

CHAPTER 10.

I GO TO PRISON FOR SIX YEARS.

Crime and prisons make daily news. H. Block, Hunger Strikers, The Maze, Prisoners on the Roof, Crimes of Violence, Mugging, The Ripper, all these kind of issues provide a daily dose of crime and punishment news.

Occasionally it all goes wrong at once, Inner city troubles boil over into riots, soccer hooligans go out on wrecking rampages ^{whilst} singing 'We'll support you ever more', and ordinary people see, in stark reality, how reasonable community living depends ^{as much} on enlightened social policies ^{as} on the instruments of law and order.

Interrogation is no substitute for intelligence.

My three years of varied prison experiences, taught me to understand the true nature of many of the tensions and divisions that really exist, just below the surface, in the ^{everyday} lives of thousands of men and women, ^{These people are, in the} ^{main,} born in the ^{disadvantaged areas} of our inner cities, or on the Council Estates which replaced the slums they lived in yesterday. ^{This large minority} spend a considerable period of their lives in prison wings at a very high financial cost to the community.

They marry when very young, have children soon after, are mainly from broken homes, live in with one or another of their parents, and they normally separate very quickly after they marry, and almost certainly prepare at least one of their children to follow in their footsteps.

From ^{these} emerge the hard core of 'big time' criminals, represented ^{inside} by the unlucky few. Most professionals do not get caught, for them crime is a paying business.

The tough few have special hates ^{which are} 'grasses' that sell them down the line, 'coppers' who verbal them, ^{and snobs,} (prison officers) who they hate and despise.

Without exception they learn to hate before they learn to love. Many of them never learn to love ^{another human being.}

Of The remainder of the prisoners, the recidivists are the majority, ^{These are small time} criminals caught up in petty crime, sometimes brutal ^{but} more often, ^{they are} petty thieves, car thieves, receivers or involved in a host of similar activities. They live in a world of fantasy outside of prison ^{and} in; imagining themselves as part of the romantic big time of the novel or film. ^{They mainly} get involved in the hate game when they are in groups or gangs.

On their own on a prison wing they are immature and totally absorbed the prison system of which they have become a part. Prison officers manipulate them through the use of privileges available. There is a strange camaraderie between the prison officer and the recidivist. They greet each other when the 'con' returns to prison and shout a friendly 'I'll see you' when the 'con' is released for the umpteenth time. There are the prison minorities, the mentally handicapped for whom inadequate provision is made elsewhere by society ^{and} who drift into a prison system which does not want them and is ill-equipped to cope with them. Their sufferings are often intolerable. The other large minorities ^{include the} helpless, homeless, social outcasts, criminals through a variety of social and personal diseases, ^{such as} drugs, alcohol, or gambling, ^{these are} compulsions suffered by thousands of prisoners, leading them to prison wings as they drift helplessly from sentence to sentence.

The prison system can do nothing positive for them but it slowly destroys what ever vestige of pride they may possess. Some of them combine all the major compulsions, and for them, life is a daily hell from which many have even lost the desire to escape in death.

In a period when employment opportunities are harder to find, crime is a growth industry ^{and} police forces ~~grow~~ ^{grow} in numbers and status, - the traffic wardens do some of the work that policemen used to do.

THE Prison strike for better conditions ^{or} take part in limited strike actions ^{and} refuse to service ^{the} Courts. Courts are overworked and, as more people are charged and sentenced, ^{longer,} prisons get more overcrowded ^{with} private security organisations flourish and reactionaries call for even stiffer and tougher sentences. ^{TORY} The Home Secretary, in an effort to silence the flowery-hatted party members, announces the 'Short Sharp Shock Treatment' as though he had discovered a form of Penal Penicillin.

I became a prisoner when the prison population first reached the unacceptable level of 42,000 ^{and} Roy Jenkins was Home Secretary, carrying on as had his predecessors ^{as} (and his successors ^{have since}) effectively finding no answers to the main prison problems.

I went down on the Judges instructions, into a prison system which violated the very laws it exists to uphold. Imagine if a theatre, cinema, hotel, restaurant, or football stadium ignored the numbers prescribed by the licensing authority and just crammed in ^{they wanted in.}

How the courts would cry out and act. But these same people in our legal institutions violate many of the rules they exist to implement and there is no simpler condemnation of the 'Justice' business than that.

Prisons built a century and more ago are chronically and criminally overcrowded way above their stipulated populations.

