

Book Reviews

Prison Architecture — Policy, Design and Experience

Edited by Leslie Fairweather and Sean McConville, pub. Architectural Press 2002.

Prison architecture cuts to the core of effective penal policy and prison building design. It is an increasingly important area of architecture because of the impact of unparalleled increases in prison populations throughout the world and the huge expense of construction and operation.

Almost everyone who enters a prison finds the experience daunting. There is something inherently uncomfortable in entering a place which deprives fellow human beings of their liberty. This is true whatever the type of prison and whatever its design. Yet the designs are far from accidental. They represent the accretions of more than a century of penal policy. Every prison poses a challenge for architects because of the tension between building a place where people are sent as punishment and yet where they have to live in the hope of finding new purpose in life.

Good prison design allows good relationships to develop between staff and prisoners, provides space and opportunity for a full range of activities, and offers decent working and living conditions. The Victorian radial prisons had much to recommend them. Staff and prisoners felt safe because of their good sight lines and the tax-payer benefited because fewer staff were required. In contrast, the prison designs of much of the post-war period, like post-war architecture in general, have proved shoddy, expensive and just a little inhumane. For all these reasons it is not surprising that prison architecture — and the philosophies that it reflects — have been the subject of much academic debate.

Prompted by an international symposium on penal ideas and prison architecture held in April 1998 which included architects, academics, prison administrators and staff, former prisoners, private sector providers and penal reformers, this book brings together a truly international range of views, experience and knowledge. The editors present a completely fresh look at the policies and designs of today and the future, as well as exploring important themes in current penal philosophies and legislation.

But while architecture can permit or prevent good penal practice, it is not the whole story. Prisons are living institutions. People can make them work or they can make them fail. Security is more than high walls, barbed wire and sniffer dogs. All prisons can be run in an oppressive manner. Equally, the best governors and staff will make a go of things no matter what the physical conditions or restrictions of the site.

Prison design is not the be-all and end-all — but as a topic of immense importance and research this book bears important testimony.

*Revd Canon Alan R. Duce,
Chaplain HMP Lincoln.*

English Prisons: An Architectural History

By Allan Brodie, Jane Croom and James O'Davies. Published in 2002 by English Heritage (297 pages) ISBN 1 873592 53 1.

This book is the result of the first comprehensive survey of the prison estate in the modern era. It was conducted by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England (RCHME), which merged with English Heritage in 1999. The Strangeways riot and the resulting Woolf Report gave impetus to the project: immediately after the riot RCHME staff from the York office were asked to make a

photographic record of the damage. The new approach to prison design, following the publication of the Woolf Report, led to the authors' survey of every prison and their research into their (our) history and the compilation of an archive of over 5,000 photographs and over 250 files. Incidentally, this archive can be seen through arrangement with the National Monument Record in Swindon (Great Western Village, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ).

This is a magnificent book, copiously and excellently illustrated with diagrams, plans and colour photographs (some of which are stunning images). But it is much more than a coffee table book: it is a scholarly history of prisons and imprisonment. It begins with a summary of prisons and punishment before 1775 and breaks down into six eras the development of the modern estate. The watersheds are well known: John Howard's report, the advent of the Pentonville design, the particular features of military and convict prisons in the mid-19th century (Jebb *et al*), the early years of the Prison Commission and the early modern period up until 1961.

What marks this out as being a particularly good book is the way it weaves into the history of the design and the bricks and mortar (and latterly, all the new materials of modern construction, including ships and RTUs — both with their place in the book) the important pieces of legislation and the different schools of regime philosophy. What came across as particularly striking to this reader is the account of the impact of the Prison Commission. Established in 1878, it overthrew the brutalism of Jebb's radial designs and a regime based upon 'hard labour, hard fare and a hard bed'. The Commission also began to question the supreme confidence of the early to mid-Victorians, although we will not come completely from out of their shadow until we vacate their buildings. It was

the social reforms as much as the penal changes which helped improve prisons.

The Public Health Act 1875 was in certain respects as significant as the Prison Act which established the Commission. It highlighted the importance of preventing infection from contagious diseases and as a result saw the building of separate reception and healthcare facilities which were previously located in the basements of the radial designs. The laundries and wash-houses of 31 prisons were improved or rebuilt by 1890. It is also interesting to note that it was in this era that the first anti-suicide design measures were introduced: wire meshing between the landings, raised railings, the removal of gas lighting from cells and the replacement of bell handles with electric bell-pushes.

