

THANKS TO YOU ALL

Fortunate as we are in our funding approaches we could not deliver the 'goods' without the willing help of our volunteers and supporters:

The Mothers Union team and Friends cheerily turn up Fridays and Saturdays to welcome and refresh visitors.

Christine Willis somehow makes time in her busy schedule

to produce our newsletter to professional standard.

One Friend scrutinizes our annual accounts and gives advice before the accountant's examination.

Accountant, Geoffrey Spencer, signs the accounts off for a nominal fee.

The prison and staff undertake

the printing of much of our publications.

Donors and Friends encourage our endeavours.

Last but not least, everyone who contributes to the delicious food we provide for fund raising events and socials.

Fantastic! Aren't we lucky!

Friends social – springing to change!



Ann entertained at our Friends Social 2010

Something special is being planned for our next Friends Social, can you wait until the spring?

Many people take late holidays in the autumn and evenings are drawing in which restricts some Friends from joining us. We want as many of you as possible to enjoy the evening, designed to inform, entertain and thank you for your support,

so decided to delay until a more popular season. Also we have decided to stray away from the prison for a change, and have in mind a very pleasant and convenient venue to hold our gathering.

As soon as our plans are completed we will give you the date to put in your diaries. Be patient, please!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 3rd November

Bridge Day at Donhead St Andrew. See page 8.

Spring 2012 Friends Annual Party

Date to be arranged, full details later.

Friends of Guys Marsh

Charity No. 1104063

Supporting HMP Guys Marsh

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:	
Linda Cowley	Roberta Primrose
Beryl Adams	Pauline Batstone
Committee:	
Steve Hodson	Jane Childs
Claire Macdonald	Jonathan Davies
Rachel Davies	Graham Woollard
Annie Henschel	Jackie Woon
Patsy Todd	Marcel Williams

News *for* Friends

Newsletter of the Friends of Guys Marsh No 8 – Spring 2011

Welcome to our newsletter for 2011...



This year has been both busy and successful for the Friends of Guys Marsh. I am pleased to report that our Prison Effective Resettlement Co-ordinator (PERC) is proving to be worth his weight in gold as he builds relationships with the many voluntary agencies coming into the prison, and signposts prisoners towards those that can assist them on their release. This was an innovative appointment and has caused much interest in other prisons. It soon became obvious that part-time hours were just not enough! Towards the end of 2010 we successfully applied to the Tudor Trust for further funding to increase the PERC's hours to full-time and also to employ an administrative assistant for him.

With cuts in every direction, these are difficult times for us all – and the prison service is no exception. The Green Paper, 'Breaking the Cycle', sets out how the Government proposes to break the destructive cycle of crime and ensure more offenders make amends to victims and communities. However, with shrinking pots of money this will have significant financial implications for charities such as ours, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank you all for your support. Helping prisoners to resettle and not re-offend will save us all money in the end!

We are in the process of planning our next fund-raising event on 3rd November, a Bridge Day in a beautiful country house. Further details will be sent to you later this year but do keep the day clear if you are a bridge player or would like to help with the refreshments.

I hope you will take a look at our new website: www.friendsofguysmarsh.co.uk. This will help you to keep in touch with our progress and you can contact us via the website if you so wish. I would be pleased to hear from you.

Linda Cowley,
Chairman



Librarian Anne Hurrell accepting FOGM award shield

SEE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ON BACK PAGE...



Breaking the Cycle

A message from the President

Dear Readers,

Last month Kenneth Clarke, Lord Chancellor and Minister of State for Justice, announced that the business of Her Majesty's prisons was to punish offenders, protect the public, and reduce re-offending. To 'break the cycle'. The emphasis was henceforth to be on the rehabilitation of prisoners. It was gratifying to the Friends of Guys Marsh to hear it – it was after all to this end that the Friends were started in the first place, in 2004. So forgive us if we indulge in a little 'I told you so.' We got here first.

