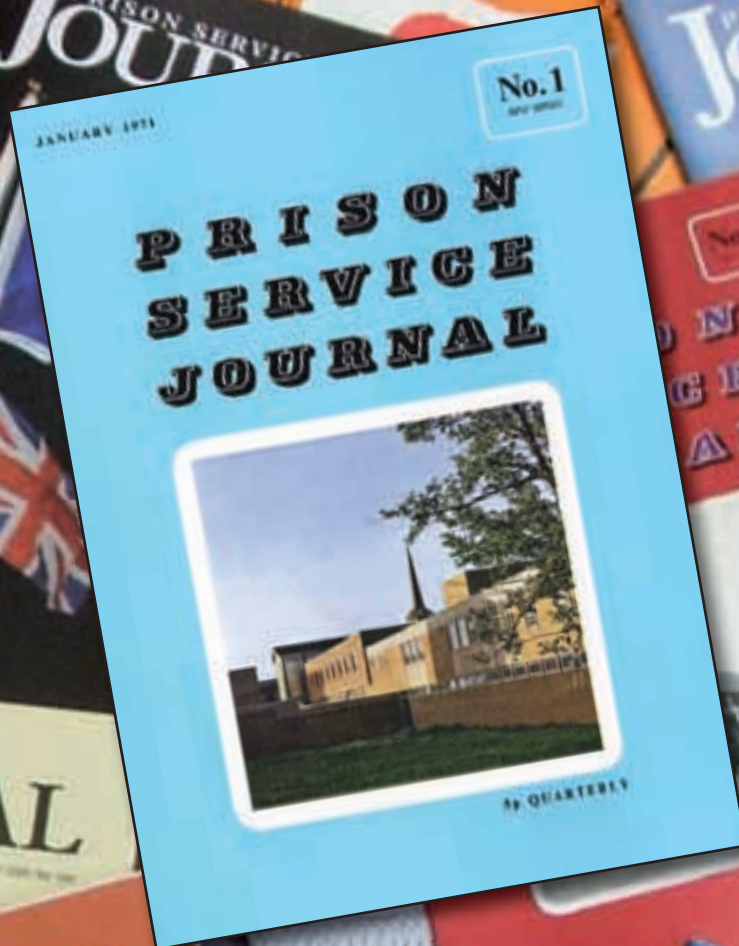


# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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**200th Edition**

# Editorial Comment

The *Prison Service Journal* was originally launched in 1960, edited and produced within the prison system with the aim of providing: 'an opportunity for comment and discussion in any topic relevant to the function which the Prison Service performs and the field in which it operates'. In January 1971, the 'new' *Prison Service Journal* was brought into being and this edition is the 200th in that series.

It is not only prisons that have undergone major changes over the last forty years; wider society has also been transformed. The editorial in the first edition of the 'new' *Prison Service Journal* explained that it had come into being as a result of wider developments, being as it was; 'linked with the decimilisation and metrication changes now almost upon us'. For those alarmed or confused about the effects of these changes, the editorial went on to helpfully advise that; 'Readers will observe that 5p is the new name for the old price'.

Looking back at that first edition, it is striking how much has changed in the world. There have been transformations in economics (consumerism, globalisation, insecurity of employment), family life (smaller households, diversity in family structures), information technology, transport, and the democratisation of social life (challenges to the subordination of women and minority groups, decline of deference and elitism)<sup>1</sup>. This set of transformations are inevitably contested, imprecise and difficult to categorise, but are broadly characteristic of the contemporary period in western liberal societies, which has been termed as 'late modernity'. These changes have permeated deeply, altering the ways in which institutions act and the functions they fulfil.

In prisons, late modernity has seen a decline in the liberal elite and the welfarist rehabilitative ideal, replaced by more punitive and populist policies which have facilitated the expansion of prison populations and the ever-growing web of criminal justice<sup>2</sup>. The practices of criminal justice professionals have also become increasingly shaped by globalised approaches, in particular managerialism. This is seen not only in the panoply of targets and audits that are now deployed, but also in the ways that 'offenders' are categorised and managed through actuarial approaches to assessment and interventions<sup>3</sup>.

