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Lyburburgh Farm, Marnhull, Dorset DT10 1HN

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(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).
If you are a higher rate taxpayer you can reclaim the difference between the higher rate of tax you pay and the basic rate of tax we reclaim when you complete your self assessment tax return.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 10th September
"Call my Bluff" A fun evening at The Exchange with full audience participation when Fay Weldon, Giles Henschel and Dave Quinell will challenge our credulity!

Friday 30th September
Friends Annual Party
7pm – 8.45pm. Light buffet, informal social, music and interesting talks at the Learning Centre, Guys Marsh.

Saturday 27th November
Comedy Night at The Exchange
8pm. Raising funds for FOGM



Chairman:
Mrs Linda Cowley: 01258 472333

Secretary:
Mrs Beryl Adams: 01258 820450

Treasurer:
Mrs R. Primrose 01258 820310

Friends Committee

President: Dr. Fay Weldon
Vice President: Terry Francis
Hon. Vice President: Derek Ross
Hon. Vice President: Graham Cole

Trustees:
Sir Barry Wilson Beryl Adams
Linda Cowley Roberta Primrose

Committee:
Steve Hodson Annie Henschel
Rachel Davis Patsy Todd
Paul Goldman Jane Childs
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Pauline Batstone Ross Faulkner

News for Friends

Newsletter of the Friends of Guys Marsh No 7 – Spring 2010

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 LankellyChase 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



The prisoners' art inspired by well known cartoon characters is displayed in the Visitor Room to create a more child friendly environment.

See more inside...

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 can hamper efforts to this end. Management and charities do what they can, but in a prison system crowded to the limits and beyond, rehabilitation is the more difficult to achieve.

When the prison gates clang behind the prisoner as he leaves, research

shows that the one who has a functioning family, somewhere to live, and a means of employment is far more likely to stay out of prison than the one who has none of these. And it is surprising how, for all the charities within a prison, the prison gates clang, and there's nothing in place. Or nothing appropriate, and nowhere to go but some sofa in a friendly drug squat. Well, we too learn.

The Friends of Guys Marsh, together with the Citizens Advice Bureau, and with the help of the LankellyChase 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 now to extend the appointment, or through experience of PERC's achievements, to include the knowledge gained in the day to day running of the prison.

Meanwhile it is your support and contribution we depend upon for future successes. Better to look clearly at what is, than to look the other way, all too easy as that is. Thank you for what you have already done for us. Please encourage others to join. The more Friends we have the better. Do come to our Autumn social, meet other like minded people, and find out more about our ambitions.

*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.

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

This bright and lively card was designed for us by a prisoner. John Fish (generously, at cost price) printed a large set for us with Christmas greetings and another set blank for general use. They all sold out very quickly.



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.



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 page 12 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.**

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

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.

Beyond the Gate

Many of the men in prison have a hazardous relationship with alcohol and, indeed, are there because of it. Beyond the Gate is a charity running programmes to confront this issue. These programmes have been designed by an ex-alcoholic who is all too aware that dealing with addiction is a life-long challenge, but who also knows that it is possible to overcome it and, with determination and support, lead a full life without its influence.

Due to our ability to provide the funding, the course 'You Decide' was delivered in Guys Marsh for most of the year and is well regarded by staff and prisoners. Some of the men who have completed the course have worked as mentors on subsequent courses and then trained as Trainers themselves. This gives them an NVQ in the course delivery (on alcohol issues, their impact and the path to freedom) and enables them to support other men who are struggling when no other help is available.

June Award



Our Chairman presents the Shield

In June 2009 we were delighted to award our shield to Jon Simpson of the Offender Management Unit who works hard to raise the profile of prolific offenders, not just in Guys Marsh, but also within Area. Jon also devotes considerable personal time as part of the Staff Support Team, assisting staff after incidents. He had been a dedicated member of our committee during 2005/6 and his experience and wisdom were highly valued.

Guys Marsh Goes Green

An exciting addition to the prison is a Bio Plex Anaerobic Digester whereby organic waste is processed into methane to produce electricity to power the generators. Not only will this produce 'green' benefits for the environment but also provide good prospects for future employment for our prisoners by providing opportunities for further training in Recycling and gaining qualifications in Waste Management to NVQ level 2 City & Guilds.