The Friends exist not to be 'soft on criminals' but by focusing on their relationship with their families, to enable them to break the cycle of offending. The key to rehabilitation, to 'going straight', is to give the offender something worth going straight for – namely, the family unit. As it was, the difficulties faced by women and children, back in 2004, as they tried to keep the family together, was terrifying. A visit to a family member incarcerated in Guys Marsh meant a long journey with small, upset children (they mostly are) into a prison deep in a strange countryside, no transport when you got to the station, and then obliged to stand outside the prison gate sometimes for hours, with no shelter from the weather, or a seat to sit on, until your

number was called to pass through security. Visiting is a stressful experience at the best of times. To this was added humiliation and exhaustion. It was not surprising if visiting numbers fell away, and visitors further discouraged as family ties stretched and snapped.

Now, thanks to the Friends, there's a bus service from Gillingham station to Guys Marsh on Saturdays, and a friendly base just this side of the prison gates where families, parents and friends can sit and wait until their number is called, where volunteers provide cups of tea, and there are toys to divert the children (Barnados helps us here) so the visit at least starts well. And that was just a beginning.

Now we do – well what don't we do? – fund work inside the prison gates too, helping deal with the drink and drug problems which land so many of our prisoners here in the first place, a Storybook Dads scheme so the children can listen to Dad even if they can't see him, a yoga class for prisoners (and staff), a music course (new research claims that learning an instrument will actually help a brain rewire itself, to the good). And so on.

And this year we have a PERC, Marcel Williams, Prison Effective Resettlement Co-ordinator (yes, we have to cope with jargon too) who co-ordinates the work



of the many charities inside the prison, so they work as a team, money is saved, efficiency rules, and good interventions do not go to waste, outside as well as inside. If you want to know more about this just ask our secretary Beryl Adams for a copy of his report on what a prisoner encountered on his release. It is a real eye-opener and should be required reading for all concerned social services and charities as to just how things go wrong, and why.

Now this is not easy. Prisoners can let us down. Motivating them can be a problem. Families break in spite of our efforts. It can feel like an uphill struggle. Rehabilitation has to happen, perforce, within a tight security framework.

Guys Marsh is not an open prison: it exists primarily for the safety of the public. We don't forget that, well aware that 'do-gooders', from the point of view of any closed institution, can be seen to do more harm than good. We have been careful not to tread on toes, and have been rewarded by acceptance and indeed encouragement from the prison authorities.

FOGM – A Governor's View

At the end of another challenging year for the prison I was delighted to be asked to provide some words on the Guys Marsh Prison and FOGM partnership. Having been involved with FOGM for 2 years now I have had the opportunity to see close up the excellent support that FOGM gives to staff and prisoners.

In times when efficiency savings and difficult decisions need to be made about what can and cannot be funded by the Prison, FOGM have been an excellent source of support in the initiatives they have enabled, none of which should be underestimated in their importance. They play a significant part in helping prisoners to reduce their risk of re-offending.

When I first arrived at Guys Marsh I have to admit that I was unsure as to how a group like FOGM could influence the needs and outcomes of a complex prison like Guys Marsh. After working with the Committee I now understand how and why it has such an

influence. FOGM is a committee of honest and committed individuals who recognise the abilities and potential in others. This recognition of potential can come through funding for prisoners or the much coveted FOGM Employee Recognition Award for staff. Each, in its own way, contributes to the success of Guys Marsh by encouraging prisoners to work hard at addressing their offending behaviour whilst in custody, or simply by recognising staff for a job well done.

Without a doubt the most significant influence that FOGM have made has been through the funding of the PERC role from Tudor Lankelly Chase Partnership. Our joint venture with FOGM and the CAB in this project has been strengthened through our employment of a full-time Partnerships Manager, Graham Woollard. He has shown significant drive and enthusiasm and has developed a first class working relationship with the PERC, Marcel Williams. Marcel brings a huge amount of experience, knowledge and

enthusiasm to the role and is, in my opinion, a truly inspirational person. This partnership is an exceptionally exciting one and I look forward to watching it develop further.

