QUAKERS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

A Bit About Quakers In Criminal Justice

QICJ was formed as a special interest group in the early eighties primarily as a support group for Friends involved either professionally or on a voluntary basis with the criminal justice system. It has also welcomed Friends who themselves or a family member have been involved in the justice system. Some members have come to Quakerism having been touched by Quakers working in prisons and others, like me, have come across this interest group through the newsletter usually on display at YMG, Friends House, Woodbrooke



and member meeting houses. Each member brings their unique experiences, and their expertise is reflected in the regularly updated membership list as well as through newsletter contributions. The membership list, in itself, makes for interesting reading outlining the role and areas of interest of active members. We are an eclectic collection of people with backgrounds including probation officers, therapists, youth justice workers, social workers, chaplains, restorative justice pioneers, advocats, experts and facilitators, circles of support volunteers, governors, prison psychologists, academics, CPS, magistrates, mental health professionals, solicitors, mediators, police as well as most members being actively involved in at least one, often more related charities including the Howard League, Prison Reform Trust, Phoenix Trust, IMB, Prison Visitors, AA, AVP, Prisoner Penpals, Families of Prisoners, IAGs, NAOPV. Lifelines, Overcoming Victimhood,..to name but a few. In reality, the list is endless as individual members get involved in so many different areas.

Quakers have a long history in criminal justice and prison reform. QICJ encompass this special contribution by providing a network for members to be connected. We hold an annual conferences where

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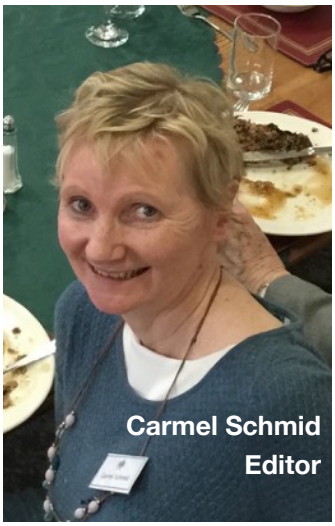
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members old and new are welcomed and can become energised through stimulating plenaries and workshops. At the conferences, I get a sense that I am supported in my prison visiting which can be quite an isolated although truly fulfilling volunteering activity.


Carmel Schmid
Editor

Otherwise, we have a website, a committee and our newsletter which appear three times a year. I still consider myself a new member as I don't have a professional background in criminal justice and this is only my second year as editor. Adrian, my predecessor was editor for twenty two years.

I am tempted to say something along the lines of QICJ being a 'like minded' network but that can be an erroneous thing to say anywhere but most especially amidst 'individually minded' Quakers. But what motivated me to take on the role of editor was, what I perceived as a very compassionate attitude towards the offender as well as to the victim, a defiant recognition of 'that of God' in all and a compelling instinct that a restorative approach to justice should prevail over a punitive approach.

Generally, amidst members there is a recognition of the important contribution of a committed 'one to one' relationship with individuals caught up in the system either through mail, visits, therapy, mentoring, offender management, education or pastoral care and a sense of rehabilitation as being an appropriate (though sadly unfulfilled) purpose behind imprisonment. Furthermore, amidst reformers and academics as well as practitioners and volunteers, there is a sense that together we achieve more.

.....A Bit About The Newsletter - I gave up reading the newspaper many years ago, many would regard it as an ill-informed choice but my rationale was that newspapers are inevitably much the same day after day, week after week. The same reporters provide the same slant on the same stories and nothing much changes except the names, the dates, the places, the small details. Even the pictures are the same , now, my point here is that the QICJ newsletter is much the same – one edition after the next is filled with a compassionate attitude towards the oppressed (victim and offender alike), outrage at cost cutting at the point where it is most needed (probation, social services, rehabilitation), alternative approaches to justice (restorative justice, circles of support), initiatives that embrace reform (Intensive Fostering, Healing of Memories..), reports from conferences, book and film reviews, members perspectives on their experiences as well as stories and poems from people within the system.

“Quakers have a long history in criminal justice and prison reform. QICJ encompass this special contribution by providing a network for members to be connected.”

..... And, A Bit About This Annual - Since I started as the newsletter editor, there has been a long running debate as to whether the newsletter ought to be digital, sent by email or continue to be posted at great expense with Royal Mail and on whether it should be jazzed up in colour, or remain as it is in sombre but much loved black and white. The truth is that while these discussions come and go, there has been nobody with the know how, initiative and enthusiasm required to carry out such a transformation. But at the 2015 conference in Ammerdown, there was a new recruit, a delegate from Northern Ireland who had never actually seen the newsletter. I was excited at the thought of a potential new reader and I quickly thrust a copy into his hands. As he picked up the cherished publication and held it in his hands I could see him shake his head, a frown appeared on his face and the words “16th century printing press” tumbled from his lips. It was of course what I had always known but did not want to admit. The time and very luckily the resource to experiment with something new had arrived at QICJ. This compilation of articles plucked from recent past editions is the result – an experiment with a new format using material that is quite frankly just too good to be forgotten.

FISH TANK REDEMPTION - GEOFF HAMMOND

The first time I came across the existence of Quakers was under very unusual circumstances - inside the cellars of a prison.

In 1969 I was found guilty of murder along with three others and sentenced to life imprisonment. I ended up in Wakefield maximum security prison where I served most of my sentence. Inmates at Wakefield were allowed to keep budgies in cages and fish in tanks, but one many used the glass of a tank as a weapon resulting in a fatal wounding. Because of this, all fish tanks were immediately confiscated and held in a disused bath house in the cellars below the cells of the prison. After many meetings between staff and prisoners it was agreed that a fish club could be formed in the Bath house where inmates could visit daily to tend to their fish. The fish club was named 'the unique aquarist society' and I became a very proud and active member of it.

In a very short time our club became quite famous. We had a full half hour feature on the TV once and regular spots on local radio. We were visited by local celebrities and even held our own annual fish show which attracted hundreds of the top breeders from all over the north of England. The Governor of the prison was very proud of its success and the Chief Officer was delighted to be voted in as the club's President. However what had started as a club with a few dozen tanks had now blossomed into one with over a hundred tanks, some of them huge – filling up every single wall from floor to ceiling with many stacked aisles in between. We could barely move. We needed to expand and fast!

The Chief, having obtained some old architects drawings of the cellars, looked at the maze of rooms and quickly pointed at a badly bricked up wall at the back of our club. "That's where we are going," he said, "There's a large disused area of small rooms behind that wall and we're having them". And so we did.

After the Chief had secured for us a sledge hammer, club hammer, chisels and a powerful torch, we set about demolishing the wall to release the desperately needed space. We quickly tore down the poor brickwork and made a hole the size of a small door. After fifteen minutes or so when the dust had settled we went back in, and armed with a torch, we stepped into our new territory. I was the first one in. What I saw there took me by surprise. It was like I had stepped back in time.

I was now standing in the middle of the original bath houses that were placed there when the prison was first built. Dotted all around the room in recesses and small rooms were the remains of old stone baths and stone benches. All of them had been smashed to pieces and left in heaps of rubble and dust … all that is, except one! It was still broken but its shape was still there. Each side of it in a part recess were rusted chains hanging from the walls with rings on the end. It then occurred to me that maybe in the past they used to chain people in these baths. If this was so, then why would they have done this? Was it a punishment? Why had they bricked it up?

"During the First World War, Wakefield Prisons was filled with conscientious objectors or 'conchies' as a punishment for their refusal to accept compulsory military service. Most of them were Quakers"

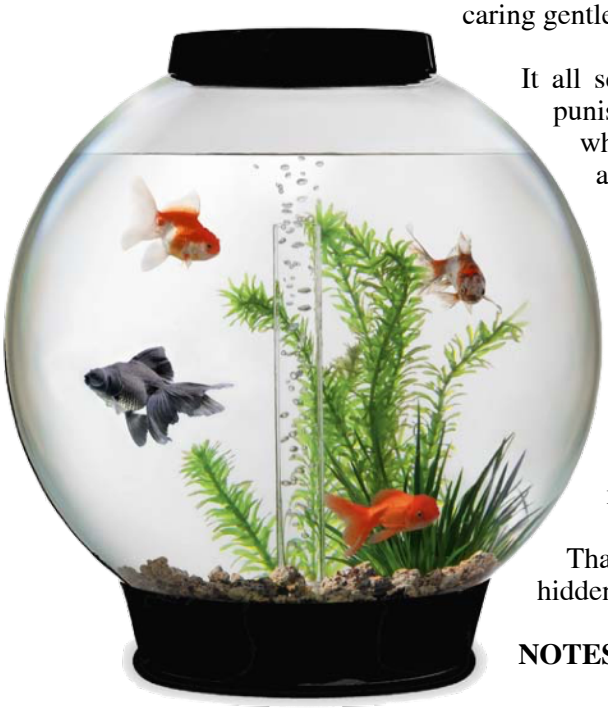
The Chief, realising that this could be important local history, asked us to touch nothing until he had made a few inquiries. And so he did. I made a few inquiries too.

By asking staff and visitors, ordering reference books from our local library and by badgering the Chief I found out the following. Although the prison dated back to 1594 the stone baths were built in Victorian times when the main wings were built. As well as being used for normal bathing they were also regularly used for punishment. Violent and disruptive prisoners would be doused in a cold bath and fed bread and water in order to make them comply. If they resisted the treatment they would have been chained into the

bath. This practice was used for many years but ceased after the end of the First World War, although bread and water punishments continued to the 60s.

During the First World War, Wakefield Prisons was filled with conscientious objectors or 'conchies' as a punishment for their refusal to accept compulsory military service. Most of them were Quakers. The staunchest of these were called 'Absolutists'. It was these men who would have filled the baths in the cellars more than any other objectors because they absolutely refused to comply with a system that would force them into a war to kill fellow human beings.

Knowing this, but still not allowed to touch anything, I often found myself wandering into the old bath houses to stare at that bath. I tried to imagine what it must have been like to have been chained in a cold bath, fed bread and water and to be despised and branded a coward and a traitor because you believed it was wrong to inflict violence on others. The Victorians built these baths to punish violent and disruptive prisoners, but during the First World War they were used to punish God loving, kind and caring gentle folk …. Quakers.