The public go their way, they may hail Ronald Biggs for 'beating the system', they may feel sad for Lady Isabel Barnet who committed suicide following a prosecution for shoplifting, they will certainly detest the 'Yorkshire Ripper', and then proceed to forget the suffering minorities, including the families and close friends of the victims and perpetrators alike. Those problems go largely unheeded after a while.

I had no idea what happened next, but I was soon aware that the majority of my newly sentenced colleagues were completely familiar with the procedures and even familiar with some of the prison officers. They knew the attitudes of certain Judges, the competence or otherwise of briefs, or Magistrates, the softness of certain Probation Officers and knew the 'nick' to which they were going and the officers who would be there to 'welcome' them.

Most of them graduated through Detention and Borstal and, with their blue tattoo-pricked fingers and arms declaring Love and hate, were thus branded for life as 'insiders'.

A few of them learned the disadvantage to them of the tattoo marks and apply to have them removed and lucky. Others apply and are turned down. The majority take them through life with a kind of pride similar to the old Etonian for his tie!

The public rarely recognise the tattoo marks of the offenders, but, having been 'educated', I ^{now} always notice them.

In prison you enter that twilight world of 'them' and 'us'. Stripped of all but your prison clothes, without pride, purpose, or incentive, you become a regular, or you vow, 'never again'. For the recidivist majority, they soldier through until age takes away their appetite for the punishment, if not the crime, and they simply sicken out of the futile prison system. Prison contains the monuments to society's inadequacies rather than the inadequacies of the individuals it traps.

Political parties are quick to pronounce on the social problems of unemployment, bad housing and deprived social areas in our towns and cities. They understand the relationship of environment and crime. But there the concern ends, even in 1981, when inner city riots helped fill Borstals and prisons and ripped the streets apart,

little discussion takes place on any progressive resolutions concerning penal reform at any of the political party conferences.

Nor do the political parties direct the political philosophers to discuss with the Magistrates who are selected the political system to serve on the Magistrates Benches, the kind of social problems consciously created and leading a new generation of clients into lives of crime. All prison experiences begin in a Magistrates Court. Mine began in Lavender Hill, London, progressed through Lambeth and I later appeared in Newcastle Magistrates Court. Those appearances were made while I was on the 'outside'.

After I was sentenced and then charged again with the Dilson Offence, I had a new experience, I was taken to the Court from Bedford Prison and locked up in the Police cells below Northampton Court. Those cells qualified for condemnation by the Public Health Authority but the Authority was more concerned with offences committed by the public and overlooked the offences of the Court Authorities. There were no facilities provided for client/solicitor discussions and that was an elementary and necessary facility for people like myself brought under escort from prison to Court.

I found Magistrates Courts closely reflective of the current social crime situation and, as I saw the daily throngs of people passing through them, I realised that over the years millions of people find themselves, their relations or friends, personally experiencing 'being in trouble'. Criminals tend to classify themselves, There are the drug, drink, driving offenders of no matter what criminal gravity who seem to think they are in some way superior to the run of the mill 'normal criminal'. I do not agree.

I often I hear it said that there are no votes in Penal Reform, but with so many voters involved in, or associated with, crime and criminals, such excuses are not sufficient reason for tolerating the near barbaric conditions still existing in our prisons.

It dawned on me on my way from Court to prison, that the person making the headline in that night's evening paper was me. At the same time, the reality of being an individual without civil rights sunk into my tired mind. As a prisoner entitlements are those contained in the Prison Rule book and life is totally in the hands of the prison authorities. The man at the other end of your handcuffs can be a murderer, rapist, arsonist, child sex offender, hard drug operator, or more than likely, an ordinary petty criminal.

My first sentencing experience ^{was} unforgettable, as ^{was my} first experience of being handcuffed and transported to prison. Even more soul destroying are the apparently unending procedures common to every prison reception, every time you enter or leave. At first, through inexperience, you are not adjusted to the simple truth that time no longer matters, and that any procedure that uses up time, is as good as any other. So it is that the regular 'con' relaxes in the comradeship of reception procedures. It gives him a chance to renew acquaintances, to negotiate 'snout' or pay back an outstanding loan, be brought up to date about happenings on the wing, or in the prison. Reception is also a place where those inside welcome a chance to meet old friends, and who knows, pick up the odd tit bit from those who have been on a Court appearance or who are in prison for the first time.

I began my prison life in Armley Prison reception, and before I was released three years later, I had been in and out of prison reception over ninety times. I was in Armley, Leeds on three separate occasions, in Liverpool Prison on one occasion, in Wexon Green, Birmingham on two occasions, in Woodhouse Grove, London on five occasions, in Wandsworth Prison on one occasion and I was back at Leyhill on five separate occasions. I spent one year in closed prisons and two years in Leyhill Open Prison.

