



[POSITIVE JUSTICE GLOUCESTERSHIRE](#)

Newsletter winter 2016 – 2017

2016 meetings

In March we attended a showing of the film 'Stand or Fall', part of the Stroud film festival, about a performance by the Playing for Time Theatre Company, a joint enterprise of inmates of Winchester Prison with undergraduates. This was initiated and brought to us by Annie McKean of Winchester University Drama department. It was wonderfully revealing and showed how such work can lead to life-changing personal development.

In July we had a successful meeting at Prema in Uley on the subject of Arts behind Bars: Unlocking Creativity. A report of this can be read on our website www.pjglos.org

Prisons Week Meeting this year in October was entitled: Footholds for Reform. 'Inspiring', 'excellent', 'fascinating', 'interesting' were some of the words used on evaluation forms by those who heard Juliet Lyon's talk. Again a fuller report is on our web.

Letter to Liz Truss

In July PJG committee sent a letter to Liz Truss, congratulating her on her appointment as Justice Secretary. We said that we have heard a lot of positive talk about reform of prisons, but we want to see this backed up with action. We told her PJG are cheering her on – so far, and hope that she will continue with Michael Gove's radical reforms. The full letter can be seen on our web. We received no reply.

From Inside Time - newspaper for prisoners - September 2016

Prisoner dies at Bronzefield after pressing cell bell for 2½ hours

'A prisoner who died after overdosing on prescription medication had been ringing her cell bell and calling for help for two and a half hours at HMP Bronzefield, it has been claimed. The woman had had a major operation and was recalled to the prison three days before her death.

Deborah Coles, co-director of the charity Inquest, which supports and advises those bereaved by deaths in custody, said: "Bronzefield is a private prison, being paid vast amounts of public money. The new justice secretary should visit the prison and ask questions as to why they are seemingly incapable of keeping women safe." Sodexo get £64,445 annually per prisoner at Bronzefield. HMP Durham costs just £36,036 per prisoner.

Alex Cavendish, a former prisoner who blogs on prison issues at Prison UK: An Insider's View, said: "Too many prisoners are dying in custody. As repeated inquests have found, a significant proportion of these deaths might have been avoided if appropriate care – including mental health support – had been in place and proper assessment procedures followed.

Based on the information that I've received, this tragic death at HMP Bronzefield raises very serious questions about monitoring and supervision of vulnerable women, as well as concerns over the response times when cell alarms are sounded by prisoners in distress."

PJG's Spring meeting will be on 23 March in Cheltenham when Lorraine Atkinson, Senior Policy Officer of the Howard League will speak on their campaign on prison suicides.

Alternative Methods of Rehabilitation and Resettlement in USA and Norway

Judy Rolls, of PJG committee, reported on a Clinks seminar she attended in Birmingham in October 2016

Sara Lee, Artistic Director of Irene Taylor Trust has been facilitating music education projects in prisons since she was a music student at the Guildhall. She won a Butler Trust Award in 1995 for her work in Wormwood Scrubs. Now her charity runs 3 UK-wide projects: Music in Prisons, Making Tracks and Sounding Out.

She visited the US and Norway on a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship. She gave a picture of the climate in 1980s and 90s when the arts were valued in UK prison education. Then in 2008/9, this changed dramatically after 2 negative stories in the press, one about a party at HMP Holloway and the other about a comedy project at HMP Whitemoor which had been running 10 years. General public reaction to events involving arts in prison has only improved slightly since then.

UK Research shows the importance of the Arts in rehabilitation, music playing a vital role through building relationships involving cooperative teamwork, and offering the experience of success and enjoyment with others, and a coping mechanism for downtime and socialising after release.

Sara expected the place of 'arts in prison education' in the UK to come between that in the USA and in Norway. She found, however, an **optimistic 'can do' attitude in the USA**. There the Press generally recognise and sympathise with the situation and problems of offenders. California provides Arts funding for every prisoner. On the East Coast Sara visited several projects, including one in Philadelphia where prisoners painted murals on buildings around the city providing a continual visible reminder to the population of the plight of those behind bars. In New York State released prisoners have the opportunity to build on work they have started in prison, and they may be supported as they reintegrate with society. Boston University has been delivering a programme for prisoners for over 40 years and in New York the Blackbird Project includes Wise Women's Words designed to promote women's well being.

