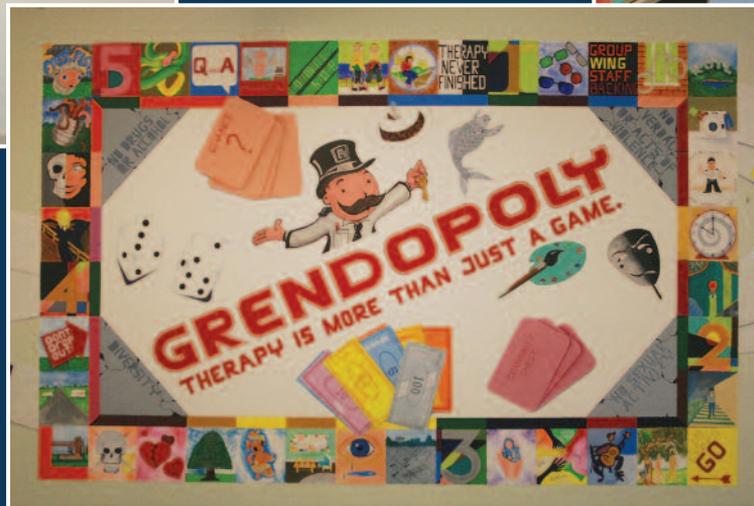


# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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*Breaking the Cycle*

# Reviews

Book Review

***What Works in Offender Rehabilitation: An evidence-based approach to Assessment and Treatment***

Edited by Leam Craig, Louise Dixon and Theresa Gannon

Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell (2013)  
ISBN: 978-1119974574 (hardback)  
978-1119974567 (paperback)  
Price: £75.00 (hardback) £36.99 (paperback)

This book, quite simply, is an essential read for those interested in knowing how best to rehabilitate offenders, the importance of which cannot be underestimated. Rehabilitation is central to the Coalition Government's criminal justice policy with a rehabilitation revolution being at the core of the December 2010 Green Paper 'Breaking the Cycle — Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders'. This was taken forward in the January 2013 Consultation Paper 'Transforming Rehabilitation: A revolution in the way we manage offenders'. The government's plans were then set out in May 2013 when 'Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform' was published.

While there may be many disagreements about the government's approach to achieving this revolution in rehabilitation one cannot doubt the government's commitment to reducing reoffending. As Chris Grayling, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, states in the Ministerial Foreword to the Transforming Rehabilitation Consultation Paper:

*'Reoffending has been far too high for far too long... We need a tough but intelligent Criminal Justice System that both*

*punishes people properly when they break the law and also supports them to get their lives back on track, so they don't commit crime again in the future... Offenders often lead chaotic lives: Broken homes, drug and alcohol misuse, generational worklessness, abusive relationships, childhoods spent in care, mental illness, and educational failure are all elements so very common in the backgrounds of so many of our offenders. And right now, we are failing to turn their lives around ... Transforming rehabilitation is my top priority'.*

Rehabilitation, consequently, is central to the National Offender Management Service's business priorities with the 'tagline' in the NOMS 2013-2014 Business Plan, above 'Our Statement of Purpose' being, 'preventing victims by changing lives'. Indeed, the second element of NOMS' Statement of Purpose is 'we will work to protect the public and reduce reoffending by delivering the punishment and orders of the courts and supporting rehabilitation by helping offenders to reform their lives.'

Given the above context, this book offers the evidence on how best to rehabilitate offenders. It contains chapters written by internationally renowned academics and practitioners but also contributions from those who are commencing their research and/or clinical careers.

All relevant areas of offender rehabilitation are covered. Theoretical models are explored: Risk Need Responsivity and Good Lives. Sexual and crimes of violence are considered, including chapters on

intimate partner violence, those with schizophrenia who behave violently and female sexual offenders. Discussed also is What Works with juvenile, personality disordered and psychopathic offenders; those who have committed anger-related, arson related or substance misuse related offences; offenders with intellectual disabilities and, those on supervision in the community. There is a chapter on treating offenders in a therapeutic community and one on multi-agency approaches to effective risk management. Contained within the book are ethical, legal, cultural, social and psychological components of offender rehabilitation with contributors from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Norway.

The approach adopted by the editors is summarised in Tony Ward's foreword where he writes 'the heart of any rehabilitation initiative is the attempt to persuade individuals to reorientate (and at times replace) their core values and the way in which these values are instantiated in their lifestyles. It is simply not enough to target criminogenic needs and levels of risk when designing intervention programmes.' Embraced within this book is a much broader approach to rehabilitating offenders than when offending behaviour programmes were first developed in the late 1990's and early years of the 21st century.