My travels, ^{were} occasioned by my appearing in court as a defendant and as a witness as in Leeds, ^{as a defendant in Birmingham Crown Court} and in addition, ^{being} ordered to appear before the Special Committee of the House of Commons and before the Lord Salmon 'Royal Commission', ^{in the latter} ^{in my returning to Woodhouse Grove} ^{on the National draft (the prison transport system)} I in National Draft and in the course of journeyings found myself inside of Strangeways, Manchester, Wandsworth London, Bristol, Gartree, Wakefield and Gloucester Prisons.

Needless to say, the more I moved around, the more I got to know the 'ropes' and the reception cons although ^{the pattern} continually changed. I also got to know a lot of prison officers. Prison is about knowing prisoners. All things in prison are easier if you get to know ^{and} make friends and build up respect amongst your mates.

Reception procedures are simple ^{and they use} an effective way of checking people in and out, ^{the} There are odd escapes, odd suicides, more frequent unauthorised use of violence ^{and} but, given the overcrowding, the increasing number of prisoners being handled through reception every day and ^{every} night, the system works at a slow steady pace.

Inside reception, your handcuffs are removed, and you take a place, depending on the facilities, in a communal or individual reception cell until you are called or fetched. You are stripped of your clothes and valuables and sent naked to the bath, some find this embarrassing, although I never did. ^{You} You return from the bath your personal clothes and belongings are boxed and handed in, and your prison clothes issued ^{These include} weekend and work issue ^{with} vest, pants, towel, shaving kit and as needed, a chamber pot. For bedding, you ^{are issued with} a pair of clean sheets, a wool under blanket and a cover blanket, with clean pillow cases. These I rolled into a bundle and, so equipped ^{I received} my first prison meal.

^{very} My first meal was no different ^{from} the others I was ^{later} served, except that ^{it was} inevitably cold because of the lateness of the hour. It ^{had} also been moved ^{had been} from the prison kitchen to the reception and the food ^{ever} slopped around. Every reception meal I had, was a mixture of custard and gravy. I rarely found any reason to complain about the quality of prison food, it was simple and adequate for me. All the security checks completed, fingerprints and photographs taken, I was ready for the medical. Another weary

wait for the Medical Officer to appear and, of all the Prison Staff I ever met, the most disinterested was the Medical Officer on that ^{first} reception occasion.

The medical inspection over I was ready for allocation to one of the prison wings. In the local prisons in which I was imprisoned, apart from Birmingham and Bedford, the cells were all three'd up; ^{three} three men to a cell, ⁱⁿ the non-star prisoners were three'd up ^{and} those of us in transit or up ^{on} Court appearances had single cells. The 'Star' wing in Bedford, ^{for first offenders,} was a communal ^{dormitory} and, during my stay there, we negotiated a constitution for the wing ^{which improved conditions for the inmates.}

You expect prison to be a place of doors with locks and it is. The 'screws' carry bunches of keys, every door is opened and locked and when you are finally 'banged up' for the day, in addition to the lock, there is a strong bolt ^{pushed} into place. The size of most cells is 12 feet by 6 feet, enough room for a bed and table and for one man to move around in. When, as is common, two or worse still three, are crammed into one small cell, the problems of space as well as conflicting temperaments depend on the three men and how they can adjust ^{to} each other. At best, it is difficult at worst, deplorable.

Where prisoners are three'd-up, the cell beds consist of a double bunk and a single bed; the ^{most} ~~best~~ ^{resident} inherits the best wire mattress and chooses his own bed. Of the two small tables in the cell, one is taken up by the washing bowl and water jug and there is a small mirror for use by all three inmates. The other small table is all that is available for use by the three men for writing, food consumption ^{and other general purposes.}

'Lights out' is at ten o' clock, and control of the light is normally outside of the cell although sometimes it is inside. You are wakened at 6.30.a.m. and at 7.00.a.m. cells are opened up and slopping out begins. It is a revolting process aggravated by over crowding, when queue to empty the slop and toilet buckets filled since six o' clock the night before. When an epidemic of diarrhoea is on the wing, it is indescribably nauseating even for the toughest stomachs, of which I was the happy possessor. For the constipated or the nervous, the morning wait for a turn on one of two toilets was sheer hell, with those behind in the queue shouting in mainly four letter words announcing that you are taking too 'f....' long. Others mean near you right continue to pour their filthy, unhygienic slops into the only sluice provided for the purpose. Twice as many men, and twice as much filth than the system was designed to accommodate a century earlier, periodically ensure that the drains are blocked ^{thus} creating yet more unpleasant odours and marginally more squelchy filth than before.