On a personal note I have thoroughly enjoyed my working relationship with FOGM and it is with much sadness, therefore, that I am moving on to pastures new. Whilst the challenge of returning to manage Dorchester Prison under the new Twinning arrangements will be an exciting one for me, I am genuinely sorry to be leaving so soon. I would like to thank all the Friends for their help, support and professionalism over the past 2 years. I have thoroughly enjoyed our association and have gained an enormous amount of experience and knowledge whilst working with you.

I wish you all well for the future, and for anybody reading this that is thinking about becoming a Friend, please do so. They really do make a difference.

Steve Hodson, Deputy Governor



Last September we were approached by the Prison Council with a request to supply yoga classes again. These had been very popular when we arranged for sessions to be laid on a few years before. As Yoga helps prisoners to handle stress and develop a degree of self-discipline we agreed to a series of sessions to be run during October and November. The classes were also open to staff during their lunch period.

Feedback from prisoners revealed that they felt generally healthier and calmer, experienced relief from anxiety, were able to sleep more soundly and levels of aggression and anger were reduced. Since then some prisoners have taken up yoga as a regular routine and find it a stabilising influence on their lives.

Several prisons have chosen to include yoga and meditation in their regime, recognising an effective and powerful intervention but how long this will be the case with cut backs is questionable. Perhaps it will only be possible in other prisons with the aid of the charitable sector, as it is at Guys Marsh. ■



The Forgiveness Project

Do as you would be done by or
Do as you have been done by?

We all know the answer to that, don't we? But if only it were that straightforward. Too often childhood maltreatment results in a deep rooted distortion of attitudes towards others and life in general: life is scarred and without intervention the wounds lay open, festering resentment, fear and hate. Many of our young men who end up in the criminal justice system carry this burden from their unfortunate pasts. Their lives tend to revolve in a cycle of crime and punishment; paying back to the world the hurt done to them; being immune to the needs of others, encased in the restricted world of self. What can be done to repair the damage, to reverse this trend? This is where The Forgiveness Project comes to the fore as it works to free internal ravages.

The Forgiveness Project (TFP) is a UK-based charity working at a local, national and international level to help build a future free of conflict and violence by healing the wounds of the past. It has a special programme designed for use in prisons to help the person face up to and understand the demons in their lives and the consequences of their own actions. Only by letting go of the past can they move on towards the road of victim awareness, self healing and responsible citizenship.

It must be no surprise that FOGM has high regard for

this programme and, in the light of budget restraints and possible closure, has stepped in to ensure its continued delivery until July 2012. This was possible by securing a generous grant for this purpose.

Before being able to apply for this course prisoners must first have completed the Victim Awareness Course which prepares them for the mental and emotional rigours of the TFP programme. Each course consists of three days of workshops where personal forgiveness is explored through the real life experiences of the facilitators (often harrowing) and of the participants (courageous public admissions of private pain), leading their findings towards the understanding of the concept of restorative justice. The men have cell work to complete after each session and reactions to the course are very positive. Typical comments on course evaluation forms have been :

"I have to forgive myself before I can progress." – *"It made me feel very remorseful."* – *"I really liked the workshop, it allowed me to look at forgiveness from a different angle."* – *"It made me think hard about my victims and what they went through."*

Two of our committee were privileged to sit in on one workshop. It was a draining experience but also uplifting to hear such honesty and see the possibility of better horizons for some of these men. ■

Guys Marsh Green Space Project



The Bioplex Garden

Exciting plans are underway behind the metal fence. If the proposals designed to improve and develop the estate's green spaces are accepted there will be many opportunities for men to develop their skills and abilities in the horticultural and environmental fields. Through a series of projects including a wildlife pond, bog and demonstration gardens, the Bioplex garden (with a greenhouse heated by the digester system), a variety of allotments, and a small tools maintenance workshop, many skills will be learnt and qualifications gained.

