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**Understanding the Past II**

# 'Major H' — the life and times of a Victorian Convict Prison governor<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Considering the importance of the role of governor in the English prison system, surprisingly little has been written either by or about such individuals.<sup>2</sup> As Johnston comments, 'there has been little consideration of prison staff who implemented [...] regimes on a day-to-day basis'.<sup>3</sup> Former governors appear to have been somewhat reticent about publishing their memoirs, especially those serving in Victorian convict prisons. Whilst 'gentlemen convicts' appear to have fallen over themselves in the rush to publish their usually anonymous and sensational memoirs in the 1870s and 1880s, little is known about the governors under whose watch such writers served their sentences.<sup>4</sup> This article investigates the life and times of one such governor; Major Robert John Fayer Hickey, who was Deputy Governor at both Portland and Dartmoor convict prisons, and subsequently Governor of Dartmoor prison for a period of just under two years in the early 1870s, in an attempt to discover what such individuals did during their tenure.<sup>5</sup> This article, based upon contemporary records which reflect Hickey's work and character,

investigates both his life and times, with his career being seen as typical for that of a governor of a convict prison; ex-military with many years of experience at running a tightly disciplined unit of men, followed by several years' experience as a deputy governor.<sup>6</sup> It discusses many of the problems faced by such individuals; how to govern and maintain order over a body of often ill-disciplined, fractious and disparate group of offenders, ranging from illiterate members of the lowest stratum of society to so-called 'gentlemen convicts'; middle-class fraudsters who had fallen spectacularly from a privileged background. It also discusses the successes and failures of 'Major H' within the wider context of a relatively new prison regime; that of penal servitude within a convict prison, which was experiencing considerable change and resistance at the time of his appointment.

## Background to the Victorian Convict Prison system

By the mid-nineteenth century, the use of transportation (the major method of dealing with the punishment of indictable crimes since the last quarter

1. "Major H" is a reference to the self-penned moniker used by Hickey in a flyleaf dedication in a copy of the anonymously written prison memoir of a 'gentleman convict' (since identified as Edward Bannister Callow) entitled *Five Years' Penal Servitude By One Who Endured It* (London: Robert Bentley, 1877), owned by one of the article's authors. The dedication reads 'To the "Brothers Sillar" from "Major H.", late Governor of Dartmoor, as a trifling token of the pleasure he has derived from their society and in grateful recognition of many acts of kindness shewn him by them.' July 8th 1880'. Hickey is referred to several times in the text of the book and was obviously pleased to have achieved a certain amount of literary fame, as the book was a best-seller in its day, running to several editions, and also being referred to in the Kimberley Commission Prison Report – see 1878-79 [C.2368] [C.2368-I] [C.2368-II] *Penal Servitude Acts Commission. Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the working of the penal servitude acts. Vol. I.—Commissions and report, index, p. 1276.*
2. The occasional autobiographical account of a former governor has been written in recent years – see for example Duffin, C. and Duffin, H., *Jail Tales: Memoirs of a 'lady' prison governor* (Wairarapi NZ: Cumulus, 2011).
3. Johnston, H., 'Moral Guardian? Prison Officers, Prison Practice and Ambiguity in the Nineteenth Century', in Johnston, H., (ed) *Punishment and Control in Historical Perspective* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008):77-94, p. 78.
4. For examples of such prisoner autobiographies, see Anon [E. B. Callow], *Five Years' Penal Servitude by one who has endured it* (London: Bentley, 1877) or Anon, *Revelations on Prison Life by one who has suffered* (London: Potter, 1882). For further details of the life and times of Edward Bannister Callow, see Cox, D. J., 'Public and private perceptions of Victorian respectability – the life and times of a 'Gentleman Lag'', in *HMP Prison Service Journal no. 232* (Special Edition, *Small Voices*, July 2017): 46-52.
5. The authors would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to Brian Dingle, Graham Edmondson and Paul Finegan of Dartmoor Prison Museum for their invaluable help and enthusiasm whilst researching this article. Dr David J. Cox would also like to thank Dr Richard Ireland for a fascinating discussion about the role of the early Victorian gaolers of Carmarthen Gaol – for further details, see Ireland, R. W., and Ireland, R. I., *The Carmarthen Gaoler's Journal 1845-1850 Parts One and Two* (Bangor: Cymdeithhas Hanes Cyfraith Cymru/The Welsh Legal History Society, 2008 [vols. VIII and IX]), and Ireland, R. W., *A Want of Good Order and Discipline: Rules, Discretion and the Victorian Prison* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).
6. The two main contemporary documents are Hickey's *Governor's Journal, 1871-2* (Dartmoor Prison Museum) and *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol.1 The Report and appendix* (London: HMSO, 1871).

