QUAKERS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

SPRING 2023 EDITORIAL

Welcome to the very, very delayed Spring Edition (still technically :-)) of the Quakers in Criminal Justice Newsletter. But hopefully it has been worth the wait.

These last few months have been a significant period of change for me, thankfully mostly for the better. Some of the positive changes have included new job and this being my final Newsletter as an unmarried man. It took me 52 years to find and then convince my other half to actually marry me. But as of 1st of July at about 11:00am I'll be Mr Wilgenbus - Lamb :-)

This month, it is with a heavy heart that I step away from working within the prisons in a professional capacity, to explore a new adventure supporting 42 advice agencies around Northern Ireland. However I am already getting prison related queries and take comfort that I will still remain involved in fighting for a fairer Criminal Justice System through the likes of QICJ and Quaker Service Northern Ireland.

We have had some really excellent articles this time including a couple of reports on our recent conference in Leeds. One focusing specifically on our first speaker and the other more broadly on all the presentations and talks. If you are planning a trip to enjoy the improved weather, we have a couple of book recommendations to take with you for a deck-chair read.

There is a great article focusing on Yvonne, a volunteer with the Prisons Phoenix Trust, highlighting the importance of letter writing to prisoners. Two topics which are currently of great concern for QICJ members are the plight of older people in prison the impact of IPP sentencing. Sue and Ed deal with these topics with research and first hand experience.

As always I want to express my gratitude to you all for making my job easier. Without your commitment to producing these excellent materials I would spend all my time pleading rather than editing. You're a wonderful bunch. Thank you so much.



Jonathan Lamb Editor

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DEAR QICJ



Dear QICJ

Thanks to Simon B for pointing out that Dominic Raab's changes to recommendations for the Parole Board (which he forced through without debate, via a 'statutory implement') have been quashed. The High Court called them 'unlawful' and 'improper'. You may recall from the last newsletter that Raab's intention was that, in a number of cases, only a single view, that of the Secretary of State, would be permitted. This disallowed recommendations from all other voices, such as probation and has already affected 12,000 parole hearings . Inside Time, April 2 edition, carries further details.

Melanie

Dear QICJ

When the police contacted me about a broken window recently, I had initially assumed it was at my flat - the police report didn't specify which window it was. It turned out that it was next door at the Quaker centre - one of the small panes. Lots of glass everywhere. It transpired that the perpetrator had severed an artery in the process. He turned up on Monday morning with his arm in a sling - apologetic and offering to pay - restorative justice in action. We are in the middle of 3 pubs so broken windows are nothing new, but it was great to know that the gentleman involved wanted to meet with us to find a way to move forward from the incident and I'm very pleased that he is making a recovery from his injuries.

Julia Richardson



VOLUNTEER FOCUS: YVONNE

The Prison Phoenix Trust

Yvonne mentors people in prison through 'sacred' medium of letters

The Prison Phoenix Trust (The PPT), which this year celebrates 35 years supporting the spiritual lives of people in prison, was founded by volunteers and continues to be powered by them - including a significant number who are Quakers.

At the heart of The PPT's work is a deep trust in the power of silence and the breath to help us connect with our inner spiritual lives. In this there is a shared experience with Quakers. But its support for meditation and yoga in prisons is offered in ways that are inclusive of people of all religious faiths and none.

One of The PPT's longest serving volunteers, Yvonne, a former Quaker chaplain at HMP Grendon, has been writing letters to people in prison for 20 years. This mentoring by correspondence is one of the core services offered to people in custody, along with yoga classes and specialist resources such as books, DVDs and newsletters.



Letter writers are not pen-friends; they write little about themselves and instead reflect back to the person writing from prison the insights they themselves are experiencing and allow the writers' own sense of spirituality to emerge in its own way from encouragement in contemplative practice.

"The key," says Yvonne, "is openness and being willing to welcome everyone as they are, to work with what they bring and what is making sense to them. I see my role as creating a space for them of quiet contemplation and compassion for them to turn within."

Yvonne, who grew up in the North Midlands and now lives in Oxfordshire, first came into contact with The Prison Phoenix Trust when she wrote off for some of its meditation and yoga books. Soon afterwards, the books she had ordered provided a lifeline at a

time of personal need.
“I experienced an extremely painful life event and I turned to the books,” she recalls. “They got me through was what was really quite a crisis in my life.

“I wasn’t religious at the time but it sparked off a meditation practice that helped me to stay sane through what I was going through. It got me interested in spirituality and religion again. Meditation became a really solid part of my daily routine.

“My own practices have become simpler over the years. I’m no longer looking for new techniques for meditation; a simple practice with the breath is enough.”

Over the years, Yvonne has corresponded with more than 15 people in prison, continuing with some people for many years after their release.

She says she approaches the task of reading a letter from a prisoner – and responding to it - as a spiritual practice.

“I sit for a moment in prayer or meditation before I read the letter. There might be all sorts in the letter – from the profound to the day-to-day. I try to find the most important thing this person wants me to hear. There will usually be one thing I choose to focus on and reflect back to them to encourage their spiritual life to unfold.”

The benefits of this voluntary work are not just for the prisoner. Yvonne – and all who support prisoners in this way – speak of the rewards they receive from the prisoners’ own insights.
Yvonne says: “The thing that really strikes me is the gratitude, not just for the letter but also for the things in life that they don’t take for granted, such as hearing the sound of traffic, having a comfortable bed, choosing your own food, the feeling of rain on your skin…”

Yvonne’s letter-writing practice has also resonated with her Christian faith. “When reading the New Testament, I’m struck by how much of it began as letters.

“Everything is so quick these days and there’s something quite intimate about writing letters. How special it is to get a letter from someone writing in a non-trivial way – quite a sacred thing. It’s not something we do much anymore. What a privilege it is to write to people in this way.”

