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*Gift Aid
If you are a UK taxpayer you can make a Gift Aid declaration which will increase the value of your subscription/donation to Friends of Guys Marsh by almost 30%. This is because it enables us to reclaim the basic rate of tax on it from the Inland Revenue, benefiting us enormously but not affecting you at all.

(This is only allowable provided you have paid at least as much tax as we are reclaiming, either as income tax or capital gains tax).
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GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR...
I can hardly believe that a year has gone by since our last newsletter, or that I have now been chairman for 18 months!

Those of you who were at our fundraising event last July would have heard that we hoped to raise enough funds to employ someone to co-ordinate all the many and varied voluntary organisations that come into Guys Marsh to assist prisoners with their resettlement plans. I am delighted to be able to report that we were successful in our bid to the Tudor Lankelly-Chase South West Partnership and our PERC (Prison Effective Resettlement Co-ordinator) started work at the beginning of December ’09. (See article inside on page 7).

We were recently able to join with Billy Bragg at The Exchange in Sturminster Newton to celebrate the life of a drug and alcohol counsellor who had been employed at Guys Marsh. Malcolm Dudley, who died recently, had inspired Billy to set up his charity ‘Jail Guitar Doors’ and prisoners at Guys Marsh had been the first to benefit from the guitars that were donated (see website for further information: www.jailguitardoors.org.uk).

We are excited that our own website will be going live soon and hope that this will enable you to keep in touch with our progress. In the meantime we hope that you will enjoy reading this newsletter which reports on the many and diverse ways in which we have supported the whole community at HMP Guys Marsh, i.e. Governor, staff and prisoners.

We are in the process of organising our annual fund-raising event and further information will be sent to you. We do hope that you will join us on that occasion to celebrate our achievements and help us raise further funds, which I can assure you we will put to good use.

Linda Cowley, Chairman

SEE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ON BACK PAGE...
Too Many Charities?

In Haiti so many large charities moved in after the earthquake, all with their own rules and customary procedures, that they tripped each other up and got in each other’s way. Central organisation was missing. Well, they learn.

Guys Marsh is not exactly Haiti, though we have our own emergencies. Amongst them the fact that the prison has tripled its size in recent years. Its prisoner capacity is now nearly 600. And the number of charities working within the prison has increased – so we too feel the need for a central organisation when it comes to the resettlement of offenders.

When the prison gates clang as a prisoner arrives – actually they glide quietly at Guys Marsh, if in a rather determined way – associated bodies and charities are there to work towards his successful rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is what keeps recidivism – re-offending – down. Recidivism costs the country millions. But the over-riding necessity for high security; although the latter is a strange thing to say – in a perfect world there would be no prison at all – but if there has to be one let it be well run, well situated, secure and helpful to the community that pays for it – as Guys Marsh is. The challenge is to learn about the needs/problems of every prisoner on arrival and help effective rehabilitation to this end.

The Friends of Guys Marsh, together with the Citizens Advice Bureau, and with the help of the Lankelly Chase Foundation and the Tudor Trust, began consultation to fund the employment of a salaried co-ordinator of the various charities within the prison. Representatives of these bodies visited the prison: talked, agreed, acted. An award of almost £70,000 has been granted for a three year appointment for a co-ordinator. The Governor has approved: offices and administrative facilities made available.

There was competition for the new post. It produced fifty applicants, and the person selected – the Prison Effective Resettlement Co-ordinator is already hard at work. In other words, a PERC. (We were rather pleased with the title, being both pronounceable and descriptive.)

In Guys Marsh we have a prison to be proud of. That may seem a rather strange thing to say – in a perfect world there would be no prison at all – but if there has to be one let it be well run, well situated, secure and helpful to the community that pays for it – as Guys Marsh is. The challenge is to learn about the needs/problems of every prisoner on arrival and help effective rehabilitation to this end.

In Guys Marsh we have

Fay Weldon, President
Friends of Guys Marsh

Going Online!

A website for Friends of Guys Marsh is currently under construction. It is planned to have a home page telling people about our charity and the work that we do; a ‘news’ page where subscribers can download the newsletter; and a subscription page for the use of donors, and both new and existing Friends.

The website is not designed to be a substitute for more traditional methods of communicating and contacting our Friends, but will be useful in attracting the support of new Friends. It is a small step towards a ‘greener’ Friends of Guys Marsh if we can encourage more exchange of information on-line and use less paper.