of the eighteenth century) was being questioned by both the UK government and the Australian authorities in terms of cost and effectiveness. Almost 160,000 men, women and children as young as nine had been sent to Australia to serve sentences ranging from seven years to life imprisonment between 1787 and 1853, but the system was increasingly perceived to be deeply flawed at home and bitterly resented in the new and burgeoning colony.<sup>7</sup> Between 1850 and 1868 an alternative system of punishment known as penal servitude was introduced, whereby convicted offenders would, instead of being shipped overseas, serve their sentence within state-run convict prisons. They would spend a period of several months in separation whilst at 'Government prisons' such as Millbank or Pentonville, followed by a longer period in association undertaking 'Public Works' (hard labour used to construct military defences and roads or on similar projects to improve the public infrastructure) in convict prisons, before often being released on licence if their behaviour whilst incarcerated met certain standards.<sup>8</sup> Their sentences initially ranged from three years to life imprisonment. For those who could not cope physically with the harsh demands of such labour, a system of 'light labour' — for example tailoring or shoemaking — was introduced and several convict prisons also contained an 'invalid' wing. Dartmoor Prison (originally built to house French prisoners-of-war during the Napoleonic Wars) was one such prison, and it was to this place of confinement that Major Hickey was appointed Deputy Governor in December 1867.

### Major Robert John Fayer Hickey

Robert John Fayer Hickey (1827-1889) was born at sea on the East India Company ship *Lady Flora* on 30 May 1827. The ship (captained by Lieutenant Robert John Fayer after whom Hickey was named), was *en route* from Bengal to Portsmouth. Hickey was the son of an East India Company employee, and initially

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followed a military path, being commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, Bengal European Regiment (later Bengal Fusiliers, now Royal Munster Fusiliers) in June 1845. On 20 August 1845 he sailed for Calcutta on the P&O paddle steamer *Oriental*, later being commissioned as First Lieutenant on 17 June 1848. He enjoyed a successful military career, being awarded a medal and clasp after seeing action in Pegu (Burma) in 1852-3, and being commissioned as Captain on 7 June 1857.<sup>9</sup> He retired from the Indian Army on full pay on 3 August 1864, being made a Brevet Major.<sup>10</sup> Like so many of his military colleagues he seems to have sought employment in another highly disciplined arena; that of a convict prison. Between November 1864 and December 1867, he served as Deputy Governor at

Portland Convict Prison, and in December 1867 he was appointed as a Deputy Governor of Dartmoor Prison. He succeeded Captain Butt as Governor of Dartmoor Prison on 6 January 1870, where he remained until 11 October 1872.<sup>11</sup> A contemporary account of his appearance when he was Deputy Governor of Dartmoor Prison survives; he is described as follows:

With his back to the fireplace, behind the Chief [Warder], stood a gentleman in mufti, who I needed not a second glance to see was a soldier likewise. This was the Deputy-Governor, as gentlemanly a little

fellow as ever stepped, and to whom I cannot but think the duties must have been very repugnant. Except when in his office, and prisoners were brought before him on report, I do not think Captain H, was ever known to speak before a prisoner. He never, however, let a thing escape him, and any remark he had to make he made to the principal warder on duty.<sup>12</sup>

