to avoid cycling people back into custody where risk can be managed in the community. These are finely balanced public protection calls, and governors will feel the consequences on both sides of the gate.

These changes won’t transform things overnight—but they are steps to de-pressurise the estate while holding the line on public safety.

Drugs and Drones

The single biggest operational threat you report is the drug economy—now supercharged by synthetic opioids (nitazenes) and drone-enabled supply. In some prisons, over 30% of random drug tests are

positive. That's not just a statistic—it's a warning light flashing red across the system. The Chief Inspector's 2024–25 Annual Report was blunt: supply and use of illicit drugs “undermine every aspect of prison life.” This is simply incompatible with safety, stability and purposeful activity.

We've all seen the shift on the supply side: more drones, more sophistication, more third-party orchestration from outside. Inspections and reportage through summer 2025 highlighted how drone deliveries and lucrative markets erode rehabilitation, with purposeful activity rated poor or insufficient across the majority of inspected adult prisons. Your staff cannot run education, a workshop, or a therapeutic community in the middle of a live criminal marketplace.

There are some hopeful indicators. The latest HMPPS Annual Digest shows stepped-up security effort—more random MDTs, and big increases in finds of phones, SIMs and weapons—all of which speak to better searching and intelligence. But the digest also acknowledges testing volumes still aren't consistently at the levels needed for robust national estimates, so we mustn't kid ourselves that the data is the whole picture.

Beyond cannabis and synthetic cannabinoids, nitazenes have changed the risk profile. Public health guidance in June 2025 warned of sustained nitazene-linked deaths and urged every area to plan for synthetic opioid risk. That has profound implications for first aid, naloxone coverage, and clinical pathways on reception and throughcare.

Safety

Drugs fuel violence and many of our prisons are unsafe. We have seen the media report horrific acts of violence against prison staff and the number of homicides in our prisons are at an all-time high with 7 homicides in the 12 months to June 2025, an increase from no homicides in the previous 12 months. As we know that number has increased since the latest statistics were published. What the media report is only the tip of a growing iceberg, only when a notorious prisoner is involved are these events brought into the public eye. You know the true picture and are there every day to pick up the pieces, helping staff and prisoners to cope with both the physical and psychological harm caused, and to try to prevent future harm occurring.

Staff

None of this is solvable without people. You know the story: experienced officers are gold dust; new officers need time and mentoring; healthcare, education and psychology teams are stretched; and the emotional labour of the job is heavy. The best violence reduction work, the best drug strategy, the best resettlement outcomes—all of it sits on top of stable, skilled, supported staff teams. There is no shortcut around that.

Building a confident, competent workforce is made more difficult when some of the people we have recruited have a limited right to work in the UK and our previous Lord Chancellor's new department change the rules on Skilled Worker Visas, so that we have to dismiss staff that we have only just recruited and trained. This doesn't feel like particularly joined-up government.

Regimes

With enough staff, in those prisons where the regime works—proper time out of cell, a credible day's work, accredited programmes targeted to risk, education that leads somewhere—the atmosphere changes. Disorder and debt shrink. Violence falls. Staff job satisfaction climbs. Yet the inspectorate's most

recent cycle found purposeful activity “poor or insufficient” in a large share of the adult estate inspected. The new PES contracts are seeing a 50% reduction in education provision in some of your prisons. How are you supposed to improve things against that background? How are prisoners supposed to better themselves? How can we break the cycle of reoffending? You feel the tension most keenly: when capacity runs hot, you rob time and resources from the very activity that reduces reoffending. We must stop robbing rehabilitation to pay for overcrowding.

Infrastructure

And the buildings matter. Many of you run Victorian buildings that were never designed for today’s population mix or security threats, and the maintenance backlog has been a long-running constraint. Investment in electronic drone countermeasures, improved windows, and perimeter technology would help; but the National Audit Office has been clear that we need sustained, value-for-money investment and pragmatic choices on where to add places, where to refurbish, and when to close accommodation that can’t be made safe or decent.

Leadership

Leadership in prisons is gritty, not glamorous. You make a thousand micro-judgments, most of which will never be on a minister’s desk or a front page. The system changes only when those micro-judgments add up: the search that finds the parcel; the conversation that defuses the threat of violence; the class that persuades someone to try reading again; the OMU meeting that sets up effective resettlement; the staff rota that keeps an experienced SO on a volatile spur. That is leadership.