It all seemed so wrong. There was I a murderer, who deserved to be punished, staring back in time, listening to the cries of these poor men who had done absolutely nothing wrong! Also by their very nature as Quakers, they would probably have forgiven the prison guards immediately for their actions. Needless to say I found the experience deeply moving. My heart went out to those brave Quaker men and I promised there and then that I would always remember them.

After a few weeks we got the go ahead to clear out the bath rooms and to start refurbishment. I begged the others not to smash up the intact bath and they agreed. We covered it with cladding, placed a large stone on top of it and then placed a large fish tank on top of that.

That was forty years ago. As far as I know that bath is still there – a hidden testimony of the gentle heroism of Quakers inside.

NOTES

My wife and I are regular attenders at the Aylesbury Quakers Meeting for Worship. It was during a deep silence that I felt deeply compelled to briefly mention my first encounter with Quakers. After the Meeting I was approached by an elder and asked if I could write this story down for the Quakers web portal. The first draft was lost in cyberspace. …

RESEARCH

The story was based on limited research at the time. The following information has been more accurately researched recently from national archives paper entitled

'First World War conscientious objectors and exemptions from service 1914 1918'

- In 1916 the Military Service Act introduced compulsory military service for all men in Britain between the age of 18 and 50.
- It allowed for exemptions from call up on the grounds of occupation, hardship, ill health and conscientious objection.
- Conscientious objection came from all walks of life but the vast majority of them were Quakers.
- A series of military tribunals were set up to evaluate who should be exempted from service or not.
- Of the 16,000 men who applied for exemption only 300 were exempted absolutely.
- A great many of those who applied were ordered into non-combatant military service. Shortly after, the Non Combatant Corps (N.C.C.) was set up and 3,500 men readily accepted this service.

- Conscientious Objectors who refused to join the NCC were arrested, taken to barracks and forced to wear military uniforms. Those who continued to resist military service, (most of them), were court martialed and sent to prison.
- Over 6,000 men served between a few months and two years in prison because of their conscience.
- At one time 50 or so absolutists were sent to the front line in France and ordered to fight. Because they refused to accept any form of discipline in a theatre of war, between 30 and 35 of them were sentenced to death, but this was immediately commuted to ten years penal servitude.
- As a result of their harsh treatment, 73 men died in confinement either in prison or in barracks.
- Because of the above scandal, the Home Office emptied out two prisons and set them up as work camps for conscientious objectors – Dartmoor in the south and Wakefield in the north.
- Wakefield could then house nearly 1,000 prisoners. It quickly filled up with 'conchies' most of whom were Quakers. How many of them were punished in the stone baths is unknown.
- At the end of the First World War. All prison sentences were commuted to time served and all prisoners were released.

"I'M ONLY A CONVICT" - ANONYMOUS

I've been asked to share the following excerpts from an appreciative QICJ reader on the inside.

Dear Carmel, Thank you for you kind, thoughtful and very much appreciated letter and the encouragement to write of my recent rough journey explaining how I went from being one stepping stone to release to ending up back in prison. I'll tell you what flower! If it wasn't for bad luck I wouldn't have any luck so I just gotta be grateful.

My step dad and very, very, best friend in the world came up to see me yesterday. It's been about five years since I'd seen him last....so it was an extremely happy and emotional event. I don't get many visits which can't be helped, as after fifteen years, all your so called friends and family have given up on you. (I understand & don't blame them.) Following my return to closed conditions after my home leave, I lost a hell of a lot: my dad turned his back on me, my girl-friend ripped my heart out, and quite a few of my mates all thought I'd.. well f*ed up.**

So how did it all go wrong? I was set up to fail on my home leave. I had to plan out in advance all the things I would do on a 3 day home leave. Everyone was well aware of what I had planned: a job interview, see my family who I hadn't seen since 2005, register with a drug & alcohol agency, and my probation officer wanted me for a 2 hour meeting at 11 am on day two. So, as I had to spend half the first and third day travelling, I simply didn't have time to achieve all my goals. When I first turned up to the bail hostel I knew I had to adhere to an 8pm to 8am curfew. That, I thought was fair enough. However, I got upset when told I had to return at 11 am 'til 1 and at 5pm just to sign on. I mean, it was seven miles from all my appointments. I decided to return to gaol but the woman talked me into giving it a chance. So, because my brother was waiting outside, I decided to stay and 'sign on' at 1 and again at 5pm. But as soon as it got dark, I couldn't find the hostel and got back at 8.15pm some 15 minutes after curfew. So, even though it was my first time out of gaol in 15 years, they wanted me arrested and locked up. I left the hostel and spent the night with my girlfriend who is now my ex! So, it was back to closed conditions.

Then, I got stitched up on the inside as well. It's been the story of my life actually.... Don't know if I told you about my sentence and index offence? It was due to some bright spark in the government at the time (1997) they brought out a new law, two strikes and you are out. This meant that anyone convicted of a serious violent crime automatically receives a life sentence. Well, back in 2000, I was found guilty of my 2nd section 18 grievous bodily harm and even though my first section 18 was eleven years previously when I was only 14 years old, crazily, I was given a life sentence. In Jan 2015, I will have served 15 years for a stupid fight which is the equivalent of a 30 year sentence. You have to laugh or you'll just end up crying. It took me just over 12 years to get my 'Cat D' status and 12 seconds to loose it.



Since then, there was an accusation of me assaulting a screw. No one cares that I ended up with 2 broken ribs, a black eye, a gash in my head and other cuts and bruises. Afterall, I'm just a convict. I've spent half my life in gaol. It breaks my heart when I think about things, as I wouldn't want anything more than a proper law abiding life with a job and my biggest dream would be to hopefully one day be a father. I keep panicking thinking that I'll be too old or nobody would want me. But I have to hold onto something to keep my hopes alive or I'd just end up giving up.

An AA friend asked me how I cope with prison life and also what's the biggest thing I miss about being in gaol. After a little thought I said: “The biggest and most precious thing I miss about being in gaol, is being snuggled up to a girl and waking up alone with her”. Such closeness and feeling of love to me is the most precious and valuable thing in the world. You cannot buy it and nothing can replace it. With Kindness and Best Wishes, Anonymous.

REFLECTIONS OF A RETIRED QUAKER PRISON CHAPLAIN

When I first accepted the nomination of Quaker Prison Chaplains I did not think I would be organising a silent meeting. I thought that Quaker silence was something middle class, requiring certain levels of education, intelligence and understanding. I had thought that coming to meeting for worship with ‘heart and mind prepared’ implied that something intellectual happens in meeting. How wrong I was. Silence is classless and education is irrelevant.

At first, I offered a weekly discussion group where local Friends came to join us. We ended with about five minutes silence, which was sometimes interrupted by giggles. Around a dozen men used to come but it was obvious that many were there just to get out of their cells. When, as an economy measure, the prison ended evening activities, discussion group moved to afternoons. Numbers dropped to two or three, and discussions deteriorated as no one on education could come. When someone mentioned the silence I decided to risk silent meetings, followed by discussion. This was probably the best thing I did in my time in the prison.

I decided that a 'Quaker meeting' would mean little to many, who might vaguely think of porridge oats. So I advertised it as a 'Multi Faith silent meeting for those of all faiths and none'. I used to invite Buddhists and Hindus, we had a few Pagans, and an occasional Muslim and even a group of Roman Catholic travellers (busy with their rosaries in the silence). Most of those who came had not registered any religion - they came for the silence.



Gradually numbers grew with often more than 20 names on the list. Those who came appreciated the deep silence. There were frequent references to the noisy environment of the prison; our meetings were the only place they could find quiet. Visiting Friends often said the meetings were truly gathered.
I felt there was a quality to these meetings based on a shared suffering which is not often found in Quaker meetings. As in all Quaker meetings our silence was followed by a cup of tea and discussion. In discussion men would share terrible problems, others would offer sympathy, support and understanding. One day during the silence, a man in tears said, 'today is the anniversary of the death of my baby.' Several others said afterwards that their children, too, had suffered cot deaths. One young man told me that he was the only one of a schooldays gang of seven who was still alive: drugs, stolen cars, alcohol, violence had killed the other six prematurely

I was surprised, though I should not have been, by the popularity of the flowers. Once, when a women officer came to take them back, one man offered her a flower, which she put in her hair. One day I was stopped at the gate, and told that I couldn't take flowers into a prison. I said all churches and chapels have flowers. Security was called and said flowers could go to the chapel but not the cells.

Something very special could happen in these meetings. For example, a man suffering from ADHD said he had never been in silence for as long as half an hour, but would 'give it a go'. He warned me that he was unable to sit still, but would try. To my amazement he succeeded. As soon as the silence ended he started jumping about, saying how amazed he was at the power of the silence to silence him. I hope the silence gave them all something to help them get through their imprisonment, if not to 'help them lead law-abiding and useful lives after release'

Mary Brown - Retired QPM

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Mission statement: To substantially reduce the risk of future sexual abuse by assisting and supporting offenders who are committed to not re-offending. To assist them in the task of integrating with the community and leading responsible, productive and accountable lives.

The following is an extract from my talk given for Quaker Quest some years ago.

It is conceivable to believe that there is 'that of God' or 'that which is good' in everyone in normal social encounters and meetings; Quakers especially tend to be empathic and kind. It is much more contentious to suggest that the same holds true for that most reviled of offenders – even within the prison community – the paedophile.

However paedophiles, even those considered to be of high risk, are eventually released back into the community. The notion of naming and shaming drives paedophilia underground and more victims are created. Another way forward has been tried and proved to be very effective for over eleven years in this country.

'Circles of Support and Accountability' began in Canada and has its roots in the Mennonite Church. A woman pastor took a released sex offender under her wing, meeting with him regularly, challenging his awareness of the impact of his previous behaviour, giving practical support and slowly helping him to rebuild his self-esteem. The outcome was very positive, and other circles of volunteers were trained and established to reintegrate and rehabilitate offenders by building a network of social support, in order to prevent further sex abuse.

