

The Retired Prison Governors Newsletter

Founded by Arthur Williamson in 1980 - Now in its 42nd year of continuous publication



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LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Greetings and felicitations to all our readers. It's good to be back, but not under the circumstances I would have chosen. Let me begin by thanking Graham Mumby-Croft not just for deputising in my enforced absence, but also for producing two superb issues of the newsletter. I am grateful to the Committee for their unstinting support and to individual members who made contact with me. Graham officiated at my wife's funeral, and I can thoroughly recommend his services in his new capacity as a funeral celebrant. Oddly enough I also have a former colleague who has become a wedding celebrant after retirement from HMPS, but I have no plans to enlist her services!

One job I don't want back is PGA Conference Chair where Graham Mumby-Croft showed his star quality last October coping with aplomb under the pressure of unexpected amendments, card votes and other procedural matters, ably aided by Gerry Hendry in his capacity of Chair of Standing Orders.

Well, the clocks have gone forward, there is that feeling of warmth on the neck when the sun is out, and after just over two years, we are free of covid restrictions, both at home and when travelling abroad. Two years ago in my editorial I wrote that we would endure the most draconian restrictions on our civil liberties since World War Two, and I wasn't wrong. More pertinently, I also wrote that some of those given unfettered power would prove unfit to wield it. That certainly proved to be true. The shocking treatment of our elderly living out their days in care homes came to the fore very swiftly. We had police commanders confronting people sitting in parks but ignoring the mob which threw a statue into Bristol dock.s. We had idiots who prevented the sale of children's pyjamas in Wales on the basis that they were non-essential goods. We were asked to 'grass up' our neighbours if we spotted them breaking the rules. The only thing missing was the Stasi. Lastly we endured the most unfeeling bureaucracy when our loved ones were stricken with Covid, or dying of a terminal illness.

It's no surprise that people are angry with politicians and officials who have been caught out breaking the rules they forced on us mere mortals. The Inevitable Inquiry, when it comes, has to go much deeper than whether or not lockdown came too late, because that is essentially a blame game for political advantage. The Inquiry needs to look at the wider damage inflicted, not just on the economy, but on the elderly, on mental health, on how the NHS became little more than the Covid Health Service, and how the education of our children and university students was disrupted, sometimes by educators themselves. Most of all it has to ask what damage has been done to the concept of our being a free society, and crucially, how that can be repaired.

No sooner had I finished typing the final draft of this editorial than came another threat to our freedom, the ultimate threat, that of nuclear war, as a consequence of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Our sufferings under Covid bureaucracy are nothing compared to those of the brave Ukrainian people. Let us hope that somehow world leaders can bring Putin swiftly to his senses and end his senseless war.

PAUL LAXTON, EDITOR

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RPGA: E-MAIL REGISTER

The E-Mail register has been operating for around 13 years and has proved itself to be an effective means of rapid communication between members. It offers updates on current prison service developments and allows members to keep in touch with each other.

Joining the RPGA does not automatically place you on the register. If you would like to join the register then please send an E-Mail from the address you wish to have registered to **HARRY BRETT** at **h_brett@sky.com**

E-Mail addresses may not be passed to third parties without permission from the person(s) registered to that specific E-Mail address.

Please remember that if you change your E-Mail address you must inform **HARRY BRETT**, otherwise you will cease to receive further updates.



FROM THE CHAIR

You will be aware that I like to report on the view of the Pennines from my computer chair as I write. Well today is no exception as having survived storm Dudley a few days ago we are now enduring storm Eunice with horizontal rain and roaring winds so, confined to barracks today as we are warned not to go out. Pity that, as Friday is beer night so beer at home tonight. Anyway, good time to write my thoughts for the spring 2022 newsletter which is in the safe hands of Paul Laxton once again. Previous editions are on the website and our thanks again to Graham Mumby-Croft for producing a great newsletter in autumn 2021. I particularly enjoyed reading about David Taylor's harrowing experience with Covid and am pleased he is now well and hopefully ready to join me for some cricket which returns this season though it is hard to believe looking out of the window.

We held the RPGA AGM in tandem with the PGA conference on the 12th October 2021 at the Radisson Blue Hotel, East Midlands Airport although the attendance was as ever poor, we got the Association business through and we reported a sound financial position, steady membership and an active working elected committee. The minutes are on our website www.rpga.org.uk And so we go on. I have to say it is interesting to sit in the PGA conference and hear the debates on current issues.

The AGM reported bank balance was £14,228 which is impressive and mainly down to controlling outgoings. Membership is down by 4 [399] so fairly steady and I was pleased that Paul Laxton, Harry Brett and Graham Mumby-Croft were re-elected for a further term as it gives stability to the team. We will continue to seek new members and any suggestions for further improvements are welcome.

Covid seems to be on the wane at last and numbers in my social group activities are recovering each week but only slowly. I still check for my face mask when we go out through force of habit. Prices are on the rise and many folk are struggling each week so things are getting tough out there! Now we have the Ukraine to worry about too let us hope by the time you read this Mr Putin sees some sense and we avoid a catastrophe. All we want is a peaceful retirement.

Please consider writing something for the RPGA newsletter especially if it has a photograph and if you would like to join the committee let me know at graham.smith646@hotmail.co.uk.

GRAHAM SMITH JP [RPGA chair]

The PROP Revolt of 1972

This revolt throughout the Prison system was curious in that its origin was obscure and the revolt was a series of expressions of indiscipline that was pervasive but disappeared, seemingly, without trace. But it did involve me painfully.

So what was PROP? One translation was Prisoners Right of Participation. Rumour had it that it started out as an academic exercise in the Sociology/Criminology Department of a University (name withheld) that was far too successful. It postulated that non-violent demonstrations by prisoners could alter regimes and occurred throughout the spring, a long hot summer and early autumn of 1972. The response was organised by Alan Bainton, a former distinguished prison Governor. There was pressure to deal with it by punitive harshness but he rejected this and his method was one of patient reasonable non punitive action. Many found this unacceptable and the argument about the appropriate response raged at all levels, it certainly affected Bainton's health.

So where was I? occupying a desk at H.Q. in Ecclestone Square, a Governor 111 with the title Staff Training Development Officer, working to the extroverted Colonel Jim Hayward in charge of Staff Training. My brief was wide ranging, at that time mainly concerned with the introduction of early computers, principally involved with night time sanitation. My only legacy to the service is defining a computer's role within prisons, hence ECR, Emergency Control Room rather than merely Control Room. A significant difference that travelled all the way up to the Minister for his acceptance.

A small change, seemingly, but the result of considerable debate. So I was interested in the reaction of H.Q. to PROP and became involved when promoted to be the Governor of Chelmsford prison in May 1972. This was a poisoned chalice. The prison was a mess and it should not have surprised me that I was shovelled off to look after 300 London villains because it was reported to me by Leslie Portch that two senior civil servants had remarked in his hearing "there goes Selby, the most abrasive tongue in the Home Office." It certainly confirmed to me that I was a Manager rather than an Administrator. So to govern Chelmsford, unprepared, untrained, never having worked in a prison before, but conscious of looming PROP action.

This had been evident already in the odd prison, maintaining passive inconvenience but no violence because Allan Bainton's response, whilst causing considerable irritation to the heavy discipline authorities, such as Wandsworth's BOV, appeared to be working. Then it was Chelmsford's turn in early July. The long termers in C Wing refused to return to their cells on a Saturday evening and remained out in the playing field during a warm night, quietly returning in the morning. No action, it was treated as though it had never happened. A year later when interviewing a Lifer he told me that this night out was his most precious memory, just to see the stars and hear birds at dawn, so somebody benefited.

Return to normal? So we thought, enough for me to take summer leave with my family in our recently acquired house in Pembrokeshire, which we still have. So off we went, leaving the Prison in the capable hands of John Williams, the D/G and George Shore, the A/G. A fortnight later, after a splendid day's sailing, what was it that prompted me to pause before going up to bed to listen to the 10 o'clock news?

The headline stated "The trouble in the Isle of Wight Prisons has started in two prisons on the mainland." So I waited for the details and 10 minutes later, sure enough Gartree and Chelmsford were named. No phone in the house, so down to the harbour for the only available phone, but it is occupied by young ladies checking out A Level results with friends. The local Police still occupied a house, so up to the village, knock on the door, "What?"

"Can I use your phone please?"

"Why?"

“I am the Governor of Chelmsford Prison and I’ve just heard on the news that it’s rioting, “
“Come in.” There follows a painful conversation with the Deputy Governor.

In essence, and it is now 11 o’clock, B wing and C wing have refused to go to their cells at 9 o’clock, and are sitting down in their wings. The staff are in the Centre and there is a stand off but an air of foreboding, Yes, Region and Head Quarters and the Police have been informed. Right I’ll come back tomorrow. Early, the following morning, I ring again and learn that, past midnight, all hell had broken loose. A hole was made in B wing’s roof and 83 were up there. C wing went on a destructive splurge and broke into the canteen. However, the staff have now retaken control and there is a total lock down. Five are still out on a separate roof but they descend three days later.