The Gladstone Report of 1895 and the pursuant Prison Act of 1898 led to further change: within three years all treadmills (including the productive ones — that is, ones used to mill flour) were closed and their buildings converted to workshops. More impressive was that with the provision of workshops came the provision of work: by 1902, 33 per cent of the local prison population worked in association outside their cells. Other symbolic change took a little longer: it was not until 1921 that the prison 'crop' and broad-arrowed clothing were abolished and conversation allowed at work; compulsory attendance at chapel ended in 1924; and canteens and paid work introduced in 1933.

But these are details cherry-picked from the book: read it and find your own. The main text concludes with two chapters on the modern era (1961-1990 and 1990-1998). It finishes with a series of appendices and inventories including a list of local prison closures (1878-1931); all the prisons in the current estate by address and map grid reference; and a list of all local prisons in England and Wales 1777-2000. This book will please everyone who has an interest in the variously shaped and often peculiar buildings we have established to

imprison our fellow men and women. I defy the casual reader not to peruse it longer than casual intended; and, at the other extreme, it will also delight the prison 'anorak' (if there is such a fanatic).

William Payne

National Probation Directorate.

Situational Prison Control: Crime Prevention in Correctional Institutions

By Richard Wortley. Cambridge Studies in Criminology 2002

This welcome book by the head of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University, Brisbane, who worked as a prison psychologist for nine years, examines the control of problem behaviour in prisons from a situational crime prevention perspective. Following the success of applying situational crime prevention concepts to community settings, Richard Wortley argues that the same principles can help to reduce levels of assault, rape, self-harm, drug use, escape and collective violence in our prisons. He proposes a two-stage model of situational prevention, which moves beyond traditional opportunity reduction. In a closely argued and well illustrated section, he attempts to reconcile the contradictory urges to control prison disorder by 'tightening up' and hardening the prison environment on the one hand, and by 'loosening off' and normalising it on the other. 'Situational Prison Control' will be of interest both to students of prison dynamics and of crime prevention, as well as to practitioners struggling to make sense of the complexity of prison dynamics.

The book provides an analysis of disruptive influences on prison life. It is designed to assist academics and practitioners in considering alternative approaches to control. Although a controlled environment is a preferred state for prisoners, staff, administrators

and politicians, it can be argued that if development and growth are to take place in custody there should be a slightly uncertain undercurrent to a prison setting. This uncertainty enables prisoners to take personal responsibility, rather than being controlled at all times. Certainly in the prison I governed for the last ten years of my service, managing chaos was a regular theme. If we take people seriously, value them as persons and consider them capable of transforming development into pro-social behaviour then prisons must be able to take risks within the safety of relationships between prisoners and prison officers. There is little evidence in this valuable book of a recognition of this dimension.

The situational approach to crime control has given us new insights into criminal justice and prisons, using clearly researched evidence to provide a basis for assessing current environments, developing safer ones and responding appropriately to events and actions, in ways which avoid destabilisation.

Risk management is an important skill for Prison Service managers. Writing about 'dynamic security' in the 1980s, Ian Dunbar emphasised the need for managers to concern themselves with:

- the Individual (staff and prisoner);
- the development of Purposeful Regime Activity; and,
- encouraging and developing relationships between staff and prisoners.

Using ideas intuitively developed by experience and sensitivity, many current senior practitioners in the England and Wales Prison Service have managed and coped with situations that should be unmanageable on paper. This book attempts to present this intuition in a science, perhaps demonstrating something of the gulf between academics and practitioners. As an ex-prison psychologist, Richard Wortley should be well placed to bridge that gap, and one longs for the

practitioner's book arising from the insight shown in this one.

The argument is sound, but will it be heard in the right places so that practice is affected? Perhaps when the next major breakdown occurs in prisons there will be reference to this book. Richard Wortley's model is based on controlling factors that lead to misbehaviour, whilst reducing opportunities for such disruption. Rather than seeing these as conflicting approaches the author works with both dynamics as different stages of personal and situational interaction. The appropriate balance between precipitation control (control of misbehaviour) and opportunity reduction can result in a more dynamic response to issues of concern. Examples of the two approaches are set out below.