Should ^{not} the Judge, who prides himself on his concern for justice, give some thought to the justice of these disgusting conditions.

tolerable. My feelings of desperation reached a point of total despair on a night in Armley Prison when the three of us, inmates of one cell, were all suffering from a chronic attack of diarrhoea and we had only one bucket provided. The pain, anguish, nausea and retching, caused by the abominable smells, let alone sounds, combined with the feeling of personal humiliation in having to carry out this most primitive function, in front of two equally ill cell mates was personally humiliating and soul destroying. As the night wore on and we became weak, weary, and exhausted, I remember thinking, at the time, nothing that I have ever done to anyone can be compared with what the 'Establishment' had done to me that night. Would that I could sentence the perpetrators of this single crime to such a sentence.

On two occasions during the night I pulled the bell in the cell, to be told by a disinterested night duty officer that there was nothing he could do about it.

Those people who complain about prison conditions being too easy should be compelled to live through that kind of

hideous nightmare of a night.

The normal daily procedure varies little from prison to prison.,
6.30.a.m. Light switched on by the officer from the outside.
Cell bolt drawn. 7.00.a.m. Day Officer opens cell door, you slop out, collect clean hot and cold water from the wing sluice, collect your numbered razor blade from the Officer, make any applications to the landing officer.

Collect breakfast from the wing servery when called to do so by the Landing Officers. The officer locks you in. *EAT,*
breakfast, wash and shave, clean teeth.

8.00.a.m. Landing Officer opens up cell door, *Put* tray out.
The Officer locks you up.

8.45.a.m. The landing officer opens up the cell, you close it as you go to work. On arrival at work, if you are in a factory, you apply to go to the toilet and commence work, collecting your tools from the 'con' in charge of the store.

11.00.a.m. Exercise.

11.00.a.m. Return from the exercise yard to your cell which is opened up and you then attend to any application you have been granted which will be notified to you on the landing notice board.

11.45.a.m. Collect dinner from servery after you have been called. Officer closes your cell.

- 1. 15. p.m. Officer opens the cell, you put your tray outside the cell and the officer closes the cell.
- 1. 20. p.m. Officer opens up the cell and prisoners take afternoon exercise, officer closes cell door.
- 1. 50. p.m. Prisoners return to work.
- 4. 15. p.m. Return to cell, collect mail and newspaper. Officer closes the cell.
- 4. 20. p.m. Officer opens up cell and prisoners are called to collect tea from servery.
- 5. 15. p.m. Officer opens cell, trays are put out. Prisoners slop out, collect water and use toilet.
- 6. 00.p.m. Officer opens cell. Slop out, and the Officer closes cell. Those on association, attending classes, on release for any purpose are let out.
- 7. 15. p.m. Cell door opened, pot of tea, rock bun. Cell is locked and bolted.
- 8. 00. p.m. Men on association locked up. The wing becomes silent. Men start shouting from window to window and across from Block to Block and continue shouting for hours. Mainly obscenities.
- 10.00. p.m. The night duty officer puts out each cell light and checks the cell.

There are variations such as bath night, book night, and collecting your weekly pay which vary from prison to prison, but the dull uneventful monotony is unjustifiable and purposeless. The main job of the officer on duty on the wing is, simply opening and shutting cell doors. Unsentenced as prison officers are, for them these conditions are for life. At least, most prisoners concede. My God!!

On day when you are going to Court, as I so often did, you are not available for work. but when you are available the prison you are in determines the nature of the work you are allocated. I worked on mail bags; making them, repairing them, putting metal fittings on them, and sorting them. I machine pressed and cut leather pieces for industrial gloves, made fishing lines and fishing fl bricklayers plumb bobs. If there was no work available, the alternative was being

banged up in your cell for 23 hours a day. The 23 hours in your cell on Saturday and Sunday ^{were} relieved by a visit to church and a visit to a film shown in the same church building. If it was not raining you also ^{were permitted} your daily exercises.

In summer time cells would be unbearably hot, and in winter unbelievably cold. Cell and landing temperatures, as laid down in the prison rules, were for the record book and not for application on prison landings. On one occasion in Winson Green I was at the end of the wing furthest away from the centre, and the cell was so cold that I had to put my day time clothes on top of my pyjamas and still I remained cold.

I looked forward to my weekly bath as I had looked forward to a holiday abroad. Living in dirty conditions, with no facility to ^{have} a good daily wash or keep clean, made the four inches of weekly bath water assume the beauty of a Mediterranean swimming pool.