We are very grateful to Stephen de Mora, an A Level student at King’s, Bruton, for agreeing to construct the website for us ‘pro bono’ – in between his studies and driving test! It is most generous of him and we look forward to letting you know when it is launched.

Sir Barry Wilson, Vice Chairman

Keep right on...

“Keep right on to the end of the road” is an inspiring song; and the Friends of Guys Marsh are certainly keeping on: though seven years have taught us that there is no end to the Guys Marsh road in the broadest sense. The Prison has expanded in recent years, tripling its prisoner capacity to nearly 600. There seems no cause to believe that this number will reduce, in fact, given its rural setting the Prison could continue to expand.

However, there is an end to the individual prisoner’s “road”; his sentence; and the Friends main contribution is to ensure that it is the very end by contributing to his effective rehabilitation. The Prison and all the associated bodies/charities that work in the Prison have successful rehabilitation as a primary aim. This is shown as an equal aim with that of total security; although the latter has to rule “day to day” running.

There is a wealth of good resettlement intentions. The challenge is to learn about the needs/problems of every prisoner on arrival and help him throughout his sentence to prepare for good citizenship. Nevertheless, the potential to help effective rehabilitation at Guys Marsh is not used anywhere near fully. This is no criticism of the Prison Management or Staff, nor of the many visiting bodies including charities. Rather, it was a gap in the system which needed to be filled and you will have read that our ambition to do just that has been realised, with our PERC already hard at work.

This new 3 year post is a great addition to the Friends’ journey along the ‘Guys Marsh road’. But three years is finite and the journey isn’t. The challenge will be to ensure that our PERC’s achievements continue beyond this initial appointment.

Be assured, with your help, the Friends will ‘keep right on’ along the ‘Guys Marsh road’...

Sir Barry Wilson, Vice Chairman
WHAT YOU DO FOR US
A huge ‘Thank You’ goes to all the many people who voluntarily help our organisation:
• The local Mothers Union members who man the Visitor Centre every Friday, and the good folk on our Friends Saturday rota, all offering refreshments and a warm welcome to visitors.
• Christine, for the time, thought and patience she gives so generously to the professional production of our Newsletters.
• Les Sirènes, Julian Fellowes, Fay Weldon and Robert Cowley for the great success of our Event.
• Our anonymous Friend who willingly irons out the end of year mysteries on the accounts.
• Geoffrey Spencer, Accountant in Shaftesbury, who examines and agrees the accounts before presentation to the Charity Commission.
• John Fish for the printing of our cards.
• Guys Marsh staff for the printing of our publications.
• Last but not least, all our Donors and Friends who support and encourage our endeavours. Gift Aid donations add a considerable sum to our annual total and Standing Orders provide an assured input for us to plan by. Please use the form on page12 to renew if appropriate, or to encourage new Friends to support us, and thank you again.

We make the very best use of all monies we raise. The only expenses we have are very minor administration costs, as our volunteers and the prison cover most of our expenses, which ensures our objectives receive maximum benefit from your generosity.

Summer Event at the Tithe Barn
Fay Weldon in Conversation with Julian Fellowes
A fine summer’s evening, a completely full house in the handsome Tithe Barn setting, and a wonderful buzz – what more could we want to start our event! After our Chairman’s welcome the evening opened with the harmonious voices of Les Sirènes, a female a cappella singing group. They delighted us with their unique interpretations of a wide range of songs from madrigals to pop.

During the interval the rose garden was the beautiful backdrop for drinks and snacks for the audience before we eagerly returned to our seats to enjoy the main event.

The Tithe Barn is such a spectacular building that its architecture would intimidate all but the most professional speakers, so we were extremely fortunate to have our President, Fay Weldon, in conversation with Julian Fellowes. They were thoughtful, amusing, challenging: on topics as diverse as education, script writing and soap operas – huge fans of “Coronation Street”, it transpired. Our Chairman’s husband, Robert, compèred their discussions, coping admirably with the disruption of Fay’s temperamental microphone which, despite meticulous testing of the sound system beforehand, decided to do a ‘wobbly’. This made some of her comments inaudible – it was such a pity to miss them but even this did not detract too much from the success of the evening. The Governor then gave an informative talk followed by questions from the floor.

The lucky raffle winner of the first prize took home a luxurious Virginia Hayward hamper. All told the evening raised a fantastic £2,500 thanks to everyone who contributed so generously.