I’m packing and preparing to return and my 12 year old daughter returns from the village with a copy of the Times. “Look Dad, here on the front page, a photo of your prisoners on the roof”! My reaction is less enthusiastic than hers. “I know and I’m leaving NOW to deal with it.” The long train journey was through pretty countryside bathed in sunshine in contrast to my mood. I arrive in the early evening, phoned John Williams, and we sit in the lawn in gentle evening sunshine, both gripping a hefty whisky. He holds my attention with the detailed account of the last 24 hours.

I make a brief night visit but the real task resumes at 8AM the following morning with an inspection of the damage accompanied by the Engineer. What I remember vividly, later that morning, was the Discipline staff representatives telling me in a formal meeting, “We were frightened”. I realised that to restore confidence was a fundamental task which had to be taken firmly but gradually. Meeting the staff in full session they told me that the present regime of full lock down with only limited exercise was what they felt was ideal and should be retained. So I recall taking a surprisingly academic tone –“let me explain the difference between strategy and tactics. Strategy is the regime that Head Office states is right for this prison, Tactics is the method we take to return to it”.

In fact, looking back, it was an astonishingly open regime for a category B Prison, impossible now. The inmates were unlocked at 7am and remained at large until 9 pm. There were workshops for morning and afternoon work, education classes, a gym (somewhat primitive), and a large grass covered recreation area including two football pitches. So we were going to return to that and my task was to drag the staff with me. First, though, the role of punishment and the adjudication of the 83 from B Wing who had climbed onto the roof. They were seen one by one and the Adjudication a formal process, charge, evidence and reason given for the action written down. I start at 10 in the morning and finish at 10 at night. A long exhausting day. Punishment? The word was “award,” is loss of Pay 14 days and loss of Remission 14 days.

Subsequently I worked morning, noon and evening, every day for 2 months, it was hard work.

This account is long enough but two events to conclude. The first was our first service in Chapel with only a dozen or so attending. The Chaplain, a cheerful Ulsterman, was strong on Faith. His sermon propounded this with enthusiasm. “In fact” he affirmed “it should be shouted from the Roof Tops!” There was a pause and giggles from the congregation but a glare from me. Pause “I don’t mean that this to be taken literally,” ended that sermon. The second was a request by the nurses of Basildon Hospital to come and sing us Carols. Enthusiastically accepted. So early in December they came and the Chapel was well attended. They finished with Silent Night. There was profound silence and some in tears. Somehow it appeared to close the whole incident and enabled us to start our return to a positive regime.

Before revisiting our house in Pembs a phone was installed

MICHAEL SELBY

BATTING ON A STICKY WICKET - OR THIRTY YEARS AT THE CREASE

By PETER QUINN

'Issue re-write' was the instruction to the Censors' Office once a prisoner had included offensive content in a letter. Hopefully there will be nothing offensive here but it is a re-write. Versions have appeared twice before, tailored for different readerships. This time, I can take much for granted. The reader can relax and wait for the game to commence. The wicket however looks decidedly dodgy and you can't quite read what the ball will do since the bowler is – Headquarters Postings. I first became aware of the vagaries of team selection at the end of the 27th assistant governor training course. The toss of a coin would decide my fate. I had already been asked about playing for Leicester Prison and said I would be happy to open my innings there. I already knew its vice-captain, Trevor Gadd. Up went the coin and Umpire Rayfield announced that I would be fielding in the deep for Hollesley Bay instead.

Hollesley was a fine place for an opening knock. It had magnificent sports fields: the legacy of a founding borstal principle that team sports were healthy and character building, before a generation of grandstanding politicians declared them evidence of soft regimes. The Governor, Denis Higman, was a talented cricketer who would have been an asset to any decent club side. He captained the staff eleven by dint of his skill, not his position. He also played for the Prison Service national team, the Broad Arrows. An equally skilled cricketer was Dougie Price who, as orderly officer, would make sure that nobody needed for the staff team would be called in for weekends at double time, whatever their feelings on the matter.

When Chelmsford Crown Court sent us a young man who had already played for Essex Second Eleven, Denis appointed him an honorary staff team member. This made it virtually impossible for him to be nicked approaching the weekend, lest it might restrict his availability to play.

Like all good governors, Denis would do his daily rounds. In the days before in-cell televisions, when each borstal house had its own TV room and when Test Matches were free to air, 'Would anyone like to do the rounds with me?' became code for an invitation to accompany him from house to house, catching a fair amount of play wherever we stopped.

After some years it was time to change County. Tony Pearson was in charge of postings at the time. There was a Tony Pearson who had played for Cambridge University and Somerset in the 1960s but our Tony Pearson was equipped with a much more unpredictable googly. 'An open prison for women in Yorkshire' he said. I awaited this to be confirmed on the team sheet and when the envelope eventually arrived, it announced my posting to – Long Lartin. From an open prison for women to a high security prison for men in the same over! Quite remarkable.

Long Lartin was not particularly a cricket prison. Its governor, Jack Williams, had played for Saracens in his day and once a year, we hosted Jack's old team. The prisoners' fifteen, which could only play friendlies since they could not meet away fixtures, might have been playing the visitors' third or fourth fifteens for all they knew but they were still Saracens. Sportsmanship and camaraderie were much as at any other match but without the beer. Our much respected PEI (and thus rugby coach) had played at a high level of rugby league. 'It's not that I was banned for life,' he would say, 'it was more a question of *sine die*', a distinction lost on most of us.

That it was not a 'cricket prison' did not mean that cricket wasn't played. Annual limited over fixtures were between 'West Indies' and 'England', all of them prisoners. The closest that most of the former had been to the Caribbean was Brixton and the opening bowler for the latter was an IRA bomber. Who says sport and politics don't mix? I'm told that an annual fixture at Leyhill, at the time, was Cops v Robbers, all of them prisoners too.

After Long Lartin, rain stopped play for a while. I was sent to the Prison Service College to train newly joined assistant governors to be all rounders and more senior governors about prison law. Many hoped that they would never be troubled by litigation but the deluge of prisoner rights cases at the time was rather like being hit by Wes Hall without wearing a box. I should like to think that my coaching of them was rather more effective than Stan Worthington's coaching of me, as a schoolboy, at Old Trafford,

The touring season resumed and I was posted to Durham Prison. There was little time for cricket given my weekly commuting back home. But that might be a convenient excuse. Colleagues who played in the Durham Leagues were terrified by the class of player they encountered including a young lad called Harmison who was just starting his career with Ashington. Better facing a thousand or so prisoners at Durham than facing Harmy on song!

Four years at Durham and I was, once again, packing my kit. Risley Remand Centre had received a damning pitch inspection from Judge Tumim, the third umpire. A new governor, with me as his vice-captain, were chosen to turn out for the Home Secretary's Eleven v The Rest. Unfortunately, The Rest comprised a staff largely resistant to changes to the field, ably supported by their coach, John Bartell. The management team faced beamers and chuckers and such sledging as we had seldom heard. Each decision that went against The Rest was contested as if the Laws of the game (Cricket has Laws, not Rules) applied to all but them. As for the prisoners, watching in the crowd, they decided to riot. Helpfully, a local farmer rented a field to a television company so that a cherry picker could peer over the boundary. It thus became the first prison riot with a ball by ball commentary. Following this, my innings at Risley came to a premature end, without realizing that what had transpired was merely a warm up match for the first class fixture, shortly to take place at Manchester's Strangeways, just down the road. Even some of the players were the same.

That innings was over but the match was not. Eventually I was sent to govern the women's prison in Yorkshire. Cricket did not play much part in my life there, though it did in my village. An occasional spectator was one of my Durham old boys. 'Would you like to borrow this book?' he asked, showing me a huge history of the Royal Navy. 'When would I get time to read something that size?' I asked. 'I got through it in a week,' he said, 'mind, I was in Durham nick at the time.' 'What on earth were you doing back in Durham?' I asked. 'Non-payment of fine.' 'Why didn't you pay your fine?' He gave the most logical of replies, though possibly one not best calculated to appeal to the Bench. 'Because I'd bought the book!'

One more change of team was to come. Rather as knackered old jobbing cricketers are found work in administration to see out their days, I was posted to Headquarters: the Lord's of the Prison Service. There, instead of following the Laws of the game, I was helping to write them. And it was there that I was hit by a ball I couldn't have foreseen.

People, curious about my career, will often say 'You must have met some tough characters in your day'. Like most of us, the answer is 'Yes, but I never felt under personal threat.' Only once, in over 30 years, was I physically assaulted and that was by a hopelessly drunken and offensive official at Headquarters. We had called the security staff but they must have been chasing streakers somewhere else on the ground since they failed to turn up. Together with my colleague, Nigel Hancock, we ejected him from the building. And how he resisted! The official, who had 'previous', faced adjudication and was given a life ban. I was awarded Man of the Match in the form of a Battered Phoenix tie and certificate.