We ask prisons to do many things: punish, deter, incapacitate, and rehabilitate. They can never do those things well while running permanently at the red line, with organised criminality driving lucrative drug markets, frayed regimes and exhausted, demoralised, inexperienced staff. The good news is that if the leadership of HMPPS can find a way to free you up to do so and to provide you with the resources that you need, then you—governors—have the know-how to stabilise your jails even in choppy water. Imagine a prison where staff feel safe, prisoners leave with skills, and the public trusts the system again. That’s not a fantasy—it’s a future we can build.

To quote Abraham Lincoln, “Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm”.

Thank you for everything you and your teams do, every day, often unseen. I hope that next year, we’ll be talking about predictable regimes, fewer assaults and more people leaving your gates to jobs, homes and families. That isn’t a fantasy. It’s the result of hundreds of practical, professional decisions, made by leaders like you.

Thank you.

TOM WHEATLEY

PRESIDENT

PRISON GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2025 PGA CONFERENCE - PAUL LAXTON

Space does not usually permit me to devote so many pages to the PGA Conference. However, this time round I've been able to include both the President's speech and the disposal of the resolutions. Fifty-six resolutions were submitted, which after some compositing was reduced to fifty-two. Conference was shorter this year for financial reasons, so getting through that amount of business was a big ask, but it was achieved with no resolutions falling victim to the guillotine. The venue, the Nottingham Belfry hotel was agreeable, being close to the motorway and thus avoiding the city centre, but also for its ambience, with the trees in the grounds in full Autumn display.

The number of guest speakers was reduced this year. The Prison Minister's slot was reduced by a government decision forbidding him to take questions. Lord Timpson did, however, share a breakfast table with a number of delegates, but obviously whatever was said was off the record. You have to worry when a government is running scared so soon during the electoral cycle. Former Director General Amy Reece departed for the Charity sector a few weeks ago after 25 years service, and Phil Copple, another 'lifer,' departs shortly. Given that both of them are some way off retirement age, you have to wonder if there is something else the government is not telling us. In their place was Michelle Jarman-Howe, who did take questions, as interim DG until James McEwan takes over. Mr McEwan is a career civil servant with no HMPPS experience. I hope this does not signify a return to the days when the most senior role in the service was closed to prison governors.

Graham Mumby-Croft was unable to take the Chair at this year's conference due to his wife's indisposition. Yours truly was Chair of Standing Orders. You may struggle with some of the acronyms that have come into use post-retirement, but some of the subjects will be very familiar. Pay, autonomy, and the role of open prisons are conference staples, along with the ever vexed questions of job evaluation and unequal opportunities. The resolution to expand membership to non-operational grades was roundly defeated, conference voting instead to tackle the Association's funding crisis via an increase in subscriptions.

Lastly, HMPPS has found it so difficult to recruit at home that it has been forced to employ migrant labour on Skilled Worker visas to fill prison officer vacancies. (See the resolution on P34). No accommodation is provided and some are sleeping in cars, hardly an incentive to come to the UK legally. To compound the felony, the government has decided to raise the minimum salary requirement for a visa, so Governors will have no choice but to dismiss them, leaving them either to go home or find better paid work. What a way to treat people and so much for joined-up thinking!

RPGA AUTUMN 2025 QUIZ ANSWERS

1.China 2.Toytown 3.Valhalla 4.Gotland 5.Chicago 6.Mount Olympus 7.Hungary 8.St. Mary Mead
9.Tibet 10.Foot 11.David Cameron 12.October 13.Yes, only one of the coins is not a £2 coin the other is a 5p coin
14.racecar [same forwards and backwards] 15.True 16.Nucleus 17.The Kremlin 18.Westminster Abbey. 19.Wyoming 20.On the moon

RESOLUTIONS

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

This Conference agrees an amendment to the Rules and Constitution of the PGA relating to Rule 19, 'Legal Representation' Sections e to q. These changes will ensure that our rules accurately reflect the revised way legal cases are now managed.