From Darkness to Light – Restorative Justice
The Forgiveness Project is a charity working with people wishing to contemplate the nature of forgiveness, taking their expertise to prisons, schools and faith communities (one of its Patrons is Archbishop Desmond Tutu). It uses human experiences to explore forgiveness, reconciliation and alternatives to revenge. The work is extremely appropriate in prisons where they explore forgiveness between victim and perpetrator. The workshops help prisoners to address the consequences of their actions and begin a journey of restorative justice, with the aim of ultimately reducing re-offending. Guys Marsh is a strong advocate of the project’s value being part of its restorative agenda. FOGM stepped in to keep the course running during one shortfall in funding and we will be there again if needed.

Lighter reflections after the snow by our PERC
Snowflakes – Through the bars
Wispy, airy, frozen flakes
Perfection every one
Floating past the window,
Refracting winter sun
Nature’s wonder, heaven’s fall
Turns adults to children, one and all.
Hardened men behind steel bars
Exclaim delight with “oohs and aahs,”
Planning snowmen and snow wars
When it’s time to be outdoors
The thought of landscape pure and white
A welcome distraction from inmate life
A little mercy, something to tell the wife
A chance to relieve monotony while serving ‘life’.

Marcel
Storybook Dads

For several years now Storybook Dads has strengthened the bond between children and their fathers. The activity of recording stories onto discs takes place in the Library and trained staff supervise the addition of appropriate sound effects to liven up the readings. The headquarters of the SD initiative is in Dartmoor prison where the team is very dynamic, keeping a close eye on their editing suites in other prisons, ensuring that it remains a quality service. The training of all staff is undertaken there and our library assistant is scheduled to visit soon and expects to return with lots of new ideas to promote the service and enhance it. The GM library has to subscribe annually to this service and FOGM is pleased to give support here.

Storybook Dads is widely publicised on the Wings and in the prison newsletter. All new prisoners are told about the service on induction and invited to register their interest. One of the orderlies follows up the applications and if security approval and parental consent is given then the father is invited to record a story from the library’s collection of children’s books, or if inspired he can create is own.

The foreign national community, of which about 20% of our population presently consists, is able to take part, as books in other languages can be sourced by the library service. The prisoners enjoy this activity and the closeness it engenders with their children. Here is a sample of the remarks they make:

“It’s the best thing I done since I have been in prison. I will definitely read to my kids when I get out.”

“My family have thoroughly enjoyed my CD stories and my baby has got to know my voice.”

And typical quotes from families:

“My youngest started forgetting him but now when it comes on he shouts Daddy, Daddy.”

“The CD with the ballerina story was brilliant so much so that she is now having lessons.” Our librarian told us, “When I next saw the little girl’s father his reaction was ‘Yeah great success, it’s costing me a fortune, let’s try for a story with a cheaper hobby next time!’ – He was laughing when he said it!”

From Strength to Strength – a little trust goes a long way

A mentor with the Princes Trust told us of prisoner M, due to be released locally and in need of a little help. Determined to keep out of trouble, M was directing his energies into gym activities at the Gym and was sure that he would be able to stay focussed outside if he could keep this interest going away from his previous associates. His problem was being able to afford the membership of a Gym.

As a committee we were unsure about this request but made enquiries about his attitude and motivation and decided that his involvement in gym activities would be wholly beneficial to his prospects for resettlement. We found a good gym and bought M a six month subscription, making sure he would be able to stay focussed outside if he could keep this interest going away from his previous associates.

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December Staff Recognition Award

Bethan Davies, Security Liaison Officer on Wessex Unit, received our shield from Linda Cowley at the Staff Appreciation Buffet in the Visits Centre in December 2009. Bethan is relatively new to the Prison Service, having recently completed her probationary period, but has impressed everyone with her enthusiasm and dedication. Prisoners and staff alike speak highly of her and the FOGM committee felt that she set a fine example with her conduct and effort.

Diana was a most valuable member, contributing valuable work during her time with us. In her typically self-deprecating way her reaction to her award was that it was quite unexpected and certainly not deserved! We can think of few people who deserve it more.

Former Committee Member Honoured

We send our congratulations to Diana Bucknall on her well deserved award of the MBE in the New Year’s Honours in recognition of all her voluntary work in Dorset. Besides the many organisations she is involved with she is an Official Prison Visitor at Guy’s Marsh and for several years she was their representative on our FOGM Committee. Diana was a most valuable member, contributing valuable work during her time with us. In her typically self-deprecating way her reaction to her award was that it was quite unexpected and certainly not deserved! We can think of few people who deserve it more.