So, my life at the crease came to an end and I declared to watch from the boundary. Like many cricketers and governors of old, I reflect with dismay as first class cricket and criminal justice degenerate into the knockabout world of The Hundred and privatization. But working in prisons can give one an odd perspective. When, a few years ago, three Pakistan international cricketers were jailed in the UK for match fixing with bookies, I couldn't help but think about three lucky governors – they had the fittest gym orderlies in the country.

EXPONENTIAL

John Ramwell



Somehow, in the dim past, I seem to have 'qualified' as an officially recognised Regular Correspondent to our Newsletter.

If I have this right, then I'm pleased and proud in equal measure.

Apart from editing a bimonthly newsletter aimed at fellow ocean kayakers for over 40 years and writing over long letters to friends and family I've never consciously attempted to be a regular contributor for any media outlet; though I've have been known to write the occasional indignant letter to my local paper. On one occasion I brought the state of a local stream to my local council. Having seen the stream in question suddenly go a horrible grey colour and develop an awful smell which appeared to emanate from a factory, I contacted the relevant council department by email. They agreed to investigate.

On returning from a six week absence I saw there'd

been no change.

'Ah,' I thought, 'I'll test out the power of the pen.' And I wrote a carefully crafted letter to the newspaper. This worked. Even had a reporter round to follow the story up.

There was another occasion involving a local landowner blocking a favourite footpath when I managed a similar success.

But I'm not here to cement my status as your 'Regular Correspondent.' Perhaps I just felt it necessary to justify my 'appointment!'

"We'll get on with it then," I can hear you all yelling. So I will.

There's no shortage of material which I imagine will be of interest to you all. So for this edition I've chose to discuss the subject of Extrapolation and Artificial Intelligence, (A.I.).

As each of these subjects have taken up many volumes and exercised the minds of academics I imagine you wondering about my audacity in bringing these complex subjects to your attention; apart from which they sound pretty boring.

Of course I have no qualifications on these subjects, only an interest and some information gleaned from Wikipedia and books: books such as 'Homo Deus' by Yuval Noah Harari, '21 Lessons for the 21st Century' by the same author and the amazingly interesting book by Azeem Azhar, 'Exponential.'

I feel it's important to share my source of information... information supported by an overall interest in the road map ahead faced by my kids, grandkids and, as from three months ago, a great grandson. I know you'll join me in this rationale for our shared interest in what follows.

We have entered the Exponential Age.

Of course, before you'll agree to this we'll need to agree a definition.

We all know that exponential growth leads to a mathematically astronomical growth. 1 to 2, 2 to 4, 4 to 8, etc. Before we know it, we are in the stratosphere of high numbers.

When we apply this growth to businesses or companies, which this piece is focusing on, we will be asking the following questions ...

How does this level of growth happen in the first place?

How does this matter to us as individuals and society?

How do they maintain this level of growth in order to survive?

Is there anything we (governments) should be doing about such a level of growth?

Here are my stab at answers...

1. How does this level of growth happen in the first place?

In a word, 'Data.' Data is the new gold. Individually it's of no consequence. But collectively, when millions of us are contributing around the world, this is another matter entirely.

There are many ways now of collecting this data. Via the internet is the most effective but I'll share with you my own 'paraffin moment.' I use the voice control, Alexa. I get a kick out of turning on lights, television and cameras remotely by asking. I simply said to Jenny that I must get paraffin for the greenhouse heater. Within moments I was being asked by Amazon to check out their offers on paraffin. Coincidental? I don't think so.

So I've got rid of Alexa? Of course not. I've nothing to hide and am happy enough to contribute my personal data. In any case, should I have concern, it is possible to keep yourself beneath the ground - even though it takes a lot of effort and a fairly sophisticated understanding of technology.

Who is likely to be interested in our browsing habits, which is our favourite food/drink, what are our interests, who do we bank with, are we savers or spenders, what are our opinions, policies and beliefs?

Once accumulated from us all and made available, with the use of artificial intelligence, data becomes a miraculous tool which is the reason why extrapolation is able to occur.

My father once told me about the time back in the 50s when he met Lord Leverhulme, then in charge of Lever Brothers and one of the biggest conglomerates in the city. They were discussing the effectiveness and expense of advertising. The fact is, that back then, only 10% of the money spent on pushing soap was effective. Move forward to this year when I was discussing this same issue with a relative who works for Screwfix who told me that for every £1 her company spent on advertising resulted in £11 increase in profit.

It's all about targeting promotions and thereby getting a lot more 'bang for the buck.'

2. How does this matter to us as individuals and society?

Consider how our world has changed. One of the obvious examples is our shopping habits. As we've noticed our town and city shopping centres suddenly decline, we see such as Amazon, the company known to everyone, able to deliver anything to anywhere. They are devout disciples of technology as ascertained by any of you who make use of it as I've done. Need anything, no matter what, ask Alexa to arrange and next thing the Ring App. notifies there is someone at the front door and, even when away from home, you can talk to the delivery guy and ask him/her to leave the parcel where ever. We've come a long way in a short time and, apparently, we ain't seen nothing yet!

3. How do they maintain this level of growth in order to survive?

In a word, 'technology.' More precisely, A.I. or artificial intelligence. Put these two together then you have a powerful tool that permits all 'paraffin moments' like mine as mentioned earlier to occur.

At its simplest form, artificial intelligence is a field, which combines computer science and robust datasets, to enable problem-solving. It also encompasses sub-fields of machine learning and deep learning, which are frequently mentioned in conjunction with artificial intelligence.

Some say the exponential age started with computing in the 1970s, and that it continued on and quickened with the rise of global markets and the astounding way all new technologies are combined to generate more innovation. Look at how shipping, ports and the whole distribution system has changed within our times. No longer do we employ thousands to unload cargo vessels, no longer do we rely on

shopping (please don't remind Jen, my wife) when we can ask Alexa to order it and it (what ever 'it' is, be it fast food or replenishment of toilet paper) will be delivered to your door within the hour ... okay! ... depending on where you live.

Last but not least, powerful network effects influence all aspects of the economy and our lives. Between faster computers, better software and more data, ours is the first era in human history in which technology is constantly accelerating. Technology is developing at an increasing, exponential rate. But human society - from our businesses to our political institutions - can only ever adapt at a slower, incremental pace. The result is an 'exponential gap' - between the power of new technology and humans' ability to keep up.

4. Is there anything we (governments) should be doing about such a level of growth?

This exponential gap can explain our society's most pressing problems. The gulf between established businesses and fast-growing digital platforms. The inability of nation states to deal with new forms of cyberwarfare. And the sclerotic response of liberal democracies to fast-moving social problems. Some also agree that this exponential gap is not inevitable. Drawing on fields as varied as economics, political science and psychology, it has to be possible to harness the power of tech to serve our real needs - fostering new ways of doing business, innovative forms of politics, and fresh approaches to national defence.

Yet if we take the really grand view of life, all other problems and developments are overshadowed by three interlinked processes:

1. Science is converging on an all-encompassing dogma, which says that organisms are algorithms and life is data processing.
 2. Intelligence is decoupling from consciousness.
 3. Non-conscious but highly intelligent algorithms may soon know us better than we know ourselves.
- These three processes raise three key questions, which I hope will stick in your mind. Are organisms really just algorithms, and is life really just data processing?

What's more valuable - intelligence or consciousness?

What will happen to society, politics and daily life when non-conscious but highly intelligent algorithms know us better than we know ourselves. When any organisation starts to accrue such size when it, itself, requires control or else ... we're all in trouble. Of course I know that none of this comes as a revelation to any of you but only by a universal acceptance can we have a joined up approach to coping with it at worst or dealing with it at best.

These changes are occurring around us at a speed that is difficult to keep pace with.

Are they ...complex - yes: relevant to each of us - certainly; boring - never.

A final footnote..

I got the most recent Fitbit watch for Xmas which has Alexa built in. I'm now able to go in the back garden and speak into my watch to turn on the pond pumps, the shed lights, the house heating & lighting, the cameras, the toilet flush, listen to my book, add to my shopping list, play music, listen to the radio, etc. etc. Who'd have thought it?

I've always been interested in this use of technology to remotely control things.

Of course modern technology doesn't rely on Alexa to collect data on each and everyone of us. Street cameras, on line shopping, use of devices/laptops/PCs/mobile telephones, are all used to soak up data from us. You'd need to escape to a deep hole to be unlikely to contribute to this modern use of technology to collect personal information.

I realise it is all insidious but it's the way of the world.

P.S. only joking about the toilet flush!



Bees Inside

While I was an operational Governor Grade based at Woodhill Prison I approached my Governor at that time, Ed Willetts, with an idea that I had thought about for a while. In my spare time I attended an evening course to learn how to keep bees and I eventually set up a colony of bees and even managed to produce some honey in my first year.

I spoke to Ed about the possibility of setting up a hive inside the establishment with intention of eventually training up a few longer term prisoners to manage the colony themselves. Ed agreed to try this and I then linked in with the Buckinghamshire branch of bee keepers who very kindly agreed to help and together we put together a new colony of bees (a hive) and along with the Gardens manager we setup a site in the establishment campus area.