The revision will remove paragraphs e to q and replace with:

- e. Legal cover for employment matters is provided to fully paid-up members.
- f. How legal cover is provided, and how it is accessed may change from time to time, details of cover and how to access such cover will be published on the 'PGA members' website
- g. Members will be advised by correspondence (email, bulletins etc) of any changes to this provision, and advised to review published material on the member site

Paragraph v is to be removed in its entirety and not replaced. **Proposed: NEC CARRIED**

This conference directs that Rule 4 (b) and (g) of the Rules and Constitution of the Prison Governors Association are amended to say Full membership is open to Operational Managers, Prison Governors working within HM Prison and Probation Service and Non-Operational managers working in Prisons and Young Offender Institutions; to read as follows:

b) Pay bands 7 to 12 who qualify by virtue of being in one of the following groups:

Full or part time role holders as operational managers, senior operational managers and Prison Group Directors

Managers with a previous operational background who currently work within HMPPS in a non-operational post.

Non-Operational managers currently working in Prisons or Young Offender Institutions.

Those promoted beyond these grades while remaining in a role within HMPPS.

Members who move out of HMPPS to MoJ HQ roles may retain membership, but in doing so acknowledge that the Association does not have recognition rights in MoJ.

Members of fast-track schemes aimed at accelerated promotion of scheme members to governors grades;

Band 5 Custodial Managers who have passed all stages of the current Operational Manager JSAC and are eligible to seek a posting as a Band 7 or 8.

g) It is expected that members will have the equivalent operational manager or senior operational manager accreditation in support of their application to join the PGA or in the case of those Non-Operational managers currently working in Prisons or Young Offender Institutions, a note from their Governor to this effect.

.Proposed: NEC FELL

Conference agrees an amendment to the Rules and Constitution of the PGA appertaining to membership of the N.I. branch, with the new criterion to read, Governor grades and those substantively promoted beyond the governor grades, or those on temporary promotion, where this is expected to be a long-term commitment. **Proposed: Northern Ireland CARRIED**

SUBSCRIPTION FEES

This conference approves an increase of current PGA subscription fees of £3 per month (an increase to £23

This conference permits the NEC to increase subscription fees annually using the previous month's rate of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) (link: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices>). (This adjustment will commence in January 2027. This adjustment would use official data from the Office of National Statistics' December CPIH figures, starting December 2026. This will ensure that the real value of membership subscriptions is consistent over time.) **Proposed: NEC CARRIED**

This conference approves an additional monthly levy is made on top of membership subscriptions to allow all members to be enrolled in the PGA Group Travel and Health Insurance Schemes (effective from January 2026). This levy will be no more than £7 unless approved by conference. **Proposed: NEC**

FELL

PAY, CONDITIONS AND ALLOWANCES

This Conference requires the NEC to seek increased pay for members working in roles with heightened operational pressures, such as overcrowding, high-risk populations, and frequent operational disruptions. These challenges significantly increase the intensity and complexity of their responsibilities and warrant additional financial recognition to reflect the demands placed on them. **Proposed: Birmingham; Seconded: Lincoln FELL**

This Conference directs the NEC to negotiate an increase in the subsistence and overnight allowance, which has remained static for several years, to reflect the current financial climate and rising costs incurred by staff for food, travel, and accommodation. Members are increasingly out-of-pocket when attending off-site duties, training, or meetings, making an increase both fair and necessary to support members undertaking essential responsibilities away from their base location. **Proposed: Birmingham; Seconded: Featherstone REMITTED TO THE NEC**

This Conference instructs the NEC to seek the implementation of an annual clothing allowance for all members, regardless of grade, to subsidise the cost of maintaining a professional appearance. Members are expected to self-fund appropriate work attire, and the cleaning of such, and a subsidy would help ensure fairness and support for all our members. **Proposed: Birmingham; Seconded: Featherstone CARRIED**

This Conference instructs the NEC to pursue a directive from PGD's to in-charge Governors that PGA members do not work excessive hours. **Proposed: Kirklevington Grange; Seconded: Deerbolt CARRIED**

This Conference directs the NEC to again request from HMPPS a mechanism to record, repay or reward the hours worked by members, including on call hours, we remain the only staff group in the organisation without such a mechanism. **Proposed: Lincoln; Seconded: Onley CARRIED**

This Conference directs the NEC to push for recognition of protected lunch hours in the operational field, removing where possible operational briefings, lunch and learn etc from lunch breaks in the interests of health and wellbeing of its members. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Sudbury CARRIED**