Very much countered is the 1970's position<sup>1</sup> that there is very little that can be accomplished when seeking to prevent offenders from engaging in criminal activity. Those with a rehabilitative frame of reference and a positivist view of human nature always knew that this position did not reflect the reality of some offenders choosing, on leaving prison, not to continue with their

1. For example, Martinson, R. (1974). What Works? — Questions and Answers About Prison Reform, *The Public Interest*, 35: 22-54.

criminal lifestyle and opting out of a life of crime. How to assist those offenders who do want to change and who have the capacity to do so, is captured within this book.

In the book's introductory section, there is a historical overview of 'What Works' by McGuire. This contains summary information from 100 meta-analyses or systematic reviews of individually focused outcome studies on reducing criminal conviction or anti-social behaviour published between 1985-2013. Following this Jonson, Cullen and Lux examine the importance of public support for the rehabilitation of offenders and the different dimensions of public response to crime: prejudiced, punitive, progressive and rehabilitative.

There are two chapters on risk assessment, one by Bonta and Worwith which includes consideration of clinical judgement/professional discretion vs quantitative risk assessment tools and another by Craig, Beech and Cortini. Craig, Beech and Cortini conclude their chapter by saying that a number of promising actuarial and structured approaches to sexual and violent risk assessment have been developed and evaluated. For the sexual offender sexual (deviant) interest, intimacy deficits and affect dysregulation have consistently identified sexual recidivists. For violent offenders, antisocial attitudes, values and beliefs, rule violation, poor insight, impulsivity and substance misuse are the salient reconviction risk factors.

The twelve chapters on offender rehabilitation include a review of cognitive-skills programmes by Hollin, Palmer and Hatcher and an evaluation by Tew, Harkins and Dixon on what works in reducing violent re-offending in psychopathic offenders. The debate continues on intervention efficacy with this difficult to treat

group whose risk of reoffending remains high.

Three chapters explore what works in secure settings with Shuker, in his chapter on therapeutic communities, commenting that treatment is more likely to be effective in an organisation where genuine and appropriate responsibility and ownership for personal recovery can be given to the person receiving this assistance. This applies to all rehabilitative programmes and in forensic mental health settings is represented in the movement in some services from psychiatric rehabilitation towards the adoption of a recovery focused model.<sup>2</sup>

The book's final section of five chapters are on cultural factors and individualised approaches to offender rehabilitation. Included are contributions that offer an Australasian perspective on offender rehabilitation. Firstly, Thakker considers the development of programmes for indigenous offenders: Aboriginal (including Canadian Aboriginal offenders), Inuit, Maori and Pacific and Torres Strait Islanders; while, secondly, Day and Collie provide an overview of different types of Australasian programmes.

This book is therefore a comprehensive, valuable and cogent reference source on offender rehabilitation that has an international perspective. One should also not forget too, that there is an argument<sup>3</sup> that offending behaviour programmes and individual interventions support desistance processes rather than cause them with perhaps more important social rehabilitative factors being obtaining a job, marriage, supportive peers and receiving training or an education.

**Professor Michael Brookes OBE**  
*Birmingham City University.*

Book Review

***Sport in Prison: Exploring the role of physical activity in correctional settings***

By Rosie Meek

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 978-0-415-85761-1

Price: £80.00 (Hardback)

'PE can make a major contribution to the physical, mental and social well-being of prisoners.'<sup>1</sup> This quote from the Prison Service Order for Physical Education (PSO 4250) features early on in Meek's book, yet it is astonishing to discover that this is the first book to fully explore the role of sport in prison and the potential impact it can have on the rehabilitation of prisoners who take part. With re-offending rates at a high level, Meek's suggestion that sport offers an alternative way for prisoners to take risks, feel excitement, make new friends and, critically, engage them in behaviour change in the first place, seems obvious.

Meek is an established and credible psychologist, with a strong interest in Criminology and prisons in particular. The book, which forms part of a wider series by Routledge on sport and culture, is set out and reads like a psychology textbook or extended journal article, but at the same time the subject is engaging, and the prose surprisingly free enough from jargon, to peak the interest of the average curious layman.

It is the fact that Meek draws from more than just Psychology literature that makes the book so accessible. She also brings together research from Criminology, Criminal Justice, Sociology and Sports Studies, along with her own up to date original research in prisons across England and Wales, conducted over a number of years. The research recorded in the book

2. See Drennan, G. and Alred, D. (2012) *Secure Recovery: Approaches to recovery in forensic mental health settings*. London: Routledge.

3. For example, McNeill, F. (2012) Four forms of 'offender' rehabilitation: towards an interdisciplinary perspective. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 12, 251-264.

1. HM Prison Service (2009) *Physical Education PSO 4250*.

draws on interviews, surveys and focus groups with prisoners, prison gym staff, stakeholders and senior managers in the prison service, and is supplemented with analysis of HM Inspectorate of Prison reports and other broader data.