> **'I am so grateful that there are people who look beyond my past offending and look at the real me, not the monster that many people would like portrayed. I thank God for people who look at our positive aspects and are prepared to build on them.'**
>
> A Core Member

The system was piloted initially in the Thames Valley, led by Quakers and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. It is a prime example of restorative justice that aims to meet the needs of victims, the community and offenders more effectively and holistically. Volunteers are interviewed, trained and professionally supported by Social Services, the Police and Probation – the 'outer circle' to which the Core Member (CM) and the Volunteers are accountable. At the first stage, the circle meets weekly for up to a year, reducing to fortnightly. At the second stage, all being well, the meetings become less formal and increasingly more sociable. This may continue for up to 2 years – and the Core Member may be monitored for years afterwards, even long term friendships are established. The circle is small enough (3-4 volunteers) to optimise trust and communication yet large enough to share responsibility. There is constant supervision by experienced social workers and regular reviews ensure the support is appropriate and the accountability rigorous.

By May 2009 over 60 released offenders committed to being in a Circle and, of those, not one had re-offended sexually. A few were recalled to prison as they were deemed to be of significant potential risk by the Circle – which was confirmed by the professionals. Evidently it is an effective way forward and is now running in many other areas as well as in the Thames Valley. it is planned to be expanded across the country, hopefully in Staffordshire too. The Society of Friends has now relinquished its role and the service has been given charity status.

‘Public protection would be more difficult, more challenging and more dangerous without the Circles service.’

Steve Neale, Detective Chief Inspector Thames Valley

I was involved for eight years prior to moving to Leek in 2013. I was in 4 Circles altogether, each circle lasting up to two years. I do believe that we are all born trusting and loveable, the notion of original sin is not for me. Challenging, violent, skewed behaviour is learnt and exists in a climate of fear, not excuses but valid reasons. I also know that change is achievable, even if only in learning to control and manage inappropriate desires and actions. So, whilst it was a big commitment, it was very rewarding. I met some wonderful people along the way and learnt a lot about myself and others.

Maggie Hunt

LAURIE ANDREWS INTERVIEWS ADRIAN SMITH

LA: *Adrian, you have served a term in prison? What effect did that have on you?*

AS: I served nine months at Cardiff, 1978. I was convicted of gross indecency with four brothers I had got to know originally as part of my training: their family had a history of sex offending and it is easy to say now that I should have had nothing to do with them. I was vulnerable emotionally. I knew I was homosexual before I had the language to conceptualise it. I started falling in love with other boys when at primary school. I was horrified to find that same-sex activities were illegal I did not see myself as a criminal and never stole, swore or smoked. In fact, sex offenders are seen as deviant and much more severely punished.

An additional serious charge was added on without proper authority, and when I tried to object to this I was brushed aside *by my own counsel***.** To get four years as a first offender is unheard of. The whole process confirmed what I had long suspected- that the people administering the law really do not know what they are doing. Despite my distress, there was a part of me which said, “This is an unusual experience most men in your position would never get; learn all you can from it.” I had a weekly visit from a Cardiff Friend, Victor Reynolds, and on Sundays gladly attended the prison chapel. Once I became chapel orderly the chaplain, Danny Pugh, treated me as a colleague. Twice, in emergency I played the organ for services. We had a mission week with a visiting evangelist and Welsh choir that I would not have missed for anything.

My parents served the shame part of the sentence and tried to prevent people finding out what had happened. I left prison with a malicious streak, determined to upset apple carts, to afflict the comfortable, to ask awkward questions …

LA: *How did you become involved with QICJ?*

AS: When I heard that an exploratory meeting was being held at Winchester, I travelled from Bristol to take part and in due course joined. Even in 1983 there was a newsletter. The first editor was Neil Johnson, then a member of the prison service. The leading light in the early days was Venetia Caine, who now lives abroad. I soon began to meet Friends concerned for the area of the law that had so brutally treated me. Other early members included Dermot Grubb (governor at HMP Horfield when I served the initial horrific first weekend of my sentence), and Mike Coldham (who when he heard of my conviction dropped everything and came to see me at once. I shall never forget that).



Primarily QICJ is a *support* organisation, to Friends involved in the justice system. – magistrates, probation officers, prison staff, police or as offenders. I am surprised more Quaker prison chaplains do not join QICJ.

LA: *What are you doing now? And plans for the future?*

AS: I was looking forward to a benign old age when the Labour government set to "keep sex offenders under surveillance". The bar they wanted would stop my 30-year service with Holiday Fellowship (HF), since it sometimes involved contact with children under parental supervision. In the end I was allowed to resume my 15-year service with Chelmsford night shelter but trustees have since refused to reinstate me, saying I could bring the project into disrepute. HF more generously said they will give me holidays to lead in term time, when there are unlikely to be children present, but so far they have not done so. I am enraged that 35 years after going to prison I can still be clawed back into the criminal justice system to face further restrictions. I am using the time to complete my life story, but it is an immense task. I am on my own much more than I used to be. I'm an active member of Chelmsford Meeting having served as an elder. I represent Quakers on Churches Together in Essex and East London. But in my heart, I miss the company of young people terribly – it is their companionship I want, not anything improper. Since around 1956 I've taken every year as it comes, often with a sense of dread. Sometimes I am relieved that I have no children or grandchildren to worry over.

Laurie Andrews

VOICE TO BE HEARD - ANONYMOUS

Although names have been changed the following is based on facts and was checked by “Johnny”. It is based on talks with his Quaker Chaplain.

Morning Johnny

Hi Sam – I’ll spring the lock on the cell door – and put the kettle on.

From our chats over the years I’ve heard your story – It should be known wider. It’s a lot more than ever appears in your official ‘Dossier’. I hope I can do that that both as a Friend and as your friend.

Well, we do call ourselves ‘The Society of Friends’ and you happen to be the one from outside I see most frequently – that’s why I call you my Elder.

Why Quakers ?

I’d been inside some time before realising I didn’t want things put into my mind. What mattered was finding out what was already in there – think and change it. I wanted a community beyond the wing. Although we meet in silence, afterwards, there’s a lot more sharing with Friends.

How long have you been in contact with Friends ?

I first met a Quaker in prison 26 years ago and joined the Society in 1989.

I need to get some facts absolutely right. So here goes - how old are you, how many prisons have you been in and for how long altogether – and why are you here ?

Well, I’m 63, I’ve been in ten prisons - some more than once. I was convicted of murder 41 years ago when I admitted stabbing a girl in a car. It was sudden - It was perhaps an instinctive reaction from the sexual abuse I suffered as a young teenager – I know that will never excuse what I did. I was violent and criminal – I was a walking time-bomb. In prison I was angry, isolated and illiterate and didn’t respond properly to anybody – but that was long ago. I’ve thought about my victim and if I’m ever released I’ll put flowers on her grave. Other deep thinking came out in my counseling at my last prison and here – about being aware of my instincts and triggers and coping with them. I’ve learnt not to react in my old way – and that’s really tested in prison !

But didn’t they find evidence of your sexual fantasy writing in your cell ?

Yes - but that was twenty years ago. When you’re alone in a cell you have to make fantasies.



So that's what was. You've had plenty of time to change - a whole lifetime.

In the past I've done courses in Enhanced Thinking Skills, Anger Management, Sex Offender Treatment Programme, Victim Empathy, Social Skills & Relationship Skills, CALM and AVP.

They must have had some effect – aren't you a different person now ?

"Last week Mum was rung by the Border Agency and that's my problem – being technically foreign. As far as the Home Office is concerned as I've only got a foreign passport I'm not British. Last bank holiday I was visited by a chap from the Border Agency – he said they still had me down for deportation – but when I told him I came to Britain sixty years ago he said it ought to be changed"

Oh yes - some see me as the old street-wise man on the wing. I'm now the wing rep for anti-bullying, I'm an active 'Listener' trained by the Samaritans, Toe-to-Toe literacy helper, wing laundry orderly, etc.

You have so many links with those inside but what links have you kept up with those outside ?

I asked to be moved from a cat C prison to cat B here – it's nearer my Mother for visiting. She's in her eighties now and is brought here by my brother or sister.

So much really has changed - why are you still in prison - and not even in an open cat D one ?

They still treat me as a sex offender although there was no evidence presented at my trial to say I was. Perhaps because the victim was only fifteen years old – even though she and her girl friend were trying to look older. I did do a SOTP course but they kept on saying do more.

Is that your biggest frustration ?

I feel buried in bureaucracy. My "dossier" doesn't show such change. After doing several Alternatives to Violence Project workshops I became a Facilitator to help run them. I've done this both at my previous prison and at this prison. Even my official Prison ICM Report noted that there was no mention of my AVP work in my dossier. I think AVP changed me more than anything else.

But surely such things could be brought out at a Parole Board ?

I haven't had a proper Parole Board for twenty years. Then a few weeks ago I had one that lasted half an hour. The judge said he was sorry and that it would start again when the right reports had been sent to the right people. I hope you're allowed to be there next time Sam.

Many years ago you were cat D ready to go to an open prison for release – what happened ?

I was falsely accused of taking a hostage there's no mention of it in my records. That was also over 20 years ago !

I've been coming into this prison now for 18 years but I've never met any situation like yours before.

I'm not surprised. Now I just feel used – a lot of prisoners, particularly newish ones, are simply told by staff "Go and see Johnny".

A Quaker Chaplain

WHAT REHABILITATION REVOLUTION?

PAINTING A PICTURE

Anyone who works within the criminal justice system will know his type : just turned 30, his communication is violent, anger dominates everything. It is a familiar tale: his childhood was unhappy, traumatic ... abusive. His journey through education, despite his intelligence, is the classic underachiever:undiagnosed dyslexia and learning difficulties. Before he reached his mid-teens , drink and drugs had taken their toll.

A post schooling pattern quickly emerges: one job after another may last 6 months, at tops a year. The drink and drug use spiral, oblivion is his refuge – an escape from social norms and relationships. Dealing, crime and a chaotic life style fast becomes the norm. Then, he is committed to secure psychiatric care, mixing with other deeply disturbed criminals, sectioned and heavily medicated for years on end. There follows care in the community: totally underfunded and undermanned, he 'goes through' through rehabilitation and is released into society.