This Conference instructs the NEC to seek parity in London pay allowances across all establishments within the London pay scales. The current distinction between inner and outer London rates restricts staff mobility, limiting professional development and the sharing of best practice. The NEC should also explore the introduction of a tapered allowance for staff applying for roles at the same banding where a lower salary would otherwise be received. **Proposed: Feltham; Seconded: Send FELL**

The Conference instructs the PGA NEC to propose to the pay review body an increase in the percentage of RHA paid to frontline (In Prisons) governors / functional heads from 20% to 25%. Currently 20% does not

This Conference directs the NEC to pursue an increase in the total remuneration package for Band 8 Deputy Governors, as there is a clear disparity between the work and responsibilities of Band 8 Deputy Governors and that of Band 8 Functional Heads. We question the current incentive for Functional Head colleagues to move into the Band 8 Deputy Governor role. **Proposed: Send; Seconded: Feltham CARRIED**

This Conference instructs the NEC to pursue with HMPPS local pay allowances for prisons in isolated locations where significantly higher living costs cause problems of recruiting and retaining staff. **Proposed: Long Lartin; Seconded: Send CARRIED**

This Conference notes that members of this Association voluntarily agreed to forego first-class travel as a temporary measure during the period of austerity. Conference now instructs the National Executive Committee (NEC) to formally request that the employer either:

- Reinstates the right of members to travel first class in line with previously agreed terms and conditions; or
- Enters into negotiations to provide appropriate financial compensation to members **Proposed: Frankland CARRIED**

This conference demands that the PGA NEC exposes the true extent of unpaid hours by undertaking a data collection exercise of the actual hours being worked by members. The goodwill of our members is not unlimited and running low. **Proposed: YCS; Seconded: HQ Prison Industries CARRIED**

This conference instructs that the PGA ask HMPPS to produce an annual impact statement to HMCIP. The impact statement would identify each nationally driven initiative which has been decided centrally where the decisions made are not in the control of the Governor. Therefore, these issues should not be reflected in a HMIP report for an establishment but could feature in the HMCIP annual report for HMPPS. **Proposed: YCS; Seconded: HQ Prison Industries REMITTED TO THE NEC**

PENSIONS

This Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate a revised retirement age of 60 for our members, in recognition of the physical and psychological toll associated with working in high-pressure custodial environments. The unique demands of these roles raise concerns about the sustainability of continuing until the standard retirement age, and a revised threshold would reflect the intensity and responsibility of our members positions. **Proposed: Birmingham; Seconded: Featherstone CARRIED**

This Conference directs the NEC to convey to HMPPS its acute dissatisfaction with the employer's failure to meet its statutory obligation to provide all members with an annual pension statement and the appropriate support befitting our members. To simply state that it is too complex to do so is totally unacceptable. This Conference further instructs the NEC to seek legal advice regarding the lack of adherence to the pension administration rules should HMPPS continue to be in breach. The legal advice should consider how to recover EPA and EEPA that is owed to members due under the McCloud remedy. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Onley CARRIED**

SICKNESS MANAGEMENT

This Conference directs the NEC to convey to HMPPS our concerns with current OH process and reports which is making it difficult for prisons to manage staff absence effectively and offer the right support for staff to return to work. The reports are becoming more about the views of staff going through the process with little or no consideration to that of managers, who are responsible for managing staff absence and the impact of such absence. **Proposed: Long Lartin; Seconded: Whitemoor CARRIED**

JOB EVALUATION

This Conference directs the NEC to push for the removal WDM's as they are not fit for purpose. **Proposed:**

This Conference instructs the PGA NEC to pursue with HMPPS and raise with the pay review body that the operational functional head roles of band 7 and band 8, become one, in rank and pay structure. JES is no longer fit for purpose, and it does not reflect the stresses, workloads, and risks that all functional head roles carry. Whether in a standard, standard plus or complex site, the current format is both divisive and unfair. **Proposed: Moorland; Seconded: Hatfield FELL**

This Conference directs the NEC to seek a review of the Job Evaluation Scheme (JES) for all Band 7 Governors whose roles reflect parity in responsibility with Band 8 colleagues. In many operational environments, Band 7 Governors undertake duties equivalent to those of Band 8, including strategic decision-making, incident management, and staff oversight. The current grading does not reflect this parity and contributes to reduced morale and retention challenges. **Proposed: Birmingham; Seconded: Lincoln (Resolution 25 falls if Resolution 24 is carried) FELL**