Annual Party for Friends and Volunteers

Once a year in the autumn the FOGM committee invites all friends and volunteers to a party held at the Learning Centre of the prison during the early evening. This is our way of acknowledging your help, either by your subscription, donation or help with the refreshments in the visitors centre or at functions.

It is also an opportunity for you to meet the committee and other Friends, and to hear about what we have achieved in the year and our plans for the future.

We usually have a speaker or two, or some live music, with light refreshments and a raffle. Last September two members of the educational staff described the work they have been involved in. Elva described how the Forgiveness Project is helping men come to terms with their troubled lives, to forgive the wrong done to them and acknowledge that which they have perpetrated on others, enabling them to progress their lives for the good. Imogen told us of the inspiring art work that she has encouraged. She illustrated this with examples of the prisoners’ paintings, some of these we included in last year’s newsletter, and in this year’s you will see some examples of the cartoon characters they painted for display in the Visits Room.

Do come and join us this year on 30th September, an invitation with details will be sent to you all nearer the time and we look forward to seeing you there.

THE COMMITTEE’S YEAR

This has been a roller coaster of a year, starting with deflation and ending in elation! To start with, everyone who is familiar with our efforts to bring into the prison the M-PAct programme run by Action on Addiction (AoA), in which all the family members participate, will understand our disappointment at the collapse of our plans. Breaking through the complex barriers of security and co-operation with life outside the fence proved to be beyond our reach.

However, our work was not wasted as we did achieve accreditation status for the M-PAct programme, enabling other prisons to benefit from it. Afterwards our donors agreed that the remainder of the grant we had received could be kept and used for alternative programmes to combat addictions, for which we are extremely grateful.

The charity ‘Beyond the Gate’ has benefited from this outcome as we have been able to fully fund three eight-week courses, helping alcoholics to face their demons. Despite appreciating its value, the restriction of the prison’s current budget prevented them from accommodating this course. For this reason we also stepped in to fund the excellent Forgiveness Project, which tackles the issues of forgiveness, reconciliation and restorative justice through story telling, for one full course before the prison could renew its commitment for future sessions.

Now, at the end of the year, we are delighted to have realised our other major ambition. Many months of partnership work with the CAB and the Governor has resulted in an award from the Tudor Lankelly-Chase SW Partnership enabling us to establish the three year appointment of a Prison Effective Resettlement Co-ordinator (PERC). With very many organisations dealing with various aspects of resettlement and rehabilitation, prisoners can be overwhelmed with confusion. Our PERC took up the post in December and is acting as a mentor and signpost, assessing a prisoner’s needs and then directing him to the relevant organisation(s).

Interwoven with this work we have maintained our other areas of interest: supporting family ties: providing the Saturday transport for visitors arriving by train: giving a warm welcome and refreshments in the Visitors Centre: encouraging creativity in art, literature and music: supporting prisoners on release and recognising outstanding work of staff. With the voluntary help of a young student we are planning a Web site to spread news of our work further afield and gain wider interest.

Our Committee has seen a few changes. Steve Hudson joined us when he took up his appointment as Deputy Governor replacing Dave Quinnell: Kym Perham (for staff) replaced Paula Stokes: Peter Lattimer, a valuable member for over 4 years has stood down for Jane Childs to replace him as IMB representative: Ross Faulkner (Prison Council) has taken over from Anthony Bignall.

We are much indebted to the considerable contributions they have all made to our achievements.

We were sad that one of our founder members, John Warner, retired and his many years of valuable service to the benefit of Guys Marsh will be much missed. Unfortunately, we have also lost Judith Pidgeon who had to step down due to pressure of work.

However, we are pleased to welcome four new faces from the community, who are bringing new dynamics and enthusiasm to our work. Claire MacDonald has been with us all year whilst Pauline Batstone, Patsy Todd and Annie Henschel joined us in November. And we are delighted that Graham Cole (ex IMB) who inspired the creation of FOGM, and always our great supporter, has agreed to be a Vice President.

Our enjoyable fundraising event in the summer raised a record sum and the successful applications made for grants have enabled us to fulfil our ambitions for the year. We are most grateful to The Valentine Trust, NADFAS, The Pitt-Rivers Charitable Trust, The Pitt-Rivers Charitable Trust and, of course, the Tudor Lankelly-Chase SW Partnership as mentioned before. Further funding is constantly being sought and with the support of all our Friends, interested organisations and committed Committee, the coming year promises, yet again, to be exciting and rewarding.
Conversations with an Old ‘Friend’

Sir Barry Wilson recently visited Jimmy Wilds and shares with us some of Jimmy’s memories:

“Jimmy is probably the oldest of the Friends of Guys Marsh, not only oldest in age as he nears 90 years, but also in his support of our charity. He is also unique among us in his knowledge of the start of HMP Guys Marsh. It has been a privilege to talk to him about this, a fascinating experience.