Within a few years he has done serious crime, most probably drug related, even a spell in foreign prison is no surprise. The drug use is now totally out of control, mixing the ever increasing prescribed medication with illicit drugs and drink. His family and friends have long deserted him and that is no wonder.

The police want him of the street; he is smart, he is connected up the criminal ladder internationally, his criminal empire is expanding, he is violent and has no qualms with kidnapping, torturing or beating people within an inch of their lives - it gives him a buzz. Witnesses, victims and authority are afraid because they know that he is crazed and he is connected. The professionals are without hope.

This was my story up to the age of 33. On the 5th May next year it will be the tenth anniversary of my decision to walk away from my old life.

MY JOURNEY

I was at a drug addiction unit when I blurted out to my key worker - ‘This isn’t working, do you know a spiritual way out?’ He directed me to an evangelical rehab organisation where I went for six weeks. This changed me; my brother in law proclaimed that I had grown up. I had suddenly become aware of my emotions. This first part of my journey could be described as learning to relate or interact with my feelings and thoughts. The evangelical church worked with these two inner processes teaching me to connect to what I thought and felt, the CBT that I received during this period re-enforced my emotional awakening. I also began to meditate. This stage lasted about two years and brought me to a more contemplative church. During this period I stopped all illicit drugs and with the help of a psychiatrist also stopped the medication that I had been repeatedly told I would be on for life.

Over the following period of five years or so, I struggled with my sense of self and my spirituality. My deepening meditative practice coupled with my commitments in the voluntary sector brought me to a Roman Catholic Seminary where I studied counselling and spiritual direction. There followed a number of spells meditating for up to a year at an austere religious community. I began to find the bits of myself that

were missing and pulled myself together. I began to experience 'a presence' that I now call God. I started to attend Quaker meetings. In order to be accepted into society I knew I needed a professional qualification. I qualified as a counsellor in July 2012 and received my Master's in 2013.

All these years later, I am still wrestling with finding my niche in a society that does not appear to accept that people can and do change radically given the right circumstances. It was an obvious choice for me to work with other former criminals in rehabilitation. However, it does feel as if the system is against me - when I apply to prisons, the pattern is always the same, the head of counselling may say that they know how good I would be working in this environment, sadly the governor or one of his assistants would check out my past out and would say no. Successive applications to drug & alcohol units and other counselling agencies delivered the same depressing tale. Quite clearly, I am still struggling with rejection.

MY VISION

For me the rehabilitation revolution will only truly begin when the government, society, the media and service providers recognise the fact that people can and do change, and it is these people who should be at the heart of the rehabilitation revolution helping lead other ex-offenders out of the dessert. Demonising, stigmatising, discriminating or sensationalising ex-offenders to life sentences in low-pay jobs with little or no future prospects is the fuel that drives wavering addicts or criminals to re-engage in criminal behaviour.

May be I shouldn't have wrote this article this week it's been another particularly rough one. I didn't even get an interview for any of the dream jobs I applied for . Two years of rejection is obviously starting to take its toll. May be my lot in life is to dig holes after all....

Graham Clucas

Cantebury Meeting

PRISONERS' VOICES - PHILOMENA O'HARE

The seminar entitled 'Prisoners' Voices' was extraordinary for many reasons, not least for the juxtaposition of the voice of a convicted murderer and the voice of the wife of another man convicted of murder. And in truth the audience was remarkable too for the breadth of experience of so many aspects of the Criminal Justice System.

Geoff had been a young, macho, skinhead when he was involved in a murder for which, of course, he received a life sentence. During the sixteen years he served in prisons he undertook a journey of reflection and questioning which gave him great insights and strengths, ultimately allowing him to become a Quaker, a Quaker Meeting House Warden, a speaker, married, and a fully participating member of society.

Geoff's journey was not straight forward. As he explained "Rehabilitation is hard; there is no easy fix". Nevertheless he recognised that he had to shed his defensive outer shell and to be his real self, to stop blaming others and to acknowledge his remorse and guilt.

In time his insights were such that he wanted to share them with serving prisoners. But he was 'on the out' and as a licensee he could not go into a jail to do this. This extraordinary man then decided that the only way was to commit a crime that did not exist; he walked into an open prison. At evening tally there was one prisoner too many! The authorities tried to discharge him but he maintained his right, as a licensee, to serve his sentence. And so for seven years he did – working with both staff and inmates.

His was a unique perspective and he used it to do all he could to work with prisoners towards their rehabilitation. Geoff was adamant in all he told us that it was often only a millimetre of movement; there was no Big Scheme, just little human interactions. Maybe a single word could lead to some healing; sometimes this came long after the word was said. Using empathy and compassion on what could be 'hard-wired' attitudes he would open up alternatives for those he worked with.

Geoff's voice was followed by that of Tracey* who whilst working in a prison unexpectedly fell in love with Max*, a lifer. Though they faced a great many problems they did eventually marry. Any relative of a prisoner can face difficulties, however those faced by Tracey were manifestly more so. She outlined to us the social stigma with which she had to deal. Friends, family, work colleagues, prison staff were very judgemental and it took years for her to divest herself of a sense of shame. "I am no longer ashamed of loving him" she said.

Like any marriage this one had it's crises but in Tracey's case they were made worse by the fact that she can't ever phone Max; it just isn't allowed. He can phone her but if he chooses not to then she is left wondering and worrying. It is often a lonely life for Tracey and it is a life sentence as Max, as a lifer, does not know when he might be released. One of the hardest elements of their marriage is that their time together is conducted in public, on prison visits where they have to "Keep your hands were I can see them". Yet hands are so important. Tracey told us how after visits she could "Smell his skin on my hands" and how over the long years their hands weathered and changed.

So much is made difficult for prisoners' families yet such connections are vital. At the moment 160,000 children are affected by imprisonment. They are all being punished. Below is a list of organisations for prisoner's families

- Action for Prisoners' Families (National policies and guidance)
- Partners of Prisoners (North West and Beyond – runs Visitors' Centres)
- The Offenders Families Helpline (National Phone line and Website)
- Prison Chat UK – on line (Run by and for prisoners' families)
- The Jigsaw Project - Leeds Prison
- The Prison Reform Trust (National helpline and website with advice and info for families and prisoners)



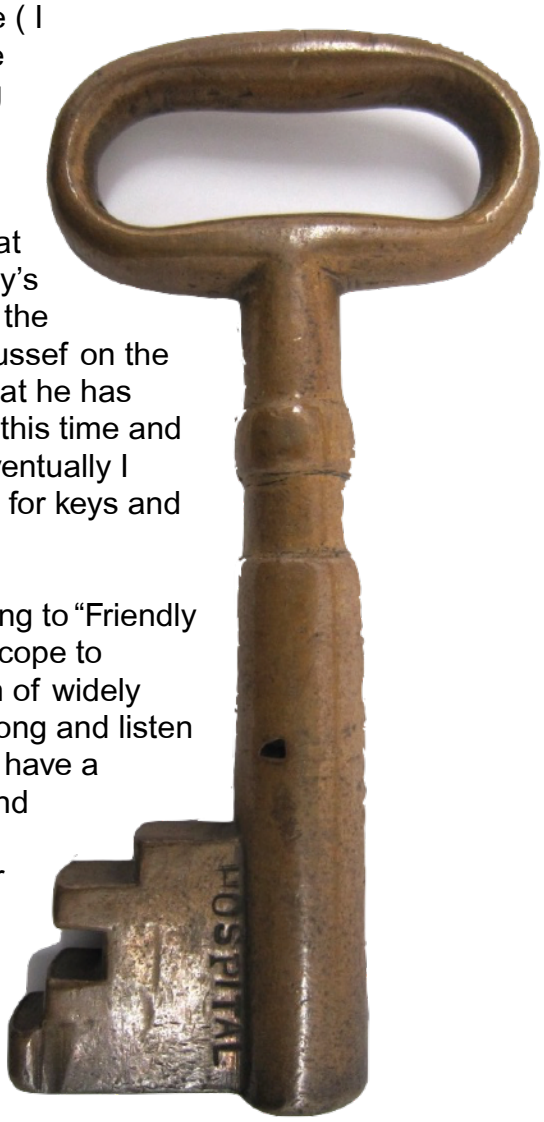
This was a moving and enlightening seminar. Ironically, as both speakers to one degree or another demonstrated, imprisonment – when occurring with the effect, if not the intent, of rehabilitation and change – was the gateway to freedom and restoration to society. And it was enhanced from briefings from Louise and Ami of Circles of Support and Accountability, an organisation formed to help former sex offenders back into the community. They are looking for volunteers in West Yorkshire (training is provided). Also seeking volunteers was Human Writes Watch regarding penfriendships for people on Death Row in the USA.

*Some names have been changed

Philomena O'Hare, Leeds Quaker Crime and Criminal Justice Group

EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF A ROOKIE CHAPLAIN

I first started to get involved with prisons about 2 years ago in HMP Isle of Wight which then consisted of 3 main buildings, Camp Hill, Parkhurst and Albany. Camp Hill was closed earlier this year. I started in the first instance as a Prison Visitor and was selected to visit a French Moroccan devout Moslem, Yussef, because (I suppose) of a shared interest in music and the fact that he was one who did not have any visitors. It was the beginning of an entry into a strange new world and so I took it slowly.



I was invited to attend the Quaker meetings in Parkhurst and Albany by the Quaker Prison Chaplain and was told that if I was working on the "inside" then it would be in everybody's interest that I should relinquish the role of Visitor. This was the first dilemma I encountered but arranged to call in to see Yussef on the wing, as I have continued to do. I am very pleased to say that he has overcome many of his mental and personal problems over this time and has developed his musical and educational interests. So eventually I completed many courses within the prison and was eligible for keys and walkie-talkie.

