



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* OFFICIAL PRISON VISITORS

Chairman's AGM report

I am writing this, my second AGM report, after a very interesting and purposeful year.

Many of you will remember with affection last year when we celebrated our 90th Anniversary with a visit from Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal. I am sure those of you who were there will agree that it was an excellent event. We were also joined by two wonderful speakers in Lord Ramsbotham and Juliet Lyon to make it a very successful day.

Since then your Committee and I have been busy. You may recall the project to produce publicity leaflets for recruiting new prison visitors and to make our service more widely known to inmates. These are now available. I would like to congratulate the subcommittee and Shirley in particular for producing some really first rate publicity which is both attractive and modern yet maintains confidentiality - a difficult job, well done!

I mentioned last year that a new training manual is being prepared and a subcommittee is working on this. It has been decided to re-focus the manual to suit more of an induction role, but it can also be used as a future reference document, as circumstances vary so much from prison to prison.

One of the highlights of the year for me was a meeting with NOMS. It has been a considerable time since we last had a meeting with MOJ officials and we have been trying to get it up and running again for some time, so we were delighted to meet the Head of Chaplaincy - The Venerable Michael Kavanagh together with Nigel Mulcaster and Michelle Crerar. We had an extremely useful discussion on a number of outstanding matters and agreed that it would be beneficial to have these meetings annually.

We also held another very informative meeting in October with our colleagues from the ANVP - this time at Maidstone prison. I think that our friends and colleagues from France

were quite impressed with the level of activity taking place there.

I mentioned last time that we were carrying out a review of the regional secretary's areas and this was done at a special meeting in March.

There will need to be a further look at this, as there have been further changes to the executive committee. However we are still in need of a Regional Secretary to cover the East Midlands area and I am again asking if there is anyone who would be willing to consider taking on this important area of our work. These days a lot can be done by email and telephone, so being based in the area is not essential.

Our finances are in a satisfactory condition and we have had our next year's grant confirmed. I cannot finish this section without placing on record our thanks to Jo for all the hard work she has done in getting our finances to the position they are in now. Jo has decided to resign as Treasurer as she is pursuing a new career, so we thank her and wish her well in her new endeavours.

I want to thank all the members of the executive committee for their support and hard work during the year. Sadly Philip Holmes has decided to resign to pursue other interests and we thank



NAOPV chairman Ian Allred

him especially for all the work he has done for the association over the years.

I cannot end without thanking you all again for your commitment throughout the year and the many hours you spend trying to help prisoners who often have such damaged lives, which often goes unrecorded.

It is very much appreciated and valued both by us and especially by those working within the National Offender Management Service.

Finally, we urgently need a new Treasurer. If you or anyone you know has the qualifications to do this, please contact us on 01274 583417 or info@naopv.com.

Membership report

The present membership situation is quite healthy and we are grateful that many of our members are paying more than the basic minimum subscription. We are also pleased that many retired OPVs continue their membership.

The recruitment of new OPVs takes time, so some keen recruits tend to lose interest. Those who do stay the course usually become very successful OPVs.

Membership figures are as follows:

- Annual membership: 326
- Honorary and Paid Life Members: 27
- New members Sept/Dec 2015: 15
- New members Jan/Aug 2016: 21
- Members deceased, resigned or retired: Jan 2015 to August 2016: 13

David Crompton

Visit the NAOPV website

Log in at www.NAOPV.com to keep in touch with the latest information about official prison visiting.

Koestler Trust

Paintings from the Koestler Trust Art by Offenders exhibition – at Spirit Level, Royal Festival Hall, London until 13 November – are featured in this newsletter.

Regional Secretaries' reports

West Midlands Ian Allred

Following the recent reorganisation of areas in the Midlands from three areas to one, I have lost some of my old Midlands Central Area Prisons and gained a whole new group which now makes up the West Midlands area. This now follows more logically the West Midlands regional area as well.

I am getting into contact with the new prisons and have a meeting arranged with the Chaplain at one of them,

small teams of OPVs who are coping reasonably well with the changes in the Prison Service (both private and public sector prisons).