### The role and responsibilities of a Victorian convict prison governor

Shane Bryans (himself a former Assistant Governor of Dartmoor Prison) recently remarked with regard to

7. See Godfrey, B. and Cox, D. J., 'The "Last Fleet": Crime, Reformation, and Punishment in Western Australia after 1868', *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* vol. 41 no. 2 (Summer 2008): 236-58 for details of the lives of the very last transportees to arrive in the Antipodes.
8. For a brief overview of the convict licensing system, see Johnston, H., Godfrey, B., and Cox, D. J., *Victorian Convicts: 100 Criminal Lives* (Pen & Sword, 2016).
9. British India Office pension registers Bengal Military Fund ledger of subscriptions L-AG-23-6-8/9.
10. *Daily News*, 24 August 1864.
11. Various sources give either 6 or 7 January as Hickey's start date as Governor, but Hickey himself stated that he began on 6 January — see *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol.1 The Report and appendix* (London: HMSO, 1871). p. 19, line 642.
12. Callow, *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, pp. 155-6.

the role of modern-day prison governors that ‘the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) into the Prison Service has made Governors far more accountable for the operation of their prisons. They are now expected to achieve performance targets, deliver efficiency savings, and to compete with other prisons.’<sup>13</sup> This article argues that whilst the responsibilities of prison governors have undoubtedly become more detailed and scrutinised, the role of a successful Victorian convict prison governor was by no means an easy task if carried out conscientiously, and that the role has changed in surprisingly few ways.

The governance and running of prisons became increasingly both more formulaic and overseen throughout the Victorian age. Following the creation of a Prison Inspectorate in 1835, quickly followed in 1842 by the circulation of a series of model rules for local prisons, governors (often then also known as ‘gaolers’) began to have to account for their actions on a regular basis. This was especially the case following the creation of a National Convict Service in 1850. By 1858, a more standardised approach to prison management was firmly established in the ‘Rules and Regulations for the Government of Convict Prisons’ published by the Home Office. This publication contained one section that dealt specifically with the Governors and their duties.<sup>14</sup> As well as requiring the governor to ‘have a general superintendence over the prison and prisoners’, he (and later she) was required to keep a number of registers or books in which every aspect of prison life was recorded for the information of the Directors of Convict Prisons (an organisation in overall charge of convict prisons, created in 1850 under the

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chairmanship of Joshua Jebb, and based at 44 Parliament Street, London).<sup>15</sup> Whilst Brixton (opened 1853) and Fulham (opened 1856) both had female convict accommodation which was run by a ‘Lady Superintendent’, Woking (opened 1869) was the first purpose-built female convict prison. This was still run by a ‘Lady Superintendent’ under a male governor (though in all three prisons such women were often referred to as ‘lady governors’). The first female governor in her own right was appointed at Aylesbury Borstal in 1921.

All convict prisons were theoretically due to be visited by a director on at least a monthly basis; Hickey states that the sole purpose of his journal was to ‘keep a copy of everything I do here connected with the prison, it is recorded for the information of the visiting director...’<sup>16</sup> The Governor was also tasked with submitting a written annual summary to the Directors.<sup>17</sup> E. B. Callow was somewhat doubtful as to the usefulness of the monthly visits by the visiting Director; he stated that ‘when the director is coming down to Dartmoor it is known a few days beforehand, and the place is prepared for his visit. Much he should not see is put out of sight.’<sup>18</sup>

As Ireland has noted, ‘A Victorian prison is supposed to be a place in which the predictable both happens and is recorded as having happened...’, and it is certainly clear from Hickey’s *Governor’s Journal* entries and other contemporary sources that routine played a large part in his activities.<sup>19</sup> What also emerges is the limited powers possessed by a governor during the period; it has been argued elsewhere that before the implementation of NPM, ‘Governors were apparently unable to make basic decisions about such critical matters as how many people worked in their