The Prison Phoenix Trust

Yvonne is one of 16 letter-writing volunteers at The Prison Phoenix Trust. Another 13 volunteers perform roles such as office support and newsletter dispatch and 9 serve as trustees. The Trust employs 4.8 full-time equivalent paid staff in its Oxford office. To find out more about volunteering or supporting The Trust in other ways, write to PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF or email **all@theppt.org.uk**

CONFERENCE REPORT

William Waddilove

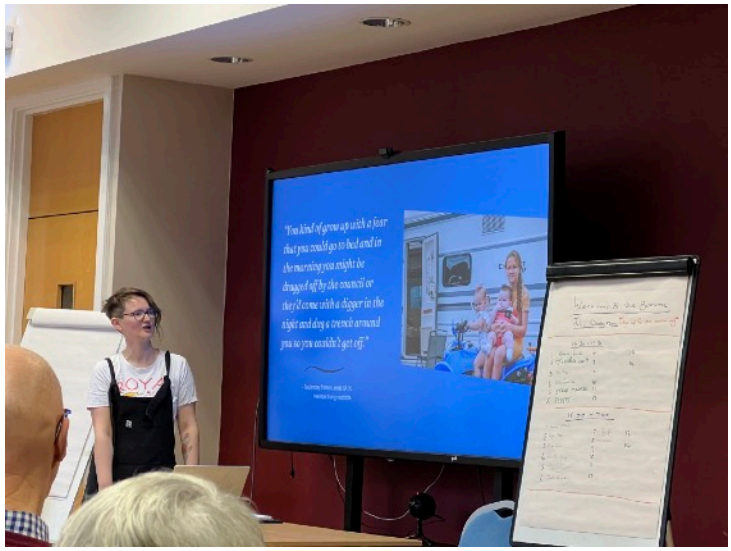
Quakers in Criminal Justice Annual Conference
24 to 26 February 2023 held at Hinsley Hall in Leeds

The theme of the conferences was 'Prejudice and Disadvantage' and was about groups over represented within the criminal system justice.

We had four main speakers.

The first was James Jones who was reporting on the Victims Commission report, he had been the chair. This report made a number of recommendations. Certainly it emphasised victims did not get a fair say. Yes they could prepare a 'victim's statement' but there was no obligation for it to be presented to the court. Also it was apparent that long sentences did not do much good but training and rehabilitation with sentence were very effective. The message he left us with was that there were ways of being far more effective within the criminal justice framework than keeping people locked up. And in a world where value for money was important then this needed addressing. He did say they were still awaiting a response and asked us to make sure our MP's knew our feelings. The full 92 page report is available online.

The second speaker was from LeedsGATE a Gypsy and traveller support organisation.



Rachel Cooper, in describing their work emphasised that most of this group came at the top of the lists of the lists you would not want to be on. Poor education, health, short lifespan, poverty etc.

She did make us smile that she said she often spoke to groups of 'Guardian Readers' but not often to groups like ours who had a good proportion of prison chaplains and others within the criminal justice system.

The group often faced forms of racial discrimination and this even continued when they stopped travelling. One of the positive things LeedGATE had help develop was to set up a 'negotiated stopping' agreement for those on the road so that some stays were of a known limited duration.

The third speaker was Max Farrer telling us about the unhappy story of David Oluwale. Although a British citizen born in Lagos who was a resilient and enterprising man but he had become embroiled in the prison and metal health scene and become homeless but worst of all he had become the focus of persistent bullying by two police officers (who were eventually tried for manslaughter).

The Remember Oluwale charity was dedicated to supporting minority groups especially within the Leeds area. There was a river bridge, a memorial garden and a blue plaque dedicated to his memory.

Within the conference weekend we had small groups so we could share our thoughts and feelings and three small interest groups. One on the problems of aging prisoners; one related to the Woodbrooke course 'Quakers Considering Penal Abolition' and the third led by the West Yorkshire Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses. In this he explained what went behind the scenes in preparing cases and supporting witnesses.



And to round off Mike Nellis who is a strong promotor of the concept that prison does very little good overall and that we should work towards abolishing it. He also summarised much of what had gone on during the weekend.
In reflection there were many dispiriting aspects centred around the problems within the criminal justice world where the 'lock them up' lobby seemed to be gaining ground by just making more prison places and giving longer and longer sentences whilst within the system facilities for training, rehabilitation and work were inadequately resourced.
If sentences beyond 9 years serve no purpose why are we extending them?
However the final words of Mike Nellis were 'you can always find one small thing to do'.

This makes me think about the Elizabeth Fry example of providing a 'bag of useful things' that went onto providing bags for half the transported women although as Mike pointed out, more radical prison reform didn't come until much later.

THE PRISON PSYCHIATRIST'S WIFE - BOOK REVIEW

Tim Newell

Review for QICJ of The Prison Psychiatrist's Wife
Sue Johnson
Waterside Press ISBN 978-1-914603-30-3

This is a beautifully written account of the experience of working creatively in a top security setting of control. The insider family view of the impact of the tension between creativity and control makes for a compelling read about the events as they rolled out. This is a strongly felt account by our friend Sue Johnson of what it was like to be committed to the ground-breaking work of her psychiatrist husband Bob Johnson in putting original ideas of creativity, compassion, and challenge in the most demanding of settings in prison.

Bob Johnson was asked in 1991 by John Marriott, the Governor of top security prison Parkhurst, on the Isle of Wight, to work with the most dangerous group of prisoners in the Secure Unit on C Wing. For the preliminary visit Sue was invited and she and Bob both visited

the Wing with the Governor and met staff and some prisoners one of whom addressed her and asked if she would let Bob come. There was a clear felt need. Bob agreed to work there after this most unusual preliminary visit.

The whole experience of working on the wing was unusual and exploratory. The personal and professional demands on Bob were considerable and given his style of working called for resiliency and courage. There were very good reasons why Sue was fully involved. She gave up her work in Manchester to live on the Isle of Wight and share the developing work, and the reactions it brought about.

Bob's approach was to help men consider the roots of their violence through early childhood experience. Realising that childhood experiences formed our outlook, approach and view of life and others, Bob sought to work with the challenges of early years. Frozen fear was explored within a relationship of trust and consent. Friends will remember this work through the James Nayler Trust, founded by Sue and Bob, to provide remarkable much needed help for people with disturbed experience.

Clearly the work in Parkhurst Prison was sensitive and called for a focus that was demanding. To facilitate the work Bob filmed the sessions so there was a record of developments. He gained the confidence of the men through a consistent presence and his enthusiastic personality. But there were occasional threats which the prison reacted to. There was a quiet scepticism from fellow medical staff in the prison, and few officers showed enthusiasm but respected Bob's consistency and commitment. He had good support from John Marriott, the Governor.