There were so many men and so few baths that you had no time to wallow, even in the shallow water.

You changed your ~~books~~ five library books weekly and, with so much time to read, the comfort and pleasure gained from reading was a plus factor to even a prison experience.

The hundreds of illiterate prisoners were unable to avail themselves of any such pleasure. These prisoners never wrote letters and scarcely ever received them, and when they did they would ask someone to read them out to them. Sometimes they asked you to write a reply for them, dictating as best they could their most personal and intimate thoughts.

Visits ~~were~~ allowed every twenty eight days in closed prisons and every fourteen days in open prison ; these ~~were~~ highlights for those men in prison with relatives and friends who still care.

I rarely encouraged visits in closed prison and this meant that I could accumulate my entitlement of Visiting Orders and have the pleasure of more numerous visits on my return to Leyhill.

Letters were limited to two or three a week in closed prisons and more numerous in open prison, the only limitation being here the amount of your prison earnings. There was an issue of about one free letter per week and at that time earnings averaged about 35p to 45p per week, *and letters cost the price of a postage stamp.* Letters were strictly censored in closed prisons but, during my time in prison the rule was relaxed to allow almost uncensored mail in open prison. Men could not afford to both smoke and write many letters.

It was noticeable that most prison officers resolutely resisted the introduction of the no-censorship rule and during my period in prison I noticed a sharpening in the attitude of the prison officers' union, the P.O.A., towards reform.

I frequently read issues of their union journal and was appalled at the reactionary attitude of almost all of the contributors.

It is unwise to generalise when making statements about any group of men, this is especially true when talking, as an ex-prisoner, about prison officers and policeman. It was very noticeable to me that the line between where the policeman ends his responsibility and the prison officer takes over, is covertly hostile.

There is no affinity between prison officers and policeman and when a police officer is handing over a client in a prison reception, the policeman is often treated as though he was himself a prisoner.

The hostility between the hardened and bitter criminal and the prison officers is, naturally menacing.

There are brutal and insensitive prison officers who have real power, there are also brutal and insensitive prisoners, who have another kind of power. Where these two types meet there can be trouble. These officers often exert a kind of tyranny over the more sensitive prisoner and also, unnecessarily, seek to provoke trouble with the tougher men.

Before I was released, I saw dozens of men in prison hospitals who had failed in serious attempts to kill themselves and I was always angry when some hard prison officer assured the bandaged man, "If you really want to top yourself, ask me, and I will tell you how to do it properly." I know it was not always said with intent, but I heard it said too many times to be sure it was not *sometimes meant seriously.*

I had one experience of fighting successfully to stop the flow of blood from the wrist of a man whose wrist was cut so deeply that his ligaments were severed. I managed to save his life by calming him at the same time as I applied a tourniquet. *The* officers *called* an ambulance over from me and rush^{ed} him to an outside hospital.

On another occasion I helped save the life of a man burned in an explosion caused by another inmate mixing *incompatible* fuels in one of the prison tractors. He was so badly burned that I marvelled when he returned to the prison hospital, many months later, to complete his cure.

However, the majority of prison officers assume a tough attitude but realise that it is only possible for them to do their job if they jolly the prisoners along and secure their cooperation. That way, they operate as best they can in mainly bad working conditions and in a non creative, motiveless job.

The prison officers' job rotates between Court, reception, prison landing, workshop and administrative duties. Each of the duties, especially those based on local prisons, is performed in, mainly obsolete and inadequate buildings.

Their work is both tedious and uninspiring, with little opportunity for those officers who wish to be constructively involved with the prisoners' personal and family problems, and who wish to take a more enlightened attitude rather than simply opening and shutting doors.

With few exceptions prison officers oppose prison reformers, especially the Howard League and Nacro, (the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. They certainly oppose the more radical prisoners organisations such as R.A.P. (Radical alternatives to Prison) and P.R.O.P.

Prisoners are also very sceptical about the benefits of the establishment organisations who work for prisoners, and are generally apathetic even towards the more militant organisations.

Ugly incidents such as the 1976 Hull riots arise from a combination of circumstances. The tensions of long sentences, combined with intolerant officers and a high proportion of men with records of violence who have little to lose nurture the seeds of riots.

On one national draft journey from Leeds to London in late 1976, I heard first hand, from a couple of the Hull rioters, who had just come up from being 'down the block' (the punishment cells), the dreadful story of those awful days.

Another aspect of that minority of pitiless prison officers is when they are employed in prison hospitals, where lifers are admitted during trial and in the early stages of their sentences.