13. Bryans, Shane Clive. ‘Prison governance: an exploration of the changing role and duties of the Prison Governor in HM Prison Service’ (PhD thesis, LSE, 2005), p. 2. For further details of New Public Management and its effects on prisons, see Bryans, S., *Prison Governors: Managing prisons in a time of change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), and Ferlie, E., Ashburner, L., Fitzgerald, L. and Pettigrew, A., *The New Public Management in Action*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.67. Also see Faulkner, Mary Hilary, ‘Actor-Directors: The Working Lives of Prison Governors’ (PhD thesis, Durham University, 2011).
14. Home Office, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of The Convict Prisons* (London: HMSO, 1858), pp. 6-18. Further details of the role of convict prison governors were published in 1894 – see Home Office, *Standing Orders for the Government of Convict Prisons* (London: HMSO, 1894).
15. Forsythe, B., ‘Women prisoners and Women penal officials 1840-1921’, *British Journal of Criminology* vol. 33 No. 4 (Autumn 1993): 525-40, p. 535.
16. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol.1 The Report and appendix* (London: HMSO, 1871), p. 43, line 1920. Hickey’s *Governor’s Journal* was not written by Hickey himself but contains transcribed copies of out-letters and telegrams written by a clerk.
17. It is this summary that appears under the ‘Prisons’ section in the annual *Judicial Statistics*, compiled and published by the Home Office from 1856 onward.
18. *Five Years’ Penal Servitude*, p. 381.
19. Ireland, *The Carmarthen Gaoler’s Journal 1845-1850 Part One* Introduction, p. vi.

prisons, who they were, and what money was to be spent on', and this was also clearly the case during Hickey's governorship.<sup>20</sup> There was no manual or course that governors went on before their appointment — as Hickey himself stated, 'I learnt my duty from the governors under whom I served'.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1871 *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons*, Hickey was called before the committee to give evidence on two occasions. This report resulted from a commission of enquiry into the treatment of Fenian prisoners held at several prisons including Dartmoor, who had complained that they were being treated unfairly by the British government whilst serving often lengthy prison sentences. The report found most of their allegations to be without substance, though it did make several minor suggestions for improvement of their treatment. On 10 June 1871 Hickey states on several occasions that his powers were strictly limited and always subordinate to the Directors of Convict Prisons. When asked about his powers regarding petitions by which convicts were allowed to plead for remission of their sentences, he states 'the power of the governor is very limited' (the ultimate authority being the Secretary of State for the Home Office). He was then directly asked, 'Is the governor asked in every case to forward the petition to the directors?'<sup>22</sup> He replied, 'Certainly so. If it was at all a doubtful thing I would forward it to the director. I could not take upon myself to stop it'.<sup>23</sup> He was surprisingly uninformed concerning the powers of the Directors of Convict Prisons; when asked this as a direct question he states, 'Well, I really cannot tell you what the power of a director is'.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, when asked about his powers to appoint staff, Hickey stated that his role was extremely limited;

when questioned, 'Are they [warders] appointed on the recommendation of the governor?' Hickey replied 'Well not always, sir. They are required by the directors to appear before the governor that he may see their fitness by appearance but their testimonials and everything else go to Parliament Street'.<sup>25</sup> Neither did a governor have the power of dismissal over his or her subordinates; they could suspend individuals, but the final employment decision resided with the Directors.<sup>26</sup> With regard to medical decisions, the Medical Officer had almost complete control of who served their time at Dartmoor or another convict prison.<sup>27</sup>

During his time at Dartmoor, Hickey appears to have been a fairly diligent and conscientious governor (though a harsh disciplinarian); Callow certainly had a higher opinion of him than of Hickey's predecessor:

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*The governor, Captain B[utt], was but a popinjay in office. He had as much to do with the management of the prison as a Russian cavalry colonel has to do with the navigation of the man-of-war he is, through Court interest, appointed in command of. [...Hickey] was a vigilant man himself, and though he said so little nothing ever escaped him. [...] Luckily Major H looked sharp after everything and the discipline of the place was kept up. It was not long before every man in the prison, officers and men, had a very wholesome respect for the Major.*<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, Patrick Lennon, a Fenian convict serving a term of 15 years' penal servitude at Dartmoor, stated when asked, 'Does the governor treat you kindly and considerately on all occasions?', that, 'They do always, sir; especially this man; he is a very gentlemanly man'.<sup>29</sup>

Hickey stated that much of his time was spent walking through the prison; 'I am constantly visiting

20. Lewis, D., *Hidden Agendas - Politics, Law and Order* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1997), p. 6 (quoted in Bryans, *Prison Governors: Managing prisons in a time of change* p. 164).

21. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol.1 The Report and appendix* (London: HMSO, 1871), p. 21, line 726.

22. *Ibid*, p. 20, line 684.

23. *Ibid*, p. 23, line 781.

24. *Ibid*, p. 23, line 785.

25. *Ibid*, p. 24, line 820.

26. *Ibid*, p. 24, lines 823 and 826.

27. *Ibid*, p. 500, line 15344.

28. *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, pp. 250-1 and p. 253. Callow was not still in prison at the time of Hickey's promotion so had no direct experience of him as Governor.

29. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol.1 The Report and appendix* (London: HMSO, 1871), p. 26, line 918.

different parts of the prison or wards', and that he also interacted with prisoners on a daily basis; 'I see them at a certain time every day in my own office for the purpose of receiving complaints from the prisoner.'<sup>30</sup> He was also proud of the fact that he did make some improvements to the lot of convicts; he tells the Commissioners that he increased the exercise time available to convicts by giving an extra five or ten minutes to allow for the time spent in falling in for the daily parade (although it was pointed out by his interviewer that what he had actually done was simply to restore the exercise time to what it should have been).<sup>31</sup> Lennon also pointed out that the food (always an important consideration in the daily routine of a prisoner) had improved under Hickey's governorship; when questioned, 'In what respect is it better?' he stated 'We used to get soup twice a week, thickened with gruel; now it is thickened with meat'. When further asked, 'When did it begin to improve?' Lennon replied, 'Since this present governor came here. And the potatoes we used to get at dinner used to be bad. Now we don't get any bad ones. They used to be rotten. The food is better looked after now than it ever was before.'<sup>32</sup>

Hickey and Callow's opinion of the degree of physical activity carried out by the able-bodied convicts was very similar; Callow stated that 'certainly prisoners are not fed as free workmen earning good wages are, and have not the same amount of stamina and physique; but, making due allowance for all that, I do not consider the average convict at Dartmoor can be said to work hard. There are some exceptions, particularly in the bog gangs.'<sup>33</sup> Hickey was similarly sceptical concerning the degree of difficulty of the labour; when asked, 'Do you think that a convict working here in full labour performs a hard day's work?' he replied 'No, sir' — he felt that an agricultural labourer worked harder on a daily basis.<sup>34</sup>

The often mundane aspects of Hickey's work as Governor are the most immediately apparent when

perusing his *Journal* entries; much of his time was spent informing other prison governors and police offices of the imminent arrival of convicts due for release on licence, or contacting carriage contractors in order to arrange the conveyance of convicts and officers to and from Plymouth Railway Station.<sup>35</sup> He also had numerous arguments with the suppliers of materials for convict labour projects; for example, he frequently complained about the quality of leather received for use in the making of Metropolitan Police officers' boots:

*To Messrs Warne and Co.*

*I beg to inform you that 290lbs of the Kip [calf leather] received from you on the 25th inst has been rejected by a Board of Survey, being too light for the Service and of very inferior quality and it has accordingly been returned to you. I must impress upon you the necessity of your exercising great care in the selection of the Leather demanded for the use of this Prison as none but the best can be made available for supply to the Police, and there has been great difficulty found for some time in getting sufficient of anything like the proper quality from that which you have sent for the purpose.'*<sup>36</sup>

Commissioners that he increased the exercise time available to convicts by giving an extra five or ten minutes to allow for the time spent in falling in for the daily parade.