Both Preston and Lancaster Farms have strong OPV teams but are not currently Branches. Preston has long been in this position, whereas Lancaster Farms had an active Branch until the resignation of their former Chairman; no one else was

I am still trying to arrange visits to Buckley Hall and Liverpool. Staff changes have caused communication problems at Liverpool and I appreciate the help given by the Area Chaplain. I will keep trying.

Northern 2 Barbara Crompton

Despite cut-backs and continual pressures within the Prison Service, prison visiting is being maintained in all but two of the prisons in this area. The two largest teams are at Leeds and Wakefield but, in some prisons, visiting is holding on due to the commitment of only two or three OPVs. OPV teams who still visit on the Wings are finding visiting a problem, due to the organisation of the core day. I look back, perhaps nostalgically, to the days of OPV evening visits, with two hours at our disposal at HMP Leeds, to visit three or even four prisoners. This is no longer possible. It is good that prisoners are out of their cells during the day, in workshops, on courses and in education, but it has placed restrictions on our visiting, particularly for the prisoners.

I am grateful to the very busy Chaplains at New Hall, Styal and Wealstun, who have all made time to see me recently, eager to support an OPV team in their prisons. New Hall and Wealstun are desperate for new recruits! My thanks to Yvonne at Styal who had invited eight potential OPVs to our meeting, all of whom agreed to apply – and special thanks to my OPV colleague, Ann, who has continued to 'fly the flag' for the NAOPV at Styal for many years, continuing to visit prisoners even when reduced to an OPV team of one – herself!

Manchester continues to flourish. Special thanks to Henry, Chaplain/OPV Liaison Officer, who has handed over the OPV Liaison to a colleague. Also my thanks to Ann, NAOPV Branch Chairman for many years, whose knowledge and support has sustained this Branch.

We still maintain only three NAOPV Branches in this area, having lost four during the past four years, due to the resignation of the Chairmen, and in one case, sadly, his death. It is significant that when we lose a Branch Chairman, unless someone else



Red Fish

Northgate Hospital, Clara Alman Platinum Award for Watercolour

HMP Foston Hall, following a contact from an existing NAOPV member. It is my plan to gradually get round to speak to all the Chaplains. Meantime potential new enquiries have been received from prisons in my old area and these have been passed on to the Chaplains concerned. I am keeping a watching brief on these other prisons until such time as we have a new Regional secretary for the East Midlands area. The good news is that following the AGM we have a new person who has applied for this post and they will be interviewed by the committee in the autumn.

In addition HMP Birmingham is in the process of setting up a scheme and I am hopeful this will be up and running shortly. Meanwhile HMP Stoke Heath is also setting up a scheme and this is close to being operational.

Northern 1 David Crompton

I would like to start by thanking the Liaison Officers of the prisons in this area and also the Branch officers (where there is a Branch) and all the OPVs operating in this region.

At Altcourse and Hindley, there are

willing to take the job!

At Kirkham (which is a male Open Prison), our only OPV, Thomas, keeps the flag flying for the NAOPV and prison visiting. He has done this for many years and is a 'young' Honorary Life Member of the NAOPV. It is good to see Thomas at our AGM every year, and we thank him for his work over the years.

I have had no contact from HMP Kennet since I took over this region. There are currently no OPVs at HMP Garth, a large Cat B prison near Leyland, but I have had a very positive visit to Garth's neighbouring prison, HMP Wymott, which is on the same campus. I am grateful to the Chaplain/OPV Liaison Officer, Calum, who is appointing new OPVs to the small OPV team. Despite his busy schedule, Calum showed us around part of the prison, including the industrial laundry which has contracts from many local firms and employs a large number of prisoners. He also showed us the extensive market gardens where Barbara was given a cucumber which she was allowed to take out of the prison. Is this a 'first'??

volunteers to take on that role – we also lose the Branch!