Precipitation control factors:

- ❑ Controlling prompts — awareness of weapons, reading the warning signs, staff providing good modelling behaviour, domestic quality furnishings.
- ❑ Controlling pressures — reducing inappropriate conformity by dispersing troublemakers, participatory management, grievance mechanisms and reducing the size of wings.
- ❑ Reducing permissibility — good staff led induction, ownership of living space, a sense of community, confrontation in wing meetings, personalising prisoner-prison officer contact.
- ❑ Reducing provocations — personal control over lights and heat, reducing overcrowding, personal decorations, personal keys, noise absorbing surfaces.

Reducing opportunities for disruption:

- ❑ Increasing the perceived effort — vandal proof furnishings, control gates, staggered cell release, structured activities, restrictions on fruit juice.
- ❑ Increasing perceived risks — screening visitors, CCTV, good

supervision in wings, civilian staff, defensible space principle in wings.

- ❑ Reducing anticipated rewards — removing targets such as personal property. Providing protection for vulnerable prisoners, marking property, single cell occupation, PIN for phone cards, ignoring manipulation.
- ❑ Increasing anticipated punishments — formal charges, removing privileges, increasing social condemnation through wing meetings, making an example by punishing ringleaders and publicising the punishments.

Many more factors are listed in the book. Separately, they are the sort of measures most prison managers would find useful to improve the atmosphere in any prison. The model is helpful in showing how they fit together in a rational way, to give a sound justification for their use. Such measures often provoke accusations that a manager is soft on prisoners, but when seen as part of a process of reducing precipitation factors they make much sense. Getting from A to B is the secret of combining good management and leadership. Prisons have often been accused of having too many managers and not enough leaders. Richard Wortley provides a way of combining two essential elements of prison governance. I commend this book to all practitioners. I hope there will be a follow up to make the ideas readily accessible at all levels in a Service renowned for not reading much but passing on its culture and practice through its rich oral tradition.

Tim Newell,
former prison governor.

TV Programme: Tomorrow La Scala! Directed by Francesca Joseph (2002).

Victoria plans to put her struggling opera company on the map by

producing Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* in a maximum-security prison. She intends to take the residents of 'psycho city' and use them to produce a popular, media-friendly hit. This is the promising premise of this BBC film, which proved to be a surprise festival hit before its TV screening in December 2002. As one would expect, things do not run according to plan. A lack of talent, a lack of commitment and various relationship problems between the participants all beset the production. However, the show does go ahead and the first night marks the end of a personal journey for those involved.

The film takes a much lighter, more human interest in prisons than many other films and has some glorious moments. Victoria's pretensions constantly get the better of her as she constructs a set where a balloon symbolises hope and a blob of red paint depicts the post-apocalyptic tundra. The film has also been strongly tipped to win the BAFTA for best impression of a lighthouse in a TV drama. However, does the film have anything meaningful to say about prisons?

The film is set in HMP Seaworth, supposedly a maximum-security prison. However, it was filmed at Haverigg, a medium security prison. This shows in the film and it seems strange that this maximum-security prison does not even have a wall around it. Why couldn't they just say it was a medium security prison?

The film also includes some incongruous scenes of extreme violence including the rape of one prisoner by another and a subsequent revenge attack on the perpetrator. These scenes move the story on very little and one needs to question why they were in there at all. Indeed, the rape scene takes place in the drama studio, to which these maximum-security prisoners apparently have unfettered and unsupervised access after rehearsals. These scenes are so extreme they alienate the viewer; and seem so unnecessary because there are other more subtle scenes which illustrate the aggression and emotional instability of

the prisoners. Perhaps intended to be a counterpoint to highlight the humanising effects of the collaboration for all involved, the extreme nature of these scenes make them counter-productive in this function. Ultimately, these scenes appear unnecessary, unrealistic and out of touch with the rest of the film.