He also had the unenviable task of informing relatives of convicts' deaths within custody; his letters to grieving parents appear to be somewhat business-like and lacking in sympathy to modern eyes:

*Mrs John Evans*

*I regret having to inform you of the death of Prisoner Richard Evans 8778, which took place in the Infirmary of this Prison at 2.35pm this day. A Coroner's Inquest will be held on*

30. Ibid, p. 19, line 656 and p. 23, line 796.

31. Ibid, p.24 lines 832-34.

32. Ibid, p. 24, lines 894-6.

33. *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, p. 349. Callow was classed as an invalid convict due to both his advancing years and debility, so did not have personal experience of the degree of difficulty of the hard labour regime. 'Bog gangs' refers to groups of convicts sent out onto Dartmoor to clear bogs or otherwise work outside in often poor conditions.

34. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol.1 The Report and appendix* (London: HMSO, 1871), p. 22, lines 759 and 761.

35. Dartmoor Prison was (and remains) in a pretty remote location, almost twenty miles and three hours' carriage ride from the nearest railway station.

36. *Governor's Journal*, 27 April 1871.

*the body in the course of a few days after which his remains will be interred in the Churchyard of the village of Princetown at either of which you or any of his friends may be present.*<sup>37</sup>

A few of the entries are unintentionally somewhat humorous; for example, his reply to Mr A Joel concerning the late delivery of a particular item hints at a mild desperation:

*In reply to your Letter of the 15th inst. I have to inform you that the Passover Cake sent from London for the use of the Jews at this Prison was delivered here from Tavistock by the South Devon Railway Company's Carriers this day, and as the Feast is over, I beg to be informed what is to be done with the cake.*<sup>38</sup>

Another of the entries informs us of the number of Jewish convicts serving time at Dartmoor; Hickey replies to a request for this information by Reverend A L Emanuel of Portsea that 'I beg to inform you in reply to your communication of the 4th inst. [April 1871] that there are the present time six Jewish Prisoners confined in this Establishment.'<sup>39</sup> As Passover was celebrated from 6-13 April 1871, these convicts must have been bitterly disappointed by the failure of the South Devon Railway to deliver the cake; any change to the monotonous diet would have been eagerly anticipated, quite apart from the religious significance of the item concerned.

Several of his entries provide additional personal and incidental information concerning individual convicts that would otherwise remain unknown to us; for example, following a request for information about a licensed convict from the Secretary of the North Stafford Discharged Prisoners Aid Society, Hickey replies that:

In reply to your letter of the 4th inst respecting Licensed Convict Jno Smith 8101 I beg to state that when he left here he quite ignored the assistance to be had from an Aid Society and stated that he was going

to his brother-in-law. He is a man in whom I should not be disposed to place much confidence. The first Photograph taken of him he spoiled, he also attempted it a second time by distorting his features, but failed. The Police certificate was received yesterday and the balance of Smith's gratuity was sent direct to him by return of post.<sup>40</sup>

From the late 1860s many convicts were photographed upon reception and release from convict prisons. Many individuals realised that this was an easy way to be recognised in future and tried their best to distort their features or otherwise avoid having their image recorded for posterity. Upon release on licence, all male convicts such as Smith were required to report to their local police station once a month and to notify the police of any change of circumstances or address. Photographs and particulars of released convicts were forwarded to the relevant police force. Convicts were also entitled to a small gratuity upon release, which they usually had to obtain from their local police station, or as in this case, could be forwarded to them directly at their place of residence.