As Woodhill is in the High Security Estate all goods (and personnel) had to be searched and/ or x-rayed. The bees came in through the vehicle lock and into the goods in search area to be x-rayed with the search staff not quite sure how to deal with this but after some assurance it was all set up. All went well until a few bees made a bid for freedom and then It was a 'don't panic Mr Mainwaring' moment, but we managed to finish the process and the bees were in.

The photo shows me doing my daily checks on the bees and I was able to produce a batch of honey that I sold in the establishment and the proceeds went to an officer who was badly burnt in a BBQ accident at his home.

I always believed that there were other ways to make life more interesting for both staff and prisoners during my time in the service, and this was just one example of that.

BRIAN PENFOLD

Your Letters

Dear Readers

Three communications for this Spring edition of the newsletter. Two independent letters and of course the usual long and entertaining outpourings from the pen of my friend and literate saviour Bob Duncan, for without his contribution I would be out of work as a correspondent.

Firstly a letter from Frances Maserick passed to me by Harry Brett.

Dear Harry

Both Alison and I had staff members who contracted mesothelioma and in circumstances where it could only have come from exposure in a prison; unlike our recently passed colleague Derek Twiner who had worked in an asbestos factory in university vacations 60 years earlier. Alison and I both found that a claim against the department was successful.

Presumably Mr Mason has been advised by the PGA/RPGA to claim.

Obviously facts differ case by case. A trades officer working in roof spaces may find a claim easier to make than an officer working on the landings.

I recognise that my and Alison's experience go back to the early 2000s and things may have changed but a claim maybe worthwhile if only to help provide for his family.

Kind regards

Francis Maserick

And the following from Robert Mason

Dear All,

My name is Robert Mason and I joined the service as a young officer at HMP Leicester in 1965. I retired as Deputy Governor at HMYOI Onley in 1995 having served at a number of establishments in an operational capacity. I was pleased to read about the work being undertaken now in support of prison service staff being supported in their difficult daily work which has prompted me to share my recent life changing experience. I have never smoked, I have kept fit, had a good diet, never been into hospital other than to visit and was skiing in the French Alps in February 2020. When the pandemic struck, my wife and I and the Country went into lockdown. We had our first Covid jab in January 2021 and what I thought was a reaction to the vaccination, a shortness of breath, prompted me to make an appointment with my surgery. I was seen by a locum who examined me and prescribed antibiotic and steroid tablets, after a week the condition had not improved and made a further appointment with my surgery. I saw a different locum who gave me another examination but said that I needed an x-ray.

The Doctor rang Glenfield Hospital, Leicester and arranged for me to go straight to the Hospital CDU . I telephoned my wife to say I was going for an x-ray and would see her later. On arrival at Glenfield, it was extremely busy but after my x-ray a Doctor came and explained that I had fluid in my right lung and when a bed could be found I would be admitted. What a shock, I had nothing with me other than the clothes I stood up in and my mobile phone. The Doctor said the ward would look after all that and after four hours I was admitted to Ward 36. My wife was also shocked at the suddenness of my admission telling her she could not visit because of Covid and my car was in the car park, later retrieved by my eldest son. After a number of tests, x-rays and consultations it was decided to drain some fluid from my right lung for further testing, and to ease my breathing. This did not work and a litre of fluid had to be removed from between my ribcage and lung.

It was at this stage the consultant asked me if I had ever come into contact with asbestos. As I had never worked with asbestos as far as I knew, my answer was 'never.' The consultant and his colleagues decided to drain the rest of fluid from my right lung and carry out a biopsy to determine the cause of condition. I was given a general anaesthetic for this procedure and another five litres of fluid was removed, no wonder I was breathless as the fluid had pushed my lung over rendering it almost ineffective. When I came round I could breath normally once again but now awaited the results of the biopsy. The results confirmed that I had lung cancer caused by inhaling asbestos fibres but could not tell me when I had been contaminated as with this condition. It could have been thirty, forty or fifty years ago! My prognosis was that 'Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma is not curable but various treatments are available and these will be discussed with me at a later date.' I spent three weeks in Glenfield Hospital and I have nothing but admiration for all the staff who treated me.

While at home enjoying my wife's excellent cooking, care and attention I had an appointment to attend the Oncology Department at Glenfield Hospital where a consultant discussed the various options now open to me going forward. It was decided that as was fit and healthy surgery would be an option if I agreed. I agreed, and an appointment was made the following day for me to attend the surgeons clinic. The surgeon, Mr Nakas saw me, and we agreed that surgery was a good option for me, he said he would make the arrangements for me to have the operation as soon as it could be listed. I asked Mr Nakas when did he think I contracted this cancer from asbestos. Again it is not understood how long ago I could have been contaminated but forty, fifty, sixty years is normal, we just do not know. He emphasized that the cancer is not curable.

After my consultation with Mr Nakas a Specialist Thoracic Nurse interviewed me to spell out what the surgery meant in terms of the procedure. She explained that I was to have major surgery to my right lung that would remove the tumour but would be unable to cure the cancer. I went into Glenfield Hospital on Ward 29 and had my surgery on 22.04.21. I came round in the recovery room with three drains in my right side, cannulas in my neck, arm and hand, hooked up to a morphine drip surrounded by a number of PPI clad staff. I was taken up to the Intensive Care Ward and monitored. It was then that I realised I had been in the Operating Theatre for seven hours ! The care and attention I was shown by all staff on Ward 29 was a humbling experience they all were exceptional and I was very lucky to live near to Leicester to have this world leading treatment and a world leading surgeon in Mr Nakas.

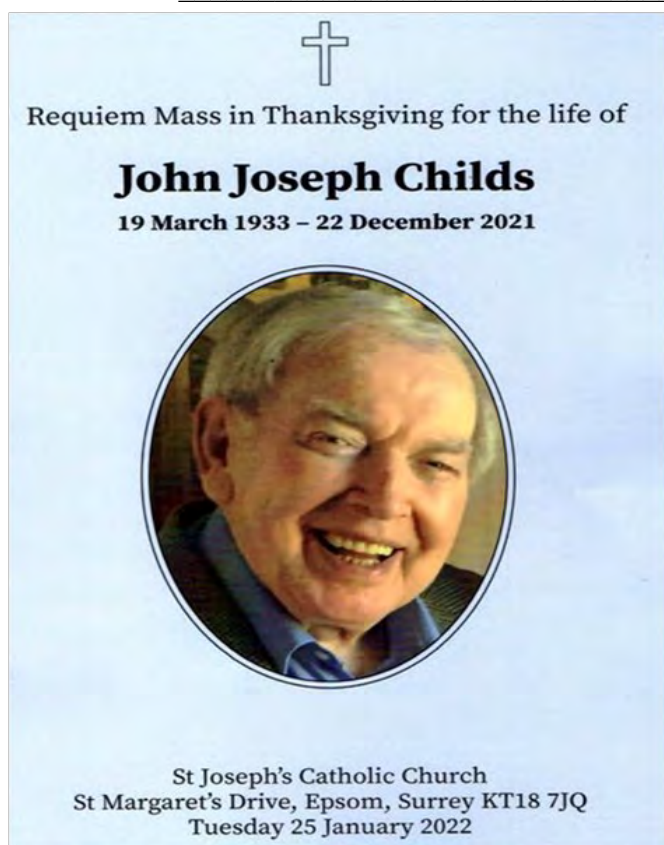
I agreed to participate in one of the consultants research programmes, which I am still part of, and will remain until the New Year. I now have three monthly CT scans at Glenfield Hospital and attend the Clinic of Mr Nakas, I have just had my second CT Scan and I do not have to have any further treatment at this stage, I feel I have been very lucky and remain optimistic for the future.

In writing to you of my experience I feel that the service should be aware that during my career spanning thirty years of operational duty, I have been contaminated at a prison I have worked in with asbestos that has led to surgery for Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma which is classed as an Industrial Disease. A ll staff should have access to the asbestos surveys that have been carried out over many years in all of our establishments, and make archive documents available as this contamination will continue unless we are made aware of its existence and its location.

KEEP SAFE

And now the correspondence from Bob Duncan:

Few will regret the passing of 2022, and we all hope that the New Year will bring a relief from the threat of the virus. We are amongst the elderly by definition and as such that more vulnerable. We are also able to take precautions. Those who still operate our prisons are unsung heroes. What they face daily is total uncertainty, reduced staffing and increased anti social behaviour. The Governor of a large Local Prison writes, 'I apologise that the regime is constantly changing, but I have to react to the number of positive results and increasing number of staff absences (currently 74), and we are isolating 244 prisoners due to positive PCR results. In my experience we never faced working conditions and problems as difficult as they are currently. Potentially there is worse to come when court system returns to 'normal' and starts sentencing the 60,000 alleged outstanding cases. It is estimated that there are people held on remand who will have served longer than any sentence they might be awarded.' As has been said by many, we served at 'the best of time', that remains very apt at the present moment.



