

‘Reclaiming the Criminal’: The Role and Training of Prison Officers in England, 1877 to 1914

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Abstract

This article examines the role and training of prison officers in England, between 1877 and 1914. It is concerned with the changing penal philosophies and practices of this period and how these were implemented in local prisons, and the duties of the prison officer. More broadly, this article argues that the role of the prison officer and their training (from 1896) reflect wider ambiguities in prison policy and practice during this period.

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This article will examine the role and training of prison officers in English local prisons between 1877, when local prisons were centralised, and 1914, when recruitment to the service was suspended due to the First World War.¹ Despite the relative wealth of research on prisons and imprisonment during the 19th Century, there has been little discussion of the prison officer within the changing penal philosophies and practices of this period. The role of prison officer is fundamental to our understanding of how the disciplinary regimes, envisaged by 'reformers' and administrators, were implemented in prisons. Zedner (1994) argues that the 'significant actors in the life of the prison are not those who merely philosophize about it from afar but those who as inmates and warders are inhabitants within its walls' (p.132). In examining the role and training of officers in local prisons, this article will attempt to address the various discrepancies between the official discourse on the role of the prison officer on the one hand, and the realities of 'prison work' on the other.

Local prisons played a significant role in the penal system, yet with the exception of the Webbs's (1963) and McConville's (1981, 1995) research, they have been largely overlooked by historians who tend to favour the convict prisons, despite the smaller numbers of prisoners who would have experienced these institutions. As Zedner (1994) points out, some historical works discuss 'convict and local prisons as though they were interchangeable or ... simply talk of "the prison"' despite the obvious differentiation (p.173).

The period between 1877 and 1895 is one denoted by deterrent prison regimes, growing bureaucratic control, and 'the disappearance of the prison' (Pratt 2002) from public view. State control of local prisons allowed an 'impenetrable bureaucratic shroud' to cloak the prison, bringing an end to the competing official and critical discourses on 'prison truth', and after the Prisons Act 1898, the contestable prison of the 19th Century 'became the acceptable prison for much of the twentieth' (Pratt 2004, pp.71–86).

The Gladstone Committee in 1895, for some authors, marked a significant change in the prison system, and began the movement away from deterrent prison regimes towards a more rehabilitative approach. It is the period from 1895 to 1914, (and not the late 18th, early 19th Century as indicated by Foucault (1991), Melossi and Pavarini (1981) and Ignatieff (1978)), that for Garland (1985) marks the beginning of the modern penal system. During this period, policies developed in areas of preventative detention, probation, juvenile justice, and certain groups of offenders, for example, inebriates and mentally ill, are removed from the prison environment. A period in which change, Garland argues, is reflecting positivist influences on the penal system.

Other historians, however, disagree. Forsythe (1995) and Bailey (1997) argue that the new 'rehabilitative' approach did little for those in prison and that the majority of harsh penal practices remained until the 1920s, or at least, had little effect on the conditions in local prisons. They also question the influence of positivist views on penal practices. Forsythe (1995) argues that Garland is identifying a second wave of positivist theorists, but that throughout the period 1895 to 1939, classical beliefs about prisoner reformation remained the base of the system, with the mental and social sciences added on. Furthermore, Bailey (1997) argues that the 'truly significant change' over the period 1895 to 1922 is the 'massive abatement of imprisonment' (p.293).

It is hoped that this article can contribute to our understanding of prison regimes in the historical perspective, and the role of the prison officer within these changing penal practices. Secondly, this article will demonstrate the ambiguity in official discourse on the role of the

prison officer, which exemplifies wider ambiguities in the penal philosophies and practices in local prisons during this period.

Centralisation and Uniformity, 1877 to 1895

In 1877, the local prisons were centralised and administrative control was transferred to the government. This move brought the system under the control of the Prison Commission, appointed by, and responsible to, the Home Secretary. The Prison Commission was made up of three commissioners and their then Chairman, Lieutenant-Colonel (later Sir) Edmund Du Cane (previously Du Cane had been Chairman of the Board of Directors of Convict Prisons). It was at this time that the paramilitary structure of the prison service was first implemented. The 'pyramidal' structure placed the governor at the top, followed by (moving downwards in the hierarchy) the chief warden, principal warders, warders and then assistant warders (Thomas 1972). Centralisation resulted in rationalisation in the prison system: 37 prisons were closed, bringing the total number of prisons in England and Wales to 69 by 1878.²