In Norway Sara found penal policy to be aspirational from the beginning of the sentence: 'the first day being the start of the exit strategy'. The media have a sense of 'one day this person will be your neighbour', is it better to repair and rehabilitate him or to do nothing? There is a holistic acceptance of the role of the Arts, in which music plays a key part, in rehabilitation.

Education budgets in each region include provision for prisons as well as for schools, teachers in Bergen and Oslo work in both, building relationships of trust and support. This is overseen by a prison education college, Fossane, which also organises continuing education for ex-prisoners. Norway has a system of small community prisons. They are pleasant and welcoming with soft building designs and a lack of visual signals (gates, walls, wire etc.). Prisoners are positively engaged with their sentence planning and given responsibility and motivation to see it completed before they leave.

The maximum security prison Halden, has its own Radio Station and a music room - it has **no violence**. The church choir in Bergen contacts prisoners early in their sentence. At prison concerts visitors mingle with prisoners and there is no absconding. As an example a former drug addict learnt to play the saxophone in prison and continued to have lessons with the same teacher after she left and to play in bands socially enabling her to reintegrate with society and stay free from

drugs.

Sara encouraged practitioners not to be frightened of saying 'the arts has worth'. It should not be a question of privilege. The arts have a vital role to play in rehabilitation. We should learn from overseas' models. We must lobby to change the perception of the arts in prison so that it's at the top table as a viable rehabilitation option.

The second speaker, Head of Reducing Reoffending at HMP Ridley, Andy Laidlaw, described his visit to Louisiana State Penitentiary, an enormous prison for 6,500 men of whom three quarters are lifers and which occupies 18,000 acres. It used to be said to hold the most difficult to manage but now has a reputation as a **place of opportunity** thanks to its Governor, Burl Cain.

Cain focussed on prisoners on long sentences who are tired and have had enough of prison. He introduced a social mentoring scheme, funded by the Baptists. He used incentives to help rehabilitation, giving 'enhanced' prisoners better and more 'normal' living conditions as well as employment including work on the ranch and in horticulture and in 17 vocational workshops including one for taxidermy and a small engine repair shop. A Rodeo is held twice a year where prisoners can compete for cash prizes in the ring; outside there are stalls where they can sell their work and keep 50% of the profits, 30% going to victim charities and 20% to prison funds. 3,000 people from all around attend each day making \$1000s for prison funds. For prisoners it is a privilege to attend and a big incentive to work and behave well in the months between. Over 10 years things have changed significantly and there have been **no violent incidents**.....

There is a Post-Release Programme as part of Rehabilitation Support and Andy visited a resettlement board in session. Everyone present offered support to the ex-offender to do things FOR him not TO him, and affirmed his progress. He sat in the most visually important seat in the room and at the end the judge hugged him.

Andy commented that in the UK incentive schemes are largely used to take things away, - punitive not rehabilitative - and that we need to make policies work by offering things that are worth having, including positions of responsibility, and by forging links with employers to find more meaningful skilled work.

At Ridley he has introduced 'Pets as Therapy' and a Prison Shop where visitors can buy prison made items including art - 'Buy the Art, set it Free'. He believes that prison buildings need to be redesigned to offer HOPE.

Andy referred us to Incarceration Nations by Baz Dreisinger, who visited 9 prisons around the world to identify why it is so difficult to change ineffective prison systems. She explains why reflection, discovery and self recognition that generative education brings, can make the difference in preparing inmates for change, rather than keeping them emotionally "frozen", as solitary confinement and many other prison strategies appears to deliver.

PJG committee hope that Sara will be able to come and speak to us in prisons week

Family day at HMP Grendon

.... is an inspiring occasion. You start the day knowing only the friend you visit (who doesn't have to be literally family). You end the day with several new friends.

The day is structured:

- Teas and coffees
- Presentations
- Lunch
- Teas and coffees
- Visits to the Wing
- Teas and coffees.

During all the tea (and coffee) drinking, the prison staff and other prisoners make a point of talking to you. All call each other by first names and treat each other as equals. There's lots to tell about life at Grendon, where everyone is everyone else's therapist. Prisoners who don't have a visitor serve teas and coffees to those who do, so you get to know them too. Staff talk about their work. By presentation time, everyone has learned something new. Then you learn about psycho-drama and art therapy from prisoners who have got a lot out of it. There may be music too. Arts and crafts are on display, some impressively good.