Finally, may I pay a small tribute to Martin, Branch Secretary at HMP Wakefield for many years, also a much valued OPV. Martin died suddenly in December 2015. A memorial service was held at HMP Wakefield attended by his widow, prison staff, OPV colleagues, Jenny, David and myself from the NAOPV, and – very importantly – some of the prisoners he had visited who held him in high esteem and remembered him with great affection.

Kent Roy Hanley

We suffered a downturn in demand for OPVs in Maidstone for a while after a rumour was circulating suggesting that 'OPVs were undercover operatives for the immigration service'. As only foreign national offenders are housed there, it was understandable that inmates were wary. Even if they did not believe the rumour, some would feel that they could not be seen to be apparently 'colluding with us OPV usurpers'! Thankfully the rumours have subsided with prison visiting returning to normal levels. However, as individual offender residence times can be only three months, there is not much time to develop any rapport with individuals. Some success now in recruiting new OPVs with foreign language skills, but more are required to meet demand.

Rochester now has a good developing team of OPVs visiting regularly, facilitated by utilising an OPV as co-ordinator. In prisons where reduced staffing levels have created difficulties in managing the OPV scheme, the use of a co-ordinator can assist in overcoming this problem.

Similar success is being experienced in Lewes, with an evolving team of established and new OPVs.

Recruitment of suitable local OPVs for the Sheppey cluster prisons (Elmley, Swaleside & Standford Hill) is still proving challenging. The time required to acquire security clearance can be frustrating for regional and branch officials when trying to establish or strengthen OPV teams.

An occasional demand for OPVs from East Sutton Park D category women's prison is being met by female OPVs.

Ford has a small team of OPVs who continue to service the relatively low demand for visits from offenders.

OPV teams in Belmarsh, Isis and Thameside all need invigorating, which with the support of prison staff and a provision of suitable OPV candidates can hopefully be achieved in the next 12 months.

South West Diana Turner

Three additional prisons have been included in the region this year. They are HMP Winchester, HMP Isle of Wight and HMP Long Lartin (for the administration of the Official Prison Visiting scheme).

There are 13 prisons in the region and all have either a Branch or Team of OPVs. The liaison with prison officials and the NAOPV Branch Chairs/OPV co-ordinators has made this a most successful region and a pleasurable role for me as Regional Secretary.

There have been occasional problems such as the frustration of evening wing visiting caused by reduced core day hours and problems with security clearance in one prison where no OPV clearance had been undertaken for several years. This has now been rectified with the help of the NOMS Regional Chaplain, Rev Phil Chadder.

Recruitment has improved this year with far more enquiries being made.



**Yellow Pear
HM Prison & Young Offender
Institution Cookham Wood
Adam Commended Award for Theme:
Comfort**

Wales Diana Turner

I am delighted that there are OPVs in all of the 4/5 prisons.

At HMP Usk/ Prescoed, prior to a new liaison officer being appointed I worked with the security team and thank them for putting up with my visits and constant telephone calls. The new team started in July and

other OPV applications are being processed. Visiting is now undertaken in the domestic visits hall. I hope that we will be able to form a Branch here later this year.

HMP Parc has an OPV team and HMP Cardiff has a strong NAOPV Branch.

Unfortunately there is only one OPV at HMP Swansea but my aim is to help recruit more this year. I hope to visit the new Chaplain soon.

The new super prison HMP Berwyn, being built at Wrexham, will open in spring next year. I started visiting and contacting organisations in March to promote the official prison visiting scheme. The aim is to have three OPV teams – one for each 'house' – ready from the start. It is strange to be recruiting when there is currently only a building site! I am fortunate to have the help of an experienced OPV who lives in Wrexham and has good liaison with the Chaplain.

I would like to thank all OPV Liaison Officers, Branch Chairmen / co-ordinators and OPVs in both regions for their hard work and dedication.

SE John Kennett

In the last few months there have been quite a large number of enquiries from potential OPVs most of whom live in Inner London. Unfortunately, the only London prison looking for visitors is Wormwood Scrubs and then only if they are speakers of Polish, Romanian or Somali.

