

for drugs offences. The poem tells of the fateful control this drug has, and a footnote informs us that the woman took her own life shortly after her release. Another contribution is from a man who was executed after having spent 22 years on death row (some contributions are, with footnoted acknowledgements, taken from other books).

However, for all the poignancy of some of the content, the absence of any fuller contextualisation of the experiences depicted — and without too some extended commentary on some of the complexities these experiences reveal — something is missed. The reader who knows prisons well with most likely think this. Without it, someone with less knowledge of prisons may be misled or at least less fully informed. The contextualisation and commentary that is provided is that of a sincere man of faith, whose faith is explicitly evangelical. This will deter some because not everyone will find scriptural quotations, prayers and the offer of spiritual redemption helpful or even relevant. The very succinct references to criminology will frustrate the knowledgeable reader. The less knowledgeable reader will need the discipline to use this book to research elsewhere the issues that arise.

It is therefore likely that book will be picked up and read more frequently by those who know little of prison. However, it is not an 'introduction to prisons' or even a vade mecum for prospective or new chaplains. It is, to coin a phrase, towards the 'kaleidoscopic' rather than 'encyclopaedic' end of the information continuum. As such, it is a book that will probably be dipped into rather than read straight through — which the

clearly detailed 'contents' enables. It is first and foremost the reflections of a life spent working in prisons as a chaplain. It provides a reflection of the witness this man of faith has borne and his evangelical convictions.

William Payne, former Prison Governor

The Maze Prison: A hidden story of chaos, anarchy and politics

By Tom Murtagh OBE

Publisher: Waterside Press

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Price: £40.00

The tensions over the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in early 2019, have highlighted how fragile and complex the political situation is in the province. Whilst the Troubles are over, an unsteady peace was forged that still simmers with conflict beneath the surface. During the period of time labelled 'The Troubles' very few places or institutions were more synonymous with the chaotic political manoeuvres, violence and fatalities of the time, than the Maze Prison.

Tom Murtagh has brilliantly captured the culture and tactics of the often opposing factions of prisoners, who over a period of 29 years completely undermined the authority of the prison staff and managers who were attempting to provide a decent custodial environment for them. He has also managed to detail perceptions of the political wrangling that the Northern Irish Prison Service HQ and Ministers were engaged in with these factions in custody and

the community. Their aim was to try to assist attempts at a peace process in the province by offering concessions to prisoners as the Maze, unlike many prisons, was not isolated from the rest of Northern Irish society but was in fact a social pawn in various propaganda campaigns by all sides. Murtagh describes in epic detail (at times on a day by day basis) how this further undermined managers and staff already dealing with an almost impossible situation.

Murtagh worked in prisons in Northern Ireland and England for almost 40 years, including governing various prisons in both jurisdictions and ending his career as Area Manager in the English Prison Service. Crucially, he was Head of Security and Deputy Governor of the Maze, which provides the uniqueness of this book; although many accounts have been written of life inside the Maze by former Republican and Loyalist prisoners little has been offered from the perspective of those working there. Murtagh spent ten years researching documents and interviewing people with experience of the Maze and has produced a fascinating and well evidenced tome that runs to almost 800 pages covering the 29 years of the Maze largely in chronological order. The book can be read cover to cover as a historical account but also be used for academic reference following the extensive research Murtagh has undertaken.

The story of the Maze is full of extreme experiences and incidents. This book describes how staff witnessed the hunger strikers being pressurised by those powerful in the Provisional IRA to continue to the point of death even when they knew they would not achieve their aims. It includes elaborate mass escape attempts,

occasionally involving guns, that were facilitated by the way staff were intimidated and undermined by the situation that was allowed to develop. It also describes how the prison was essentially totally destroyed by rioting prisoners attempting to force the government into mass releases due to lack of suitable accommodation. In this respect, Murtagh provides first-hand accounts of how a few brave staff, Spartan-like, prevented a huge number of prisoners escaping from the prison. He also describes how the Army, who patrolled the perimeter and did not understand the culture of imprisonment, used excessive force when resolving that incident. The latter provided a rallying call for prisoners held in the Maze and a propaganda boon for those outside.

Moreover, Murtagh details the intense pressure on staff working in the prisons of Northern Ireland. Not only were they subject to an immensely rising population, unsuitable accommodation, serious assaults, intimidation, understaffing and corrupt colleagues, they were also subject to death threats, assault and murder within the relatively small and close-knit outside community. During the period described in the book 29 members of prison staff were murdered and the police foiled 6 murder attempts on the author, one attempt to kidnap his wife and child, and one attempt to murder his wife with an explosive attached to her car. It was only at this point he relented and returned to the English prison system.

Importantly the book also describes how staff, managers, headquarters and the whole system was effectively conditioned to allow prisoners to separate into discrete units, consolidating their power and influence over staff,

and frustrating the aim of imprisonment in every sense. The conditions ultimately obtained by prisoners in the Maze are also relevant to how the prison system, particularly in England and Wales, manages the present day terrorist threat from within prisons.

Overall, this book provides lessons that are relevant to practitioners, students, academics and even politicians, wishing to draw lessons from history on dealing with high risk terrorists, understaffing and new recruits, corruption and conditioning, and the importance of considering the views of prison service professionals when engaging in significant changes that can impact the lives of those who work and live in prisons.

Paul Crossey, Deputy Governor at HMP Huntercombe

Your Honour, Can I Tell you my Story?

By Andi Brierley

Publisher: Waterside Press (2019)

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The latest in a line of acclaimed turn around stories from Waterside Press, *Your Honour, Can I Tell you my Story?*, provides a unique insight into the author's personal journey through care and incarceration, to youth justice practitioner. The author shares his experiences openly, bringing abstract concepts to life through a reflective lense. This creates a unique exploration of criminal justice narrative alongside lived experienced.

The author, Andi Brierley, gives an emotional account of his experiences of care as a young

child, the prison system as a child and adult, and his later desistance from offending in this candid and authentic text. Andi, now a married father, works as a Children Looked After/Care Leaver Specialist within Leeds Youth Offending Service. With his qualifications, experience, and work ethic he has now dedicated his career to supporting young people involved with the YOS.

The book aims to give readers the opportunity to explore the author's childhood trauma, alongside his socio-contextual situation and the subsequent reactive pathway of addiction, offending, and incarceration. The author provides a personal account and perspective on desistance with an honest and emotional inner dialogue that distinguishes the text from many others. The overarching themes of the book explore current criminal justice policy narratives of risk, choice, and consequence in the trajectory of the author's lived experience. The author paints a highly convincing argument in a heavily researched and debated area; that is to address the criminalisation and incarceration of young people.

The author begins his story with a succinct introduction, this chapter goes beyond its implied introductory title of 'Who am I?' and gives a detailed insight into the family experiences, and structural and ecological factors involved in his early life. The next chapters then develop into the common cyclical narrative of care, crime, addiction and imprisonment in which the author shares his experiences of navigating through, and surviving the prison system. The final chapters of this book discuss the author's road to desistance, including finding work after custody, volunteering and