

## BACK MOST DAYS

## An officer's viewpoint

When I walked into HMP Pentonville in 1989 as a New Entry Prison Officer it was my first experience of what a prison looked or felt like. Prior to this, I had spent 10 years working for British Rail at King's Cross and had passed the prison on many occasions but had never known anyone who had been in the prison, either as an employee or inmate.

When I entered the establishment for the first time I was struck by its brooding physical presence, which creates a strong impression. After 4 years that impression is still with me.

In terms of impressions, one cannot fail to acknowledge the personal skills, attributes and flexibility of prison staff dealing with a wide variety of inmate personalities and problems. Staff inject firmness, fairness, compassion and humour to resolve situations which might suddenly and can sometimes be potentially explosive. Most inmates are aware of and can perceive staff qualities and place an enormous amount of trust in them. They usually accept their word that they will deal with their demands. Prison is intended to be a last resort and yet provides accommodation, meals, warmth, canteen and medical services. The values, rules and regulations of Prison life are skilfully applied and in the main are readily accepted by inmates.

Consider all of this when listening to critics of prisons when they say that they fail to halt recidivism and offer little that is positive and constructive. Inmates arrive in prison because society has failed, often in provision of education, employment, housing and health care. In a general sense society does not seem to care. The idea that privatisation may lead to better services because it responds to the needs of people cost effectively is not necessarily so. At least in prisons we feel we know what is needed and wanted, and we can try to respond.

However, when an inmate is discharged all the effort we have made seems to become dissipated by an inmate's way of life in society. Very often the individual is battling alone and there are few support networks. There are also few resources to reinforce the values patterns of positive behaviour and few rewards for such. The individual is

often left with little alternative but to survive in the only way they know how.

It may not seem appropriate for the Prison Service to go on the offensive and demand of society what is needed but we should enlighten critics and external pressure groups, including government and politicians, that we are the recipients of society's failure and perhaps inappropriate policies. We deal with offenders for limited periods only, and I suspect our effect is strong between

reception and discharge, where our role abruptly ends. I can only conclude that the overall responsibility for the personal and social education of our people lies partly with the state. The role of the Prison Service is limited and should be seen as such but be rehabilitative. However it should not be the butt of all criticism. The debate needs to assume a wider and more helpful perspective.

Mick Daly - Prison Officer

## CANTEEN PRICE LIST

Prices correct on 5th january 1994

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DRINKS		PICKLE	.51	TOFFEE CRISP	.24
BOURNVITA	.90	PILCHARDS	.40	NUTS 50g	.25
CANNED DRINK	.27	PINEAPPLE	.32	NUTS 500g	1.49
CARNATION MILK Lg	.60	RYVITA	.41	PENGUIN BISCUITS	.12
CHERRYADE	.39	SALAD CREAM	.79	POLO MINTS	.13
HAPPY SHOPPER COFFEE	.79	SARDINES	.37	SNICKERS	.25
COFFEE TOP	1.81	SAUCE RED	.83	TOFFEES	.50
COLA	.41	SAUCE BROWN	.83	TWIX	.23
COMPLEAT	1.33	SHORTCAKE	.41	LOCKETS	.35
DRINKING CHOCOLATE	.93	SHORTIES	.33	TOBACCO	
IDEAL MILK Sm	.40	SINGLE FRUIT JAM	.75		2.00
LEMONADE	.39	SPAGETTI	.29	BONDMAN (25g)	1.20
MARVEL	1.24	STEWED STEAK	1.25	BENSONS (10s)	
UHT MILK	.36	SUGAR	.72	CIGARS	.28
NESCAFE Sm	.77	TOMATOES	.22	CLAN (25g)	2.00
NESCAFE Lg	1.49	TUNA	.50	CLIPPER LIGHTER	
ORANGE SQUASH	.75	MISELLANEOUS		CONDOR	1.88
LEMON SQUASH	.75			GOLDEN VIRGINIA	1.66
PURE ORANGE JUICE	.69	AIR MAIL LETTER	.34	FILTER TIPS	.49
RIBENA Lg	1.89	BATTERIES PP9	1.80 1.24	MATCHES OLD HOLBORN	.07
ROBINSONS	1.11	BATTERIES R20S X2			1.66
SOUP	.20	BATTERIES R14S X2 BATTERIES R6S X2	1.08	PAPERS HMP PAPERS RIZLA	.10 .12
TEA 100s	.82		1.24		1.96
TEA 40s	.64	BKANK CARDS BRITHDAY CARDS	.40 .40	HILTON (25g)	3.59
TEA 25s	.39	MUGS	.80	HILTON (50g) SUPERKINGS (10s)	1.12
5-PINTS MILK	1.12	WRTING PAPER	.63	PAPERS LIQUORICE	.14
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GENERAL PRODUC	1.	PENS	.03	TOILETRIES	
		PHONE CARDS	2.00	ARIEL	1.83
BAKED BEANS	.27	STAMPS 1st	.25	BABY OIL	1.41
BAKED BEANS & SAUSAGES	.58	STAMPS 2nd	.19	BABY LOTION	1.48
BOURBON CREAMS	.36	STAMPS make up	.01	BIC RAZORS	.47
CHEESE	.34 .45			COLGATE 100ml	1.37
CHOPPED HAM WITH PORK	1.19			DAZ	1.58
CORNFLAKES	.29			DEODERANT	1.07
CREAM CRACKERS	.29			EUCRYL	.86
CUSTARD CREAMS	.52			HAPPY SHOPPER SHAMPOO	.59
DIGESTIVE BISCUITS	.52	BOUNTY BAR	.26	HEAD & SHOULDERS	1.50
EGGS X6	.32	YORKIES	.35	MULTIVITS	1.65
FRUIT COCKTAIL	.49	СНОМР	.10	NIVEA CREAM	1.15
FRUIT SHORTCAKE	.41	CHOCOLATE BISCUITS	.73	SILVKRIN SHAMPOO	1.17
GINGER NUTS	.47	CRISPS	.17	SOAP	.42
HONEY Lg	.43	CRUNCHIE	.25	TALC	.98
HOT DOGS	.43	EXTRA STRONG MINTS	.23	TIMOTEI SHAMPOO	.94
LUNCHEON MEAT	.45	LOVETS	.30	TOILET ROLLS	.12
MACKEREL MARGARINE TUB	. <del>4</del> 3 .37	FRUIT POLO	.15	TOOTHBRUSHES	.29
MARMALADE	.74	FOX'S FRUITS	.50	ULTRABRITE	.56
		FOX'S MINTS	.50	CREST	.69
MIXED FRUIT JAM	.59	HALL'S MENTHOLYPTUS	.33	MCLEANS	.66
MORNING COFFE	.41	KIT KAT	.22	VOSENE SHAMPOO	.83
MUESLI	.67	LION BAR	.24	HAIR GEL	.65
PEACHES	.39	MARS	.23	AQUA	1.35
PEANUT BUTTER	.83	MINTOES	.50		
PEARS	.52	MOJOS	.01		

From HMP Leyhill Grateful thanks to The Leyhill News