Suhel Mulla, the managing chaplain at Pentonville, accepted several possible visitors from me but eventually decided he couldn't cope with any more for the time being. Roy Hanley has met the Rev Timothy Bryan, liaison officer at Wandsworth, with a view to resurrecting their visiting scheme and this is work in progress. A few potential OPVs specified HMP Holloway as their preferred prison and were disappointed to be told it had now closed.

On a more positive note, HMP Downview re-opened in May and will consider prospective visitors. A couple of volunteers have been referred to Anna Warren at HMP/YOI Feltham who is very enthusiastic. However, not surprisingly given the population, most of my enquiries come from people living in Inner London and I have to disappoint most of them.

Holloway prison closes

Forces charity offers lifelong support

On 1st May this year a thanksgiving service was held in the chapel of Holloway Prison. Sadly it would be the last service to be held before the prison was destined to be shut down. I had been a prison visitor there for more than 20 years and so for me it was very important to be among the congregation. I had concentrated on speaking to foreign national prisoners and translating for those who didn't speak English. Luckily enough I speak five languages, having lived in Iran, Spain, Portugal, Italy and France. Living in these countries gives you a better understanding of the culture of those who come from different countries – a huge advantage.

When sifting through the many letters and cards I received from these prisoners – who had also become friends over the years – I realise that I had gained so much for they had worried about me as much as I had worried about them.

During that last prison service, prisoners described the ghosts of those who had gone before. There had been five women who had been hanged in Holloway over the years and then buried in the grounds. Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged, was executed in Holloway on 18th June 1955. About 500 people had stood outside the prison gates protesting against what had happened that morning.

These days when walking around chatting to prisoners it is impossible to believe that women were once

hanged there - even though suicides and attempted suicides now happen in Holloway far too often.

Then there were the female suffragettes who had been imprisoned there after their street marches and general damage to property as they tried to gain the vote – though it was not until 1928 that women were finally allowed to vote. These suffragettes went on hunger strikes while in Holloway – a protest that resulted in their being force-fed under horrendous conditions.

Early on Holloway had been a mixture of a men's, women's and debtors' prison but between 1881 and 1882 improved cells were installed and in 1886 a new treadmill was put in (a system that could not have been called an improvement) alongside male and female reception blocks. In 1902 the prison became all female and in 1913 hospital cells were added. Between 1970 and 1985 the whole "City house of correction" was demolished and rebuilt on the site.

It was entered through two gatehouses. The inner gatehouse was flanked by two griffins carved out of stone. These griffins still stand guard though the gatehouses themselves have gone.

Who knows if they will still be there when the prison itself has become something completely different and the prisoners have been sent to other prisons, such as Downview.

Susan MacDonald

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, provides lifelong support to anyone currently serving or has ever served in the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force and their families. Its Prison In-reach (PIR) service provides specially trained caseworkers for ex-service personnel while in custody and on release. A national network of 112 caseworkers operates in over 100 prisons in the UK. There is also help for their dependants.

SSAFA works with other organisations to help with clothing on release, finding somewhere to live on release, getting food vouchers, managing debt.

Charitable funds for the benefit of prisoners and their families are held by the SSAFA Welfare Department. One fund helps long term prisoners achieve a goal that will improve their chances of successful resettlement. Another helps families who are struggling financially with travel costs to visit the prisoner, to buy household items or pay utility bills.

PIR caseworkers also provide practical and emotional support and help prison rehabilitation staff to find accommodation, training and employment as part of resettlement.

To find out if there is a Prison In-reach caseworker in your prison contact the Veterans in Custody Support Officer. You can contact your local branch via www.ssafa.org.uk or call the Volunteer Support Advisor helpline 0800 032 5612.

Roy Hanley

New publicity material

We have produced new posters in A3, A4 and A5 sizes. The latter has space to add prison details or to let prisoners know how to get an Official Prison Visitor.

The A3 size publicity leaflets are for local areas to attract new prison visitors. They have been so popular that we have reprinted them.