Sue describes how the stresses of prison life were lived through her. This reflects the experience of many prison families in the need to share and to be supportive of stressful demanding work. Her book is a rare insight into the stresses on the partner as innovative, challenging processes are tried out with those who have been so dangerous. Suppressing anxiety through medication had been the norm on C Wing but Bob worked with the real remembered experience and memories of the men on the wing.

Bob's work in Parkhurst proved too successful for political survival during an era of Michael Howard's 'Prison Works'. He showed that compassion and trust succeed in gaining consent so that working with the trauma in childhood gave understanding and increasing confidence and control to disturbed prisoners.

Sue expresses her anger observing the games being played out within the high risk setting. Bob seeks to reassure her but her anger bubbles over in a very powerful description. Bob's work continues to be challenged by the medical establishment. They cannot look at his truth gained through years of experience with the most damaged and dangerous people.

The Prison Service does not emerge very well out of the book with resentful officers, and a mixed response from senior staff. Bob Johnson was championed by the Governor, John Marriott, who sadly was removed from his command following the escape from Parkhurst of three high profile prisoners. The Special Unit was closed. For many of the men Bob Johnson worked with there the world has changed in that they understand why they did what they did and that it need never happen again.

JIG – A CLARIFICATION AND UPDATE

Melanie Jameson

Despite various attempts in previous edition this newsletters to clarify what JIG is and isn't, there still seems to be some confusion. I therefore offer two explanations:

1. JIG is a rapid, lively, springy, dance for one or more persons.
2. JIG is the Justice Interest Group, a working group that sits within QICJ to take on various pieces of work, now that there is no longer a staff member with this remit, drawing on the expertise of Friends. It is a flexible grouping and all QICJ members are welcome to contribute.

I am looking for a way to combine the two, but since we meet on zoom it has not yet become possible!

"The more we learned and shared, the more it became clear that the dysfunctional state of our prisons is such that they are barely able to operate"

There are two tasks that have recently occupied some or all of us in JIG.

Firstly, responding to a consultation by the Labour Policy Forum on 'safe and secure communities'. With the help of Grace, our BYM advocacy manger, we were able to put this together within the constraints of a tight deadline. Hopefully it will the first of a number of joint workings between JIG and Grace. You can read our submission here https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-lobby-political-party-on-democracy-and-justice and on the QICJ website under UPDATES for April.

Secondly, and far more ambitious, is a proposal that arose out of a six-month Woodbrooke course (Oct 2022 – March 2023), led by Mike Nellis, entitled Quakers Considering Abolition. The more we learned and shared, the more it became clear that the dysfunctional state of our prisons is such that they are barely able to operate– and this is before the projected growth in prisoner numbers which will push an overcrowded and overstretched system to breaking point. We have started drafting a document entitled 'Prison isn't Working' which will be circulated in due course.

As I write this piece, the Justice (Select) Committee has been taking oral evidence for its enquiry into the Prison Operational Workforce, written evidence having already been submitted. https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7099/the-prison-operational-workforce/ gives details of oral evidence sessions.

Opening the session on March 21, Charlie Taylor, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, said The lower numbers of prison officers in many of the jails that we inspect are having a knock-on effect on all sorts of other things. In particular, we are seeing very much reduced regimes, with prisoners spending longer than ever locked in their cells or locked on the wings without being able to get to productive activities, and increased prisoner frustration about the ongoing cancellation of regimes—the unpredictability of what will happen day by day.

The example of HMP Pentonville was given, where 50% of prisoners are not in work and are locked up 22 hours a day. The term 'warehousing' was used. He continued: We found that some very junior officers were being supervised by some fairly junior staff members. There was not a

level of experience among people on the wing to be able to share knowledge and lead in those environments.

Dame Ann Owers, Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMB), stressed that IMB reports, year on year, have referred to staffing levels. The most recent stated: Staffing problems, rather than Covid, are now the principal brake on safe, humane and rehabilitative regimes - things just have not got close to being back to normal. Furthermore, some jails in southern England are having to close wings simply because they do not have enough staff to run them safely.

Prisons have been described as ‘a bucket with a hole in it’ because staff are being lost before they can get the experience to mentor others. Another issue is the bullying by colleagues experienced by prison officers; this was found to have affected a quarter of staff within the three month period surveyed by the Justice Committee.

“Prisons have been described as ‘a bucket with a hole in it’ because staff are being lost before they can get the experience to mentor others”

Ann Owers’ closing remarks would resonate with Friends: we need to think more broadly than investing in prisons. We need to be investing in not prison and to deal with the issues that brought people there—childhood experiences, substance misuse or mental health issues—and with what is going to happen to them afterwards, such as, can they get somewhere safe and secure to live, not a hostel that will be targeted by people who want to buy and sell drugs? If they cannot find employment and their mental health issues cannot be dealt with, we are just setting people up to fail.

The situation was even more ‘fragile’ than 20 years ago, when as HMCIP, she had written: Unless something is done to tackle the causes of offending behaviour, and the social and economic exclusion from which it commonly springs, and to which it contributes, prisons will continue to have revolving doors, and the public will not in the long term be protected.

Evidence of the dire situation in prisons has also come from another respected source - the Prison Governors Association (PGA). A press release in February, spoke of the Prison Officer recruitment and retention crisis as being just one of the factors that made it impossible for the Governors to provide a ‘safe, decent and rehabilitative environment’. The PGA statement continued: 'To increase prisoner numbers against this backdrop will lead to an increase in austere regimes, resulting in more disorder, violence, suicide, and self-harm; loss of accommodation due to concerted indiscipline is a real threat in these circumstances. The health and well-being of staff will be further compromised in such a toxic environment.'

‘What canst thou say?’ as a Quaker with a concern for CJ, when you hear these words from leading voices on the front line? Are we moved to add our voices to those who declare that the prison system is broken, and maybe to go further: to consider the term ‘abolition’ even if it is only to call out a social evil, in the same way as slavery, child labour and capital punishment came to be seen as social evils?

There has to be another way. And Quakers, with our wealth of experience across the sector, are well placed to suggest what it might look like. This consideration will be a carefully discerned long-term project.

EXPERIENCES OF AN IPP RELEASE

ED (recently released)

Recommendation 11: of Justice Committee report on IPP
As set out earlier in this Report, the recall of IPP sentenced individuals is a growing problem. IPP prisoners face particular challenges with resettlement, and careful consideration must therefore be given as to how they are prepared for their release and subsequently supported in the community. We agree with the Prison Reform Trust that efforts to successfully reintegrate IPP prison leavers into society must match those efforts being made to help them to achieve release.