Despite the fact that most research in this area is concentrated on young people and the role of sport in the community rather than in prison, Meek pulls together 14 relevant, succinct and informative chapters. She starts with an overview of the history of physical education in prisons, highlighting the variations across the prison estate with regards to the opportunity to take part in sport, before moving on to the specific role of sport in relation to female and younger prisoners, and separate chapters on the positive impact sport can have on employment, education and rehabilitation.

The chapters of particular interest include those detailing Meek's research into football and rugby academies at HMP and YO1 Portland, and the significant affects felt by prisoners, staff and managers from the operation of these academies. In addition, the chapter regarding the risks of providing sport in prison, bravely identifying some of the potential negative effects on prisoner behaviour that engaging in competitive activities can have, such as increased narcissism and illicit use of steroids, shows that while an advocate of sport in prison, Meek can remain objective and focussed on the appropriate application of sport. Finally, the short chapter focussed on the characteristics of prison officer Physical Education Instructors (PEIs) and the unique opportunities they have to interact with prisoners, was interesting and clearly demands further research as suggested by the author.

In light of current tough economic conditions, with sport sitting outside of the payment by results agenda, it is essential that, as with art, the impact of sport as a

way of engaging with prisoners, helping them to rehabilitate or uniquely simply improving their health, is fully understood, and this book goes some way to achieving that. It is undoubtedly useful as an academic text, but also is written in a style that a PEI, Head of Reducing Re-offending or Governor could easily pick up and use to shape their thinking in a practical way. Meek has balanced literature from a combination of diverse fields and her own research, in an original, interesting, yet easily readable format for all types of readers.

**Paul Crossey is Head of Young People at HMYOI Feltham.**

Book Review

***Her Majesty's Philosophers***

By Alan Smith

Publisher: Waterside Press (2013)

ISBN: 978-1-904380-95-5

(Paperback)

Price: £16.50 (paperback)

Novelist and Guardian journalist Alan Smith draws on experiences teaching English and Philosophy in a Category C prison to paint an absorbing picture of prison life. Smith interweaves accounts of the triumphs and failures of 'Her Majesty's Philosophers' in his class with his own views on the purpose of prison and prison education.

Smith's prison career began modestly after an informal approach to cover a Shakespeare class. Admitting his sole knowledge of prisons was shared pre-conceptions that they were 'where ... demons are...degenerate, violent, predatory' Smith recalls nervously entering prison and being struck by the physical environment. He describes the collection of 'gates ... metal fences topped with wire, a brick cell block and numbered

windows' and realising 'how dreadful prison was'.

From such inauspicious beginnings Smith embarked on a 14 year career teaching Philosophy in prison. Throughout this period he kept copious notes on each interesting comment, perspective, analogy and story offered by his students. This book is largely a knitting together of these stories into a narrative on the lives of long term prisoners.

These powerful yet humble stories are the book's great strength. Smith's prisoner descriptions are rich and raw; eliciting feelings of sympathy and annoyance in equal measure. We share his delight at those obtaining university places and empathise with individuals rebuilding lives after release. All too often we subsequently share his disappointment as a significant number return to custody. Thus Smith gives insight into both halves of prisoner worlds; the ordered prison structure on one side and the disordered life to which many return on the other.

In the classroom Smith portrays likeable and witty individuals who are creative and academically capable. He feels affinity with his students, admits to being intellectually inferior to them and sees similarities between his past and theirs. In the structured world of the prison classroom at least, Smith attempts to narrow the gap between those in prison and those outside and admits to a preference for teaching prisoners over university students because of their attitude and aptitude for learning.

Smith mimics the immediacy of prisoner language to paint his picture of the prison classroom. He revels in describing the larger than life characters he has met, often focusing on the dichotomy between their physical size and imposing stature and the sensitivity they display in class. He describes with wit and enthusiasm his

students' tendency to apply analogies from their fragmented, violent pasts to form complex philosophical arguments and describes in fond terms the way they translate Shakespeare's language into modern street slang.

Smith also replicates the dry humour of the prison environment. Partly in reverence to the much cherished prison story teller, Smith's delivery imitates the banter of prison landings. Humour and story telling performs dual roles in prisons; increasing an individual's standing within the group and masking weakness, fears and true emotions. Having experienced this humour and banter first hand, Smith reflects it in his writing to add depth to his prison insight.

Yet in amongst the varied compliments Smith pays his prisoners, he never shies away from the brutality and violence they have experienced and inflicted outside his classroom. He casually refers to a student having killed a police dog and another in prison for violence with an axe. His matter of fact delivery is designed to reflect prisoner perception that extreme violence is a routine occurrence. Smith emphasises the stark contrast between the reasoned and measured arguments prisoners create in class with the destructive power they have demonstrated outside it.