Prisons wanting posters and leaflets can email me.
shirleycleggpannal@hotmail.co.uk

Shirley Clegg



Crowds gathered outside Holloway prison when Ruth Ellis was hanged in 1955. The prison was knocked down and rebuilt in 1975.

NAOPV Report and Financial Statements 2016

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL PRISON VISITORS

National Association of Official Prison Visitors
Independent Examiner's Report
For the Year Ended 31st March 2015

Report and Financial Statements
For the Year Ended

31st December 2015

Charity Registration Number

1099041

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 st December 2015 which are set out on pages 1-4.

Respective Responsibilities of the Trustees & Examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charity's Act 2011 and that an independent review is needed. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 145 (5)(b) of the 2011 and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiners Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charities Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in any audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act 2011 and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met, or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Victoria Susan Whitelegg

26 Trefoil Drive
Killinghall
Harrogate
HG3 2WB

Signed:



Date: 26th April 2016

National Association of Official Prison Visitors
Account for the Year Ended 31st December 2015

National Association of Official Prison Visitors
Account for the Year Ended 31st December 2015

Income and Expenditure Account	9 months Apr - Dec 15		Last Year Comparison 12 months Apr 14 to Mar 15	
	Restricted funds 1/4/15 to 31/12/15 £	Unrestricted funds 1/4/15 to 31/12/15 £	Restricted funds 1/4/14 to 31/3/15 £	Unrestricted funds 1/4/14 to 31/3/15 £
Income				
Subscriptions		2,957		4,397
Government grants	11,000		11,000	
Contribution to 2014 AGM costs				625
Contribution to 2015 AGM costs		1,125		
Room Hire Refund				220
Gift Aid		1,154		
Donations		100		20
Total Income	11,000	5,336	11,000	5,262
Expenditure				
AGM costs	6,794		4,685	
Exec Meeting Costs	965		2,074	
European Links			339	
Insurance	451		451	
NAOPV Publications	1,600		1,820	
Independent Examiner Fees			100	
Book Keeping Fees	285		220	
Book Keeping Meetings	175		168	
Travel Costs – Prison Visiting	730	1,890	1,143	893
Books/Stationery		662		297
Postage		1,281		2,098
Printing		1,806		1,263
Office Equipment Repairs & Renewals		164		53
Website		129		209
Subscription Refunds		70		20
Total Expenditure	11,000	6,001	11,000	4,834
Movement in Funds for the Year		666		428
Net Surplus for the Year		666		428
Bank Balances as @ 1st April 2014		33,891		33,463
Fund Balances as @ 31st March 2015		33,225		33,891

Statement of Financial Position

	Apr 15 to Dec 15 £	14-15 £
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	33,225	33,891
Net assets	33,225	33,891
Unrestricted funds		
General fund b/f	33,891	33,463
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	666	428
	33,225	33,891

Approved by the Trustees

I Allred

Chairman & Trustee

Signed:

R M Hailey
Vice Chairman + Trustees
(In absence of Chairman)

Date: 14-5-16

R M Crampton
GENERAL SECRETARY & TRUSTEE

2016 AGM

Around 80 people attended the NAOPV AGM on 23 June. Since then, Theresa May has become Prime Minister and Liz Truss has become Justice Secretary. Ms Truss has refused to commit to Michael Gove's prison reform plans. AGM speeches covered challenges facing the prison service, TV documentaries about the justice system and prison reform.

Michael Spurr

Michael is the CEO of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). He has held the post for six years, having started his career as a prison officer in 1983. He believes



Michael Spurr

that it is important as a society to get prison reform on the agenda. "We are facing the difficulties of 25 years of a rapidly rising prison population. It has doubled since the 1990s," he said. In the late 1990s prisons were opened up to outside people to support offenders. By the early 2000s there was health, educational support and help with drug treatment in particular, plus offending behaviour programmes and resettlement. It changed the culture in how prisons operated.

But the last five years have been difficult, he added. "Because we are an unprotected department we have lost the equivalent of 11,000 staff. We have had to rethink how we deliver services. We have tried to provide education and health services and reduced spending on probation to ensure money for working directly with offenders. It is a targeted approach."