It was suggested we should change the name of our meeting to "Friendly Discussion Group-run by Quakers" in a bid to enlarge the scope to include people of other faiths or none. We have a collection of widely varied faith backgrounds who seem very happy to come along and listen and chat for the mainly social part of our time together. We have a reading from one or two items from Advices and Queries and settle down to a period of Quaker stillness which has been around 10 minutes in length. Recently some have asked for a longer period and we now experience a 20 minute of respected stillness which is warmly appreciated. Our meeting concludes with tea or coffee and sometimes biscuits supplied by one of our "Working" members".

With the closure of Camp Hill there have been many changes for both prisoners and staff, some "doubling up" with ensuing consequences. The Meeting in Parkhurst has almost come to a halt with several of our meeting being moved away. One of our members, was seriously ill in hospital and living with ventilator assistance for many weeks. I was able to visit and communicate through pad and pen messages. At the time of writing he has made a miraculous recovery after 7 weeks. He is now back on the wing and has said that during the 2 weeks in coma he felt surrounded by a continuous warm light. The "crash team" were alerted 3 times and he was offered the last rites by the hospital chaplain. Very recently he told me that the cancer diagnosed in February was no longer visible at all on the scan that was carried out whilst in hospital!

Charles Axford

LIFELINES - 25 YEARS OLD

This year, LifeLines – an organisation whose members correspond with prisoners on death row in the US – is marking its 25th anniversary. Over that time we have put over 5000 people in this country in touch with condemned men and women. From the outset, there has been a close Quaker involvement.

In attempting to summarise what LifeLines has achieved in the 25 years of its existence, I can do no better than allow the prisoners on death row to speak for themselves. The following quotes are drawn from a recent essay competition:

"For the truly fortunate, those whose life-force burns hot and shines bright, if you will open your heart and extend yourself in love and friendship to one who is hopeless, there's a chance you could re-connect that person to their life-force. And in essence, restore life where once it was lost. And as a human-being, it is one of the greatest things you'll ever do."

"I have gone through periods of being so absorbed into prison culture, nothing else seemed real. I became in truth what many represent prisoners to be; a dangerous animal in a cage. What brought me back was contact with decent people. They shared bits of their lives with me, helped me regain my perspective, by showing me there was still good in the world. This may sound overly melodramatic, but I speak truly when I say they saved both my sanity, and my humanity."

"Every time a stranger reaches out to us, willing to befriend a convict in the direst of circumstances with something as simple as a kind word or an offer of friendship, can invigorate our sense of self-worth. For us, these are our own magical strings, helping us to escape our Labyrinth with the greatest of gifts. The one gift, that if we are blessed with it, can sustain us in the present and in our futures. The one gift, that when nurtured, can never be lost or taken away. The one gift that will always help us remember ourselves. That one gift is hope."

If corresponding with prisoners under sentence of death has taught us one thing, it is that each and every prisoner has a story to tell. They are more, as the British death row lawyer Clive Stafford Smith told us early on, than a 3 inch headline in the Sun. But in the same way that we at this end can have an unexpectedly profound effect upon those we correspond with, so also those condemned to death can, paradoxically, greatly enrich our lives. We are given a glimpse into how the human spirit can cope in the face of great adversity – an adversity that is in nearly all cases self-inflicted, making it if anything harder to cope with, as the remorse and the "if onlys" come flooding in. Also, people often open up more quickly on paper than they do in person. In doing so, we are able to enter into some of the deeply felt but rarely shared areas touched on by the prisoners in the quotes above.

For the past 22 years I have been corresponding with a man in Florida, Mike Lambrix. He has been on death row for 30 years. He is not exactly a new boy, but there are others who have been there for longer. Mike has just had some critical appeals rejected by the Florida Supreme Court. I have seen him dragged down to the point at which he was tempted to drop his appeals, but have also seen him draw strength from a powerful spiritual experience over 20 years ago when he came within hours of being executed.

Now, in the face of this fresh setback, he retains his characteristic resilience and buoyancy, and remains a source of great inspiration. (His case can be followed on http://deathrowjournals.blogspot.co.uk/).

LifeLines has a long waiting list of prisoners wanting someone to correspond with. Anyone feeling able to rise to that challenge can find details on www.lifelines-uk.org.uk/. Writing may change your life too.

To return to the words of one of the death row inmates quoted above: “So I feel safe in speaking for all prisoners, when I say thank you to all who take time to write to someone behind bars. For any of you who ever feel your letters are ‘not enough’, you have my word that you are doing far more than you realize. You are not just writing letters. You are changing lives.”

Jan Arriens

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WORKS

Restorative justice is based not on 'returning evil for evil' but on healing the harm, and where possible enabling the victim to tell the offender the effects of the crime on him or her, and to ask questions. This can be an eye-opener to the offender. Unlike the adversarial criminal trial, the process encourages empathy on both sides, although of course it doesn't guarantee it.

Opportunities are being missed. The Crime and Courts Act 2013 allows prosecution to be deferred to allow for compensation, donation to a charity, or disgorging profits from the alleged offence; but it applies only to corporate offenders such as firms, not to individuals, and there is no opportunity for their victims to meet the directors in person (rather than underlings or lawyers) to tell them, face-to-face, the human effects of their mis-selling of insurance or pharmaceuticals or their pollution of the environment.

The Act also allows sentencing to be deferred to give an opportunity for restorative justice; but prosecutors, probation officers and courts cannot refer cases to restorative justice if no service is available locally to provide it.

WHERE restorative justice has been introduced, for example in Thames Valley, it is working well. So it is disappointing to see it criticised for the wrong reasons. In April, Yvette Cooper, the Shadow Home Secretary, complained about the number of cases being dealt with by community resolution.

It is odd to see saving police time and paperwork presented as somehow dubious. Police used to have to choose between charging someone (possibly leading to a 'crime cleared up', but saddling the person with a conviction), or recording an unsolved crime (bad for statistics), or taking no further action. Now 'restorative disposals' can count as positive outcomes, which are good for community cohesion, besides saving police and court time on minor cases.

After crimes by a stranger, victims commonly want to know 'Why me?' Hate crimes (attacking people merely because they are black, gay, disabled, foreign, or otherwise different) arise from ignorance and stereotyping, and a restorative process is better suited to overcoming these than conviction and punishment.

Criticism is often based on misconceptions, such as a Daily Telegraph headline, 'Violent offenders avoid courts with soft on the street justice'.

Restorative justice is not only concerned with offenders but also with victims, who consistently give it high satisfaction ratings. It doesn't aim at controlling crime by fear of judicially ordered pain, but by the pain of recognising the harm caused to another person.

If an offender agrees to make reparation, for example by community work, the community will have to provide suitable and properly supervised tasks - not degrading ones, but activities by which he or she can gain self-esteem and the approval of the community.

What many victims want most is that offenders should not 'do it again'; many offenders need skills (including literacy), anger management, addiction therapy, and so on, and these have to be available to them, together with the basics such as accommodation and work.

Using restorative justice for domestic violence is more complex; it certainly needs handling with caution. But the UK is lagging behind several continental countries that use it widely, notably Austria, where a study in 2010 by Dr Christa Pelikan found that 83 per cent of the women who responded lived free of violence after the mediation experience.

“Using restorative justice for domestic violence is more complex; it certainly needs handling with caution. But the UK is lagging behind several continental countries that use it widely”

Of these, 80 per cent said that restorative justice had contributed to this result, mostly by making them feel stronger and more assured about their rights, and 40 per cent stated that their partner had changed as a result of going through mediation.

THE big question is, who will make it happen? The probation service, now being severely cut, is unlikely to have the time. Free-lance facilitators cannot guarantee continuity, and have no structure for support and supervision. The commercial sector operates to values which have little in common with restorative ones.

In the age of the Big Society, conflict resolution and restorative justice could be provided by local mediation services in each locality, overseen by a national NGO. Many cases can be handled by trained lay mediators (as in Norway, Finland and the Netherlands, and in some places in the UK), others by staff. If the government is serious about restorative justice, there should be a mechanism for funding it from the resulting savings in other parts of the system (a new adaptation of payment by results).



We need a strategy to spread better understanding of restorative justice and the impetus to put it into effect. About 30 years ago many local groups were formed to spread Victim Support. With guidance from a national body such as the Restorative Justice Council, could local faith groups and others do the same thing, taking up the challenge by helping to set up mediation services nationwide?

Martin Wright
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ESCAPING VICTIMHOOD

Every year about 700 people are murdered in the UK. The extraordinary, sudden, wrenching event of being a relative of someone who is murdered erases all landmarks. There is a deep threat to one's integrity and a bewildering helplessness. How can one's life before the trauma be re-connected, how to continue to live, to salvage trust, meaning and hope? How to face the fact of the murderers as fellow human beings? You are now labelled as a member of the 'family of the victim', your relative is now 'a victim' and you are taken over by a complex, criminal investigation which holds one's grieving process to ransom.

Criminal justice agencies often stress that securing a successful prosecution will afford the survivors closure. It does not. When the police, the courts and the media withdraw the traumatically bereaved find themselves isolated, unsupported and struggling to find ways of regaining control of their lives. It is at this moment that the organisation Escaping Victimhood (EV) can help.

The name of this charity came from a piece of work by the philosopher Dr. Michael Bavidge who wrote: Philosophers have thought a lot about the difference between an event (something happens) and an action (I do something) but they have not thought enough about undergoings (someone does something to me). He came up with a list entitled Escaping Victimhood which involves: putting an end to the original injustice; accepting that we or our loved ones have been the objects of injustice and malevolence; accepting that we will continue to suffer; preventing the unjust consequences of the original injustice from carrying on unrestrained; regaining control of one's own life (inner and outer); regaining or maintaining confidence in other people; defining one's own status e.g. in rejecting the victim label; and moving on and away from the offence.

"bereavement by murder is bewilderingly complex and a long haul which is neither logical nor straightforward"

However, bereavement by murder is bewilderingly complex and a long haul which is neither logical nor straightforward. It is often undermined and prolonged by an ignorance about a normal response to traumatic loss which involves shock, numbness, disbelief, frighteningly intense emotions of rage, grief and fear which can feel like insanity (and be perceived as madness by others) but are normal to the experience. There is no cure for the event but it may be possible to receive therapeutic help for the symptoms. If the process is suppressed or avoided it develops into the chronic form of post traumatic stress syndrome with its mood swings, nightmares, insomnia, aggression, isolation, avoidance of anything that may be associated with the event, relational difficulties, flashbacks, panic attacks, helplessness and low self esteem.