Penny and Kate, the Instructors in Horticulture and Gardens, described their scheme to us at a committee meeting, explaining that funds have been sought from external sources with some very positive results. Particularly encouraging is the backing from the Eden Project. We fully support their initiatives and will be pleased to help if we are needed. ■



Garden Pergola

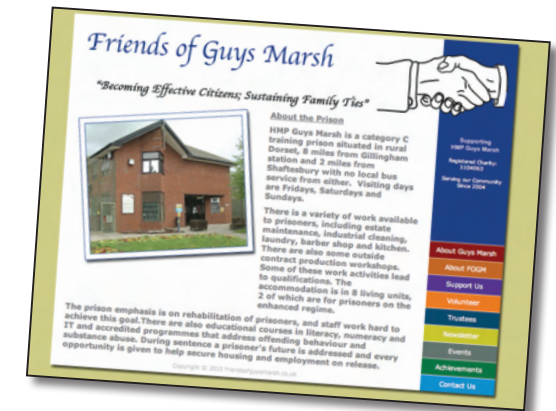
Guys Marsh has become a truly forward-looking, ecologically-aware institution, one, believe it or not, North Dorset can be proud of. There is a bio system which recycles waste to heat and light the prison; it uses its land to grow more and more of its own food. And we, the Friends, sharing that pride, go from strength to strength, gaining more Friends, more volunteers to help. Local businesses nowadays offer jobs, training schemes. We are part of the Big Society. We practically thought of it.

Sir Barry Wilson retired from the Friends last year. It was his inspiration and energy that started the organisation back in 2004, oversaw its struggle for charitable status, and with remarkable equanimity and grace kept morale high and projects buzzing during its difficult early years. Our gratitude to him is extreme. The admirable Linda Cowley took over the reins and we of the Friends all wish her well.

Sincerely.

Fay Weldon, President
Friends of Guys Marsh

ON LINE AND (almost) UP TO DATE!



Our website was launched a while ago in its early stages. Stephen de Mora, an A level student at Kings, Bruton, did a wonderful job constructing it for us and recently handed over the ongoing management for us to deal with. Dave Quinnell has bravely taken on the job of completing the pages and keeping it updated. The hand-over produced some technical bleeps, particularly with the photos, but we hope to have these corrected shortly and more photos and information added. You can view our pages which are set out in a very readable format by going to:

www.friendsofguysmarsh.co.uk

To our delight we have already benefited from our presence on the Web, even in its nursery stage, with two hits of donations. The primary purpose of 'being there', however, is for funders to be able to readily research us when we approach them with a bid. It will also be useful for agencies working in the voluntary sector investigating co-operative ventures; for the recruitment of new Friends; and for donors and volunteers contemplating where to channel their offers of help. We hope the description and information about our work will inspire all these viewers. ■

Committee and staff social gathering in December



Trustees' Report

The past year has been very full for us but especially so for our Chairman, Linda, who has attended a vast number of meetings on matters relating to our work, both in the prison and in the community. The most important of these matters was the role of our PERC. Firstly his installation into the newly dedicated Partnership Suite in Guys Marsh and secondly applying for further funding from the Tudor Trust to increase his position from a part to a full-time post. When the Tudor Trust visited they were impressed by the good working relationships between the partners in the project, appreciated Marcel's impressive development of the post and subsequently awarded the grant to procure his full-time employment which commenced in January. His contribution to rehabilitation is proving invaluable.

Some further successful bids have enabled us to secure funding for the Nordcat bus, the Forgiveness Project and to procure children's play equipment in the Visits Hall, whilst other donations and fund raising events by individuals on our behalf, have given us the freedom to grant small awards. These have helped some prisoners to access courses to benefit their future career prospects, others to strengthen family ties or have assisted ex-prisoners to establish a promising start on release.

