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Editorial Comment

Prison Service Journal has a long and productive partnership with the Perrie Lectures Committee. Each year, articles are published based upon the annual lectures. This is a partnership of which the *Prison Service Journal* is proud.

The Perrie Lectures is an annual event which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector and all those with an academic, legal or practical interest in offenders and their families. It is hoped that the event will contribute towards improving the care of offenders, and advancing penal policy, in its broadest sense. These are aspirations that are shared by *Prison Service Journal*. The Lectures are named in honour of Bill Perrie, who retired from the Prison Service in 1978. He worked as a prison governor for 32 years, latterly at HMPs Hull, Long Lartin, and Birmingham. He was noted for his contribution to the development of hostels, working out schemes, and regimes for long term prisoners.

The 2014 Lectures took the title of 'Making sense of life sentences'. As Dr Nicola Padfield, from University of Cambridge, explains, there are many different forms of indeterminate sentence now available to the courts and prisoners serving such sentences now make up 16 per cent of the population. This increase is partly accounted for by the expansion in the use of the sentence through new measures such as indeterminate sentences for public protection. However, the growth also reflects longer tariffs, or minimum terms for those sentenced and more restrictive approaches to decisions about release made by the Parole Board. Distinguished Liberal Democrat politician and Chair of the Justice Select Committee, Sir Alan Beith MP, makes a challenging contribution to this debate. He is careful to avoid polemic but draws upon a wide range of parliamentary and expert reports in order to question the current approach to life sentences. He asks whether the laws on homicide should be reformed, whether sentencing should be reviewed, whether prison interventions should be strengthened and whether post-release supervision is effective. He concludes by questioning whether the criminal justice system is the best way to promote community safety or whether other approaches should be taken. Despite the measured and considered nature of this contribution, it undoubtedly poses some challenging questions. Lucy Gampell draws upon her experience as a Parole Board member and former Director of Action for Prisoners' Families to make a case for strengthening rehabilitative interventions for life sentence prisoners and support for their families, both in custody and after release.

This edition also includes an interview with Juliet Lyons, Director of the Prison Reform Trust, who was the recipient of the Perrie Award. This award has been presented annually since 1995 to the person the Perrie Lectures Committee consider to have done most to promote an understanding of the work of the Prison Service and pushed forward the development of penal policy.

This edition of *Prison Service Journal* also focuses on the topic of open prisons and release on temporary license. These issues rose in public prominence following a series of serious offences committed by prisoners on ROTL in 2013. This has brought a greater degree of public scrutiny and raised questions about the practice and even the purpose of open prisons. This is touched upon by some of the Perrie Lecture contributors but is also explored from a number of perspectives in articles and interviews. Two high quality international academic papers, from Victor Shammas and Dr. Leonidas Cheliotis, examine the nature of control and order in open prisons and on temporary release. Without the physical controls that exist in other prisons, these institutions develop forms of control which are both instrumental (there are rewards and punishments attached to compliance) and normative (values of conformity and trust are fostered so that prisoners self-regulate). The interviews, with a policy maker, a prison governor and an ex-prisoner, discuss the recent events and subsequent changes, in England and Wales, but also the wider value of open prisons.

These articles and interviews raise important questions about the balance between public protection and rehabilitation. They illuminate the role of open prisons as a means of reforming prisoners, ameliorating the harms of imprisonment and promoting desistance through trust and responsibility. However, these also sit in relationship to other pressures that exist in the contemporary world. This includes greater concern about risk, such as anxiety about crime and prisons. Solutions are often seen in greater punitiveness, harsher sentences and less facilities for those incarcerated. Further, the private sector and technology are often looked to for the answers. These pressures can all be detected at play in the current debates about open prisons and temporary release. This edition does not set out to offer definitive answers to those questions, if indeed that were even possible, but it does intend to open up these issues and offer an opportunity for reflection and debate.