The prisoners are depicted as a group of oddballs, volatile nutcases or weirdoes, but it could hardly be said that anyone else in the film is exactly normal. During the story, they all have to face up to their own vulnerability and responsibilities. The scenes of Jordan and Charlie confessing their crimes, Sidney going into a frenzy over the late tea break or Walter bursting into tears with gratitude at the final meal all take us beyond the surface of the characters and into their experiences. These scenes are more powerful than any graphic violence in depicting their personalities and potential.

Victoria initially sees the prisoners purely as an opportunity to exploit, wanting to use 'the raw energy of the prisoners' to enhance the performance and attract publicity. On a personal level, she is uncomfortable with them. She panics when Sidney loses his temper and raises the alarm. She says of the prisoners, 'I think they're just Neanderthals. I think they're buffoons. I think they're animals'. In a critical scene, she loses a bracelet and automatically assumes that one of the prisoners has stolen it. However, as they support her through the ups and downs of the rehearsals, she starts to see them in a different light. By the final meal, she apologises for the accusation she had made and finally tells them; 'I think you're all very different. I probably had an idea about what you would be like before I came but you're all very different. You're talented and funny and patient, I think actually, and some of you are quite scary. But I like you'. Like the viewer, Victoria confronts her prejudices and sees the individuals for who they are. It is in this gentle altering of presumptions and perceptions that the film is at its best.

The key member of staff depicted is Kevin, the Lifer Wing Principal Officer. He initially appears as a bit slack and cliché-ridden, ordering his shepherd's pie over the radio net and counselling the company to 'be friendly but don't be their friends'. However, in time his approach becomes more apparent. We see his skill as he calmly talks down Sidney after he flies into a frenzy over a delayed tea break. He shows care and a sense of fair play as he defends the prisoners against accusations of lack of commitment ('You can't get any more committed than these lads'), and against Victoria's suspicions after her bracelet goes missing. He also defends and maintains the production against his own colleagues countering suggestions that control is being lost, saying 'I've never seen the men so happy'. Although he is depicted as fallible, limited and at times wrong he is also a compassionate, open-minded and honest person. This is a valuable antidote to the usual depiction of prison officers as ineffectual fools or bullying tyrants.

Prison food has never had a good reputation, but one of the most exceptional aspects of this film is the imaginative use of food to depict the pains of imprisonment and the loss of freedom. Following the auditions, we see the prisoners taking sloppy, unappetising food from the servery whilst subjecting each other to the casual brutality of prison life. They return to eat alone in their cells angry, frustrated and upset. In contrast, the opera company eat as a community, quaffing wine and enjoying a rich and lavish diet. This emphasises the distance between their lives and experiences. Later, they join together for a meal before the first performance, where each person is provided with their favourite dish. The prisoners are initially uneasy until finally accepting the normality and luxury of communal eating. This marks a coming together of the individuals as a group, casting aside their roles and prejudices. This is the freedom that the performance has given them all.

The film chooses to try to say something about the depiction of prisoners in the media. Victoria initially sees the sensational, media attractiveness of the prison setting. Later, when a journalist, Emma, arrives an interview is set up with one of the more talented prisoners. Impressed though she is with his singing talent, she is more interested in intrusively inquiring about his offence. Victoria goes full circle, criticising Emma for her exploitation of the situation. Just as Victoria's criticisms seem hypocritical, so does the film's depiction of an exploitative journalist. Given the inexplicable insistence on this being a maximum-security prison and depicting extreme violence, this film really cannot claim the moral high ground.

This is a gentle film that has much to commend it as a more human look at prisons. However, its more sensational aspects ultimately undermine it. This is a good film but it could have been more.

Jamie Bennett,
DSPD Manager HMP Whitemoor.

Albert Park, Middlesbrough — an approach to Restorative Justice

**The Restorative Prison Project.
Available from the International
Centre For Prison Studies, King's
College London, 8th Floor, 75-79
York Road, London SE1 7AW —
free for small numbers, contribu-
tion towards costs appreciated.**

What connects Middlesbrough Council, Kings College London, the Northern Rock Foundation, Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Probation Service, the Inside Out Trust and HM Prison Service? Answer, an imaginative restorative justice project which has redeveloped a local park (Albert Park in Middlesbrough) to wide public acclaim.