Their provocative attitudes can have disastrous consequences on men whose nerves are stretched to breaking point at the prospect of a life time to be spent in prison.

During the several spells I served in closed prisons, *found myself in* all sorts of situations, which I would never have experienced but for the extensive travelling. Some of the experiences *have* left me with permanent memories, *and* the incidents ranged from *tragic* to *humorous*.

On one occasion during a stay in Wormwood Scrubs, where the turn over of prisoners is rapid, I found myself in a cell with two men *who had been* convicted at the same time, and who talked persistently of their offences. I tried, without success, to widen the discussion as they were intelligent young men who had been involved *in* drugs offences and *constantly felt the need* to explain their Middle Eastern mistakes. I had *already* met many men involved in *similar offences* who had been on the same run *drugs* and *was* uninterested in them or their future prospects.

That is, until lights out on the first night. I had preceded the other two into the cell and had taken the top bunk of the two tier bunks, leaving the separate lower bunk *and the single bed for them*. To my surprise and amazement they both got into the broken sprung single bed and proceeded to make sexual love to each other.

Even though I respect *ed* the rights of homo-sexuals and supported their right to sexual freedom and tolerance, my natural instincts were those of a *heterosexual* male and I felt *repelled* and offended that such a thing could take place. I *a witness to such activities* did not want to be *but* obviously *I* had no choice.

On the occasion of my third visit to Armley Prison I arrived on the wing after 9.30.p.m. to find one inmate on a single bed, and one on the top bunk resting his head on his hand and reading. As I was admitted to the cell by the I put my bedding and other possessions on the lower bed and simply announced, "I am a religious teacher and it is my practice to preach a sermon before I settle down for the night. For my text tonight I use the famous words 'rice pudding is soft,'" and proceeded to elaborate on the theme.

The man on the top bunk, *betraying the slightest surprise, solemnly and unsmilingly* said, as I finished, "Amen", and asked me if I would care to "dine with him", *and* handed me a mythical menu from which I ordered a four course meal. He at once rang the emergency bell and when the officer came, shouted through *the spy hole* "I want to order a meal". The Officer peeping through the *spy* hole simply said, "It's too late you silly *Digger* - the last meal was at 5. 0' clock." We both collapsed *with* laughter *and* it was the beginning of three weeks of unreal and hilariously intelligent prison-situation fun.

The third example was in Wormwood Scrubs, *another* *One* of my two cell companions was a typical tough young man whose home was in Brighton and who had been involved in trouble in that area. I had listened to him while we had been in reception a couple of days earlier and I did not have *much sympathy for him*. It was obvious that, by our third day together that he was terribly afraid of being locked up and that, far from the tough *guy* I had imagined him to be, he was *unable to cope with his situation*. *In other circumstances, I would have understood and his problems maybe have been able to help him in some way.*

I had settled down early for the night as there was no room to move around when there are ^{THREE} ~~two~~ ^{TO} a cell, and I was dozing.

I awakened with a start to the Brighton man screaming that he had cut his wrist. He had ~~!!~~ ^{lithe} I am no Errol Flynn and , by the time I got down to ground level, the second man had pressed the bell and a passing officer was on the scene.

I thought the wound was not deep enough to be fatal, and , sure enough, he was back the following morning little the worse physically for his action, but badly shaken. The man needed more sympathy and reassurance than he got from me.

When I occupied a cell by myself, I used to walk every night after 'lights out'; from end to end ^{like} a caged animal until I had measured off a two mile walk.

Rule 43 is a prison rule designed to protect men who are in danger of violence from other prisoners. ^{However} Prisoners have ^{many of} ~~many of~~ their own rules by which they determine their actions in prison. ^{and} Sex offenders, ^{Nothing} children men who are guilty of offences such as ^{treating} ~~treating~~ children, policemen, known "grasses", are among the groups who are at risk of being beaten up when they arrive on a prison wing.

On the other hand, any man sentenced for ^{the} ~~rape~~ ^{of a woman} was given every degree of tolerance, especially if in his trial he had pleaded that, 'she was willing'.

On ^{another} occasion, I had been going to Court every day, handcuffed to a small man, who was on ^a charge of killing a mentally handicapped girl, employed by his family as a servant. The man and his wife, in order to escape punishment, had gone abroad ^{but had} been eventually arrested and then brought back to England for trial.

I disliked the man because he spent most of his time on the way to and from Court pointing out to me that his wife was the guilty one and not him. After he was sentenced, the Judge, having clearly taken into account the amount of time spent in prison abroad by the defendants, awarded, what I must admit seemed to me to be a derisory sentence and when the man came back through reception that night, the men ~~in the cell~~ were incensed. I had long since come to accept the illogicality of convicts assuming to themselves the right to judge others, but it ~~was~~ a fact of prison life.