"We took the best models and applied them across the estate," Michael explained. "For example, Feltham got

more resources but Leeds took one of the biggest reductions."

Two major external shocks have made this approach more difficult. The first was a spike in prison population in 2012-13. The second was the proliferation of psychoactive substances inside prisons. "The drug rate was coming down but these substances are available on the internet," Michael said. "In 2014 we started to look at what this might mean but we were overtaken when organised criminals realised they could make money out of it. Around 39 deaths have been linked to legal highs and there is an illicit economy, more bullying and violence while staffing has been reduced." There has also been an increase in self harm and suicide.

"The last few years have been the most difficult I have ever known in 30 years," Michael admitted. "This could lead to huge pessimism but you have got to believe that you can make things better. We are fortunate to have prisons at the heart of the government agenda," he added. The Queen's Speech marked the first time that a prime minister had made a speech on this topic. "Also, justice secretary Michael Gove wants to make prison a place of rehabilitation with opportunities for redemption." Who would not want to sign up to that?, Michael asked. He noted that the reform bill focuses on rehabilitation, but this requires prisons to be safe and decent. "At the moment too many prisons are not," he said.

Once this is in place you need to work with staff to help create a framework and culture to stop drug taking and alcohol. Offenders also need help when they come out of prisons.

"There are three aspects to the government's reforms," Michael explained. "There is £1.3 bn for new prisons. Loads of prisons are not fit for the 21st century. We need to close old ones, so I am pleased we have funding for four new prisons. We will try and design them with a rehabilitative focus. We also need to reduce overcrowding. But rehabilitation is mostly about culture, not buildings."

The second aspect is a review of education. NOMS is also looking at better safety and mental health. Thirdly, governors will be given more autonomy.

Michael admitted that the budget is still tight, but NOMS does have £10m and four initiatives to improve safety.

"As for the work you do, it is important because you give hope to people," he added. "People in the despair of deviancy need that and you do that by visiting. You help to create a rehabilitation culture by bringing normality into prisons. This brings away from a focus on the inner self and helps to prevent institutionalisation. This is what motivates me to keep going and what motivates our staff."

Rex Bloomstein

Rex is a film maker who pioneered prison documentaries in Britain and made the award winning series *Strangeways*. "I share many of the values reflected in the NAOPV guide," he told the AGM. "It is a sign of humanity to be non judgmental. I try to do the same. My work is pared down to narrow the space between me and the viewer. The films and radio programmes that I have been making for 40 years have been an attempt to know more about prisons and prisoners. The themes are alcohol, anger, a crime subculture and the choice to become a lawbreaker. Can the camera offer insight? Do personal testimonies humanise the criminal justice system?"



Rex Bloomstein

Rex started in 1975 with a documentary about the magistrate courts, following one person through the system. "In 1976 I looked at prisoners wives and the pressures on families to keep going. I then looked at the parole system, which was secretive in the 1970s. By the end of the 1970s there was concern about overcrowding. I wanted to make a fly on the wall documentary about it and this resulted in eight 40 minute

programmes about Strangeways. The series was broadcast in 1980.

"I then looked at life imprisonment in Lifer, broadcast in 1982. In 2005 I looked at youth justice and the problem of breaking the cycle of offending. Three quarters of young offenders are back in prison within a year of their release. I then returned to some of the people I had documented in the early 1980s."

Rex believes we need such accounts to see the people behind the system. "The problems are the same, they have not gone away. As a society we are firmly hooked on punishment."

Frances Crook OBE

Frances is director of the Howard League for Penal Reform. She was appointed in 1986. "The work you do is with people that no one likes. You are the very best of this country," she told the AGM. She added that the Howard League is independent from government and a law firm that represents children and adults in custody. "We have a £1.5m turnover and try to change policy and practice. One of the big changes is the state of prisons today. I respect Michael Spurr's optimism – but the report from Stafford for example showed that rehabilitation for sex offenders is not working. 126 were released without resettlement and 10% were released onto the streets into homelessness. Bronzefield private prison has been releasing women onto the streets with sleeping bags."