Centralisation also led to changes to the regime in local prisons. Progressive stages and the marks system, as used in the convict prison system, were introduced. Through time and merit, prisoners would pass through 28-day stages to be eligible for promotion, and then, if the required marks had been obtained, promotion to the next stage could occur. However, the stage system was irrelevant to the vast majority of those held in local prisons as the sentences they served were 'so short that no matter how well behaved they were, they could win no improvement in their circumstances' (McConville 1998, p. 135). There was no system of remission for those prisoners serving sentences of up to two years until 1898, and only the few prisoners in the highest class could obtain some improvement in conditions. A lengthy sentence in a local prison, at this time was an 'extraordinarily severe punishment' (McConville 1998, p.135). Those undergoing a sentence of 28 days or less would serve the whole term at the first stage. First-stage prisoners would be employed for ten hours a day at hard labour, in strict separation, of which six to eight hours were to be on the crank, treadmill or similar work; they would receive no gratuity/earnings and would sleep on a plank bed without a mattress.³

When the Prison Commission took control in 1878 there were 1,181 male warders and 328 female warders working in local prisons. The Commissioners were proposing a change in the staffing levels to increase the number of male warders to 1,246 and females to 331, based on the staff of the prisons to be retained.⁴

Scales for the pay of officers had been set out from July 1878. Chief warders received a minimum of £125 per annum, with an annual increment of £2. Principal warders were paid a minimum of £85 per annum with an annual increment of £1. Warders were paid £70 per annum with an annual increment of £1 and assistant warders (and messengers and watchmen) were paid £60 per annum with an annual increment of £1. Female warders were paid £55 per annum with an annual increment of £1 and ten shillings and assistant female warders received £45 per annum with an annual increment of £1. Warders of all levels were to have a uniform and when they resided in the prison, free living quarters.⁵

Centralisation and the resulting closure of some local prisons meant that the staff had to be distributed around the remaining prison system. Du Cane organised this distribution and these statements give an insight into how local prisons were staffed and how the hierarchical

structure operated. The prisons were listed in rank and alphabetically; the top five local prisons were staffed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Staffing of the Five Largest Local Prisons, January 1880

<i>Male subordinate staff</i>				
Prison	Chief warden	Principal warden	Warder	Assistant warden
Coldbath Fields	1	6	38	70
Liverpool	1	5	10	20
Strangeways	1	3	11	22
Wakefield	1	6	26	53
Wandsworth	1	5	11	24

<i>Female subordinate staff*</i>				
<i>(Source: National Archives (NA), HO 45/9561/72292.)</i>				
<i>(Note: *there were no female subordinate staff at Coldbath Fields at this time.)</i>				
Prison	Chief warden	Principal warden	Warder	Assistant warden
Liverpool	1	1	8	16
Strangeways	1	1	5	7
Wakefield	1	-	7	12
Wandsworth	-	-	3	11

Role and Day-to-Day Duties

Local prison officers were subject to strict rules and regulations governing their working day and their lifestyle. Instructions to prison officers outlined in 1878 state that officers ‘must be of good moral principles and unblemished character’.⁶ This document also asserts a new discourse in expressing the role and duties of the officer. It states that:

The great object of reclaiming the criminal should always be kept in view by all officers of the prison, and they should strive to acquire a moral influence over the prisoners by performing their duties conscientiously, but without harshness. They should especially try to raise the prisoner's mind to a proper feeling of moral obligation by the example of their own uniform regard to truth and integrity, even in the smallest matters; such conduct will, in most cases, secure the respect and confidence of prisoners, and will make the duties of the officers more satisfactory to themselves and more useful to the public.⁷

Previously, legislation such as the Prisons Acts of 1839 and 1865, had asserted rules and orders for the prison officer, but it appears that this was the first time that language which focused on ‘reclaiming the criminal’ was used. This is, to some extent, surprising, given the prominence of deterrence at the time. In 1877, both local and convict prison operated a regime based on deterrence, which had grown more severe since its implementation in 1865, and followed the collapse of reformatory practices of the early to mid 19th Century. Thus it is difficult to see how prisoners could have been ‘reclaimed’ within the severely deterrent

regime in operation. This new penal language would, perhaps, be less surprising after the Gladstone Committee, as this phase has been characterised as more rehabilitative. The implementation of a different regime after the Gladstone Committee is often cited as a cause for particular concern for officers, in terms of their understanding their role of 'rehabilitation' on the one hand, and 'security' on the other (Crawley 2004; Coyle 2005; Thomas 1972).