For our generation it has been a time of deep sadness at the loss of so many dear colleagues; the latest as I write being **John Childs**. We first met at Dover 56 years ago and have kept in touch every year since. Each loss is though an apt reminder of the quality of the personnel managing the Service in our time. More than that, we knew each other, supported each other, and remained friends in retirement. That is less self evident today!

I attended the Requiem Mass in Thanksgiving for his life; I was the only Governor there, though I know Bernard and Marjorie Marchant would have been there had they not passed away before him. John, Jean and I attended their funerals; John was already showing signs 'ageing'. It was probably the last occasion I saw John. I had forgotten how proud he had remained of his Scottish ancestry, so it was a most fitting touch that we were all piped into the Church and again when we left. I knew at the back of my mind that John had a medical background prior to joining the Service. I had assumed he was training to be a doctor, but it was in fact Dentistry (see eulogy

further on).

At the service I sat next to fellow mourner who appeared to be on his own. We got talking and I asked how he knew John. He explained he was builder involved in house maintenance and had undertaken quite a lot of work on their property. He was so impressed with their kindness, wisdom, and genuine concern other people, and that they were always ready to help anyone; and that he wished to say a formal 'goodbye.' When he realised my background, he was eager to know more about John's career. Later he asked if I was attending the graveside, I explained I had to drive back to Kent, and would probably get lost finding my there. He immediately said he would take me and bring me back to the Church.

I am extremely grateful to his sons for making the Eulogy on the facing page available.

- John was born on 19 March 1933 in Dundee, Scotland. He was an only child. His father, also called John, served with the Black Watch during WW1.
- John attended Lawside Academy in Dundee and at the age of 17 he won a scholarship to study Dentistry at St Andrews University. He studied there from 1950 to 1953 but knew early on that a career in dentistry was not for him. His grandson, Sebastian, recently graduated with a 1st class degree from his alma mater.
- After St Andrews, John began his 2 years National Service in the Royal Signals.
- After completing his National Service, John worked as a Telecommunications Superintendent with the Post Office in London.
- John married Jean, at St Edward the Confessor Catholic church in Hendon on 30 September 1961. They had met at a dance in London; Jean did not really want to be at the dance as her bags were packed and she was ready to move to New Zealand with her mother. She saw John looking very dashing in a waistcoat. He asked Jean to dance; neither of them knowing that they would dance together for decades to come.
- For several years, John did voluntary work at 'Norman House' for discharged prisoners. The Warden there passed John an application to be an Assistant Governor in the Prison Service telling John that was cut out for the job.
- John spent more than two decades serving in Her Majesty's Prison Service, with his first posting in Dover Borstal as an Assistant Governor. After spells in Wakefield at the Prison Services College and at Armley Jail in Leeds as Deputy Governor, he became the Governor of Portland Borstal, at that time the largest Borstal in Europe. He then took up a 3 year post as Governor of Bristol Prison, before his final post, as Head of Training and Development.
- During his life, John was heavily involved with charitable work, with the Round Table, Rotary Clubs and as the Vice Chairman of the League of Friends for Epsom and Ewell Hospitals.
- After his retirement from the Home Office, he set-up his own company, TCS Management Consultancy in 1985. He enjoyed the independence and won contracts with the Home Office, the Inland Revenue, and some large commercial organizations, such as BT.
- John and Jean celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on 30 Sep 2011 on Epsom Downs with family and friends. They were also blessed to celebrate their 60 Wedding Anniversary on 30 Sep 2021. Due to the pandemic, this was done via a 'Zoom Call' with family joining from around the world
- John passed away at Epsom General Hospital on December 22 , 2022, at the age of 88. A service was held at St. Joseph's Church Epsom on January 25", before he was laid to rest in Epsom cemetery.
- John is survived by Jean, and his three children. The eldest, Simon, lives in Tokyo and is an entrepreneur, having built and sold several businesses in the recruitment and staffing industry. He is a former Chief Inspector in the Royal Hong Kong Police. He is married to Mika, a Japanese national and they have two sons. His daughter Jennifer has spent her entire nursing career within the NHS. She is married to Sandro, a lawyer, and they have four children and three grandchildren. His youngest son, David, was a Senior Inspector in the Royal Hong Kong Police. He is married, to Naomi, a Japanese national and they live in Kuala Lumpur, where he heads regional security for a large US Insurance group.

JOHN CHILDS R.I.P.



I recently remade contact with **Mike Poselay**; he wrote back, 'it was such a joy to hear from you. Talking to you today took me back 20 years plus to our days at Pentonville, discussing things it seemed like only yesterday.' He does some lecturing on management at Westminster University, and claims he often quotes my style of management! When he first retired, he had plans to travel the world. Unfortunately, his wife fell ill and that prevented his plans. So being Mike he undertook a Law Degree and was called to the bar at Gray's Inn in 2007. He now undertakes Court work which he enjoys.

He naturally asked about **Steve Metcalfe**, I explained we always made contact in early December, and I would pass on Mike's contact details. I received a sad but lovely

letter from Lesley; I will share parts of it. 'I do not suppose Steve shared with you the state of his health, but he had been unwell for the past few years. We got out a bit, but Steve could not walk far without getting breathless. He was diagnosed with cancer of the bladder in July, had surgery and chemotherapy and we were confident he had recovered. In November there was a rapid deterioration and a sudden collapse at home. He was rushed to hospital and received a devastating diagnosis of brain cancer. We had hoped it could be stabilised, but it was not to be, and Steve died peacefully on the 24th of November.

I miss him dreadfully but have so many memories of our life together and I am comforted by knowing he is at peace and no longer suffering.

He was always immensely proud and grateful that you had believed in him and gave scope at Pentonville which led on to a very successful career culminating in being Governor of Wormwood Scrubs, which he enjoyed enormously, but he always looked back on Pentonville with great fondness.'

John Berry comments, 'This is sad news. He worked for me as a senior officer and had great potential which he realised when we moved to Fresh Start and the grades were unified. He was excellent with prisoners and staff. He also knew all the tricks of the trade and staff knew it.'

I keep in touch with **Senior Officer, 'Stuey'** who retired from Pentonville. He writes 'How lovely to hear from you. I got the email on the way to The Isle of Sky for a fishing trip. I heard with great sadness that Steve Metcalf had passed away. He was a decent man with a great sense of humour and like you he looked after staff. It is a real shame he is no longer with us. I remember Mike Poselay very well. A great character and I am not surprised he is doing well for himself. Enjoying retirement and caught two nice Trout for BBQ. Recent storms have not caused us any damage, but many homes were out power for some considerable time. The virus of course has dominated our lives and I have friends who have sadly lost their lives.

Harry Brett must be a happy bunny, his football team, Manchester City are guaranteed to be the winners of the 'Premier League.'

A missive from **John Ship** who comments they are having a cold snap with the temperature down to 20 degrees! He continues by saying he was chatting to a colleague, **Arthur Littler** who was a Prison Officer and Governor before retiring here in Hua Han the same year as me. I mentioned Mike Poselay to him, and it seems Mike and Arthur were close at Birmingham, but he lost touch over the years. He is anxious to get in touch, can you help? I have sent contact details. A classic example of what the RPGA is all about, keeping retirees in touch with each other. Do make sure Harry has you're up to date details!

John has just responded: 'When you sent me contact details for Mike, I dropped him a line and he responded very quickly, my friend here **Arthur Littler** and I never crossed paths though we were both at Brixton at different times; our paths crossed when he visited a Masonic Lodge I'm a member of here in Bangkok. We are both involved in the charity aspect of the craft, much of last year was spent providing respite to locals who were suffering from the fall out of the pandemic, no meaningful Government support here. The lack of overseas travel has allowed us to travel within the Kingdom. We have just spent a couple days touring Pranburi, we had not realised that there was such beautiful countryside almost on our doorstep. We are planning to drive down to Phuket next month stopping off at some towns on the coast of the Andaman Sea, an area that has been rebuilt after being devastated in the 2001 Boxing Day Tsunami; incidentally Ice was in Phuket that day.

As ever your font of contacts has come trumps yet again.'

A short note from **Joan Ozanne**, she has had a spell in hospital but is OK now. She is still keenly missing Danny. Always good to hear from **Dave Simons**, who states, 'it has not been a good year. Ann has not been well, and I have been a full-time carer. On top of that in July I fell down five concrete steps in the garden and split my head wide open. Hospital sealed it with superglue! Still had pain in back and sides. Doctor eventually sent me for x-ray and discovered I had a fracture of the hip. Now healing after 6 months. Doctor informs me it will heal with time.' I replied, 'I do not have a lot of time left.' We all feel for you, and also with the sentiment of how much time some of us have left.

Colin and Sue Tanswell have kept reasonably well but accept keeping healthy is becoming more of a struggle. They have though avoided the virus but have not been able to travel to Canada to visit their son, due to all the travel restrictions. Whilst on that point we have good friends in Belgium; one was diagnosed with terminal cancer and my daughter wanted to visit her. For yonks we have all been visiting Belgium, often just day trips to visit the duty-free establishments. To my daughter's annoyance you now required a visa to visit. That entailed obtaining all the paperwork involved, completing it and returning it. No flight could be arranged until a visa was agreed. Fortunately, she made it in time and was able to visit our friend in her nursing home prior to her death a few days later. Now it appears that visits to relatives in nursing home are going to face further restrictions due to staff being off sick.