"In Wormwood Scrubs force is used to control the jail. It is infested with rats and over 1,000 men are locked up for most of the day. 40% of the men are released into homelessness. Probation has been privatised with a US company responsible for after care. At Woodhill there have been 11 suicides. In Doncaster there are two assaults a day. The prison is infested with vermin and overcrowded. Leeds is the most overcrowded prison in the country. Lewes has half the men locked up all day. Parc had two suicides this year. In Moorland prisoners are locked up all day. And all this is just in the last five months."

The Howard League legal team represents young people who are given the punishment of further days in prison. In the last six years adjudicators have awarded more than

a million extra days of imprisonment for misbehaviour – not criminal activity, Frances noted.

"The system is toxic and going rotten from the inside," she said. "How did this happen? It was not so bad in 2010 when the coalition government got in. Ken Clark tried to introduce work into prisons. Most of the problems started when Chris Grayling closed 18 prisons, staff were cut by 40% and legal aid was stopped for prisoners. This created a toxic mix."



Frances Crook

Things could improve with Michael Gove as Justice Secretary, she added. "I have worked with 15 secretaries of state and this is the first time I have heard one talking about the treasure in every man. The prime minister also made a speech offering hope and seeing prison as a transition. It is a change in rhetoric but we have yet to see how it will pan out."

Michael Gove wants to close Victorian prisons not fit for purpose, but Frances noted that Holloway is being closed even though most of it is 25 years old and women are being moved to other prisons that are 25 years old. "It will mean they move outside London and lose the vital support from voluntary agencies and local authorities," Frances warned.

"There have been six suicides and a bloodbath of injuries among women," she added. "Meanwhile the Equalities and Justice minister has confirmed that the capital receipt from Holloway will not benefit women, but will go towards building new prisons for men. We have been trying to protect women's centres and services in the community but lots of services for women are going to go and I am very worried. Women's centres keep women out of prison and turn their lives around."

Frances was also concerned about the plans to give autonomy to prison governors. "What does this mean if they can't decide the basics? As for new prisons, I am a fan of Victorian design. The problem is not the design of the buildings. The problem is that they are not maintained and they are overcrowded."

Another issue is community sentences, which Frances believes have been "a disaster." "We tell the government it needs to manage the contracts really well," she said.

"We also have to reduce the number of people in prisons. We have to reduce the overuse of remand and of short sentences. Prisoners have to get out of long sentences quicker," Frances added. The Howard League has suggested taking the power to send people to prison away from magistrates. It has proposed that their position in society could be changed so that they become problem solvers rather than just punishing people.

"Prison does not work for society because of reoffending. It does not work for families and victims get forgotten. Taxpayers pay a fortune for a system that does not work. Some people in prison have done horrible things and are dangerous and custody for them in a safe place should be useful, but they should be allowed to work because it gives them dignity."

Frances has run a real business inside a prison. "It was not minimum wage jobs and workers made voluntary contributions to charity. They helped to support the community and pay tax, because they are citizens. I will be talking to Gove about this – it would be safer for staff too."

I believe we can save lives," Frances concluded. "I do not want to go to another inquest of a young person who died in prison. There is a window of opportunity to make a change and take public opinion with us. I am very optimistic about that."

AGM 2017

Tuesday 20 June
Resource for London
356 Holloway Road
London
N7 6PA

OBITUARY

ALMA McKENNA MBE

In 1964, a lady applied for a job she saw in a local paper for a secretary to work from home. The advert had been placed by a Mr Sykes, Hon Secretary of the National Association of Prison Visitors – an organisation which she had never heard of. But once appointed, her life changed. It led to an association with the NAPV, later the NAOPV, ('O' for 'Official') which lasted for 43 years.

Alma's initial job was to take the minutes at Executive meetings. She took along a large reel-to-reel tape-recorder; she recalled attending a weekend meeting at HMP Wakefield and had to transcribe 90 pages! Sadly, Mr Sykes died suddenly in 1966, and the then-Chairman, Reg Hewit asked Alma if she would become General Secretary to the Association, which she was pleased to accept – at five shillings an hour.