Our fund raising event at The Exchange, Sturminster Newton in September was a light hearted evening of 'Call

My Bluff' fun and much enjoyed by all. Also that month we held our evening social for Friends and Volunteers where we heard from Marcel who explained in his unique and humorous style how he approaches his partnerships work. After a light buffet supper Ann Hinchliffe told us how she inspires musical creativity in the prison and then entertained us with some music herself.

Twice yearly we present our FOGM shield to a member of the Guys Marsh team for their outstanding work. In June Anne Hurrell, Head Librarian, was chosen for her dedication to family support. Graham Cull, Housing Officer, received the award for his great contribution to rehabilitation which we presented in December during our annual lunch buffet where we mark our appreciation of the work of all the staff.

At our AGM in September we reluctantly accepted the resignation for personal reasons of Sir Barry Wilson, both as a Trustee and a committee member. His wisdom and perception will be sorely missed. To celebrate all he has achieved for us and to show him our appreciation, we arranged a



Sir Barry's appreciation evening



Graham Cull receiving his award from Linda

most enjoyable evening with Sir Barry and Lady Wilson at a local restaurant (I must add, in case you are wondering, not at FOGM's expense!).

A few other changes to the committee have occurred over the year. We thanked Paul Goldman for his valuable contribution which unfortunately he had to withdraw. However, we are delighted that Pauline Batstone stepped up from our committee to become a Trustee and that we have been able to welcome three new members: S.O. Graham Woollard, Partnerships Liaison officer (replacing S.O. Kym Perham), Jonathan Davies representing the community, and Jackie Woon, Barnardo's Family Support Worker. In the short time they have been with us their contributions have been most productive as was also Ross Faulkner's, the Prison Council representative, who has recently been transferred. With our dedicated team we approach the coming year with continued resolve to improve prospects for the men, and the families and communities they will return to.

Roberta Primrose

Barnardo's at HMP Guys Marsh

My name is Jackie Woon and I have been working at Guys Marsh as Barnardo's Play and Family Support Worker for about a year now. I am employed for 18.5 hours per week and work with prisoners and their families to improve family ties. A large part of my work is based around domestic visits. I am generally present at two of the visits sessions each week. I start off in the Visitors Centre, outside the prison. I try to speak to all first-time visitors to Guys Marsh and talk them through the visits process (where they have to go, how much money they can take in etc.) and I also inform them of any support they might be entitled to or might want to make use of. I also deal with any other queries they might have. Often families have concerns about what to tell their children about imprisonment and I can give them advice on this also.

During the actual Domestic visits I am based in the Play Area of the Visits Hall (inside the prison) and try to make the Visits experience a more positive one for visiting children and families. The Play Area, itself, is very small and is open to all visiting children and their accompanying carers. Children can take toys from the Play Area to the table they are sitting at – allowing them to play with the prisoner they have come to visit. We try to keep the games simple and inexpensive so that parents can buy them at home if they enjoy them. 'Snap' always proves to be popular and there is plenty of colouring and crayons. Children generally come in and out of the Play Area on a regular basis and when they are in the Play Area this gives the adults with

them chance to talk about things they might not want to discuss in front of the children.

I also help out at the various other forms of Family Visit Days that take place at Guys Marsh. These generally take place in the library or gym and allow the prisoners to have much more interaction with their children.

I am also involved with the Children and Families Pathway in the prison – helping to reduce re-offending rates by strengthening prisoners' family ties.

We are just about to start running a Resettlement course at the prison and I will be running a session on parenting and re-establishing relationships with the children.

I have already met many of the Friends of Guys Marsh – in their role as volunteers, serving refreshments to visitors before Domestic Visits. This is such a valuable service and I would like to take this opportunity again to thank those volunteers. A smiling face, with or without a cup of tea, makes such a difference! (and that's just for me – let alone the visitors!)