A situation that **Ron and Sue Curtis** unfortunately knew too well; Sue's mother had to move to a care home in 2020 at the height of Covid, when their visits were curtailed. Fortunately, restrictions eased, and the family were able to visit her regularly which was a blessing after being separated for so long. Her death in February was sad but also a relief and she received superb care in her last days. They sold her house at the end of September. I remember the house well as it was in the short road which was one of the fixed posts when trainees absconded, and Ron always persuade me join him at that post as often as possible, and unknown to me disappeared for a period to visit Sue. Oh, happy memories! Ron comments that it was the grandchildren who were the worst off with the closure of schools. It was much the same with universities, my grandson went to his Cambridge College last September and his parents were not allowed in the college grounds to unload but had to park in the street and only Luke was allowed to carry his luggage to his room and his parents were not even able to see it. Then they faced virtual lock down for the first term and no socialising and only 'virtual lectures.' Not the best start to what should have been an exciting new experience.

There was further sadness during the year, as Ron's elder sister was killed when in September she was stuck by a car whilst she was on a pedestrian crossing. The driver had ignored the red light is to be charged with dangerous driving. They would have been celebrating her 90th Birthday in November. Ron adds, although she had mobility problems, she was still very active socially and mind as bright and sharp as ever. It must have been a shattering loss, and all our thought are with you.

On a more cheerful note, they had a great break in Northumbria, in a superb B&B, and a trip to Holy Island. It really is a magical place for those who have not been and well worth the effort to make the trip.

In the early autumn travel restrictions were lifted sufficiently for Simon and Laura to visit the UK and spend a week with them, and the 'clan' in Scotland came down for the weekend. Sue has also found more time for the garden this year and was rewarded with a good crop of vegetables, which we both enjoyed.

Veronica Bird has had some health problems; she had some pains then a cataract operation. The day after she collapsed and was resuscitated. She phoned the Doctors for an appointment, and was firmly told there were none, so she was taken to hospital by ambulance and had no idea what was going on. As she says, 'there is no fun growing old.' The good news is that by the end of December she was feeling much better and hopes it was all a blip

She has many talks booked and so many more requests, 'I could give them every day, but now I must plan carefully.' Any Donations Veronica receives for giving the talk she gives to charities, including the Shannon Trust and the Butler Trust, and the local Hospice. She hopes 2022 will be good year for us all.

A lovely homemade Christmas card made by **Sheila and news from Jim Blakey**; after a bad period when Jim when had a bad spell when all manner of things happened to him, he now feels as well as he has been for a long time. Sheila's rheumatoid arthritis continues to cause her pain and has now developed into Lipodernatosclerosis. (One for you to look up in the dictionary.) Apparently, it is not very pleasant and there is no cure.

They have both spent the majority of time self isolating, so Jim has been able to spend enormous hours in the garden; he misses not having a greenhouse to potter in, but it was one of those things he had to give up as a result of down-sizing. This has resulted in a very fruitful garden season; they only finished the last of their outdoor tomatoes in last week of November.

They are pleased and proud of how their son's business is thriving; he can now afford to be selective and thoroughly enjoys his work. One firm he did a lot of work for had not offered him the kind of support he felt necessary. So, when it was taken over, he decided to resign. They enquired why and he told them straight. They were rather aghast; they asked, if they tackled all the issues would he not resign. They did and he remained and was rewarded with a better contractual arrangement and a 50% increase in fees. Quite an achievement! In addition, the grandsons are both doing equally well; both

have just ordered new company cars. Tom, who ordered a Tesla, will have to wait a bit as the delivery time is 6 months!

Jim is still President of the local Bowls Club and enjoying the involvement. The members are a good crowd but a bit apathetic in respect of the total needs of the club so, regrettably, he has to give them the occasional nudge to get things done. He claims that he has not fallen out with any of them to date. Keep well and safe and have a good 2022. He is in regular contact with **Jerry Ross** who keeping well. Sheila enclosed this lovely poem and said she will send me more. I felt it so apt for many of our generation, so with Shelia's blessing I can share it.

I'M FINE THANK YOU

*There is nothing the matter with me,
I'm as healthy as can be,
I have arthritis in both knees,
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze,
My Pulse is weak, and my blood is thin.
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.*

*Arch supports I have for my feet,
Or I wouldn't be able to be on the street
Sleep is denied me night after night,
But every morning I find I'm all right
My memory is failing, my heads in a spin,
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.*

*The moral is this as my tale I unfold,
That for you and me who are growing old,
It's better to say "I'm fine with a grin,
Than to let folks know the shape we are in.*

Some of you might remember **Kit Jarman** and **Catherine Warburton**, neither remained in the Service long. They are now Mr and Mrs Jarman, they are both well and hope to hold a celebration to mark Kit's 50 years as a Priest, many years of it in the Royal Marines, after which he initially retired to Scotland. He had cancer, received treatment and had tremendous support from the local community. He had in reality to learn to walk again from scratch.



Gordon MacGowan rather intensively reminiscing about former times, something we all do with pleasure but in perhaps more moderation.

Walter MacGowan was a mere 76 in January and lives life to the full, eating and drinking merrily and travelling, but he is looking very well on it all.

The number of Governors I remember is dwindling each year, soon it will be down to a very few. Just a reminder I am aging as well!

Let's all hope for a more normal and happier 2022.

Bob

As ever please take time to write something that will be of interest to all your retired friends and colleagues and send them to me. Nice short chatty letters will be published in this section of the newsletter longer with more specific content will be considered for a separate entry in the Newsletter.

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MEMOIRS - PART THREE: BOB DUNCAN

The next day we attended the 'Passion Play.' What I had not anticipated was that it lasted all day with a break for lunch, and was, of course, all in German. It was though quite unique and a spectacle, but it

was somewhat of a relief when it concluded. We then continued to a very nice hotel located above the town of Solbad Hall, which had a small outdoor pool. It was also within an easy walk of Innsbruck, a very attractive Austrian town which was just a pleasure to wander around. We also had good weather; our fellow tourists were a very friendly crowd, so we had a very good holiday. At that time, you could only bring back half a litre of duty-free spirits, but it was cheaper to buy a litre bottle. So Leonard bought a litre bottle I think of Rum; he explained he would drink half before we got back. I do not think it had anything to do with the drinking but might have done, as he landed heavily on one end of his bed and the leg broke. We fixed it for the

last night. When we left next morning, the bed was virtually propped up with matchsticks .



Dewsbury (Earlsheaton) House



Dewsbury Kitchen



Duffy



With Paul Wailen in Lake District (Jane took photo)



Solbad Hall - Austria



Holiday- Llangrannog



At Cousin June's



Aunty Marjorie - Usk

UNIVERSITY – LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

I had decided I would study accountancy at university, but then discovered I would still have to study the full accountancy syllabus, which took four years and take their exam; but any degree would for some reason reduce the study period by two years. So, I decided I might as well do something more interesting like social sciences. In my second year I became a little disillusioned within the university, so started looking for a career in the social area. I applied for the Probation Service, but they stated they were not interested until I had completed my Degree. So, I decided to soldier on and complete my degree. I was on special leave from E&A so could return there at any time, so resolved that was the best option, and I could take my time looking for an alternative career. So, in September I returned to E&A and had to start studying law and accounts on half-day release on a Friday at the City of London College. I could not fathom the point of double-entry bookkeeping as the civil service did not use it. I enjoyed the law, and the lecturer in accounts put up with me. As he lived in Nottingham at the weekend, when I knew I was scheduled to go on the audit there, I asked, and he cordially agreed to give me a lift there. I had applied and been accepted at Birkbeck College, London to study for a master's degree in social psychology by evening study. I happened to be there when the news broke about the assassination of President Kennedy. The study stopped for the rest of the evening as we were all so shocked.

At the end of the first year at the City of London College, there was an exam in both subjects, I decided to fail the exams so then I would have to repeat the first-year studies and not move onto the second year. The rationale was that I could then concentrate on the master's degree. For the Law exam, I wrote a critique of communism as I thought it fun. As it turned out I achieved the lowest marks ever in both exams, and my bosses knew I was just back from university, I was quizzed by my boss, he plainly did not believe my story. I was then summoned to see his boss; he was not convinced either so then I was summoned to appear before the Auditor Director-General himself. I was not impressed by him, nor was he with me as he didn't believe me either, so in almost desperation he leaned over his desk and sternly said 'Boys from Chatham School do not behave in this way.' I then knew his background, but also what I did not expect was that an old boy network actually operates in the civil service.