Since my release in early December 2022. As you are aware, I have been a resident in an Approved Premises in B….. A city where I have no Local Connection.

Upon discharge I had received an up to date Community Care Needs Assessment, which I was then informed by Social Services in W.. that a referral had been received by Social Services Adult Care Team prior to my release in B.. I received confirmation of this through a telephone call shortly after my release also undertaken by the Case-Manager of W…. I have been chasing a further Community Care Needs Assessment and additional Care-Plan with B..City Council..

They have confirmed on several occasions they have received a referral. About two weeks ago, I was interviewed by a Social Worker, not from Adult Socialcare but from Forensics Team. This Social Worker expressed she would not be able to process a Community Care Needs Assessment as she could only refer me on to the Occupational Therapy Team...

My Quaker Friend has been amazing trying to fight my corner and attempting to communicate with the Powers to be, but more on this later!!!

I have limited capacity through long term Mental Health Issues and I have received a diagnosis of Autism. I need a calming influence and an advocate to support me with navigating systems at the best of times. I certainly struggle to get my voice heard and for me to be listened to so as I can get my point across and simply answer the torrent of questions and the misleading information entered onto their systems...

My Friend at the Quakers has kindly suggested he would support me with this set of very real disadvantage and dilemma. Unfortunately, neither the Quakers, nor my Friend are considered as a Statutory Body, he is being refused entry and access to me into the Hostel...

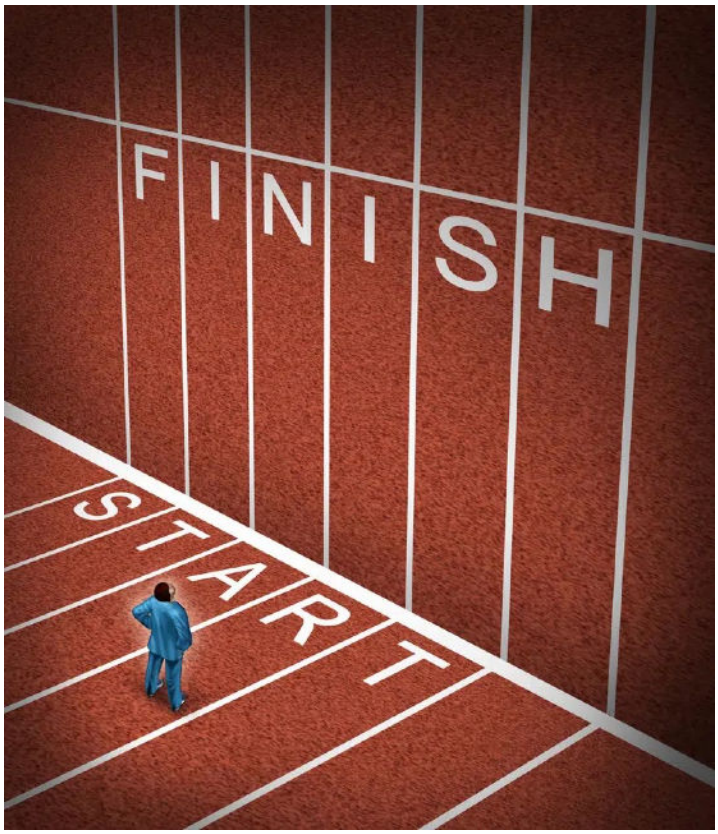
When the arranged appointment with the Social-Worker took place, I was only permitted to be seen in the company of the Case-Manager at the AP. This interview took place under some serious spurious and insidious circumstances… When I struggled with the reason for this meeting as I had been informed it was a male Social-Worker who had been assigned my case and a female came out to see me. This in itself created high levels of anxiety and confusion. I then was informed, she could not assist me with the Community Care

Assessment.

She asked me some prying questions and would not allow me to answer them in an honest way, consistently interrupting my chain of thought and talking over the top of me. I attempted to be assertive and ask her to allow me to finish and asked quite politely not to be interrupted...

Then the Case-Manager started to talk for me and his answers were completely misleading. I asserted myself and confirmed “I can speak for myself, especially as you are deceiving in your answers”.

At this point, I was spoken to in such a condescending and aggressively confrontational manner, my anxieties got the better of me and my frustration then came to the fore. I ended the meeting and expressed I felt highly discriminated against , harassed and would not be bullied. I will telephone my Solicitor.



The next day I was informed by my Case-Worker that an appointment was made with the Occupational Therapist. I simply asked if I could take the meeting and Assessment on my own as I do not wish to experience the same course of events as the day before. I was duly informed “no”. A member of Staff needs to be present. I suggested a Supportive carer be present to assist me. This was also denied...

This meeting ended abruptly with my Case-Manager saying, "I will cancel the appointment." Before walking away and failing to engage any further...
I did not react but kept quiet and allowed him to walk away… Now, my Offender Manager as suggested a more suitable accommodation would be Sheltered Housing Schemes. As I am proactive, I discerned contact details of three separate organisations and gave them a call...All three suggested, they would need a referral from Adult Social-Services...

My Friend from the Quakers had suggested a meeting be held at his place of work. I am confident he won't mind me confirming he works within the NHS. This was accepted by the Social-Worker and my Offender Manager who had the opportunity of being present through a Video Conference. The appointment had been arranged for the 23rd February and was confirmed to the Manager of the AP...

Today, I commenced the process of being assessed under a Homeless Application through B… City Council. They needed evidence of when my bed at the AP would be coming to an end. I expressed truthfully, it was the 23rd February and would ask for written confirmation as the

Support-Worker assessing my needs required evidence. Naturally this is par fof the course. The Manager of the AP obliged but confirmed my bed would expire on the 13th February and possibly would not be extended...

Without then challenging the Manager, I rang Social Services Adult Team and requested consideration into bringing forward the planned appointment as the dates had changed...

The Duty Social-Worker expressed he would email the nominated Social-Worker and ask her to get back to me as time is of the essence. Nobody would be surprised that at close of business today, the nominated Social-Worker has not communicated with me...