During the next few days, a plot was hatched to ^{make out their own idea of justice} ~~make out their own idea of justice~~ Although he was on Rule 43, ~~it was~~ allowed to happen simply by officers turning a blind eye after opening up the man's cell. Instead of ~~bringing~~ ^{being} a mug of tea, ^{being} handed us to him by the prisoner on ^{on duty he had} a jug of scalding water thrown ~~over~~ ^{over} him.

The two half hour daily periods of exercise were taken each morning and afternoon by walking around exercise yards which were mostly cement pathways located directly beneath the prison wing, and under the supervision of officers with guard dogs.

The worst of the exercise yards were no more than barren cement and brick wildernesses of decay and unrelieved gloom.

Sometimes, as in Wormwood Scrubs, the exercise yard was a spacious cement playing area, edged on one side by grass and in summer it had a border of flowers.

Also in summer, the multi-racial younger men during exercise periods played a vigorous form of cricket with all the gusto and partisanship of a Test Match but with crude makeshift facilities.

During these games, the rest of us had to beware as the hard cricket ball had the velocity of a bomb.

For several days I walked this exercise yard with John Stonehouse, a former Member of Parliament.

One of the consequences of locking prisoners up for twenty-three hour periods and of sometimes denying them exercise, is that they use newspaper on which to evacuate their bowels. Rather than keep the 'parc el' in a multi-occupied cell, they throw it out of the barred window into the exercise yard below. It is this kind of uncivilised choice that is inflicted on men where the alternatives are equally objectionable. Throwing it out through the bars at least has the virtue in overcrowded unventilated conditions, of preventing unbearable 'fouling of the nest'.

Thus the exercise yards, in hot weather, become insalubrious and evil smelling enough to turn the strongest of stomachs. If the officer on exercise duty was of a particular mentality, he would leave the cleaning up of the yard until everyone was sick or, more likely, immune to the sight and smell.

I used to find it hard to understand the outlook of prison officers standing with their guard dogs in the midst of human excreta. I could hardly believe that most prison officers could not see that bad living conditions for prisoners meant bad working conditions for themselves.

There were a few additional privileges granted to prisoners during my time in prison. Permission was given to wear a wedding ring and a wrist watch and, although possession of these items led to some 'insider' trading, the concessions were appreciated by most men.

An even bigger concession was the right to have a radio in your possession if it did not have a V.H.F. waveband. The cost of replacing the batteries restricted its use and so you carefully selected your favourite programmes. For me most of my programmes were on radio three and four and I was greatly indebted to the B.B.C.

Within two months of my being sentenced, I was on my way to Leyhill open prison. I had my first spell in Wormwood Scrubs during that journey.

The very name Wormwood Scrubs gave me a kind of 'insider' feeling, because the name of that famous London prison sounded familiar to me.

I was buoyed up by the feeling that I was on my way to more bearable conditions and this would help me to endure whatever sentence remained to me.

The National Draft prison transport system is regionalised, and the staging post for the North and South West is the Scrubs where star prisoners (1st offenders) are checked before proceeding to their further destinations.

I arrived at the Scrubs just in time to miss the connecting South West draft, and I settled down to spend my first short spell within that prison.

My first prison experience of an especially tense nature occurred on that journey. We had left Walton prison, Liverpool, where I had spent some weeks after being transferred there from Armley prison, Leeds, and we were journeying south to Manchester and then to Birmingham.

The draft coach was proceeding at a much too high a speed down the M.1 motorway, with a fairly full load of Borstal boys and three adult prisoners including myself, when the front offside wheel punctured, pulling the coach at a frightening velocity towards the central reservation.

As is the practice, I was handcuffed to another prisoner and, after a mile of struggle the driver pulled the coach to a halt only inches from the crash barrier in the fast lane of the M.1.

Within seconds the police arrived to ensure that there were no headline making escapes.

I was less than a column inch away from another sensational news worthy story!

The man to whom I was handcuffed was the crudest man I had ever met in my life. Brutal in appearance, foul in every spoken word, and a frightening, unpredictable character in every sense.

Although I had served my apprenticeship in the building trade and had experience of the toughest building labourers, this man defied definition.

We halted in our journey at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, where we stopped for lunch and , as we were shepherded passed the meal distribution centre to collect our food trays, the comments of my tough fellow traveller directed towards one of the most timid Borstal boys, left no doubt as to his later intentions towards the boy.