From that point onwards, Alma attended every Executive Committee meeting for over 40 years, except one, when she was ill. In those days, Exec meetings were held in different prisons around the country, so a lot of travelling was involved. During a very dark time in Alma's life, when her elder daughter died of cancer in her early 50s, Alma remained deeply involved with the NAOPV and there is no doubt that this work helped her through this difficult time.

As General Secretary, it wasn't long before Alma applied to be a Prison Visitor herself, and she visited at HMP



Alma McKenna

Bedford for most of those 43 years. She had many memories of those years, and would talk of prisoners whose stories had affected her very much; stories and confidences shared

which she never forgot.

The General Secretary not only handles the administrative work for the organisation, but keeps an overall view of prison visiting in the whole prison estate. Even when abroad, if there was a chance to visit a prison, Alma took it. She has visited prisons in Stuttgart and in Nairobi, and over 80 prisons in the UK. She met many well-known people over the years, and met our patron, HRH The Princess Royal, on many occasions. The last occasion was Alma's last AGM – our 90th Anniversary AGM & Conference in 2015. This was Alma's 50th AGM attendance.

Alma's had an extensive knowledge of the Prison Visiting Scheme and could be relied on to sort out many queries or problems. The highest accolade was her MBE; she received a crystal bowl on her retirement from HMP Bedford, and there were gifts from prisoners, such as a model wooden rocking-chair made of pegs. She was also pleased to be appointed as a NAOPV Vice President.

Only five members of the current NAOPV Executive actually worked with Alma. It has been my great pleasure to write this tribute to a very remarkable lady, whose long and dedicated commitment to prison visiting enabled it to continue today. Long may it continue!

Recruitment buoyant

Recruitment for new OPVs is probably at an all-time high, with many enquiries coming via the NAOPV website, and also wide distribution of our new NAOPV recruitment leaflets. Every website enquiry receives detailed information about the OPV scheme and the work of the OPV.

We depend on the co-operation of HM Prison Service, our colleagues in the Ministry of Justice and, in individual prisons, the OPV Liaison Officer. With all the recent changes at the top of government – a new Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State, and a new Minister of State – the NAOPV will continue to 'ride the storms' in our pledge to support this unique and valuable voluntary work.

Barbara Crompton
General Secretary

Honorary Life Members 2016

Penelope Swan - Long Lartin

Michael Garner - Leeds

Elizabeth McOwat - Leeds

WHO'S WHO

Patron: HRH The Princess Royal
President: The Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice

Vice Presidents:
Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington GCB CBE
Prof. Andrew Coyle CMG
David Libby MBE
Brian Lawrence MBE
Gerard L G Noel
Anne Pigott OBE

Officers:
Ian Allred – Chairman
Roy Hanley – Vice Chairman
David Crompton – Vice Chairman

Barbara Crompton – General Secretary
David Crompton – Membership Secretary

Executive committee:
Shirley Clegg
Margaret Franklin
Jenny Haigh
Elisabeth Hill
John Kennet
Susan MacDonald

Adrienne Margolis – Newsletter Editor

Regional secretaries:
Northern Area 1 (Lancashire & Merseyside) – David Crompton
Northern Area 2 (West & North Yorkshire; Cheshire, Cumbria; Greater Manchester) – Barbara Crompton
Northern Area 3 (South & East Yorkshire) – Shirley Clegg
Northern Area 4 (North East) – Ingelise McNulty
East Midlands – vacant
West Midlands – Ian Allred
Cambridgeshire, East Anglia – vacant
Kent & Sussex – Roy Hanley
South East London – Roy Hanley
Greater London (excluding SE London) – John Kennett
Surrey & Middlesex – John Kennett
South West & Wales – Diana Turner
Oxfordshire/Bucks – vacant

PR advisor – David Crompton
Website enquiries – Barbara Crompton/
Diana Turner

Contact us
Email: info@naopv.com
Tel: 01274 583417