Traumatic experience is processed differently from pleasant experience. There is an overwhelming arousal of the system. The experience is taken in as fragments and stored in the sensory parts of the brain where it remains compartmentalised (not wishing to be stored as a memory). It becomes a frozen silence. Yet the fragmented sensory images need to unthaw and connect with feelings and memories. It needs to move into the area of the brain where it can join up and be told as a story. It needs to be voiced and heard.

Some people find themselves trapped in victimhood, and feel that they are also 'serving a life sentence'. Often, professional support falls away, or is inadequate. Relationships suffer; marriages can break down under the pressure; children can feel neglected to the point of suicide. Preoccupation with the traumatic event can seriously impact upon and disrupt normal parenting patterns. This in turn can lead to confusion

and unhappiness in children which can lead to truanting, anti-social and criminal behaviour, which can be exacerbated by the child's own experience of the original crime (e.g. loss of a sibling or parent). Busy GPs are likely to treat the symptoms as depression. Unless properly addressed, this syndrome can last for years and even decades and may be expressed as suicide or more violence.

Families of murder victims can often feel isolated and stigmatised within their communities. Bereavement and loss affects members of the same family in different ways, leading to different coping strategies, which can sometimes fracture the infrastructure of the family unit. Those who 'undergo' the effects of serious crime or traumatic bereavement may "self-medicate" with alcohol and drugs. This can lead to a range of drug or alcohol related problems, including serious accidents, injury and illness. Some people also find themselves unable to continue to work, which can lead to severe economic hardship and in some extreme circumstances homelessness.

Victim Support and their now specialist arm – the Homicide Service - and other charities in the field can offer plenty of help, including general support, advice and access to local groups of people who have had similar experiences. But none have the resources to help people to understand their own deep seated trauma, and to gain the confidence to re-take control of their own lives and in time to regain a fuller life. It is not the intention of EV to replicate clinical services which may or may not be available for those who wish to access them but rather to offer an innovative response to traumatic bereavement and loss in a group residential setting – something that is not readily accessible through conventional mental health services.

The challenging and specialist area in which EV operates, provides a week long residential programme, and a follow-up day for about 12 participants. It has been designed to help people affected by the trauma of serious crime, murder or manslaughter, employing skilled and experienced professionals. The venue is chosen to ensure safety, comfort and relaxation so that participants experience a feeling of sanctuary from the harsh, seemingly inexorable assault of traumatic loss. EV has run 15workshops, one for survivors of domestic violence, and 14 for families of murder or manslaughter victims. Feedback from participants has identified that, for many, this has been a life changing experience. The participants also tend to stay in contact with each other, forming informal support networks, but many feel they no longer need such support.

The design of the workshop may vary according to the needs of the participants but will always include certain core elements. There is an opportunity to learn about the impact of trauma and to reflect on this from a personal perspective ; sessions on personal change to help participants locate the traumatic event within the context of their life's journey, and to provide some tools for self-help; body work such as massage and tai chi, which provide relaxation, , and the potential for the release of traumatic memories held in the body; creative workshops, such as painting or photography, providing participants with new ways of expressing their experience. The facilitators are also able to offer participants one to one sessions to help apply the learning to their personal circumstance.

EV has chosen to use a collaborative, experiential, person-centred approach to this work incorporating the core principles of: Unconditional Positive Regard - for the participants and fellow facilitators; Empathy - with participants in their reality; Congruence - in that all facilitators are honest, open and real about themselves and their interactions with the participants and each other. Courage and commitment is required from every facilitator to adhere to the principles underlying this methodology and to all conditions arising within the group format. The practice is underpinned in all that is done by principles of restorative process, ensuring that the focus is on the needs of the individual, the work is centred on repairing the harm, it is voluntary and involves informed consent at all times. It trusts the person to take their learning from the experience and apply it without continuing dependency on an agency.

One participant said that, 'with all the treatments and care made available to us, we felt able to respond and open up, to unleash some of our pain that has been trapped within us for what seems like an eternity, in a safe and peaceful environment. It was OK to cry, laugh, shout; to feel and show emotions, something that we are not allowed to do in our society'.

The Oxford English Dictionary offers only one example of the use of the word 'victimhood': Mrs. Carlyle describes someone as 'wearing a sullen look of victimhood' (Letter 1883). The root of the word 'sullen' is Latin 'solus': alone. This is indeed at the heart of this state that can so easily become inescapable, misunderstood and alienating. This innovative project has already helped people to escape from this most pernicious, dehumanising label into a more hopeful, stable future within the greater whole of a caring community.

Marian Partington

NO RIOT IN CHAPELTOWN

On Monday 8th August 2011 Tottenham had erupted into rioting; there was much media coverage and the expectation was that rioting would spread to other cities. It did, but not to Leeds. The Leeds Quaker Criminal Justice Group invited a panel of speakers to a seminar on the anniversary of the riots to explore how and why riots occur, how they are policed and why Chapeltown didn't follow other copycat rioting.



The academic theory was covered by Dr Paul Bagguley of Leeds University whose speciality is the sociology of protest. He explained that traditionally riots were thought to be an expression of irrational behaviour, of a crowd with a collective mind. This theory is still held by both politicians and the media, yet crowds are often rational as to who and what they target. They do, however, often have common grievances such as economic and political frustration, particularly if the victims feel excluded or inadequately represented. But this doesn't necessarily lead to violence; the violence comes with a trigger, for example the death of the man in Tottenham.

Superintendent Keith Gilbert is responsible for Community Safety in Leeds and he addressed the conference on the topic of Public Order. The Police are trained to preserve the peace based on the original Peel principles with the paramount assumption of using force only after persuasion, advice and warning are insufficient. One important aspect of dealing with disorder, in all its variations, is the importance of the Human Rights Act which gives everyone the right to peaceful protest. Furthermore, the Police must maintain their impartiality whatever their views on the protest and be aware that public perception of their methods is all important. In dealing with public disorder proportionately the Police take into account what is 'normal' for that community; something that only comes from local knowledge and involvement. They need to be aware of how local tensions express themselves and what might be a local trigger. They aim to prevent escalation from disorder to serious disorder to riot and are trained and equipped for this. There is a national model of tactical options, each of which is designed to achieve the preferred outcome. All riots eventually diffuse and settle.

The seminar went on to hear from the people involved directly in Chapeltown on the night of the Tottenham riots. They were Chief Inspector Melanie Jones who was the senior officer on duty in the

Chapeltown area that night, Claude Hendrickson and Lutel James both of whom are local residents and who have been community activists in Chapeltown for many, many years. They have worked with C.I. Jones in the past as they all strive to improve dialogue and trust between the police and the public.

There was a nation-wide expectation that the riots would spread and this also held true for Leeds. Tensions in Chapeltown were made worse that day by the shooting of a young man who was well known to the local youngsters and had caused them to gather together. There was a police presence which included a dog-handler. The officer's perception on the ground was that the crowd at the scene were in danger of contaminating a murder scene. The dog was deployed but unfortunately slipped its lead and a young person was bitten. This increased tensions. They decided to 'face off' the Police. C.I. Jones had gone off duty but returned. Claude and Lutel went to the Police Station and, knowing how the youngsters trusted them, persuaded the Chief Inspector to give them one hour to try to diffuse the situation. Things were beginning to hot up, a car was on fire and some adults had joined the youngsters.

Claude and Lutel worked tirelessly (till well into the early hours of the next day and the following one) to persuade the youngsters of the possible effect of their actions. They pointed out that once they had a criminal record their futures would be blighted for the rest of their lives. But they made it clear that the responsibility for their actions was theirs. As Claude and Lutel had worked in Chapeltown, day after day, the youngsters trusted and respected them, they listened and eventually dispersed.

Claude and Lutel made it plain to the audience that they were not Community Leaders but Community Activists. They are very concerned for the future as they see the Government cuts curtailing employment prospects and, as the gap between rich and poor widens, more and more disillusionment. They have less and less funding to carry on their work which was so effective, not just for the youngsters but also having an influence on their siblings and even on their parents and grandparents. There was a general air of gloom amongst the audience as future riots seem inevitable.

Philomena O'Hare.

CORNWALL'S FIRST RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCE - NOV 2013

There is little in Cornwall in the form of reparative justice and the conference served to inform, educate and motivate people to think along the lines of focusing on the needs of victims, communities and offenders instead of relying solely on the principles and punishments of the adversarial system.

The keynote speech was given by Lionel Morrison OBE. Lionel was once imprisoned with Nelson Mandela. He spoke movingly of being labelled and stigmatised as an offender and of witnessing a strong sense of community and of being upheld by family and friends throughout the apartheid struggle. He explored the title 'Reconciliation - Sorry Is Not Enough' stressing that RJ was not a quick-fix solution to crime or conflict and that lots of communication and preparation were necessary between offender, victim and the injured community.

The second invited speaker, Barbara Tudor, is a national RJ trainer and consultant who presented a film to show the power of RJ at its best. Mary, a bereaved mother and Michael who played a part in her son's

death described their experiences of meeting to talk on a negotiated day release for Michael. Barbara emphasised the months of work and preparation leading up to this meeting and that every situation is unique and planning is needed to tailor the needs of all concerned. As a direct result of the conference, a Restorative Justice forum has been formed here in Cornwall which meets six times a year

Another exciting development resulting from the conference has been a week-long training course in RJ conference facilitation delivered by Tim Chapman and Hugh Campbell from the University of Ulster Restorative Practices Programme. The course took place at The Eden Project in February where participants from Devon and Cornwall looked at the Balanced Model of RJ. HARM was the focus and equal preparation and listening to was given to the community, the person who caused the harm and the person who was harmed. One of the inspirational quotes Tim Chapman used in the training came from Leonard Cohen – “There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.”