Being back in A&E, Sports Day cropped up again, so I attended and aimed to do my best to score as many points as possible for my Department, so I entered every event. I remember in the 800 meters' walk, when I passed someone who was supposed to be an athletics competitor and had expected to win, saying I must be cheating to pass him, I just shouted back, 'no, my Mum always walked very fast!' By the end of all the events and scores added up, my Department had won the Day against the other 8 Divisions. I had also amassed more points as an individual, that entitled me to be awarded the Victor Ludorum Cup by the Director General of E&A himself, and he would then buy me a drink. When he saw it was me, there was a bit of a kind huddled conversation, and the cup was passed to the Deputy Director and no drink was offered. My name was, however, inscribed on the cup, so I remained a thorn in their flesh!

As I had reverted to commuting from Ramsgate, so my days were long, getting up at 05.30 am on most mornings and not getting home until almost 23.00 some nights. Mum decided that it was too much, and we should look into moving nearer to London. The family had close connections with Whitstable, so the hunt started there. A pair of semi-detached new houses were on sale for £3,300 just within our price bracket in Grimshill Road. It backed onto the Whitstable football pitch, and we were screened by a hedge and not overlooked. With my savings and a mortgage of £2,200 from the Halifax at 6.1%, we were able to proceed with the purchase and moved there eventually on the 18th of January 1963. We had waited for the removal van we had arranged from 9 am onwards; when it had not arrived by 10.30, we phoned up and were informed they had overlooked the booking but would immediately arrange to find a van and crew. So, by the time we had unloaded at Whitstable and made beds we were too

exhausted to eat and all too glad to get into bed. We eventually sold the Ramsgate house on 14 February 1963 for £2,800. When the trains were running on time this reduced the previous two-hour journey time by 40 minutes each way, which made a big difference. I was still paying over £12 a month out of my net income of just over £50 a month; so it was expensive even then. It was a reasonable walk to the station, and I could buy a paper at a newsagent by the station. (It is of note that trains from Ramsgate on that line still take 2 hours some 60 years later!) I planned and laid out the virgin garden, mainly to grass, but with a vegetable patch at the bottom. Leonard took the lead in us erecting a garage to the side of the house, and he connected an electrical supply. It was more for storage space and a workshop. Mum was very happy here as we had other relations in Whitstable, and she often looked after June's children when they were young; Uncle Les would also come round and play with them in the garden.

Some years on Mum, unfortunately, had a Stroke, she recovered reasonably well, but lost the strength in her right arm, over which she got rather frustrated and a bit bad-tempered at times. As we were now both away, Uncle Les had joined her and they had holidays together. I had not realized at the time how much this was appreciated by my cousin June and husband Max. They had moved to a very nice bungalow overlooking the golf course, but they had three growing sons, and her father had moved in after his wife died, so he was taking up one bedroom, so they were very tight for space. To make life easier for mother it was decided to sell the house and purchase a bungalow in Tankerton. This was finally finalized despite the difficulties being created by the seller, and they moved in on the 4th of July 1972. The property had been unoccupied for a while, so the garden needed quite a lot of attention. As it did for the next several years as Mum was not up to it and was one of the first tasks I had to do whenever I could get to visit.



Bungalow Tankerton

I happened to meet up with a couple of ex-residents of New College who rented accommodation near the college and it emerged that they had a spare room, so I agreed to join them and moved in. I was using a borrowed bed, but they wanted me to move my own furniture in. I managed to stall for a bit, as I knew I would be moving on hopefully. Earlier in the year my love of Coventry Cathedral had persuaded me to enrol on a week of study and worship being run by the Cathedral staff. It was very stimulating, and we had free run of the Cathedral buildings. There happened to be a leader and about 20 young Congregationalists from Connecticut in the United States of America also on the event. They were then off on a trip to Europe. I became quite friendly with them, and remember I joined some of them who had arranged to see a local production of the opera, 'Madame Butterfly' by Puccini. We also exchanged addresses. I was in the flat in London, the two flat mates were away, and late evening there was a knock on the door. When I opened it there was the whole of the USA group plus bicycles. They explained that they had been delayed and could not return the hired bicycles that night nor had they anywhere to stay, could I put them up? I was slightly aghast, but felt obliged to help; so, all 20 odd and the bicycles all entered the flat and they squatted for the night where they could. I was relieved the next morning when they all left, but they said they would keep in touch and write to me. When my flat mates returned, they somehow picked up on what had occurred and were not too happy about the situation.

As matters had moved along a bit on the work situation, I knew my stay there was limited. One of the young ladies in this group I did quite fancy; However, that was not the one that did write to me. That was Donna Hasbrouck who I could place, but as she sent several photos of herself as well as very flattering and endearing letters that was no problem. So, I decided to continue the correspondence whilst it lasted. I decided it was too good an offer and that I would go to the USA to meet up again. That was not to take place until 1968, so I will return to it.

The first post I applied for was for a research post as an assistant in the social studies department at Leicester University. Only a very bright young man from Aberdeen University and myself were called for interview, I felt pleased to have been called, but was not overly disappointed as I well appreciated that the other candidate was better than me. I then applied for a research post at the Home Office which concentrated on studies in Criminology. The interview went quite well; as it drew to close the Chair of the panel took off his glasses and sat back, and said 'Mr. Duncan, I am now speaking out of my role, so what I have to say you can completely ignore should you wish. I think you might have fitted the role for which you applied, but listening carefully to all you have said, may I suggest that your skills might lie more in the practical application of theory than the pure theory itself. Have you ever thought of joining the Prison Service?

I thanked him as I felt I had been offered good advice. By coincidence, the Home Office advertisement for 'direct entrant trainee governors' which only appeared once a year came out the next week. So, I applied and was accepted. The bonus I had not known was that I remained a civil servant and was only changing departments, so my pension contributions just continued with no hitch and if I did not settle in the Prison Department I could revert to E&A for up to 2 years. So, I could not lose. The problems I had faced with finding accommodation in London or commuting were gladly to come to an end. The real loss was that I had to relinquish my studies at Birkbeck.

Mother, you never really understood why I joined the Prison Service, but you taught us to listen to good and wise advice, as above. It opened up for a career where I found I had much to offer, and it also provided a world of opportunity that I could never imagine.....

To be continued...

RPGA Newsletter fun quiz March 22

- 1) How did Hansel and Gretel originally find their way home from the forest?
- 2) Who wrote the story about an American stranded in London who comes into possession of a one million pound note?
- 3) Andrew Carnegie was born in which Scottish town?
- 4) What nationality was the actor Sid James?
- 5) From 1889 the Orient Express connected which two cities?
- 6) Which Gothic horror story novel was set originally in Ingolstadt in Germany then moves to Switzerland?
- 7) What was the name of the flying island visited by Gulliver on his travels?
- 8) Who was the husband of Helen of Troy?
- 9) Which paper was founded in 1912 and transferred to the ownership of the Trades Union Congress in 1922?
- 10) Agnes Fleming was the mother of whom?
- 11) Which of these is a type of Ant; Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor?
- 12) The flag of which country is the reverse of the emblem of the Red Cross?
- 13) Which European country uses “.es” as its internet address?
- 14) Which two countries are members of both the commonwealth and NATO?
- 15) In which city will you find O’Hare airport?
- 16) Minsk is the capital city of which country?
- 17) In which country will you find the Gibson Desert?
- 18) What is the more common name for “surgical sutures”?
- 19) What is “Acrophobia a fear of?
- 20) Which of these countries has the longest coastline; Brazil, Italy, Mexico or the UK?

Answers at the foot of the back page of this Newsletter. There are no prizes, just the pleasure of getting as many right as you can without going on the internet.

GRAHAM SMITH



From The Treasurer

As I write this piece for the newsletter, it is the end of February 2022, and in a conversation on the telephone with Paul Laxton, The Editor, less than a couple of hours ago, I found myself comparing the 2020's with the 1920's in terms of history almost repeating itself. Now, as then, the world is in political turmoil, and at a time when the world is just starting to emerge from the ravages of a global pandemic. As I write, to my left on my desk is the digital readout of my Smart Meter, the one that I set up several months ago to trigger a warning of when my daily usage of gas and electricity exceeded the average daily rate that I was paying for those utilities. At the end of last summer, when the days were still warm and the evenings still light, I could look in satisfaction at the readout and see that for both fuels I was well below the average. But as the nights drew in, and

the days grew colder the figures would climb to meet, and on cold days exceed by a small margin, the daily average target. At the end of the year, when my account was reviewed everything would be in near equilibrium.

Fast forward only 4 months to the present day and whilst electricity and gas prices have rocketed away, I decided to leave the setting of my daily financial average as it was. I now find that on some days the average daily spend, based on Gas and Electricity prices in August 2021, is usually exceeded by mid-morning, and always exceeded by mid afternoon., and I have just received the news from my supplier that my annual payment is to increase by £885/year. I suspect that if the situation does not get better, then by this time next year I will find myself in the situation of paying more for my utility bills, Gas, Water, Electricity and Council Tax than I ever paid in mortgage repayments. I certainly expect that when the new rates for Gas and Electricity kick in on the First of April, on cold days my average cost, set in August 2021, will be exceeded the moment I turn my kettle on for my morning cup of tea.