This Conference directs the NEC to push for a meaningful review of the job banding and the headcount of SMT members deployed in Open Prisons given the increasing workload and the volume of risk management being asked of its members, seeking closer parity with the closed estate. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Sudbury CARRIED**

This Conference notes that the role of a Deputy Governor in open prisons is assessed as being a band 8 role, but believes this is not an appropriate level, when the role requires additional qualifications and carries a similar level of responsibilities & risk as a Band 9 Deputy Governor. Conference instructs the NEC to seek a re-evaluation of the role of the Deputy Governor in Open Prisons. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Sudbury WITHDRAWN**

This conference instructs the NEC to call upon HMPPS to formally recognize and implement a third-in-charge role across establishments, to reduce the frequency and intensity of on-call commitments currently placed on Governors and Deputy Governors.

It is proposed that this role be undertaken by individuals who are either:

Deputy Governor accredited, or

Actively being supported toward Deputy Governor accreditation, as part of a structured development pathway.

Proposed: Lancaster Farms REMITTED TO THE NEC

JOB OPPORTUNITIES, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

This conference instructs the NEC to clarify with HMPPS why the use of secondments/loans across the estate is lacking in equality of opportunity and preventing significant numbers of people from taking these opportunities for development. These roles should either be recruited into permanently or there should be no restrictions on who is permitted to apply. **Proposed: Lincoln; Seconded: Onley REMITTED TO THE NEC**

This conference directs the NEC to ask HMPPS to stop the use of long holds on positions/roles that our members could be applying for, we repeatedly see positions being held for extended periods without an acceptable reason and without looking to fill the vacancy. **Proposed: Lincoln; Seconded: Onley CARRIED**

This conference instructs the NEC to urge HMPPS to reallocate resources from assessment processes towards structured development, mentoring, and training prior to promotion into key leadership roles, including Function Head, Deputy Governor, and Governor. Too often, staff are appointed to these

based roles over non prison roles. **Proposed: Kirklevington Grange; Seconded: Deerbolt CARRIED**

This Conference calls on HMPPS to adopt a national succession planning strategy, together with a formal exit strategy for Governors, to be implemented in the event of them being potentially compromised, as well as for those displaying signs of burn out. **Proposed: Kirklevington Grange; Seconded: Deerbolt CARRIED**

This Conference instructs NEC to raise with HMPPS the need for current and aspiring Operational Managers to have career and development training that prepares them for various functional roles such as HoBA and Heads of Security as well as support for transitioning into senior management roles within prisons and departments. **Proposed: Long Lartin; Seconded: Whitemoor CARRIED**

This Conference calls on HMPPS to ensure that the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit (TUBU) adopts a balanced, holistic and systemic approach when reviewing prison culture. Reviews should consider historical findings, previous investigations, and wider organisational factors, rather than focusing solely on individual leadership teams and how they conduct themselves. **Proposed: Birmingham; Seconded: Featherstone REMITTED TO THE NEC**

REGIMES AND CATEGORISATION

This Conference directs the NEC to push for the removal of prisoner progression schemes, such as TPRS, without a detailed risk assessment process given our significantly reduced staffing profiles, lack of physical security and open regime. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Sudbury REMITTED TO THE NEC**

This Conference directs the NEC to welcome reports such as the Justice and Home Affairs Committee report “Better Prisons, less crime” which makes recommendations around the current state of our prisons. To complement that, the NEC is instructed to pursue with HMPPS the commissioning of a report into the impact of the changing behaviours of the prisoner population over the last 10-15 years which has impacted negatively on stability, violence and self-harm levels, and staff retention. **Proposed: Kirklevington Grange; Seconded: Deerbolt FELL**

This Conference instructs the NEC to seek from HMPPS a consideration of the impact of the monopoly held by DHL in providing canteen services within public sector prisons which does not offer competitive pricing. This is increasingly becoming a point of conflict within the prisoner population with unilateral increases on the price of goods which often is not reflective of affordability within the prisoner population. **Proposed: Long Lartin; Seconded: Whitemoor REMITTED TO THE NEC**

This Conference instructs the NEC to raise with HMPPS the need to consider an uplift in prisoner pay on a yearly basis as current pay is not adequate and is making it difficult for prisons to motivate prisoners to attend paid activities, which is also impacting on safety within our prisons. **Proposed: Long Lartin; Seconded: Whitemoor CARRIED**