Prison officers' duties were determined by the timetable of the prison. In October 1878, the Prison Commission adopted a timetable to be used in all local prisons; this seems an obvious way to demonstrate the structure and activities of the working day for officers (Table 2).

Table 2.

Weekday Timetable used in Local Prisons, 1879

(Source: RCP 1879, (C.2442-1), XXXIV.1, Pt II, Appendix, p.47.)

6.00am	Bell rings; officers muster
6.05	Prisoners rise, clean cells & c.
6.30	Commence labour
7.45	Cease labour; prisoners' breakfasts
8.00	Officers (except those on patrol go to breakfast)
8.40	Officers return; patrols go to breakfast
8.45	Recommence labour
11.15	Bell for prayers
11.25	Prayers
12.00	Prisoners' dinners
12.15	Officers (except those on patrol) go to dinner
1.25	Officers return; patrols go to dinner
1.30	Labour recommences
5.45	Labour ceases; prisoners' suppers
5.55	Officers go off duty
6.15	Officers to sleep in prison come on duty; labour recommences
8.00	Labour ceases; nightwatchmen come on duty
8.10	Lock up
8.30pm	Lights out

Other activities, such as exercise and schooling, were distributed throughout the day as the governor saw fit. On Sundays the prison rose at 7.00am, and the day was similar to the weekday except that no labour was undertaken and Divine Service was held at 10.15am and 2.30pm.⁸ The majority of the officers' day was filled with locking and unlocking, taking prisoners to and from exercise or chapel, collecting completed work, supervising labour and meals, delivering new materials and meals, and generally working to the timetable of the institution. As O'Brien (1982) notes, the 'daily routine in the prison was very similar for the keeper and the kept. A system of order and rational punishment imposed a system of discipline on those required to enforce it as well as on their charges' (p.206). This may have been particularly the case after the decline of the reformatory aims of the separate system in the 1850s and 1860s and the general move towards a regime based on deterrence (Henriques 1972; Johnston 2006).

The first government-run penitentiary, Millbank, opened in 1816, and initially operated a system of discipline based on constant inspection and regular employment of prisoners. Under this regime the officers were to observe the conduct of prisoners, to 'enforce his orders with firmness, but shall be expected to act with utmost humanity to all prisoners', but not to be familiar, and not to converse with them unnecessarily (Griffiths 1875, p.54). But the penitentiary was plagued with problems from the beginning, and by 1843 had been converted to a convict assembly depot (McConville 1981). However, as Wilson (2002) argues, ultimately Millbank failed because it was not legitimate in the eyes of the public, the prisoners or the prison staff. As Wilson acknowledges, it is difficult to determine the views of

warders at this time, but it appears that there were problems of discipline, dismissals, and some staff thought that 'the balance of power was too focused on prisoners, rather than on staff' (p.379).

Thus, there seems a tension between official documentation and the realities of the prison regime. From the early 19th Century, most people in authority envisaged prison officers as moral examples to the confined. Government rules imposed on local prisons and rules adopted by the local authorities emphasised this point, particularly from the introduction of the separate and silent systems from the 1830s onwards. Although unable to speak to prisoners, and interact with them, aside from giving orders, the prison officer was supposed, through their actions, to provide a moral example to which the prisoners should look for support in their 'reformation'. The use of this language of 'reclaiming' the criminal reminds us of the earlier reformatory penal practices of the 1830s and perhaps pre-empted language used to inform the penal policies of the 1920s onwards.

Despite evidence that suggested a reduction in the prison population by the end of the 19th Century, 'confidence in deterrent imprisonment was decidedly on the wane' (Bailey 1997, p.287). The daily average population in convict prison fell by over one-half, from 10,880 to 4,770 between 1879 and 1894, and in local prisons, fell by one-third from 20,833 to 13,850. However, this decline could have been the result of other factors, including: reduction in recorded crime, reduction in the minimum length of sentence for penal servitude, and increasing use of non-custodial sentences by the courts (Bailey 1997). At the beginning of the 20th Century, the prison population began to increase, and in 1908 there were 22,000 prisoners. However, over the next 30 years this declined to an average daily population of around 11,000 by 1938 (Rutherford 1984). This decline was the result of a combination of different factors. In 1908 there were over 200,000 receptions to prison and three out of four of these were offenders committed for non-indictable offences or imprisoned as fine defaulters. Winston Churchill, Home Secretary briefly in 1910/11, saw the main problem in the large number of petty offenders serving sentences of two weeks or less (Rutherford 1984). Over the period 1908 to 1938, a significant shift in sentencing practice reduced the prison population, and this was underpinned by policies to give offenders time to pay fines, to divert certain groups of offenders from imprisonment (mentally ill and those aged under 16 years, sent to Borstal), and the granting of remission to around 11,000 prisoners under the accession of King George V (Rutherford 1984).