After all the work and effort to obtain my Statutory rights and mandatory entitlements, all the official processes have done is run down the clock, playing for time and extended, or at least, widened the goalposts. They most certainly have not been accommodating or supportive. Maybe they are negligent, or maybe they could not care any less. Who knows???

The Statutory Bodies have failed so far to support me with any move on accommodation thus far. The nearer it gets to the date the bed is withdrawn, the less likely anything will be accomplished… Many residents have nowhere to go when their bed is withdrawn and they are simply informed to go to meet with their Offender -Managers. Some residents have been threatened with having the Police called and have them removed if they fail to leave early morning before 12 noon...

Of course, many fear being placed on recall, if they do not leave and report to their OMS... What a travesty and injustice. Some residents have been placed in temporary accommodation that is totally unsuitable to meet their needs. Some have been placed in another AP anywhere in England and Wales where there is an Emergency Space. Some have been told to leave their belongings at the Probation Service Offices and return back here for a further 48 hours...

I have very little idea what is going to happen to me. I don't know whether I should ask for an extension, or just produce myself at T… Probation. As far as I am concerned, this experience is not new. It appears as if the principle problem is the fact we are placed in an APs where we do not have a local connection but informed that we must gain access to the services and support from the Statutory Bodies in the area where they place us. The Statutory Bodies do not have any Duty of Care to provide any additional services as we are not local residents...

In this day and age, it is extremely difficult to gain the support and Community Assistance as local Councils and other Supportive Associations do not have the budgets or the manpower to manage those who they do have a duty to help, never mind the budgets to support those out of area… Politics, politics, politics...

As for the support from my Friend at the Quakers and also the Support from my own Offender Manager, it has been amazing. I cannot thank them both enough. I only wish and pray, that private Accommodation can be offered or at least a further opportunity of Supported Housing placement comes to the fore before I too face being on the streets with nowhere to go. I live in hope that alternative accommodation will be provided before my

bed here is withdrawn...

The anxiety and the psychological effects are enormous and I would not wish these circumstances on anyone. The one thing I have on my favour is the fact that my Offender Manager, alongside the Parole Board have included a condition that I cannot be seen to be living on the streets...

May I ask a serious question? How can the MOJ allow these injustices to take place and place people in a position to reoffend just to be recalled in the first instance???
It is not a case of people reoffending to commit further crimes to gain wealth or be better off financially. It is through necessity. People are offending as a Cry for Help...



If like me on IPP, if the risk is considered too great then we are facing recall through no fault of our own. Is it any wonder many on licences are saying they are being set up to fail???

I feel for everyone caught up in this quagmire of injustice. Especially those who have considerable disadvantages and who are highly vulnerable. The general public are being misled by the gutter press and our Ministers into believing it is all for the sake of recidivism and greed...

Wake up people and smell the coffee! People are suffering not through want but necessity. You cannot blame those who commit crime to gain a roof and one square meal a day through necessity. Prison to some is better than living on the streets and facing unbearable suffering...

I'll keep you posted and appraised of the situation and the mountains I must climb just to survive whilst out on Parole Licence and the daily struggles trying to keep my own health and wellbeing stable...

May God bless you all and be kind and Gracious to you all. Holding you all in the light and my prayers and thoughts...

Respectfully Yours. Ed. <>< Psalm 23.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Simon Ewart

A new membership book will be with members in the post very soon. These will be distributed by post. When compared to the last book we now have 152 members against 134 in 2019. 25 of those named in the 2019 book are no longer in membership today, so over the 3-year period we have gained a total of 43 new members.

NEW DOMESTIC ABUSE PROGRAMME

Follow up News from Sue Penna of Penzance LM, Speaker at Ammerdown 2021 on Adverse Childhood Experiences https://rockpool.life/meet-the-team-sue-penna/

As a C.I.C (Community Interest Company) we aim to improve and support organisations who work with vulnerable adults and children.

We are absolutely delighted and excited to have just embarked on a programme with the amazing charity Women in prisons. We know that 80% of women in prisons have experienced domestic or sexual violence.

We have just trained 16 link workers and prison staff from 7 women's prisons to deliver our nationally recognised domestic abuse recovery toolkit. This is a psychoeducational programme to support women who have been victims of domestic abuse understand the coercion and control they have experienced and the coping strategies they have developed to manage the risk they experienced. These upskilled staff will then select women within the prison to take part in this 12-week recovery programme.



Following the women's successful completion of the programme they will be trained to deliver a shorter course (Hope 2 Recovery) to other women in the prisons. This peer support education programme will assist women on shorter sentences gain insight into the dynamics of coercion and control and give them strategies to be safer on release.

This pilot programme is innovative in supporting women to support their peers within the prisons and give them skills on release to continue to deliver the programme.

OLDER PRISONERS

Sue Barrance

OLDER PRISONERS : DISADVANTAGED AND OVER-REPRESENTED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The number of prisoners over 60 has grown more than three and a half times over the last twenty years. 13,985 are in their 60s and 1,775 are 70 or older. 368 are 80 or older. Some have determinate sentences over 4 years but many are to be found among the IPPs and lifers.



What has bought about this change in the age of prisoners? In 1997 the new Crime (Sentences) Act empowered the courts to give those found guilty of a second serious violent or sexual offence a life sentence. The IPP sentence [Imprisonment for Public Protection] came in 2005 and further overwhelmed the parole board, delaying hearings. Meanwhile the existing lifer population grew older. Determinate sentences have lengthened and there has been a growth in the number of recalls of those released on licence.

The greatest increase in numbers since 2012 has been the increase in imprisonment for sexual offences, particularly of historic cases arising 20 to 40 years ago. The offences occur within the home, or the homes of friends and neighbours, in situations where the offender has some authority in institutions or businesses. Behaviours to which a blind eye was once turned are now recognised as having done harm and left long term victims. Many older perpetrators have great difficulty in appreciating that times have changed. Furthermore, there has been a constant

turnover of prison offender managers , huge case loads and little opportunity to give older prisoners the time they need to absorb new ways of looking at their past behaviours.

Prisons were designed for young men, small cells on landings linked by flights of stairs. Doorways and gates are often narrow, changes of level lack ramps, lifts are rare, medical facilities frequently on upper floors. Few prisons still have hospital facilities. The transport of prisoners to hospital appointments is difficult to staff and puts a strain on the ambulance services, kept waiting while escorting staff are made available. The existing physical environment does not easily adapt to accommodate the growing numbers with disabilities, chronic conditions, loss of mobility, dementia, terminal diseases and social care needs. Rehabilitation is focused on getting inmates into work, and reducing alcohol and drug dependency. Only 8% of those over 50 have problems of addiction and most are retired. 43% have committed sexual offences and 27% violence against the person. Both the physical environment and the regime are ill suited to their needs.