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 his 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!"



Prestigious Recognition for HMP Guys Marsh Farms & Gardens Team

Penny, running the Horticulture course with her staff team and students have, for the second year running, won coveted awards for their entries in the National Amateur Garden Show. Their 'Recycle a Bicycle' theme for 2009 was awarded the **Silver Gilt prize**.

The garden was on a circular theme and the planters and summer house were 'finned' to represent the spokes of a wheel. They used bicycle wheels to make the trellis and planters, built the summerhouse mainly from scrap wood and old pallets with a roof of hardboard and roof felt rescued from a skip. The men grew and cared for all the plants themselves



and a prisoner on the Bricks Course helped build the garden at the show. On the day he did two live radio interviews for BBC Somerset Sound and Midwest Radio – all the men on the Bricks workshop were listening to the radio back in the



workshop – you can picture their excitement!

The Friends have not been involved in this terrific success but we are open to requests if needed for future projects. For the men horticulture offers a great learning experience, is therapeutic and creative and holds possibilities for future employment.

Congratulations! – Penny says 'watch this space for next year's plan' – we certainly will.

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 workouts at the Gym and was sure that he would be able to stay focused 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 the proviso that we needed feedback about his progress.

After a month M sent us a card of thanks, and we have had reports that he is making good use of the excellent facilities, getting there at 7.30 every morning by bus, after buying a bus pass out of his slender allowance. He is

determined to keep away from trouble and being sensible about the people he socialises with. The really good news is that, through an organisation called Footprints, he has been offered three days work a week in the Council's Parks Department, unpaid at present but with the prospect of an Apprenticeship and proper training in the summer. We feel that our trust in M has been justified and wish him all the best for a future which now looks promising.

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.

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 LlanckellyChase 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).

Intertwined 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 Hodson 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 enthusiasms 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 fund raising event in the summer raised a record sum and the successful applications made for grants have enabled us to fulfill our ambitions for the year. We are most grateful to The Valentine Trust, NADFAS, The Pitt-Rivers Charitable Trust and, of course, the Tudor LlanckellyChase 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.

PLEASE USE FORM ON BACK PAGE FOR RENEWALS

Conversation 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

there for ten years prior to joining the Royal Signals and becoming a Dispatch rider. His Second World War service is a fascinating story in its own right culminating in becoming a personal messenger for Winston Churchill. But that is a story for elsewhere!

Between the ages of 6 and 14 Jimmy used to walk to school, mainly in Shaftesbury to the establishment still there opposite St. James Church. He claims to have never missed a day even during heavy snowfalls and has a case in claiming that we are all wimps today!

So there was no "prison" when he left in 1936. The building of the establishment as a British War hospital started urgently in 1939 and then, after the war, became

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 Borstal! 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 fencing 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..."



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.

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".

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

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 on another 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, and safe in the knowledge that if things get too hot I could simply disappear, I resolved to keep the post I had accepted on 7 December 2009 and set about the process of filtering out impurities, adding colour and hopefully creating a new definition of PERC. I know I said the definitions did not apply ...but what's wrong with wearing a belt and braces?

In a perfect world it would have been nice to have been able to set up a complete blueprint for the post before actually setting foot in the prison. We do not, of course, live in a perfect world. To suggest that the answers to providing effective resettlement are clear, unilaterally enforceable, and non dynamic,

flies in the face of the rationale behind a funding bid which itself took 18 months to crystallise. Whilst the process of consultation and evaluation goes on however, the human side of what we are trying to achieve must not be forgotten. Prisoners need help now. So, in essence we have parallel processes to maintain - the first is to provide an interim service and the second is to consult, listen and put together a proposal for the future.

Another major factor mitigating against finalising a protocol now is the fact that Guys Marsh, like all other prisons in the UK, will shortly have a new computer information data base called P-NOMIS. The evaluation of this as a potential tool for aiding resettlement cannot be ignored. Like many other things in life there appear to be Pros and Cons. On the plus side this tool 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),

Pete Cockburn (Partnership Co-ordinator), and Librarian 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 jigsaw-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.