The project had a number of practical and very positive results:

- ❑ prisoners were given the opportunity to make reparation to the community, to develop skills and to regain their self-respect;
- ❑ the local community has been involved in the planning, will have the use of an excellent community facility and have seen that prisoners can make positive contributions to society;
- ❑ the local council has built up closer relationships with the prisons; and,
- ❑ funders will be pleased with the permanent return on their investment grants.

So far, so good, but the 24 pages of the report has a lot of space taken up in giving information about the partners. Two pages are given to press cuttings that almost exclusively are about the funding with just a minor mention of some of the work undertaken at one of the prisons. The final three pages describe the work undertaken by prisoners. The prisoners came from three prisons: Deerbolt, Holme House and Kirklevington Grange who, between them, have places for approximately 1,500 prisoners. We are not told how many took part in the project.

While the funding and contributions in kind are carefully listed, the contribution of prisoners and prison staff has not been quantified either in kind or time. The inputs from prisoners and the staff that have trained and supervised them to date cover:

- ❑ furniture for the café, community room and reception/offices;
- ❑ restoration of six clinker built boats;
- ❑ refurbishment of metal railings;
- ❑ creation of flags and bunting;
- ❑ production of exhibition screen that will divide the café and general circulation area in the Visitor Building; and,
- ❑ artwork and frames for permanent display in the Visitor Centre.

The benefits for the individual prisoners seem to be confined to

receiving photographs and feedback about comments from users of Albert Park. It isn't clear whether any of the prisoners did any of their work in the park itself. There is a sense of desperation on the part of the report writers when Prisoner Benefits are listed in one column as 'Ownership — photographs etc.' In the future there are plans for community service for prisoners from Kirklevington and other projects that could include work in the park.

Overall, this report has the feel of a document produced to satisfy the needs of current and future funders and to provide a platform for the activities of the major partners. I wish there had been some individual stories — from prisoners, staff, community members, funders and the partners about their experience. This would have enlivened and enhanced communicating the real gains of the project.

The Albert Park work scores very heavily on the second and fourth objectives of the Restorative Project: prisoners working for the benefit of others; and a new relationship between the prison and its community. But these don't take us any further forward from the old style community service. The first and third objectives are prisoners' work with victims; and a new basis for resolving conflicts in prison.

It is not reasonable to expect that any individual project would address all four or even three of the objectives and I understand that the Restorative Prison Project is setting up projects that will develop training for prison staff in all three prisons to enable the second objective to be achieved over the next two years.

As a secondary victim of a serious crime (my younger daughter was murdered), as a member of the team who worked with Tim Newell on his Restorative Justice Project, and having spoken at a number of courses and conferences where staff from the criminal justice system formed the major part of the audience; I am saddened at the fear I find within the system of involving victims. At one prison I visited I was told very sharply that 'there

would be nothing that prisons could do to benefit victims'. I hope the Restorative Prison Project will tackle the first objective and facilitate contact between prisoners and their victims in appropriate ways.

The introduction of restorative justice practices in prisons is going to be an organic rather than a revolutionary process. I look forward to hearing that the prisoners and staff at Deerbolt, Holme House and Kirklevington will be given the opportunity to have victims of crime involved in their victim awareness and empathy courses and, if it is suitable, to have contact with the direct victim/s of their crimes. For too long the criminal justice system has operated in a way that keeps the people who are most affected by crime as far apart as possible. With a current prison population of over 70,000, there is plenty of work to be done.

Lesley Moreland,
author of 'An Ordinary Murder',
Trustee of The No Way Trust. This
review was first published in 'Vista' —
the Probation Journal.

TV Programme: Feltham Sings Channel 4 TV December 2002

Feltham Sings, shown on Channel 4 in December 2002, is the astonishing result of a collaboration between Simon Armitage, Dextrous and the prisoners and staff of Feltham Young Offender Institute. The film uses music, poetry and conversation to describe the lives of those who live and work at Europe's largest youth prison.

The film starts with an image of a peacock, a motif repeated throughout. At first this appears like some kind of comment on the shallow preening of youth, like the film is presenting some psycho-sexual explanation for youth crime. However, it quickly becomes apparent that this is not a pretentious or self-consciously arty film. It tells things as they are and as the people experience them. The peacocks are not symbols — they are real, roaming

round the grounds annoying the residents. They are part of the life of Feltham.