Next, there's a really gorgeous meal and a chance to talk to your original friend, as well as more opportunities to understand a different world, maybe several different worlds.

The wing is impressive too. You see your friend's cell and visit other cells and meet the budgies – so there is some contact with other species as well.

By this time, you will know at least one other prisoner besides your original friend, one other visitor, one prison officer. A net gain in friendship and a huge gain in understanding how prison can work, given enough goodwill.

Why aren't there more prisons like Grendon?

Hilary Peters

Bad Press but Better Broadcasts

26 **Sun** Sunday, November 13, 2016 1GM

200 RAPED BY SERIAL BEASTS

MORE than 200 people have been raped in the last five years by sex beasts previously convicted of the offence.

And the number of repeat offenders who struck last year hit a new record high. Forty-seven rapists who

Blast ... Peter Cuthbertson

By TOM WELLS

attacked in 2015 had been jailed before for the crime – compared with 46 the previous year, 38 in 2013 and 26 in 2010.

Of last year's total, 12 had been caught for rape on three previous occasions.

One in ten of all Britain's 1,382 rapes last year was by a repeat offender. In total, 208 convicted over the past five years were repeat rapists.

Critics say rapists should serve longer sentences and lose opportunities for early release.

Peter Cuthbertson, of the Centre for Crime Prevention, said: "These figures show a shocking failure by the courts to protect women.

"Every time a rapist re-offends, it proves they should have been in jail longer."

The Ministry of Justice said: "Anyone convicted of a second very serious sex offence now faces an automatic life sentence."

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This is typical of a journalist slipping in unsubstantiated conclusions with seemingly authoritative backing. The Centre for Crime Prevention sounds like a government body but is just a purveyor of 'news' items to journalists hard pressed to find a story. I am starting a collection of such pieces to think more carefully how they might be countered, so I would like to know what other people come across.

On a more positive note, there have been some better researched broadcasts. I was grateful to Judy Roles for suggesting listening to a BBC5 piece <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b087tg37>

which you can still see as a podcast. It shows how government policy has not fundamentally changed and is still reacting to the present problematic happenings in the prison system rather than addressing the underlying problems and attitudes that have brought about loss of control, increased violence, the rise in suicides, growing difficulties with nps and escapes. While the style of the programme might be rather dramatic with the focus running through being the almost 40% increase over 3 years in the emergency call out of ambulances, it will pull in viewers who might not otherwise have been interested. It is a good way of making point that the state of our prisons directly affects all of us – and not just through the financial cost. Watchers are introduced to some of the realities of prison life. Picking up from a prison, whether a patient suffering a heart attack as a result of chronic disease brought on by old age, a patient out of their mind after taking nps or victims of an attack, the paramedics, under pressure to get on to other urgent calls, will be held up by prison necessities, the opening and re-locking of double gates, the finding of extra staff to accompany the medics wherever they are, guard the ambulance and finally to accompany the patient to hospital if they are an inmate. Many prisons no longer have enough staff to operate – hence the increase in lock downs – so finding extra officers may take hours. Meanwhile the ambulance, the paramedics and the patient wait. So do all those other casualties waiting on the outside.

The audience is introduced to the real underlying difficulties. More severe sentencing has led to the doubling of the prison population over the last 20 years. Private prisons now compete with the state sector for contracts to run prisons with the aim of making a profit for shareholders. The government through their Safe and Sustainable and Benchmarking schemes reduced the number of prison officers by 7000 [against which their offer to replace the losses with 2500 seems paltry], discontent with lower pay and worse working conditions has led to industrial action and difficulty in retaining new recruits in what can be a dangerous job. The growing tension from overcrowding has escalated into violence and the situation has been escalated by the addition of nps into the drug scene.

Prisoners are generally people with more problems than they can manage, often institutionalised in a mis-functioning system which damages them further. We certainly need to support those looking for a radically different approach and we need to let the government know we recognise that increasing punishment, building extra giant prisons and using anti-drone equipment and forever seeking to keep ahead of substances to be banned, will not solve the problem. Two programmes before Christmas on the radio, an 'analysis' and one on 'How do you rehabilitate?' offered important ways forward in changing the culture. Their central focus was that prisoners are people, individuals, and that within institutions 'I/thou' relationships need to be restored. Alison Liebling, a Cambridge psychologist, was quoted as saying that, '*Trust is the only thing that changes people*'. We are used to the good press given to the Scandinavian countries for their approaches to criminal justice but the programmes referred to the changes made over recent years in Holland where 18 prisons have been shut. Holland's proportion of the population in prison used to be closer to our own [worst in Western Europe], so, perhaps, their example might be a better demonstration of what we can achieve.