Jimmy’s father became the manager of Guys Marsh Farm in 1926; part of the Farm lands is where the prison stands now. Jimmy was six years old when he moved with his parents from Margarets Marsh to Guys Marsh. He was an American controlled Transit camp helping to deal with the huge numbers of displaced people of many nationalities. But this ended in 1957 and Guys Marsh was earmarked to be a Borstal for young male offenders. And Jimmy, who was just completing his Army service, returned to manage the first group of offenders and to develop the camp into a Borstall! He and three colleagues looked after this for just short of two years when the Prison officers arrived. When he comes to our events I think the massive felling of what is now a Cat C prison probably saddens him.

It was a pleasure to hear these reminiscences; and quite hard to abbreviate them into a printable size. Thanks Jimmy…”

The Visitors Centre

One of the first activities that the Friends of Guys Marsh arranged back in 2004 was the introduction of the provision of refreshments in the newly built Visitors Centre on Fridays and Saturdays for the families and friends of the prisoners. Since those early days members of the Mothers Union have provided support on Fridays and a group of Friends and volunteers has covered the Saturdays. Hot drinks – tea, coffee and hot chocolate, as well as mugs of soup, are available for 40p. Cold drinks of squash and biscuits are also available.

Most visitors have travelled far for their visit and are certainly appreciative of the warmth of the visitors centre especially in winter, and the welcome warm drink and a chance to talk whilst they wait their turn for their visit. Magazines are provided and there are many toys and books for the children courtesy of Barnardos. If you would like to offer your help on a Saturday, for about a couple of hours, 12.15 to 2.30pm, about 4 or 5 times a year, please contact the Secretary who will arrange for you to join the rota and “show you the ropes”.

Family Days

The library continues to run its Family Days for prisoners on the enhanced regime, sometimes combining joint activities with the Gym and Barnardos. By using the dedicated funds for these activities we are able to provide the necessary play and art materials to keep family bonds strong in the relaxed atmosphere created by the staff.

Prison Effective Resettlement Co-ordinator

Whilst preparing for a presentation to be made to the staff at Guys recently I googled the word PERC and must confess to having been somewhat startled at the top search result. “PERC (defn)” it said, “a septic water filtration test”. I knew that Sir Barry Wilson of the Friends of Guys Marsh had come up with the title, I knew he had a dry sense of humour but surely this was not intentional! I searched for the further search engine. “PERC (defn) is a non flammable colourless liquid at room temperature that readily evaporates into air.” Panic started to rise …and then I realised my error. I was trying to find something that already had existed, been analysed and tested, but our PERC is something new, innovative and untried. Carefully bookmarking the latter definition among the pros and cons. On the plus side this appears to offer a Pandora’s Box of opportunity for aiding intervention of Voluntary Organisations and improving communication. On the other we will clearly need to ensure that prisoners’ rights and Data Protection are upheld. The system goes live on 21st March and we need to see how it will impact upon our process and evaluate what opportunities it offers.

Notwithstanding the Christmas slowdown and snow disruption, both processes are moving along. More than 80 files have been opened for individual prisoners to assist or refer them to partners who can assist. With the help of Linda Cowley (Chairman of FOGM), Anne Hurrell, countless prisoners and some of the voluntary sector partners, the information gathering process has begun. We have explained clearly that this post will rely heavily on the experience and expertise of those in the know – prisoners and prison staff. The final stage in the jig-saw building process will be for the voluntary organisations to input and involve themselves in the process, thus maximising their effectiveness as role-players in a very important process.

Ultimately, of course, this post will only be a success if prisoners support it, engage in it, and benefit from the help available to them. We have taken the first tentative steps but then a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. We are not here to filter septic water, do not intend to evaporate, and as for me personally, with my belt and braces on, I do not expect to get caught with my trousers around my ankles! Thank you to all who offered congratulations on my appointment, thank you to those who have helped to get us to the start line, and thank you in anticipation of your continued assistance towards our redefining the concept “PERC”. Only with your help can we achieve the goal!

Marcel Williams, PERC

The IMB Annual Report for 2009 is accessible in local libraries.