Violence is not always to the fore but permanently lingers in the background. Smith's narrative thus reflects the uneasy reality of life in prison wherein a threat of violence pervades periods of relative calm. Smith admits to surprise at the ease with which he became accustomed to living in this tense environment. It was only with hindsight he acknowledged the draining effect it had on his personal life.

Smith offers a very personal insight into the effects prison work had on him. He candidly describes the blurring between his lives inside and outside prison. He admits to

eventually growing apathetic and sceptical towards prisoner issues, to becoming disillusioned at the changing objectives of the education department and becoming increasingly drained by the work. He finally resigned as the negative impact began to outweigh the contribution he could make.

Unfortunately the strength of this book is also its limitation. At the outset Smith dedicates a chapter to exploring the concept of 'truth' in a bid to explain whether prisoner stories amount to fact, fiction or something in between. This unfortunately highlights a credibility issue; the witty and engaging stories which are intended to bring 'fresh perspectives to the minutiae of prison life' cannot be relied upon as anything more than best recollection.

The purpose of the book is also unclear and it offers no solutions to the issues it raises. For instance Smith questions the purpose and priorities of prison education, offering a view it has become too obsessed with making prisoners employable to the detriment of harnessing their natural abilities. However he offers no viable alternative or direction forward save for a few lines on specialist education prisons.

Smith's book therefore amounts to a lively collection of prisoner caricatures but is nonetheless an engaging and thought provoking read. In the same way the series *Porridge* was not factual; many practitioners consider it the most realistic representation of prisons and cherish it for its portrayal of prison humour. Smith's book offers a similar insight and re-opens a debate about the contribution qualitative sources can make to our view of life behind bars.

**Chris Gunderson** is an Operational Manager working for NOMS Business Development Group.

Book Review

***Inter-war penal policy and crime in England: The Dartmoor convict prison riot, 1932***

by Alyson Brown

Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan (2013)

ISBN: 978-0-230-28218-6 (hardback)

Price: £50.00 (hardback)

The Strangeways Riots of 1990 still loom large over the contemporary prison system in England and Wales. For 25 days, prisoners took control of one of the largest prisons in the country, sparking a series of copycat incidents in other prisons and drawing the world's media to the scene. The subsequent inquiry conducted by Lord Woolf delved deep into the causes of the disorder, looking beyond the violence to the root causes and the state of prisons at the time. Woolf's recommendations were only partially followed up but nevertheless provided a positive and lasting legacy. This book, by Alyson Brown of Edge Hill University, revisits the 1932 riot at Dartmoor prison, which, like Strangeways, was a significant public, political and professional watershed but is now largely forgotten. Drawing upon recently released public documents, Brown offers a 'microhistory'; using a detailed examination of a particular event in order to illuminate wider themes and issues. In doing so, she provides a fascinating and revealing insight into the penal policy of the inter-war years.

The inter-war years are sometimes seen as a golden age of imprisonment. A low and declining prison population, combined with the liberal intentions of important personnel such as Alexander Paterson created the impression of a period of benign, patrician reform. It was the Dartmoor riot which broke out in January 1932 that threatened to undermine this façade. Although relatively short-lived, the riot did lead to a total loss of control, with aerial

photographs of the burning prison making this visible to the world. However, the mutiny was suppressed by force and then through the deployment of the processes of criminal law and official inquiry.

In her careful analysis of the public records, Brown is able to reveal the oppressive aspects of the regime and the poor conditions endured by prisoners. This raised questions of legitimacy and undermined the confidence and trust of prisoners. However, unlike the Woolf inquiry, these grievances were contained and given limited airing in the legal processes, the official inquiry or the press reports. Instead, the Du Parcq report blamed a small group of hardened prisoners,

the character of the Governor (who had unusually for the time come through the ranks and was therefore seen as lacking the right breeding), and the local culture of Dartmoor itself. By managing and limiting the public discourse about the riot, fundamental questions about penal policy were avoided and the political and public storm died away.

Under the surface though, Brown is able to excavate some of the tensions at play within the prison system of the 1930s. Class and elitism can be seen both in the haughty response to the Governor of Dartmoor, but also in the gulf between the intentions of the officials and the reality on prison landings. There were also changes in society with the threat of capitalist

urbanization and its dark underbelly of organized and serious crime. Uncovering these issues illustrate the intersection between the peculiar local culture and context of prisons and the broader social changes taking place at the time.

This book offers a fascinating insight into the hidden history of inter-war penal policy. Given the uncertain future of Dartmoor prison itself, it is also a poignant reminder of the iconic position that prison holds and how its sometimes troubled history profoundly reflects the history of English prisons as a whole.

**Dr Jamie Bennett** is Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill.

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