Sue Barrance

Have you a fiddle in your loft? - not cannabis plants but a violin HMP Leyhill . If so, whatever its state of repair, please contact suebarrance@hotmail.com.

For some good news go to https://www.gov.uk/government/news/justice-minister-opens-timpsons-training-academy-for-female-prisoners?utm_content=buffer57c80&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

The Ruby Quilt

This Quilt was made by the Rubies Group at HMP Eastwood Park. 'The Rubies' is the name for the group of ladies over 50; at present our eldest is 84.

It aims to be a circle of mutual support. The group meets away from noisy wings and is facilitated by Alma a RECOOP worker (RECOOP= resettlement and care for older ex-offenders and prisoners.) who offers a range of creative sessions and purposeful activities plus relevant advice advocacy and info. We hope that being in this group will increase well-being, and possibly bring about a change in attitude and behaviour. New skills are learnt that can enhance self-respect and self-confidence, which hopefully will also result in a reduction of re-offending.

Respecting every person as a unique individual who will be treated with dignity is of utmost importance. Together we break some of the isolation and fulfil our need for companionship.

On the 27th of September 2013 we were shown the Holloway quilt. This was made by some 130 Holloway women in 2012, being inspired by a quilt, made by the Suffragettes in 1912, which contained the names of the women imprisoned at that time as a result of their public protest for the right to vote. We – some 12 Rubies and the then Dept. Gov. and me as RECOOP group facilitator-at HMP EWP then felt inspired to use our voice in this way too.

The Rubies express in embroidery what prison is/was like or what inspires us.

The border on the top in big words acknowledges us as makers: the RUBIES and at the bottom: **Creativity works as all women have velvet in their hearts.**

We did a lot of **recycling** too: the green squares that carry the words were cut from old prison sheets; the black cell-boarders in between were ripped (no scissors!) officers used and discarded uniform trousers. The centre square is yes/ from indeed: the bum pocket of one of these uniforms- real prison keys being rather bigger though. The tulips in the corners have significance and so have the red, yellow and green borders (those celebrate the life of one of the greatest prisoners of all times: Nelson Mandela, who died when we were making the quilt)

It has become a master piece, a true voice of the Rubies in a given point in history. It won the **Platinum Award from the Koestler Awards 2014**, was displayed at the **Southbank in London and later in the HQ of Amnesty International/ London 2015.**

The strewn sewn on buttons were sewn on later as it had become damaged by careless hanging-> pearl buttons now hide these vulnerabilities (...!).

The Rubies /RECOOP have now given the quilt on temporarily loan to the Women's Centre in Gloucester.

Alma Hageman/ the Rubies



The Forgiveness Project's 6th annual lecture

"The Quality of Mercy: anger, forgiveness and making peace with the past" was the thought-provoking title of the 2016 Forgiveness Project Annual Lecture held this year at the Royal Geographical Society in London on Friday, 2nd December. It was deeply moving, the main speaker was the poet Lemn Sissay, who talked about forgiving the foster parents who sent him back to the care system when he changed from being a cuddly baby, then a lovable child, into a stroppy teenager. You can read about it here: <http://theforgivenessproject.com/news-6th-annual-lecture-thoroughly-entertaining-deeply-moving/>

2016 Koestler Exhibition We are all Human



The Koestler is the UK's annual national showcase of arts by prisoners, ex-offenders on community sentences, secure psychiatric patients and immigration detainees. It is the ninth exhibition in an ongoing partnership between the Koestler Trust and Southbank Centre. This year's show was curated by writer and dub-poet Benjamin Zephaniah. The exhibition features a wide range of art forms including painting, drawing, matchstick modelling, craft, music and writing, exploring themes of time, contemplation and the natural environment. 'Prison is a concrete

jungle so I wanted to get as much nature into the exhibition as possible. We are all human – it's a really simple truth.' *Benjamin Zephaniah 2016*

'Beyond the Door' is another Koestler exhibition in Birmingham curated by young people from the Walsall Youth Service from 13 - 26 January. For details: <https://macbirmingham.co.uk/exhibition/beyond-the-door-the-koestler-exhibition-for-the-west-midlands>