One thing is sure, neither your, or my pensions will increase by anything near to the true amount that the cost of living has risen, and will continue to rise. The thing that annoys me the most is the hidden inflation that is all around us as things get smaller, yet the price remains the same. My wife and I live close (within easy walking distance) to both a Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer Food Hall. We are both quite partial to a Sainsbury's Belgium Bun, (2 for £1.25p). Until recently they were at least 30mm (1¼") thick. Now they are only about 20mm (¾") thick. That is a 33% reduction in size and yet they still cost the same. It is the same with crisps and I am sure that the new Walkers Crisps competition is a prize to whoever actually finds more than 10 crisps in a bag.

The real rub to this is, that whilst the upside should be that I am taking in fewer calories, thanks to the reduced size of almost everything that I like to eat, I am not getting any smaller; in fact I am getting bigger. I suppose this could be down to my system of compensation, where I now eat two of everything that I used to eat one of, and have therefore increased my consumption by a third?

So we come to the point where you are probably thinking, "what is this madman rambling on about, and what relevance does it have to my membership of the RPGA"? Well the good news is that I am currently in the process of sending off the books to be audited and, unlike HM Government, I am proud to say that I operate the finances of the association to always remain in the black, based on the simple maxim of not spending more money than we generate in income.

As the figures are subject to confirmation by the auditor I will not publish them until the AGM in October, but I am able to say that the association is in good financial order, with a healthy balance of cash in hand, and that as a result I will have no need to add to the inflationary pressures on your overstretched pensions by seeking to raise the cost of subscriptions.

The reality is that since the pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown periods the costs of running the association have reduced considerably, to the point that items such as travel costs from the committee are almost non-existent. Historically our biggest cost has been in the production of the Newsletter, and this continues to be the case.

As you will be aware, due to tragic circumstances, I took over the editorship of the newsletter for the two 2021 editions, and I have to hold my hands up to the fact that I aimed for quality over cost. What this meant was that rather than set a limit on content, and therefore pages, in order to keep the print and distribution costs at a low level, I took the view, supported by the Committee, that I would look to include everything that was submitted, and where people provided colour photos, to reproduce those in colour as well.

Now that Paul is back at the helm of the Newsletter, he has an increased freedom to be able to aim for a quality publication that is limited only by how forthcoming members are in submitting items for inclusion. So, as always, it is over to you, the membership.

Another task that I have at this time of the year, to coincide with preparing the books for audit, is to compare my list of subscriptions with Harry's list of members, to check that those lists coincide. This always proves to be an interesting task as Harry and I email back and forth seeking to ensure that we have not missed a new member, or sadly a member who had died, and of course to ensure that we coordinate the list of those who are paying the extra to receive a PGA diary.

This year's initial check has revealed that Harry's list and mine are some distance apart with Harry showing several people as members, from whom I have no record of having received payment, and a couple who are paying, that Harry had no knowledge of. We are working on this, or we will when Harry gets back from gallivanting around the world, but in the meantime could I ask you all to carry out this check?

If you are reading this in a copy of The Newsletter that was sent directly to you, then unless you are family of a deceased former member, then you should be paying a subscription to the RPGA of either £13/year (No Diary) or £20/year (With Diary).

- Please check your bank statement for the standing order to the RPGA. If you are not paying the correct amount then please contact me to sort out a new standing order.
- If you believe that you are a member and there is no payment from your account to the RPGA for 2021 (1st January 21 to 31st December 21) then again, please contact me so we can sort this out.
- Finally, each year I receive a payment of £20 into the bank from VALUE EXCHANGE. I assume that this is a member living overseas, but I literally have no way of knowing who this person is. Therefore can I ask, if you live outside the UK and received this Newsletter directly to you, please contact me so that I can try to put a name to this payment.

Graham Mumby-Croft

Treasurer

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John Childs – Prison and Borstal Governor (1933-2021)

John Childs joined the Prison Service in the middle of an ongoing crisis as the Service faced extraordinary and overwhelming pressures.

First was the unprecedented rise in the number of prisoners from 1945 – an ever increasing avalanche which all but overwhelmed the system. Second was the failure to grapple with deep rooted staffing problems that led to staff disillusionment and then to widespread industrial action.

Throughout these years, several major reports into disasters were published – which laid out the problems and suggested possible solutions but were rarely followed up adequately by Government. From the Mountbatten Report into the escape of the spy George Blake over the walls of Wormwood Scrubs in 1966, to the May Inquiry into the Industrial Relations crisis of 1978, the Service faced what felt like a never ending series of very difficult and insolvable problems.

This was the sombre background against which Childs developed his career.

A man of high principles, shaped by his deep-rooted Catholic faith, Childs brought both sensitivity and deep interest to all that he was involved with. He is particularly remembered as a very kind man, with a good sense of humour.

His early involvement in and commitment to charity work in addition to his career was to continue throughout his life. This was a clear demonstration of his core determination and interest in putting theory into practice.

He quickly acquired a clear grasp of the realities of prisoners' life experiences and the factors that contributed to their offending behaviour. He was heavily committed to doing the very best he could for those in his care. He was at his best with staff in a mentoring role with a rare ability to listen carefully to what he was told and then to help an individual understand the options for change and improvement.

From his formative experiences at Dover Borstal, he had a particular interest in young offenders – an interest that led to his eventual appointment as Governor of Portland Borstal which accommodated over 500 offenders, the largest young offender's establishment in the Service at the time he was in charge.

John Childs was born in Dundee Scotland on 19th March 1933. An only child, he attended Lawside Academy before gaining a place at St Andrews University to study Dentistry. Realising that dentistry was not for him, after two years National Service in the Royal Signals, he joined the Post Office in London as a Telecommunications Superintendent.

His interest in the Prison Service derived from his involvement in voluntary work at Norman House which provided a service to discharged prisoners. The Warden drew Child's attention to the advertisement for Assistant Governors in the Prison Service - and advised him to apply.

He was successful in the open competition and joined at the Wakefield Prison Service Staff College in September 1960 for the six month initial training course provided for Assistant Governors.

In March 1961 he was posted to Dover Borstal as an Assistant Governor Class Two. He was to spend a relatively long period at Dover, involved in a major research project, master minded by the Governor David Gould.

In September 1961, he married Jean at the Catholic Church of St Edward the Confessor in Hendon.

He was promoted to Assistant Governor Class One in 1967 and was posted to the Prison Service College as a member of the teaching staff. He was further promoted to Governor Class Three in 1970 continuing at the College.

In 1972, he was transferred to Leeds Prison as Deputy Governor, a post he held for four difficult years in the midst of acute service wide industrial relations problems. Leeds was also a severely overcrowded local prison – with very poor conditions for both prisoners and staff - a very different experience from his previous responsibilities.

In September 1976 he was promoted to Governor Class Two and given his first command at Portland Borstal in Dorset, built as a convict prison.

In 1980 he was transferred to take charge of Bristol Prison, a post he held for three years.

In 1983, he transferred to Prison Service HQ – P7 Division, which was responsible for staffing matters including staff training. Childs was appointed Head of Training and Development.

He retired from the Service in 1986. After retirement he established TCS Management Consultancy which undertook work for both Government Departments and commercial organisations.

He died on December 22nd 2021 aged 88. He leaves his widow Jean and three children. Both his sons served in the Royal Hong Kong Police while his daughter developed a nursing career in the NHS.

BRENDAN O'FRIEL

Prison Governors Association

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Bulletin 827

21 February 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Just launched - Free exclusive perks for Prison Governors Association members

By way of an update to Bulletin 826, the Prison Governors Association are pleased to announce that its members can now benefit from free exclusive access to over a thousand perks, discounts, and freebies from big-name brands and local businesses.

The Prison Governors Association perks platform, is powered by PerkJam, covers all aspects of life from entertainment, technology, travel, automotive and more. All serving and retired members can benefit from the perks (including friends and family) all they have to do is access the platform from this link, and register your details with PerkJam <https://pga.perkjam.com/>

Right now, PerkJam members can benefit from exclusive perks such as 25% off everything at Under Armour, 37% off Ray-Ban sunglasses, and 20% off everything at Rohan.

Carl Davies, National Officer, said the free perks platform is a great addition to the services we provide our members. "Our new perks platform is a fantastic service available to all members. Saving our members money and spreading a little bit of happiness can only be a good thing. We are delighted to launch our new perks platform in partnership with Perkjam."

To view all perks and start saving visit – <https://pga.perkjam.com/>

Andrea Albutt
President

Mitch Albutt
National Officer

Carl Davies
National Officer

QUIZ ANSWERS

Answers to RPGA fun quiz March 2022

1. They left a trail of stones
2. Mark Twain
3. Dunfermline
4. South African
5. Paris and Istanbul
6. Frankenstein
7. Lapula
8. Menelaus
9. Daily Herald
10. Oliver Twist
11. Soldier
12. Switzerland
13. Spain
14. UK and Canada
15. Chicago
16. Belarus
17. Australia
18. Stitches
19. Heights
20. UK