This Conference instructs the NEC to urgently pursue policy changes to the categorisation framework, ensuring that young adults aged 18–21 are assessed using the same process as those aged over 21. In the absence of dedicated Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) and with most establishments holding young offenders designated as Category C, it is neither safe nor appropriate to accommodate 18–21-year-olds who would otherwise meet the criteria for Category B, in this regime. **Proposed: Feltham; Seconded: Send REMITTED TO THE NEC**

This Conference directs the NEC to push for clarity as to the purpose of the open estate given the significant changes in our population as a consequence of the significant early release schemes and the pending changes in the sentencing bill. The NEC is further instructed to push for the suspension of capacity expansion in the open estate until accurate modelling is available to demonstrate need, given that

This Conference directs the NEC to push for a meaningful review of the complexity of open prisons given the current risk envelopes and challenges that our new populations bring noting that to date Open Prisons are all classed as standard despite significantly increased challenges and risk. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Sudbury CARRIED**

DRONES AND CONTRABAND

This Conference instructs the NEC to impress on HMPPS senior officials that the need for continued investment in our prisons to meet current challenges must continue to be a priority. This includes finding a workable and lasting solution to the drone problems we currently encounter which are causing a destabilising effect on our establishments, in some instances directly linked to serious violence, drug overdose and in the worst case, deaths. **Proposed: Onley; Seconded: Long Lartin CARRIED**

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND THE TRAINING OF PRISON OFFICERS

This Conference directs the NEC to push for a review of recruitment and training that should include the requirement for face-to-face interviews for new Band 3 prisons officers and a move away from e-learning to face to face learning wherever possible for all grades. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Lindholme CARRIED**

This Conference instructs the NEC to engage with HMPPS to ensure that prisons are not left short staffed following the decision to increase the salary range for right to work visas for Prison Officers from July 2025 and that those staff are supported. Conference notes that staff expecting sponsorship for Skilled Worker Visas have had their expectations let down, with very little support or even sympathy expressed by senior leaders. These changes are not only causing stress to the staff members and their families but are also threatening to have a huge impact on workforce planning. **Proposed: Coldingley; Seconded: Long Lartin CARRIED**

This Conference expresses its disappointment in the poor training of prison officers, which fails to prepare them for working in our prisons in the current climate and instructs the NEC to raise the matter with HMPPS to emphasise that the training of new staff must be revised, with operational input that prepares our most important resource in running our prison regime. Their training deserves better investment and a curriculum that meets the challenges staff face in an increasing complex environment, which current training does not provide. **Proposed: Long Lartin; Seconded: Whitemoor CARRIED**

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEMBERSHIP

This Conference instructs the NEC to communicate with the membership, at least monthly, to update them on issues of note. **Proposed: Onley; Seconded: Lincoln CARRIED**

This Conference instructs the NEC to, where possible, give feedback to previous year's resolutions before the request for new resolutions, thus allowing branches to know where previous resolutions failed or have progressed. **Proposed: Lincoln; Seconded: Onley CARRIED**

FUNDING AND CONSULTATION

This Conference instructs the NEC to ensure that HMPPS funds prisons appropriately. The population crisis has resulted in prisoner flows not being adhered to and as a result prisons are being required to complete work they are not funded for. As an example, a Cat C trainer having over 1200 movements through Reception in a year and holding a 50% Resettlement population. **Proposed: Onley; Seconded: Lincoln**

This Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate for Governing Governors to be granted full autonomy over their establishments, including multi-year budget ownership and the authority to procure outside of contracted suppliers where cost savings and operational improvements can be demonstrated. Greater budgetary autonomy and procurement flexibility would enable more responsive, cost-effective decision-making and reduce reliance on rigid central contracts that may not meet local operational needs. **Proposed: Birmingham; Seconded: Lincoln CARRIED**

Conference directs the NEC to push for onsite support from devolved functional support including HR, Finance and Pensions. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Sudbury CARRIED**

Conference directs the NEC to push for consultation with the front line when introducing new or changed performance metrics. **Proposed: Hatfield; Seconded: Sudbury CARRIED**

WWW as applied to RPGA

W (who) W (what) and W (why)

It's entirely possible that some of our readers are not aware that we have a dedicated website for the RPGA members use. It can be found at www.rpga.gov.uk or www.rpga.homestead.com I will try to explain here why and how our website came about. I have now been retired for 21 years after 32 years' service, twenty-two as uniformed and the last ten as a governor grade finishing with a G3 pension. I am now a member of your RPGA committee with a specific role as webmaster for the RPGA website. How did that come about and why do we have a website I can almost hear you thinking.