Lesley Chandler

CRIMINAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Belfast Conference of the European Forum for Restorative Justice, June 2014

The content of the 2014 conference of the European Forum on RJ, 'Beyond Crime' showed that restorative practices in other contexts such as schools, workplaces, and post-conflict situations are inseparable from the criminal ones . The theme of 'desistance' - does RJ help to keep people from re-offending? - was addressed by three internationally known keynote speakers.

Shadd Maruna noted that the court process is a degradation ceremony, and therefore acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy confirming people's self-identity as criminals. At the least it should be followed by a re-integration ceremony, and sanctions should aim at constructing a pro-social identity. Joanna Shapland's research found that dialogue reduced the frequency of re-offending, and most persistent offenders wanted to desist; but society should remove obstacles to leading a non-offending life. John Braithwaite, currently studying the broadening of restorative practice in several countries, said that RJ guidelines, such as scripted questions, should not always be adhered to rigidly: usually the circle of participants should be as wide as possible, but on occasion certain people should be kept out. To reach agreement it may be necessary to accept some 'creative ambiguity.'

Northern Ireland was a good place for the conference, because its juvenile justice system has been successful in embodying RJ. The conference was opened by the Minister of Justice, David Ford, who described how RJ is used in the prison service and the youth detention centre. He also spoke of the two community-based RJ services: Community Restorative Justice Ireland and Northern Ireland Alternatives, operating in parallel with the statutory system. However, Kieran McEvoy, of Queen's University Belfast, warned against 'being a partner' if that means becoming 'just a service deliverer'. This year the conference had field trips, one included speakers from (Republican) CRJI and (Loyalist) NIA who described how former paramilitaries are now running these services. However, social justice is yet to be delivered in Northern Ireland; it is a society where the sectarian divide is evidenced in a 10-year difference in life expectancy in different parts of Belfast, and the wall separation both communities is still standing.

The conference was truly international, with participants from every continent. There were over 100 workshops a few selected points will give the flavour.

- There were preliminary reports from a major EU-funded project of the EFRJ, known as ALTERNATIVE. It aims to develop a theoretical framework for an alternative understanding of security and justice, using research on neighbourhood disputes in Austria, conflicts between Roma and non-Roma people in Hungary, inter-ethnic conflicts in Serbia, and conflicts among different groups in Northern Ireland. Progress reports are on www.alternativeproject.eu/publications, and a final report and conference are planned for 2015.

- Ted Wachtel and his colleagues described the work of the International Institute for Restorative Practices in policing, prisons, courts and schools in the UK, Ireland, the US and Hungary. Belgium has pioneered and researched RJ, especially in its juvenile justice system.

- Belgium has pioneered and researched RJ, especially in its juvenile justice system. Michael Bouchez presented strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to RJ practices. He pointed out that mediation could be 'hollowed out' and become just a part of crime control rather than a new philosophy. It could be imposed rather than offered, with pressure on delivering 'results' rather than enabling people to communicate.

- Speakers from Russia described their progress with RJ for victims and offenders as well as restorative practices in schools.

- Mediation in schools featured in several papers, and Belinda Hopkins convened a meeting to establish a European Circle of Restorative Education. The EFRJ does not at present have the resources to take on this additional sphere of work, but close co-operation and a possible future merger were envisaged.

Brunilda Pali, in a thoughtful closing address, pointed to the rising prison population of Europe and the increasingly coercive social control. She mentioned too, the disproportionate number of foreign nationals in the prison population. There is an alternative, she said, that focused on reparation of harm to the victims and involving offenders in finding ways to repair the harm.



The conference was well organised, with an impressive handbook summarizing the presentations. On the other hand, organisers should have rehearsed speakers to find the right distance from the microphone and speakers should be wary of slang and speaking too fast or their non-native English speakers (and even some English ones) may not understand what is being said.

The finale was an outing to the spectacular Giants' Causeway, and the peaceful Corrymeela Community, scene of much reconciliation during and after the 'Troubles'.

Martin Wright

WHY NOT USE RJ TO REDUCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

If criminal justice policy should be based on evidence of what works, why is restorative justice banned in cases of domestic violence?

Some years ago, a meeting was held by a mediation service with representatives of four organizations involved with victims of domestic violence, and a senior police officer responsible for domestic violence policy. The aim was to examine research findings showing that in cases of domestic violence committed by men with no previous criminal record, mediation reduced re-offending better than prison sentences. The research was based on information gathered from the district criminal courts in Durham, North Carolina.

I had availed of my role as mediator in the criminal courts in North Carolina to personally carry out research on outcomes for the ‘assault on a female” charge.

The meeting did not last very long. After I outlined the research, one of the organizational representatives commented that it sounded to her that it was about using restorative justice, a method not acceptable to the four of them for DV. She continued by stating that the chief executive and I had not realised the high risk of bringing victims into the same room as their male assailants. So there was nothing more to say, and the four representatives left, together with the police officer.

The chief executive and I were stunned. With our respective backgrounds in managing hostels for violent offenders and as chief psychologist in two top-security prisons, we understood risk assessment! We had been looking forward to dialogue with people who shared our concern about domestic violence, if not with our point of view. It was a rude awakening to be faced with a walkout before information could be shared and discussed.

They were supporters of the Duluth model, which stresses the use of the criminal courts to punish offenders as the only way to deal with such violence in a patriarchal society.

But there are those of us that consider that a range of options should be provided to take account of the wide variety of victims and their differing needs. The proponents of this view believe that mediation and restorative justice methods can be used in appropriate circumstances to handle domestic abuse.

Katherine van Wormer has put forward this case from a ‘standpoint feminist’ perspective. She has argued that:

“The present system involving mandatory arrests and prosecutions of perpetrators of domestic violence has brought about unintended consequences to the extent that many victims are reluctant to call the police. Victim choice has not been a part of this process. The widespread dissatisfaction with the current system of mandatory law enforcement opens the door to a consideration of alternative forms of dealing with domestic violence. Restorative justice strategies have several

major advantages-they take wrongdoing and its resolution beyond victims and offenders into the community".

A few weeks later I was asked by the director of the United Nations Latin American Institute for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to give a talk about restorative justice to a conference for criminal justice staff in a Mexican state that was in process of reforming its criminal justice system. I am an enthusiast for restorative justice and greatly appreciated the chance to take part in the conference. I checked with a Mexican friend of mine, who recently had been the country's deputy attorney general, about the interest in restorative justice. I mentioned the Durham research which showed the benefits of mediation in appropriate cases of domestic violence and said I would refer to it in my talk. Don't do it, she said. It could cause real upset among the women members of the audience.

I decided to go ahead and gave my talk. An internationally-known criminal justice academic gave the next talk and commented how brave I was to mention the subject of restorative justice for domestic violence cases. There were around 400 people in the audience. In the Q&A period, one questioner asked about risk. Some 20 people came up to the platform to ask for copies of my talk, but none raised the risk issue.

I had the same response when a female colleague and I ran a workshop about restorative justice and domestic violence at the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Brazil in 2010– serious interest and no uproar.

In England, judges have been informally told not use restorative justice in cases of domestic violence – although restorative justice is becoming one of the main planks in the country's youth justice policy. A senior judge I know is frustrated that half the cases of domestic violence that come to his court do not take place because the woman does not appear. A senior civil servant that I met recently wanted to use restorative justice for appropriate domestic violence cases, but felt that a long campaign would be needed to get past the blocking power of certain women's organizations.

The following questions come from examining the results of the Durham study about the problems of using the criminal court process:

- **Why do around half the woman victims NOT appear at the trial of the man charged with the offence, with the result that the charge is dismissed?**
- **What happens to the woman when a case is dismissed?**
- **What happens to the woman when the male defendant is tried and then found not guilty?**
- **What happens in the family when trials take up to two years to come to court?**
- **What happens to the family income when the man is sent to prison?**
- **What happens to the woman when the man is released from prison?**

Here is a key result from the Durham study, published in 2010, in International Perspectives in Victimology. (Bryant, Seigle, Jabbar, McGeorge, Vol 5, 1,47-54)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STUDY, NORTH CAROLINA
Comparison of outcomes between criminal court disposals and mediation for men, who had no previous criminal convictions, charged with assault on a female. The findings raise serious questions about relying on the courts alone to reduce domestic violence offending.

So why not give women victims, in appropriate circumstances, the opportunity to make an informed choice between using mediation/restorative justice or going to court?

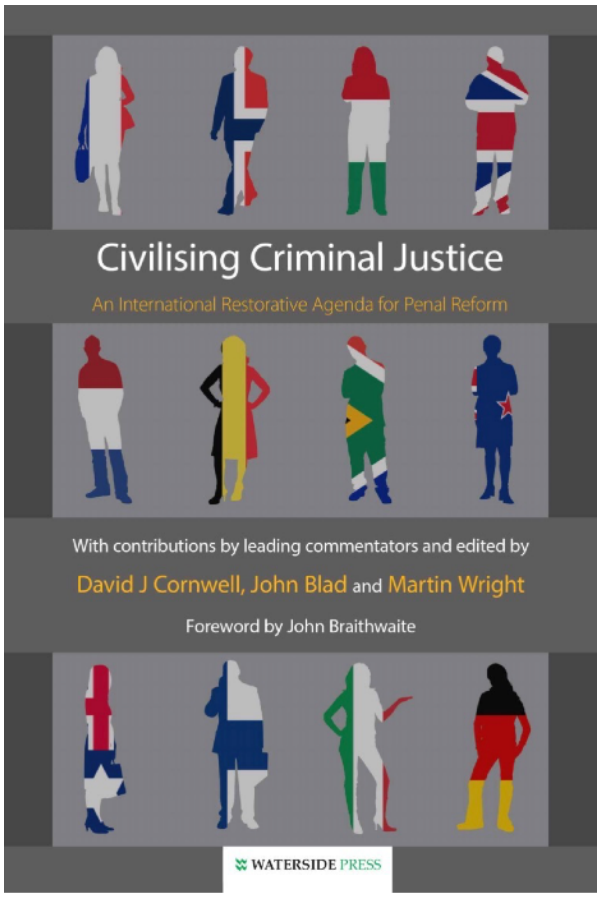
Nicholas McGeorge
Previously printed in Carolina Dispute Settlement Services newsletter.