We are confronted with the cold reality of the establishment and the residents; Feltham holds 700 prisoners aged 15-21 and 75 per cent will re-offend. Paul McBride, a prisoner serving 12 months for burglary, explained the depressing inevitability of prison for him; 'I knew I would go to prison from a young age ... I've been going to visit my uncle in jail, my big brother in jail for years'. As he sings, the future does not appear any brighter 'Let me out tomorrow but I'm back again on Saturday'.

Despite the grim histories of many of the prisoners, hope shines through. As Cass Galton stands in the gloom and rain, he defiantly sings of his own potential; 'This is me, I know you don't see what I see'. Kenroy Cole, the Head of the drug counselling service, provides a role model and an example of what can be achieved by these young people. He tells of his own history of involvement in crime and his subsequent decision to change when his son was born.

However, not all of the prisoners are from deprived backgrounds or are in the early stages of a potential criminal career. James Catty is a fish out of water in all senses. A New Zealander, travelling during a gap year before University, he was caught taking drugs into a nightclub and admitted he had more at home. He ended up with a 12 month prison sentence. He reads his poem, with a sense of his own isolation, the unexpected role he has had to adopt and his surreal predicament, describing himself as 'A Kiwi with a peacock outside'. He provides an interesting diversion, but his presence also emphasises that his story is the exception. For most of the others, it is a familiar story of broken families, poor parenting, abuse, institutional care, drug and alcohol misuse and gradually escalating crime.

Life in prison is often portrayed in the media as either a hell-hole or a hotel. This film tells a far more complex story. Paul McBride complains about

the lack of privacy in using the toilet in a shared cell and sings that prison 'Ain't no picnic, ain't no holiday'. However, one anonymous voice admits that if they had not been sent to prison, they would probably be dead from a drug overdose or gang violence; 'It's probably a blessing in some way'. Spooks MC sings the ten commandments for a prisoner at Feltham, running from mind your own business to don't pretend to be tough. This is a glorious insight into prison culture. Officer Dave Worley also joins in, showing the empathy, fair-mindedness and strength required of a role model officer. In doing so, he did a great deal to challenge public perceptions and prejudices about prison officers.

Robin Skilbeck and Terrel Theusday are both serving six-month sentences for car theft but their motivation and behaviours are diverse. Robin suffered abuse and institutionalisation from a young age and appears to suffer a range of emotional problems. His song 'Nightwatchman' describes the experience of being monitored as at risk of suicide and the experiences that have shaped his life. Terrel on the other hand saw himself as the breadwinner in his house after his father left, but was then angry when his mother remarried. In his song 'On Road', he states his economic motives; 'It's not about crime, it's about earning a living'. These two songs highlight the diverse routes young men take into crime and the different motivations that drive them. In doing so, it casts some light on the complexity of the issues.

The film does not attempt to excuse the prisoners or to glamorise them. Terrel Theusday's greed and unrealistic expectations are clear when he says that crime is a temporary measure until he can get a job, but 'I don't want to work unless I'm earning sixty grand'. Cass Galton also fails to grasp the wider implications of drug dealing, seeing it as being a simple contractual transaction between adults. He is ignorant of the social implications of his behaviour even though it is right in front of him to see. He also weakly

tries to argue that most victims of crime have done something wrong in their lives so that this is some kind of rebalancing, a karma. However, he is certainly no angel of justice. Kenroy Cole considers where this failure of morality comes from. He sees its source in a lack of positive role models and the failure of the community to teach morality; 'You can teach good, but it's not a reflex'. He compares these young men to feral children who have been taught to survive according to the rules of their own game. It is our role as a community and individuals to educate and encourage the young to respect their responsibilities as citizens.

Following the New Year's Eve shootings in Birmingham, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Tarique Ghafoor, blamed a 'backdrop of music' for influencing alienated young men. He blamed rap artists for glamorising guns and violence. However, this documentary shows the power of music to give a voice to those disaffected youth and to make people listen. Music is an influential medium and this film shows its power to explore the challenges facing these young people and our community. When Feltham sings, we should all listen.

Jamie Bennett,
DSPD Manager HMP Whitemoor.