This edition of *PSJ* attempts to explore the nature and effects of these transformations in the criminal justice system and wider society over the last four decades. Five articles from the first edition are republished here alongside specially commissioned reflective pieces by distinguished commentators. The topics addressed include: the role of prisoners, prison officers and prison governors, as well as the operation of the parole system and the representation of prisons in the media. These issues address some of the most fundamental aspects of the operation of the prison as a social institution, both internally and externally.

Together, these articles are able to capture and illuminate some of the ways in which prisons have been transformed. In his response to Andrew Rutherford's proposals for the employment of ex-prisoners in the criminal justice system, Christopher Stacey, a project manager for UNLOCK and himself an ex-prisoner, is able to illustrate how such opportunities have dramatically expanded in recent years both inside prisons, with schemes such as the Listeners, and also outside with a myriad of organisations employing released prisoners in providing rehabilitative and resettlement services. However, Stacey is alert to the ways in which this enables ex-prisoners to find quality employment whilst also reinforcing marginalisation from mainstream work. Former prison governor Shane Bryans provides a closely researched account of how the optimistic social welfarism evident in Frank Ainsworth's original publication on the training of assistant governors, appears alien in today's managerialist world. Nicola Padfield of University of Cambridge offers up to date research on parole to compare with Keith Bottomley and Alan Bilton's 1971 account. In this she is able to show how the system has become characterised by growing sentence lengths, more restrictive release and greater use of recall. The dramatic nature of social change is perhaps most acutely illustrated in Yvonne Jewkes' response to Alan Rayfield's article on the representation of prisons in print and on TV. Jewkes, of University of Leicester, rightly contrasts the limited choice of the early 1970s, with the sprawling and uncontrollable mass media of the 21st century.

The articles are not, however, all about change. In many instances they also highlight continuity and the

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1. Garland, D. and Sparks, R. (2000) *Criminology, social theory, and the challenge of our times* in Garland, D. and Sparks, R. (eds) *Criminology and social theory* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  2. Garland, D. (2001) *The culture of control: Crime and social order in contemporary society* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  3. Feeley, M. & Simon, J. (1992) *The New Penology: Notes on the Emerging Strategy of Corrections and its Implications in Criminology* Vol.30 No.4 p.449-74.

perseverance of the localised idiosyncracies of prison life. As has been noted in society generally, globalised change is filtered through local cultures and practices, so that there is a process of adaptation and accommodation<sup>4</sup>. In prisons, despite the changes that have taken place, many features remain ostensibly unchanged, including in many cases the architecture, routines and practices. Continuity is particularly noted in the response by Peter Bennett, recently retired Governor of Grendon and Springhill, in his response to an article by D W Manning, who in 1971 was a prison officer at Grendon. Bennett notes how the democratic therapeutic communities at Grendon have proven to be durable and resilient despite changing political and economic pressures. In other pieces, continuities are also noted, for better or worse, including the frustrations of prisoners facing parole and the antagonistic, polarised, often superficial representations of prisons in the media.

The process of reflection prompted by compiling this edition has provided a perspective on the grand narratives of social change but also illuminated a more subtle process through which features persevere. Some of those features are problematic including questions about social power and the essentially punitive nature of imprisonment. However, what also remains is the ability and desire of individuals to craft a space for progressive, moral practice.

After two hundred editions, the *Prison Service Journal* itself has to question its position in the contemporary penal landscape. Its purpose remains to provide a reflective space for practitioners, academics and other interested people to engage in dialogue about professional practice, policy development and the role of prisons in society. That purpose remains as vital today as it was forty years ago.

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4. Kennedy, P. (2010) *Local lives and global transformations: Towards world society* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.