My service started at HMP Leeds during 1974 (14 years), PSITG HQ (2 years) then HMP Belmarsh (10 years) While there I was promoted GV after 4 years the Balance of 6 years was a little nomadic as a controller (Temp G3) at prisons operated in the private sector.

During my service I had heard of Bob Duncan, but we didn't meet until after my retirement when I took up employment as Head of the Male Prison at Peterborough (this was a serious mistake and another story) and I met Bob there where he had been employed as a consultant, we became kindred spirits and became lifelong friends.

Eventually I gave up on HMP Peterborough with an NDA but kept my affiliation with Bob who recruited me to help him in the management of the Charity "The Shannon Trust" (yet another story). At the time Bob lived nearby in the town of March, and we met weekly for lunch and enjoyed each other's company sharing anecdotes and opinions about HMP. Our personal view on the HMP operations while not diametrically opposed were significantly different but we did not argue, we just discussed, and I had great and shared respect for each other. Bob had been a member of the RPGA since his retirement and had become an active member of the committee. Bob proposed me to be a committee member, and I was pleased to join the committee.

Now to the website:

When I joined the committee, I was quite surprised that the RPGA did not have a website, and it hadn't really been considered so I suggested that I could create one for the group. Like most things it was essentially a whim. Apart from life experience I didn't have any special skills that I thought would be useful to the group and I did have the ability to produce a website without creating any need to affect the group funds. **(continued on P36)**

The group of members were “Typical” of the generally retired group of people. They couldn’t visualise the need for a website and in fairness neither could I apart from my desire to do something that I had a competence for, and it might somehow be useful. In business it is generally considered that “not to have a website is equal to not having a business” and it is fair to say that for the great majority of people nowadays who are seeking information about anything go to the internet. The Chinagraph and Acetate along with the Quill and Parchment are long gone and the new technology expands daily whether we like it or not. My argument for the website was based on we dinosaurs are a dying breed and the new guard are all tech savvy and more familiar to using technology, paper was dying, and the screen was where we all got our information.

In essence my reasoning was simple and accepted albeit with some reservation. So it was that I began to build the website. I formed the basic design providing what I thought would be most acceptable to users. I need not go into detail because the site remains as my original design for you to see. It contains information about the RPGA organisation and literal copies of the Newsletter. To make some items more easily accessible to users I have provided the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor their own unique areas and their newsletter entries are published independently to allow users easy access to their entries. As we have several members who provide their own thoughts of prison matters or personal interests for publication, I provided a separate area for members contributions.

Fortunately, we have a growing number of contributors some with many insightful entries but all very interesting. All contributions are published and more will be welcome.

The major benefit of the website is that it acts as a useful archive. When I first started this process, I thought it would be easy to collect and collate newsletters and just extract and publish the interesting content. I should have known better from my own experience of how handovers take place in the prison service, it may be better now, but I doubt it. We all know better, how the job can be done, than the previous incumbent so we all start afresh ignoring what went before.

The RPGA are no different. I speak with deference to the present committee who are all good and worthy people as are those who went before them. I discovered quickly that nothing, that I needed, had been handed over no one had an archive of previous copies of the newsletter. Of course, thanks to the present Editor I am now able to maintain a good record of the newsletters published since the website was first launched in 2018. There should be 92 possible newsletters since the beginning, and I have been able to collect and publish 49. As you read this and you have some newsletters saved in the bottom of a cupboard somewhere. Please just check and if you have one that I don’t have please let me know (roger@rsoutram.co.uk) and I would be grateful to have a copy.

So far this year there has been 372 Views of the website at an average of 47 per month. Neither astonishing nor surprising given our demographic. Since I started on this Journey, I have realized that there is a good reason, past my ambition, to maintain this website as an archive of our activity beyond retirement.

Please continue to view the website and support the views and values of the RPGA.

ROGER OUTRAM

WEBMEISTER