The need for social care was already flagged up by the Prison Reform Trust in their report on older prisoners of 2010. This care was informally provided by fellow prisoners until the Social Care Act 2014 made provision the responsibility of local authorities. A joint report by HM Inspectorate of Prisons and the Care Quality Commission found great variation in provision and the need for better care plans which could be passed on to the resettlement area. Prisons had to improve their safety policies with the rise in the number of disabled inmates. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans [PEEPS] began to be developed so that should the need for emergency evacuation arise, the deaf, the blind and those with mobility and other problems were the responsibility of wing officers and neighbouring prisoners. It was pointed out that the increasing numbers of the infirm were a growing problem and that there was a need for specific prison officer training, particularly in disability, dementia and end of life care. 50% of deaths in custody were of older prisoners and there needed to be a framework of guidance for managing and supporting all those involved.

The Justice Select Committee's 2013 Inquiry into the Needs of Older Prisoners reported that the needs were not being met. Resettlement was difficult because hostels, like prisons, were accustomed to a younger clientele, most rooms for residents being upstairs. Very few can accommodate those with social care plans. The government did not accept the committee's recommendation that a national strategy should be developed – just one among many examples of government neglect of the prison population.

The relevant Ministry of Justice Model of Operational Delivery [MOD] and Prison Estate Transformation Programme [PET P] offer guidance to senior staff in prisons. The guidance acknowledges that 90% of older prisoners have at least one moderate or severe health condition and 50% have three or more. Half the elderly prisoners have sensory or mobility impairments. Their age-related illnesses are long term and complex. Regimes, rules and timetables need to be thoughtfully modified for older prisoners. There is a lack of suitable rehabilitative activities and those who choose not to work are often confined to their cells for long periods without educational or leisure activities. A one-size-fits-all approach to diet, exercise, rehabilitation and medical treatment is effectively a form of age discrimination.

The Equality Act of 2010 means that the services for older prisoners must be equal or services need to be different but equal and this may be achieved either by modifying sites or by transferring older prisoners to more suitable establishments. Peer Support is recommended and a growing number of prisons are developing such schemes with relevant training for the care orderlies. Activity Centres are encouraged to combat loneliness and isolation. Education and gym staff are encouraged to set up activities on the landings and to offer activities relevant to the older prisoners at a pace they can cope with, focusing on retaining flexibility or developing shared interests. All sorts of excellent provision is suggested, picking up innovative ideas in various establishments, but budget limitations prevent the spread of good practice.



Like Travellers and black prisoners (also a focus of our 2023 conference), the old are overrepresented and are particularly badly served by the current regime. Making Sense of Sentencing shows that our criminal justice system does not work, failing prisoners, victims and the wider society. Prisoners gain nothing without rehabilitation and support to turn their lives around. Victims suffer further without the criminal justice system becoming clearly focused on restoration.

We cannot go on without in depth reform and that will not be possible with a demoralised and shrunken workforce and an expanding prison estate. Could these three disadvantaged groups highlighted in the conference, be treated differently, offered more relevant support than constant risk assessment exercises? There will remain those who are a danger to themselves or others and will need to remain incarcerated until we have a better solution to offer them but they are a very small number among the older prisoners.

MAKING SENSE OF SENTENCING

Martin Schweiger and Lesley Chandler

Making Sense of Sentencing: Doing Justice to both Victim and Prisoner

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE, former Bishop of Liverpool, Hull and of Prisons and former member of the House of Lords, opened our conference. Bishop James is no stranger to the world of criminal justice having been appointed by the Home Secretary to chair the Hillsborough Independent Panel which resulted in the quashing of the original inquests. Throughout his working life he has worked extensively on a range of issues from the environment, to criminal justice and ethics, he has recently chaired the Independent Commission into the Experience of Victims and Long-Term Prisoners entitled Making Sense of Sentencing: Doing Justice to both Victim and Prisoner.



The bishop said that it was good to be able to talk to 'prayerful' people on such an important topic. He asked whether prisons should be examined under the lens of

a) greenhouses for restoring the redeemable or as
b) warehouses for storing the incorrigible.

His main message carried the five principles of sentencing which should be understood by all parties. Briefly summarised, they are:

1) to punish the offender
2) to protect the public and the offender from further harm
3) to reduce crime
4) to reform and rehabilitate the offender
5) to permit reparations by the offender to those harmed

Whilst adding that it was a proper response to be angry about crime and to focus on punishment, the vulnerable also needed to be protected. Moving on gradually from initial outrage, he alerted us to the increase in punitive sentencing by stating that long sentences (10+

years) have nearly trebled in recent years. Life sentences have doubled in length from 9 years to 18 years and neither of these increases do justice to victim or offender.

The unique feature of his report is that it is bi-focal. Victims have had very real grievances that they were not participants in the process. We heard that the victim code is being updated but still is not enforceable. Victims are often subjected to postcodes and we have heard recently in the media of painfully distressing accounts caused by victims' statements being omitted from the process.

With over 3,000 IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) offenders languishing in prisons or in the community under constant threat of recall for minor misdemeanours, the bishop's personal opinion was that better use of public funds was preferable. Spending on education rather than lengthened sentences would shift the focus from length to content.

We were asked to write to MPs asking them to contact the Lord Chancellor to ask whether he has considered the paper Making Sense of Sentencing and if so, requesting a response. This was a very good opening presentation to the conference.