CIVILISING CRIMINAL JUSTICE - BOOK REVIEW

Civilising Criminal Justice: An International Restorative Agenda for Penal Reform. Edited by Cornwell, Blad & Wright.

This book is a rigorous read but not for the faint hearted. It is aimed at academics & theorists but would hold a worthy place on reading lists, if not core manuals for students of criminology, social policy as well as law and order. That said, I feel a little wiser have delved into some interesting nooks and crannies and so feel duty bound to encourage you to do the same.

It is presented in three separate sections: the procedure the theory and the practice of civilising justice. The book is a compilation of eminent writers from divers parts of the world. Braithwaite - an Australian has written a rather rapturous foreword describing empowerment as giving citizens voice in civil society. He hits the nail on the head when he speaks of 'recognition' helping us move from self-absorption to responsiveness to the other. This is the promise of mediation and connecting with others is the micro foundation of civility in the wider society. I have to admit that this a mighty place to start on the topic of civilising criminal justice. I am now convinced that the term 'criminal justice' is in itself an oxymoron. The Australians do come up triumphs again in the latter section of this meaty tome and in some way, it seems to me that they have set a new standard in civilising justice.



Louis Blom-Cooper

The first part is an exploration of structural issues. Now, I personally am not a theorist but I did feel very drawn to the writing of Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC (What a mouthful). If I were true to my tradition, I might have dropped his title but on this occasion, I overlook it as his thinking is clear and his writing is compelling. He starts by identifying a complete lack of joined up thinking on law and order as totally disparate and largely independent state institutions interact only insofar as to pursue their respective goals. His premise is that 'crime control' has no place in the justice system and likewise the instruments of justice have no place in 'crime control'. He is onto something here. There follows a detailed discourse on how such distortions have given rise to dysfunctions including our current draconian 'joint criminal enterprise' law. He states it is 'a desire to affix criminalisation beyond what is either necessary or just'. Crime control and 'due process' are poles apart – the former seeking to exert a dampening influence on burgeoning rates of crime and the latter focussed on demanding justice for the alleged criminal.

He speaks of the evolving role of judges who now carry out hearings before trials to establish the issues and hence are involved in court management. He hints that a further development or erosion might see a movement away from the criminal system towards the civil courts. He points out that most crimes never get to court, victims of crime have scant purpose in criminal proceedings and so criminal justice is at most peripheral to the control of crime. He describes the evolution of victim support, the compensation of victims, the emergence of private prosecutions through to the successful conviction in the Stephen

Lawrence case albeit decades later. He argues strongly that victim offender mediation & RJ generally belong to crime control and is rightly placed within the community. He is in favour of a selective process where criminality is assessed and evaluated with a view to appropriate action. It is so with disease – each condition is assessed and treated appropriately. He expands to suggest the civil process could better deal with many crimes citing the change with anti social behaviour orders.

He is very much in favour of trying sexual offences through a county court prior to criminal trial as the burden of proof required would provide much solace for victims who currently find great difficulty securing conviction in criminal courts.

He quotes Kenneth Clarke's comment that “prison is a waste of public money”, he calls for a review of 'detention for the sole purpose of public protection' (including mental health tribunals). There is currently, he suggests, too much scope for “carriages of injustice”.

Theories & Procedures
Other contributions to the volume discuss: 'crime as conflict', the justification of punishment, 'maximum theories of RJ', the City of Hull as a restorative city, diversion of crime to civil courts. But I was most drawn to the snapshots of practice elsewhere in the world.

Australia
The Australian story revolves around Aboriginal restitution. It started with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody when it was highlighted that some 99 died over the course of a decade. There follows the great story of social justice that led to focusing on the underlying issues affecting the Koori community. The subsequent changes included development of: community participation, culturally sensitive programs, fair & equitable justice processes for Aboriginal people, recognising the impact of dispossession of traditional lands as well as the past policies of separation of children from their families. For those of us introduced to the topic by movies such as “Rabbit Proof Fence” and “Australia” we can feel somewhat appeased by such stoic, institutional changes.

As a complete aside, I am left feeling a little inept having heard that my local community prison (albeit Category A) suffered 13 deaths in custody in the course of 2013. My local paper reported horror citing a lesser number – maybe 7 or 8 but even if it was more accurate than the figure I overheard – where is the public outcry, the institutional change, the social revolution?

Norway
The pictures of Norway and Finland are equally interesting. The Scandinavian countries are known for their social equality and it is where we see good social policy underpinning good criminal policy. The Norwegian government place a strong emphasis on rehabilitation within the prison system. Mediation appears to be institutionalised although there has been uncertainty as to whether it belonged to the municipalities or the state. The good news is that 'Norwegian youth has never – in modern history – been so law-abiding as it is now. There is a new initiative 'Youth conferencing and young people plan' that offers a voluntary path to divert youths from CJ to a youth conference followed up with a support oriented action plan. This has well defined principles and is clearly not an easy welfare programme. Norway also appears to be advancing quickly in using RJ in cases of domestic violence possibly partially as it is the fastest growing reported crime there.

Finland
Finland has come a long way in civilising justice. As a community, they suffered three wars in the twentieth century and there followed a significant period of reconstruction. The legacy was a coercive penal system with long custodial sentences imposed for crime such as robbery, assault and drunk driving. Since then, prosperity and good social development policy has seen a dramatic reduction in custodial sentences as well as the length of sentences. The author puts it down to many factors but the most important being the political will and consensus. Those responsible for the reform shared a conviction that it would be possible to substantially reduce the amount and length of prison sentences without serious repercussions on crime – and that's exactly what they did.

Other factors that enabled this to be done: the reformers were exceptionally expert-oriented; the media-market- he says the Finns have been saved from low-level populism - 90% of them read a newspaper everyday and the market leader is a quality newspaper; Nordic co-operation; strong co-operation between judiciary and legislators; judges and prosecutors are career officials with training in criminology and criminal policy; a strong welfare state with income equality and an institutionalised role for mediation.

The graph of crime rates when plotted against incarceration rates in Finland support the general criminological conclusion that crime and incarceration rates are fairly independent of each other. Interesting however, that the most heated debates in the Finnish metamorphosis concerned the use of mediation in cases of domestic violence where feminist organisations expressed strong doubts.

In Summation
So, this lengthy volume is a pre-course to change. It questions the unquestionable with regard to externally imposed punishment and as opposed to internally experienced remorse and the rebuilding of self-respect and respect of others. It concludes that crime control belongs to the realm of social and educational policy rather than criminal justice.

Carmel Schmid

REFORM, CATHOLICS & CONJUGAL VISITS

Parallels were drawn between the situation in UK prisons and those in Brazil when Juliet Lyon, of the Prison Reform Trust and Dr Fiona Macaulay, of Bradford University spoke at the Saturday Seminar of the Criminal Justice Group held on the 17th May 2014. In both countries the state prisons are overcrowded, recidivism is the norm and the majority of the prisoners come from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Brazil however, the state prisons are far, far worse, so bad in fact that the prisoners have taken over the prisons as a way of restoring order amidst the violence and the murders. Each prison has its own particular gang (both inside and outside) and a prisoner is allocated to the prison of his gang. They are described as 'pure hell'.

“By influence and persuasion they have shone light on various problems and turned them around but they are facing the impact of the 23% cut in the Prison Budget”

Yet it is in Brazil that there has evolved a new type of prison which the prisoners term 'pure heaven'. Begun in the 1970’s by a group of concerned lay Catholics the idea was to run them on humane lines with a view to the rehabilitation of the prisoners as 'decent people' when they went back into the community. Community was a crucial part of the concept. Prisons were kept local and kept small. Families of prisoners were involved (indeed families would bring back any of their kin who escaped!) and volunteers from the community helped run the prisons alongside the prisoners.

The contrast between the state run prisons and the new variety (known as APACS) was described in a letter from a man in an APAC prison to a friend in a ‘normal’ prison. Phrases such as “We were given lunch – as much as we wanted, all home cooked” “I had a shower and it was HOT” “The toilet had a seat” “People are polite”. Photos showed us gardens with fountains amongst well designed buildings. Interestingly the men were housed fourteen to a ‘cell’. This was designed to give them the opportunity to develop self care, mutual care and community care by way of negotiations and responsibility.

The whole point of the APAC prisons, we were told, was to re-socialise the prisoners. A very memorable recollection by Dr Macaulay was of a prison yard full of small tents - in the pouring rain. “What’s going on” she asked. “Oh it’s conjugal visits day” she was told. Such visits not only reduce male on male rape and violence but keep family relationships strong and help address hyper-masculinity by emphasising men as husbands, fathers and sons.

It works. It costs less, the re-offending rate is less, human rights are better. And it is being tried elsewhere. Could it work here – particularly with Young Offenders or with women?

Both speakers agreed on the need for prison reform in the UK. Juliet Lyon explained how deep rooted are the problems in British prisons and how difficult it is to effect change. The Prison Reform Trust works across party lines and across Government Departments in an effort to achieve change, even if it is piecemeal. To do this they commission research – one instance she cited was an enquiry into the experience of 6,000 under 18's in the last 6 months of their detention. As a result of this they approached those Local Authorities with the greatest number of Young Offenders in custody and worked to show them the best practise of other authorities. This, plus working alongside the Youth Justice Board to change Police discretion, resulted in a drop of 55% of young people in custody. Youth crime has also fallen.

By influence and persuasion they have shone light on various problems and turned them around but they are facing the impact of the 23% cut in the Prison Budget with its consequent closure of small, local prisons, the increase in deaths in prison, the drop in the ratio of staff to prisoners and the rise in disturbances. Juliet and Fiona both agreed that prison is ineffective for those sentenced to less than six months custody, that smaller, local prisons work the best but most of all that Restorative Justice, used as a disposal of choice, was the way forward.

Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile is available from the Prison Reform Trust as is What can I do? a guide to volunteering and achieving change in the criminal Justice system. Some copies are still available at Carlton Hill Meeting house.

Philomena O' Hare

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