I would also like to thank the Friends of Guys Marsh for all their support in my role generally. I have enjoyed working with you all and I have seen at first hand the invaluable work your organisation does

in supporting prisoners and their families. I look forward to continuing working with you all in the future.

Jackie Woon



The Nordcat bus providing its regular Saturday transport between Gillingham Station and the prison.

FRIENDS:

I am only who I am
Because of those I meet
It matters not if they are Kings or Queens
or people from the street

For as long as I take time
to invite them into my heart
As bold a gesture as it may seem
Its how a friendship starts.

And friendship helps unravel paths
That previously were unseen
Where I may not have dared to travel
Were it not for friends more keen

So friendship gives the timid man
A lion heart that roars
And gives new hope to hapless cases
That previously grasped at straws

Some friends stay with you
On life's journey but a short while
But if they've touched your heart too
You remember them and smile

And then there are extra special friends
That hold the magic key
That helps you reach new appreciation
of how beautiful life can be.

Marcel

Life's priceless ingredient

Soon after the earthquake, one of the national newspapers carried a photograph of the unbridled joy on the faces of two Japanese children. It was immensely evocative and powerful. If anyone had any doubts of the power of Friendship this photograph would surely dispel such doubt forever. Amid the devastation the photograph showed that, although these two lads could offer each other nothing by way of essential requirements like food, money, housing, they could offer each other everything which could make sense to them ... reciprocal and mutual love and warmth. Innocence and elation personified, a snapshot of hope.

Surely this is friendship in its purest form. Friendship, however, exists at many other levels and anyone with a sense of community will recognise that there is sometimes in life a need to offer Friendship in a less pure form. This type of friendship is not always reciprocal or mutual. Although less likely to be captured through a photograph in a "KODAK MOMENT" such friendships remain crucial none the less. These Friendships exist in offering hope, advice, guidance, opportunity, time, money... This type of Friendship

is not about receiving love, gratitude or even thanks in return. It is about offering a second, third or even fourth chance.

The recipients of offers of such Friendship will not all readily accept or embrace it, a percentage because they cannot or choose not, for whatever the reason, to want to be befriended. Infinitely less visible than the physical and mental damage caused in an earthquake or Tsunami, the effects of drugs and alcohol, missed education, broken families and abuse, or even mental health, all play a part. But these are often unseen subjective tragedies that don't make good television or photo opportunities.

Help will stream into Japan and so it should, all things being equal the two children in that iconic photograph will be counselled, the devastation around them will be repaired, cities and streets and a future will rise like a phoenix from the ashes.

What you will not see on television will be the "no good criminal" who quietly took me aside and asked me if I could think of anyway we could get funding for him to be sent to Japan to help clear the



Partnerships Team Marcel Williams and Graham Woollard with Linda

devastation and bury the bodies. Nor will you hear the story of his own childhood. The future for such individuals is less likely to be so full of hope.

We all have our "different" friends, "quirky" friends, "sad" friends, we choose them for different reasons but almost always because we know something about why they are and who they are. Maybe you would like to offer your skills, experience, financial aid, to the Friends of Guys Marsh who, together with their Partners, are striving to offer some rather unlikely characters a different future. There are no cuddly dogs but with a lot of polishing a few diamonds are waiting for an opportunity to shine.

Marcel Williams



Calling all bridge players

Thursday 3rd November 2011

Come and enjoy your favourite game in the beautiful setting of Donhead House, Donhead St Andrew, where our hosts, Claire and Robert Macdonald, have again generously offered to open their home for a day of Bridge. Both Chicago and Rubber Bridge will be played with lovely prizes, plus a raffle and produce stall. Coffee on arrival and lunch provided, for only £20 for the day. So make a note of the date and get your fours together. Invitation forms will be sent out at the beginning of September, but for early booking, tickets will be available from July onwards.

Please pass the enclosed flyer to bridge playing friends.

CALL MY BLUFF

Our fundraiser for 2010 was a fun event entitled 'Call My Bluff' held on September 10th in The Exchange, Sturminster Newton. It followed a similar pattern to the much loved television panel game of the same name with panellists providing true or bluff definitions to words set for them by the Chairman.