RECOOP AND JOURNEYMEN THEATRE

Tracy Eadie & Journeymen Theatre

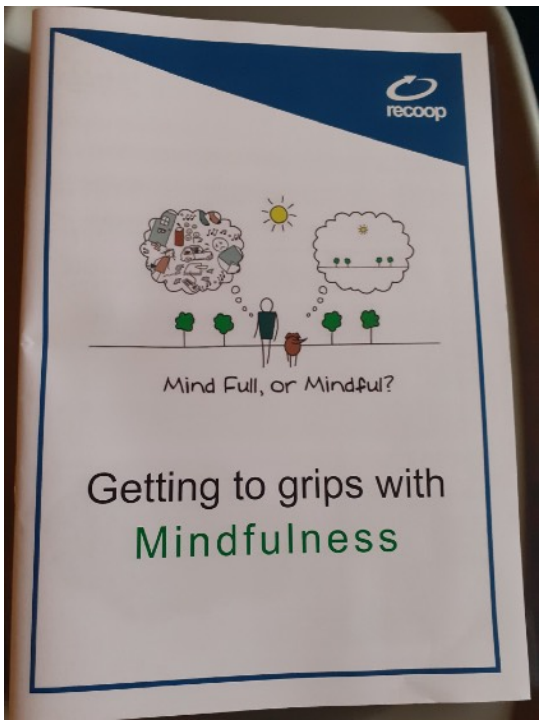
We [Journeymen Theatre] began our association with Recoop several years ago as we started to tour our play Lockdown. Then lockdown happened and naturally, we needed to change the play's name. Now Back Door Parole, the play has toured extensively in the UK and is still on the road for the next few months. As the play deals with the much neglected issue of ageing men held in our prison system, Recoop has been a natural partner for us. Tracy Eadie, Regional Manager North saw the play at Bolton Quaker Meeting House as part of a large and compassionate audience. She says of that experience, 'What I hadn't appreciated, until I came to see you, is how well Mindfulness fits with Quaker values. A perfect fit.'

Audiences have been generous in their donations at performances and we have been able to send quite regular sums to Recoop over the past few years. One significant outcome to which our donations have contributed has been the development by Recoop of a Mindfulness course in booklet form. This is proving to be both popular and effective in an ever growing number of prisons.

Tracy writes:

The Mindfulness booklet is being used in most of the prisons we work in, which currently equates to 16 (and rising). We have also sold the booklets to 5 of the prisons in the West Midlands via an organisation called People Plus (Healthcare) who use them as a social prescribing tool, they're also in HMP Downview & Haverigg and now even reaching Prisoners Abroad who have recently purchased 1,000. We'll be using them in all of our new contract prisons, which are Lowdham Grange, Altcourse, Send, Bronzefield, Garth & Lancaster Farms.

The quotes below are from some participants at HMP Erlestoke. Anyone can order copies from us, unfortunately there is a charge and a minimum order of 10. The booklets cost £6 each.



"I have recently been 'recalled' to custody. I had serious issues on release with relationships and housing. I certainly agree with the course speaking of 'good stress'. I found the booklet really well presented making it easy to read and the Journal was helpful – thank you. I shared it with my peer. We both found it helpful. It would have helped me when I was out in the community before".

"On arrival into prison, (it is my first offence) - I was terrified and traumatised. The course was helpful to me as it showed me simple solutions that you can try without anyone noticing you".

"I found the course a positive and helpful experience. It shows us how to reflect and look into Ourselves. The images of calming scenes, I would replace with photographs of scenes near where I lived and places I was happy in like when I was on holiday. It was good to know that stress can be positive too. The breathing, listening and paying attention to your body p.9-p11 was something everyone can try straight away. I thought the colourful course booklet and journal was great too. It raised interest from others as I walked back to my Wing".

"This training pack would definitely help most people I know in this prison. Not just while they are in custody, but also when they are close to release and on release as each stage brings different stresses".

"Stress is different depending where you are on the sentence. Your stress that you have changes depending if you are at the start, middle or end of your time in custody. For example, if you accept what you have done or are awaiting appeals etc.
It gave me the idea to use images of my own: I got one from my local area and places I had been on holiday. I also got images of my house where family now live".

"I liked the course. We all spend too much time saying staff and peers do not listen to us. We want acceptance by our peers and staff and if we feel we are not getting this, then we become stressed and we sometimes become angry and get ourselves into trouble. On the other hand, if you are quiet and under the radar, you can be ignored. These things make me unhappy. What I should do instead is, listen to myself, I should think about positive stress and how I can clear my head by these simple exercises. I liked the journal".

"I found the training was good but I am a practising Buddhist. I use all of these techniques plus much more such exercises already. I find them very helpful and it gives me peace from the very stressful surroundings on the Wing. I am sure if you try these things and use the journal, you will be glad you did it".

MARGARET, WILLIAM AND THE QICJ CONFERENCE 2023

This family story was passed down to me as a child. I believe that the stories we inherit within families are there to be nourished and shared even if we don't fully understand them. There is always more than a grain of truth in a good story and sometimes a lesson for the learning…

Once upon a time (1780ish) in a Cumbrian village by the banks of the River Eden, Margaret Pennington was born to proud and loving Quaker parents. Two elder brothers already lived on the family farm which had sheep and cows and chickens. When she grew up, Margaret accompanied her father in the horse and cart selling their prize-winning cheeses at nearby markets and country fairs. Fairs were often the means of finding a marriage partner but not so for Friends. That lengthy process would involve parents, monthly meetings and meetings for clearness. Marrying out was frowned upon and especially in the 1700s in these northern parts. Cutting short this idyllic story I can add that Margaret was certainly a huge disappointment to her family in that she fell in love and married out of the Quaker faith. Could the disappointment and shame experienced by her family get any worse? Well - yes. Her chosen partner for life, was a cheese-loving horse trader of the Gypsy kind who visited Appleby Fair to buy and sell horses. So I've always known of the Gypsy and Quaker heritage but recall those hushed tones of elderly relatives whispering over the sordid details of this past 'secret scandal' which stained and shamed the family. The shame belonged less to the marrying out than to the marrying a Gypsy. Were it not for the Quaker cheese seller, the Gypsy horse trader and the recent QICJ conference in Leeds, I wouldn't be sharing this family story…