Simply he intended to rape him. The 1969 Young Offenders Act laid it down that Young Prisoners and adult prisoners had to be kept apart. I was sure that by putting us all together, young and older prisoners in one locked up transit reception cell, the prison authorities must have been committing an offence.

Combined with the hair-raising near accident and my brutal travelling companion, the food was totally inedible and was left uneaten on the metal trays. In a fit of sheer 'inspiration', 'Brutus' (as I had mentally called him) started throwing the food around and then began to collect the remnants and push the mess plus the trays, plates and crockery, through the barred window on to the exercise yard below .

The he turned his attention to the young Borstal boy who was trying to hard to look brave.

Andy Cunningham was the other prisoner and , like myself, he was not keen to become involved in a tough physical battle.

He is slightly older than me and ' Brutus' was a mid-twenty year old, strong as a bull. Brutus was being encouraged by the majority of the Borstal boys, who were our companions in the locked up communal cell, to execute his execrable intentions.

The ' politician' in both Andy and myself found us a way out of the dilemma. " What are you doing ' bird' for? " I asked ' Brutus' and there ensued a short discussion which effectively ended with ' Brutus ' asking Andy, " What are you in for? "

To which Andy gave what I considered to be the classic politic and desisive answer, " I am in here for murdering two people". The activities of 'Brutus' subsided.

Of course Andy had been sent down with me on charges associated with Poulson.

By comparison with the *other* prisons through which we had passed, Leeds, Liverpool and then Windson Green, The Scrubs had the *atmosphere of* relative 'luxury'. The entrance walls were tiled and clean, the lighting was bright and reflected on well painted cream walls. The reception holding cells were spacious and had *sufficient* room, and seats, for the number of men using them. 'Star' prisoners were kept separate from the regulars, *the latter being* dealt with in Wandsworth Prison.

The procedures were the same as in other receptions, but the *composition* of the incoming prisoners was, as could be expected, more international than were either Leeds or Liverpool. *The* nature of the offences included a range of 'new' white collar offences about which I had not up *til* then learned about. Certainly *I* began to 'relax' and play the system. *as things which as it* emerged and, *and time 2* became incontrovertably certain, was that your crime education, both theory and practice, *was one of* the main achievements of the Prison System.

I *to this* confidently assert that if you balanced out the best rehabilitative work carried out within the prison system, and offset it against the amount of 'crime education' gained by recidivists as a result of being inside, the negative would be three times more productive, in terms of increased successful executed crimes, than any positive achievement of the prison system.

to this
Add, the kind of brutalising experience I have just explained and the whole process can be seen for what it is a system in need of dramatic re-organisation. What point is there in simple containment without progressive purpose, in providing prison officers with boring, tedious jobs in extremely bad conditions, only to announce that the main achievements of the whole system - the creation of more rather than *fewer* criminals, and *these more expert* as a result of the prison experience?

Of course a minority, including myself, would never want to see the inside of a prison again, and ~~it could~~ be used as evidence of the deterrent effect of the system. But we are not representative. *from the George*

before the allocation officer in Walton, Liverpool, I learned that I was going to be allocated to the 'Eton' of prisons, Leyhill in Gloucestershire. I had been told about the Open prison from a hospital inmate in Leeds who painted it in glowing colours. The landing officer in the Scrubs alerted me that 'to-morrow you will be on your way to Leyhill' ~~and so it was~~ *and* I found myself back in reception only one week after I had arrived. It was the parting of the ways for Andy and I; he had been allocated to Ford *Open* prison.

South West

There were only two of us on the Draft Coach until we approached the *main* prison gate, ~~at~~ *where* we were joined by a young man, *giant*, obviously as highly strung as a young fawn, and who ~~had~~ loaded into the coach three musical instruments and a host of other boxes. It was as though he was moving house rather than cell.

We Frank turned out to be a lifer with ten years of sentence behind him and he was on the final stage of his life sentence which ~~was~~ *he* complete in Leyhill.

The other traveller, Tom, ~~was~~ *was in appearance as* solid and relaxed, as the lifer ~~was~~ *was* tense, and ~~he~~ *he* was two years into a seven year sentence for drug-running offences. The journey gave me my first real insight into mature prisoners. Local prison receptions are mainly *crowded* with petty offenders, all serving short sentences against which my six year sentences seemed to be eternity. ~~Here~~ *on the coach* ~~was~~ *was* talking to a man who had been inside for ten years, against which my sentence suddenly seemed much shorter. I was learning that prison sentences are about filling-in time and not about rehabilitation.