

# Reviews

## Book Review

### **The Murder of Childhood**

By Ray Wyre and Time Tate

Publisher: Waterside Press (2018)

ISBN: 978-1-909976-62-7

Price: £22.50 (Paperback)

### **Pick up the pieces: A Survivor's story of life with Ray Wyre**

By Charmaine Richardson

Publisher: Waterside Press (2018)

ISBN: 978-1-909976-63-4

Price: £16.50 (Paperback)

The first edition of *The Murder of Childhood* was written in 1993, with this second edition published 25 years later. As a second edition, it has two additional prefaces and an additional epilogue, but the main content of the book remains unchanged. The book appears to have two main purposes, one relating to Robert Black (a serial sex offender and child killer) and the other to discuss the work that Ray Wyre undertook with a number of high-risk sex offenders, including Robert Black.

Black, who died in 2016, had been serving life sentences for killing four children and abducting a fifth. He was also thought to have been guilty of many other unsolved cases, which for a number of reasons were not pursued. The book begins with the abduction of Laura Turner in 1990. While in prison, awaiting trial for this crime, Ray Wyre enters into Black's life. Black had heard of the work that Wyre was involved in at the Gracewell Clinic (see below) and wanted to speak to him. Over the course of four separate interviews, covering a period of two years the book documents what was said between the two men. In 1994,

following a nationwide investigation, which the book interestingly describes, Black was found guilty of the murders of 11-year-old Susan Maxwell, five-year-old Caroline Hogg and 10-year-old Sarah Harper. In 2011, he was also found guilty of the murder of Jennifer Cardy. Black had a number of previous sexual convictions prior to his capture in 1990, including sexually assaulted the victims named above. As an account of Black's life and the investigation into his killings, this is a compelling and easy to read account.

Ray Wyre, a former probation officer, is attributed with setting up the first residential sex offender treatment centre (The Gracewell Clinic). Prior to this, he had spent a number of years working with sex offenders in prison and firmly believed that at that time, in the 1980s and 1990s, not enough was being done to treat high-risk offenders. The argument throughout the book is that just detaining sex offenders is not going to protect children and so treatment is essential. While the focus of the book is on Black and the investigation, which linked the child murders to him, the reader is also informed about the techniques that Wyre used and the book serves as an important reminder of what was available in terms of sex offender treatment during this time.

The conclusion of the first edition of the book is therefore that not enough was being done to treat and risk manage those sex offenders who either did not receive a prison sentence or who had been released into the community following a prison sentence. This came at a time when the Gracewell Clinic had been

closed on a technicality, largely due to concern and protest from the local community in which it was situated. Sex offenders were thus released into communities with little or no support or monitoring. The prediction that there would be more Robert Blacks seems fair at this juncture.

The new epilogue serves as a brief summary of the changes, which have occurred in the 25 years between the two editions. These include, as mentioned by the book, the Sexual Offence Register (known as the Violent and Sexual Offenders Register (ViSOR)), the use of a risk management approach, which involves multi-agency working (MAPPA), and Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA). The chapter also comments, negatively on the prison Sex Offender Treatment programme (SOTP) and states how this has been recently discredited. It concludes that little has been done to really change the situation and how even now 'there will be more Robert Blacks, and the murder of childhood will continue' (p.290). While I found this book interesting, this second epilogue, in my opinion, is ill informed and far too negative.

What this chapter does not do is to explain in any detail what MAPPA is and the huge resources which go into ensuring that sex offenders in the community are monitored. It does not explain in any detail what COSA does nor does it tell the reader that there is a disclosure scheme, which allows the police to inform relevant people about who sex offenders are and where they live. It does not mention the use of mandatory polygraph conditions in some sex offender's prison licenses, the use of

pharmacotherapy to treat high-risk sex offenders or the fact that there are a number of successful community SOTPs. While it is true that the prison SOTP has been discredited there are now two replacements, Kaizen and Horizon which are based on the Good Lives Model, rather than on cognitive behavioural theory. There are also a number of other prison programmes that are running including healthy sex programmes and living skills programmes and some, which have been adapted for deaf prisoners and those with learning disabilities. While these important programmes and risk management strategies do not offer any kind of guarantee, many are effective and work so that the vast majority of children are protected from predatory sex offenders. This is the more sensible conclusion and the one, which in my opinion, Tim Tate should have reached.

The second book in this review is written by Charmaine Richardson, the wife of Ray Wyre when in died in 2008. Entitled *Pick up the pieces: A Survivor's story of life with Ray Wyre*, it covers the abuse that Richardson suffered as a child at the hands of her Grandfather and her life with Wyre. It also connects with the first book reviewed here, in the sense that it talks about the Black case, the childhood that Black had and to some extent the impact of the Black case of Wyre. Other chapters of the book cover the language, which we should use with children, the work of the Gracewell Clinic and the author's own work as a counsellor. For a book that is only 136 pages, however, it tries to cover a lot and because of this very little is covered in any detail.

While the book is interesting and does to some extent compliment the first book discussed here, it has a very similar negative tone. An example of this can be found on page 77 where the author

argues that since Wyre's death: *'there are no more dazzling conferences bringing people together to share their knowledge about child sexual abuse'*. In the United Kingdom, there is the work and events put on by organisations such as the National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA), Barnardo's and the NSPCC. In addition, other international organisations, which run annual conferences and workshops, include the Association for the Treatment of Abusers (ATSA), which is based in North America and the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abuse (ANZATSA). In 2018, this statement is incorrect. In summary, I would recommend the Murder of Childhood book, but I think only as a piece of history and as an account of the Black case.

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#### Book Review

#### **On prisons: A gaoler's tales**

By Danny McAllister

Publisher: Danny McAllister (2018)

ISBN: 978-1-911195-72-6

(paperback)

Price: £9.99 (paperback)

This new book by distinguished prison manager Danny McAllister, offers personal reflections on the experience of leading prisons. The book loosely covers McAllister's 27 year career, from his initial training following a successful first career as an army officer, through postings at various prisons, including as Governor of HMP Brinsford and HMP Whitemoor, then onto his roles as an area manager and Director of High Security Prisons. The book also has chapters on overseas work in Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, Kosovo and Libya.

Many people working in prisons today will have worked with McAllister and will have admired his many qualities as a senior leader. Those who were not fortunate enough to have had that experience, will get a sense from this book of his exceptional operational leadership and expertise. This is brought to life most vividly in a chapter titled 'Bad day at the office', which describes the riot at Bristol prison in 1990, one of many that took place during that summer as disorder swept through the system. This is an extraordinary story of calmness and courage under fire, told with simplicity and without glorification. Many managers will also take much from McAllister's descriptions of the everyday challenges of prison management. His approach is characterised by bringing a sense clarity and orderliness, to a world that is more often than not messy and complex.

There is also much in this book that will interest more general readers who may never have worked in or even set foot in a prison. In several chapters, including one on 'legends', McAllister writes lively pen pictures of prisoners. These diverse and memorable characters bring to life the wide range of people that are encountered in prisons, their lives and struggles. At times, including in the chapters on suicide and segregation units, their pain and distress is also laid bare. These descriptions, along with introductions to the range of incidents that prison managers encounter, will offer an accessible insight to the uninitiated.

There is also much here for the academic researcher. In recent years, prisoner autobiographies have started to be recognised as a potential resource, albeit problematic, for accessing and exploring the prison experience. They can authentically represent the realities and complexity of everyday