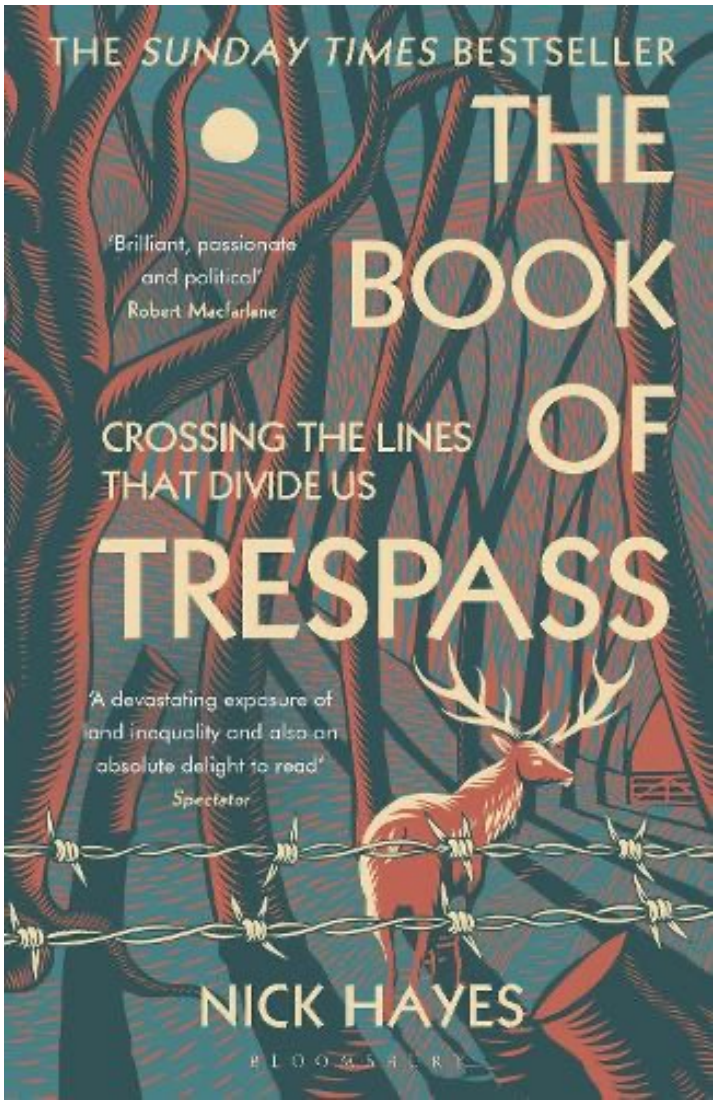
The theme of the conference this year was Prejudice & Disadvantage: Groups over-represented in the criminal justice system and I was particularly drawn to the presentation given by Rachel Cooper of Leeds GATE, a twenty year old organisation working across Yorkshire with and in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Aware that these populations are disproportionally affected by the criminal justice system especially within prisons,

we heard some startling statistics. With a life expectancy of 50(!), set against 78 in the general population, Rachel explained that the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller populations experienced the lowest health-related quality of life of all ethnic groups in the UK, the highest exclusion rate in schools and the lowest literacy rates.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bhBbMrF8Z0

When compared with the 0.1% of the general population in England incarcerated in prisons, 6% of all prisoners are Gypsy, Roma or Traveller and Prison Inspectors found that most prisons were unaware of their existence or specific needs and that almost no staff considered ethnicity to have any impact.

We learned by watching an excellent YouTube video (Roads from the Past) how with the advent of farming, nomadism had all but died out. Most of our ancestors put down roots in villages and towns but not all. Gypsies from India travelled across Europe settling here 1000 years ago. Despite several historic persecutions, by the 1700s Gypsies were an integral part of the British landscape. So-called because of their dark (Egyptian-type skin colour) Gypsies have been pressured into abandoning their nomadic culture and settling in houses becoming more like 'us' ever since. An early example of laws curbing immigration was The Egyptian Act of 1530 which legislated against the Romani people entering the country from abroad, forcing them to settle in one place or risk the death penalty. We also heard that before the 1960s people moved around relatively freely. In spite of a number of Acts designed to protect travelling groups, public pressure to stamp out nomadism has enjoyed greater popularity. Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities probably experience a higher percentage of hate crime than any other ethnic communities in the UK but those crimes are seldom reported. Relationships with local Police are often poor and many parents simply tell their children to get on with it… The vandalisation of council- managed gypsy sites is often deliberate and used to further incite racism and hatred. Often fed by stories in the media, attitudes have hardened and the perception of gypsies as being dishonest, anti-social and of simply being not like us are on the increase. These communities describe hate being as regular as rain…



In small conversation groups at the conference one Friend's searingly

honest account of feelings about traveller encampments near her home were heard. They echoed perceptions of gypsies as being outsiders, untrustworthy, dishonest. This was an uncomfortable learning curve of institutionalised prejudice, disadvantage and persecution about which we need to be more aware. Another Friend felt that we should do more to extend the hand of Friendship. If a fundamental belief in the equality of all people has led Quakers to campaign actively against racism in many parts of the world, shouldn't we be just as concerned about the racism on our doorstep?

https://travellerspace-cornwall.org/about-travellerspace/
https://www.womenscentrecornwall.org.uk/Roma%20Gypsy%20Traveller%20Project.pd f

The Book of Trespass' by Nick Hayes was recommended reading and a must for LM libraries.

BRIEF UPDATES

Simon Ewart

QICJ at BYM
We had a good attendance at our Special Interest Meeting (38, via zoom) to which Melanie, Tim and Marian contributed. Tim's slides, which give an overview of the situation and introduce possible ways forward, is now on our website.
There was interest from a number of people at the in-person Groups Fair. Membership forms were taken away and interesting conversations took place.

Teresa
At the QICJ conference we signed a card for our much-loved former staff member Teresa Parker. She wrote back,
"Thanks for your email and the card. It was lovely to receive all the kind comments and good wishes.
Yes I am retired now!
I am a bit behind getting in touch. I had to have my Achilles operated on at the end of March and am just about up and about again. Standing up is lovely and I am on the mend.
Please say hi to those who know me in QiCJ.
Love and good wishes, Teresa."

Prison isn't Working
There was a growing mood amongst Friends who attended Mike Nellis' course 'Quakers considering Penal Abolition', and others, that our prisons are beyond reform. Please take a look at the discussion paper 'Prison Isn't Working' (On the updates section of our Website) and respond to Melanie mj@dyslexia-malvern.co.uk . A second paper is envisaged: 'There is Another Way' which I hope will be a collaborative effort.

Your Committee Members for 2022 are: Simon Ewart (Membership Secretary), Rodney Mahon (Treasurer), Alice Audsley (co-clerk), Sinead Bailey, Melanie Jameson (co-clerk), Sue Barrance, Jonathan Lamb (newsletter editor) Hugh McMichael and Jennifer Copsey

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