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### Conclusion

Hickey's tenure at Dartmoor appears to have ended suddenly; his name is summarily replaced by that of Major James Farquharson (formerly of Brixton Prison) on 11 October 1872 — Hickey writes one letter and the next entry is under the name of Farquharson on the same day.<sup>41</sup> His removal is unexplained, but clearly generated a great deal of further change:

*CONVICT PRISONS — The recent removals of officials from the Government convict establishments at Princetown, Dartmoor, have caused numerous other changes. Major Farquharson is now governor at Princetown, vice Major Hickey. Captain Cookworthy, late deputy-governor at Portland, succeeds Major Farquharson, as governor of Brixton, and is succeeded by Mr Johnson, Captain Bell, late deputy governor of Princetown, goes in a similar capacity to Parkhurst. Captain Harris,*

37. *Governor's Journal*, 20 April 1871.

38. *Governor's Journal*, 20 April 1871 (original underlining).

39. *Governor's Journal*, 6 March 1871.

40. *Governor's Journal*, 7 March 1871.

41. Farquharson lasted less than two months before being redirected as governor of another convict prison.

late deputy-governor at Woking, proceeds to Gibraltar, as governor of the convict establishment there. The Rev. J. Francis, who has resigned the chaplaincy at Dartmoor, after eight years in the service, has accepted a curacy at Ross, Hereford.<sup>42</sup>

This may have been a dismissal — perhaps as a result of the obvious enmity exhibited between Hickey and the above-mentioned prison chaplain, Reverend James Francis, who had complained to both the Directors of Convict Prisons and the Home Office about Hickey's alleged harsh punishment of prisoners in late 1870-early 1871 before resigning in 1872. Hickey was apparently in the habit of issuing successive punishments (usually consisting of putting the offender on a bread and water diet) for what the Reverend regarded as a continuing single offence by often 'half-witted' convicts. In the *Kimberley Report* of 1878/9 Reverend Francis stated that 'I thought there was an unreasonable exercise of discipline, a harsh exercise of discipline [...] under Major Hickey there grew up this course of discipline which I considered harsh'.<sup>43</sup> These complaints, together with the *Treatment of Treason/Felony Convicts Report* may have sealed Hickey's fate, although the Reverend Francis stated in his evidence to the Kimberley Commission that the visiting Director of Convict Prisons had clearly sided with Hickey; 'the visiting director appeared to me to give his whole countenance and influence to the

governor in what I regarded from my standpoint as incorrect treatment'.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Chairman of the Directors of Convict Prisons, Edmund Du Cane (noted for his strict disciplinarian stance) also sided with Hickey, indignantly remarking in his evidence to the Kimberley Commission that it 'was clearly a most outrageous thing that he should be allowed to gibbet that governor before the public as a culprit from his own imperfect knowledge of the matter, and in opposition to the views of those who had inquired into it impartially'.<sup>45</sup>

Whatever the reason, Dartmoor was the last prison governorship held by Hickey.<sup>46</sup> He subsequently became a manager of a school supply company, then a director of the Swiss Unsweetened Pure Milk Company.<sup>47</sup> He died in 1889, leaving an estate of £1,120 6s 11d.

Hickey's life was in many ways unremarkable but the surviving records do allow us to recreate at least a small snapshot of his time as Governor of Dartmoor Prison. These give the impression of a dedicated individual trying to do his best in occasionally difficult circumstances; his role was clearly defined but somewhat lacking in authority with regard to many aspects of the day-to-day running of the establishment, and this is reflected in his acrimonious relationship with the prison chaplain. Both his *Journal* entries and the *Treatment of Treason/Felony Convicts Report* throw invaluable light on a still under-researched aspect of prison life.

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42. *Morning Post*, 21 October 1872.

43. 1878-79 [C.2368] [C.2368-I] [C.2368-II] *Penal Servitude Acts Commission. Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the working of the penal servitude acts. Vol. I.—Commissions and report*, line 11199.

44. *Ibid*, line 11195.

45. *Ibid*, line 13050.

46. *The Tavistock Gazette*, 18 October 1872 refers to the change in governorship as 'A somewhat sudden change in the governorship of the Dartmoor Prison is announced', and then goes to state incorrectly that Hickey was to take over the governorship of Gibraltar Prison.

47. *London Daily News*, 11 December 1880.