We had three panellists Dave Quinnell, Security Governor at the prison, Giles Henschel a local businessman and our special guest and the charity's president, Fay Weldon. Our chairman for the evening was Robert Cowley who was set the task of providing the words, and of overseeing the proceedings and keeping the panellists in check.



Great - we got that one right!

The audience had to play the part of the other team and were invited to guess which of their opponents on stage were giving the true or bluff definition. Much fun was had trying to ascertain if 'drong' really was a word for a narrow way between two hedges, or if fidibus could possibly mean fidgetiness caused by nervous irritation or was a wicker strainer put in a mashing tub.

As well as the panel game the audience were provided with a glass of wine on arrival, a light bite to eat during the interval and the chance to win some fabulous raffle prizes, they were also able to ask any questions of the guests and the charity's Chair, Linda Cowley. The whole evening was organised and run by members of the committee and raised £1,500 for the Charity which included some generous donations, the sale of Christmas cards designed by



Three wise owls

a serving prisoner and the sale of a painting also painted by an inmate and donated to raise funds.

Annie Henschel

NB Annie is too modest to tell you but, as well as adding her grace and charm to the stage adjudicating with Robert, she was mainly responsible for organising the whole evening's entertainment. If you were not among the players, you missed a treat!



Annie and Robert see fair play

Means of achievement

How fortunate we have been again with the generosity of our benefactors. They have made it possible for us to deliver a wide variety of support to both groups and individuals in Guys Marsh and we are extremely grateful.

We have spoken of the confidence the Tudor Trust has shown, enabling the full time employment of our PERC.

There are two other major organisations that encourage our values but wish to remain anonymous. One has given us the ability to pay for programmes designed to fight addictions. The other has

secured the delivery of The Forgiveness Project and has also continued to fund our visitor transport.

The Community Foundation for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole approved our application for children's play equipment in the Visits Hall which has helped to make the visits experience for children and their families far more positive.

The Valentine Trust and the Pitt Rivers Charitable Trust consistently encourage our efforts, and together with the money donated from privately run events (The Travelling

Souk, Comedy Night, talks by our President and our PERC), and Friends subscriptions and donations, we have the freedom to enhance internal activities and provide assistance to individual serving and ex-prisoners (distance learning courses, art materials and rehabilitation settling schemes).

With the cut back in funding for the prison service, the Friends' role in Guys Marsh is of even greater demand now than it was before, to provide the means to improve the future crime free prospects of both inmates and the community. ■

The Therapy of Music

Music provision has for a long time been a part of the Education Department's curriculum. However, to our dismay, we were informed that due to other pressures it would not continue into the new year. The benefits resulting from involvement in learning to play an instrument and making music, either alone or in a group, are manifold, none more so than in a captive environment. It encourages creativity and shared interests, reduces tensions

and stimulates motivation, all of which improve a prisoner's prospects for change.

The committee felt that this was serious enough to step in to try to reverse the situation. The governors have agreed for us to contract Ann Hinchliffe on a self-employed basis and we have arranged for her to continue to deliver her course at least for a further six month period. Priority will be given to men with a history of medical problems as this area is the most vulnerable and has the potential to be of greatest benefit. Professional opinions agree that music involvement helps offenders to relax, gain personal satisfaction and form productive working relationships, all of which are likely to enable them to make healthier lifestyle choices. By occupying their time more



creatively the risk is reduced of retaining or developing attitudes which lead to drug-abuse: a problem to which many of our efforts are directed.

Circumstances will be reviewed near the end of the period to consider the prospects for further provision, either by ourselves or by finding an alternative source of funding. ■



WASTE NOT WANT NOT

On a fine afternoon in October last a number of Committee members were invited to inspect and, more realistically, learn about the bioplex anaerobic digester system now installed as a full scale working model at Guys Marsh.

The notion of recycling waste, specifically 'anaerobic digestion' was explained to us and, put simply, the system allows for the controlled production of methane gas from recycled material including metal, plastic, paper and particularly organic food waste.

We were shown the machinery, how it worked and began to understand that, at stage one, the digester vehicle

stabilizes the different ingredients introduced. Liquid is circulated and the whole thing heated for a 2, 3 day period. After this time the liquid resulting is drained off to a large nearby tank and a settling period allowed. The liquid remains in the tank but the resulting methane gas is syphoned off and can then be used both to generate heat required for stage one of the process or be put through a generator to provide electricity, as is planned at the prison.

The merits of this bioplex-based working trial are, at an environmental level, the ability to reduce significantly the



The new greenhouse will be heated by the Bioplex system

dangerous levels of uncontrolled methane gas resulting from decomposing waste in landfill sites. At a practical, prison-based level, Guys Marsh inmates work on the project on a, paid, day to day basis and will be trained to a City & Guilds NVQ level which can be of genuine benefit to them when they come to leave the prison. ■

FOGM Committee: Thoughts of a New Boy

The notion of 'making a contribution to society' seems perhaps a dated and rather pompous notion at the beginning of the twenty first century. But why? We have recently moved to the borders of Dorset from Norfolk and participating voluntarily in something that gives something back to society, in this case the FOGM Committee, provides satisfaction and personal benefits both in meeting new, interesting people and one's exposure to the new and very different world of a prison.

Whilst in Norfolk I was a trustee of a local charity trying to help young people who had been forced to leave home at too early an age, perhaps because their domestic circumstances were wholly unreasonable or because they had been driven out of their home by parents or a parent. As a charity, we wanted to help materially and emotionally, yet at the same time try really to understand their predicament in order the better to focus one's ongoing contribution. The same thought occurred to me on being asked to join the Friends' Committee.

Even as a newcomer I think I understand the aims of the Friends organisation. On the one hand to provide genuine assistance to the families of men serving time in prison, that they can secure regular access to them via domestic or family visits; thereby maintaining family ties that can become strained by the time and distance apart.

The usual profile of prisoners at Guys Marsh is that when they get there they face a relatively short, work based, sentence,

measured in months; this because their offences are not so serious as to merit more or, alternatively, that they may indeed have had to serve a much longer sentence, but are coming to its conclusion.

With a prisoner reoffending rate in excess of 60% for short sentence prisoners, there is a real need on humane and certainly on financial grounds to reduce this % and the Friends endeavour to support broadly-education-based programmes that can instil in prisoners a necessary confidence and the desire not to return to jail.

Against that background, three very different things have particularly caught my attention since I joined the Committee. The first perhaps is a naive, simplistic emotion; but I suspect many of us are unprepared for what it is like to enter a prison and experience just some of the influences within.

Stating the obvious, prison is a very secure place where bars, keys, locked doors, very high wire and alarm systems are immediately in evidence. One should not underestimate the immediate lack of freedom that hits you on entering a jail; professionally trained staff make it a place where individual freedoms are largely dispensed with and there is a clear requirement to do what one is told.

These latter comments are not intended as a criticism; it's just that one thinks one knows or at any rate can

accurately imagine what it is like to be incarcerated but it is only when one steps inside, if only for an hour or two, that one begins to appreciate what a prison sentence really means physically and mentally.

Participating in and beginning to understand what is needed from society to help those in prison, in terms of family life, plus what is required to provide real support for men when they come out of prison is at the heart of the Friends' activity and one feels privileged to be a small part of it.

Jonathan Davies

A Fond Farewell



Photo: Western Gazette

A dear and old 'Friend', Jimmy Wilds, went to his rest after an incredible life which was reported on in last year's newsletter. He celebrated his 90th birthday last May but later in the year sadly succumbed to illness. He was associated with Guys Marsh from its Borstal days and supported FOGM from outset.