During the early to mid 1890s the public's attention had been drawn, by the press, to Du Cane's prison regime by a number of factors: the report of the Gladstone Committee (1895), the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde, and the publication of a set of articles in the *Daily Chronicle* entitled 'Our dark places' (Bailey 1997; Nellis 1996). In 'The ballad of Reading gaol', Wilde (2002) wrote a scathing attack on the cruelties of the prison system. Although official discourse refers to the warders' role in reclaiming and assisting the moral reformation of prisoners, Wilde writes of warders who:

*Must set a lock upon his lips,
And make his face a mask.
Or else he might be moved, and try,
To comfort or console:
And what should human pity do
Pent up in murderer's hole?
What word of grace in such a place*

Could help a brother's soul? (pp.123–4)

He also writes of warders as ‘Despair’:

*For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night and day;
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and grey,
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say. (p.136)*

Critical discourses also came from trade unionists with prison experience, MPs (including ex-prisoners, like Michael Davitt), and the prison chaplain, William D. Morrison. The criticism focused on the ‘unnecessary hardships and brutalities of prison life’ but also on the bureaucratic control, and the lack of public scrutiny and accountability under Du Cane (Pratt 2004, p.84).

The contradictory role of the prison officer exemplifies the wider ambiguity of prison philosophy and practice at this time. Given the severity of the regime in local prisons and the extent to which this continued after the Gladstone Committee and into the 1920s there would seem little room to ‘reclaim the criminal’, if indeed this reclaiming is a reformatory or rehabilitative notion. This discourse reflects the competing priorities and the changing sensibilities regarding punishment during the period, harsh but not too harsh, avoiding media and critical accounts of regimes. Yet, rehabilitative or welfarist policies applied only to certain groups of offenders, not the mainstay of the population. Concern for officers in understanding their role, security on the one hand and rehabilitation on the other, may have been evident, but this reflects wider contradictions, paradox, and ebbs and flows in the prominence of different and conflicting penal ideologies and how these translate into the bureaucratic institutional working practices of the prison. Prison work in the local system remained centred on the hierarchical system of management, the ‘machine-like’ nature of the daily routine, and was shaped by the ‘revolving door’ admission of the mainstay of the prison population. The nature of prison work at this time, despite Gladstone's reference to criminal anthropology and the like, was centred on these features, and is exemplified by the features of the training schools set up from 1896.

Training Schools for Prison Officers

Prison staff did not feature heavily in the Gladstone Committee report of 1895 but one significant recommendation was that two or more prisons be selected and organised as training schools for all ranks. All candidates, and if possible, present staff should undergo systematic and scientific instruction under the control of the most experienced officers in the service. The Committee thought that ‘lectures should be given by experts in criminal anthropology, and every man who enters the service should have a clear knowledge of what can and ought to be done in his personal dealings with prisoners over and above the formal discharge of his routine duties’ (Gladstone Committee 1895, p.37). This scheme, they felt, would necessitate the engagement of younger men than those currently appointed and, as a rule, they would be unmarried when entering the service. Du Cane had pointed out that training schools may be problematic for married men, and it was noted that married men with families would not be expected to move to and from their training schools. This, of course,

was not a problem for female warders who were unmarried (Gladstone Committee 1895, p.37).

The idea of training schools for officers had been around in preceding decades; at the International Penitentiary Congress in London, in 1872, discussion was held on whether training schools should be formed and at which class of officer they should be directed. Dr Guillaume, a Swiss delegate, argued strongly for the training of lower ranking officers who, he believed, did not possess sufficient qualities to enable them to exert the moral influence required to reform prisoners. Du Cane, at this time the director of the convict prisons, thought that officers could only learn from actual experience. He noted that schools might be required if the 'prisons were so bad as to be unfit for the training of officials ... but he did not think that this was the case' (Gladstone Committee 1895, p.37). He argued that, 'Thirty years ago prison officers as a class were not up to the level of their duties, the reason to a great extent being that the governors were not sufficient qualified, but proper regulations and constant and intelligent supervision had been applied to the working of prisons, so that all might now be said to form a very school of instruction' (Pears 1872, p.397).

The discussion concluded that efficiency of officers should be ensured, but they were not in favour of special schools. They agreed that 'a good general education was necessary, as also firmness, intelligence, and probity; but that the acquisition of practical knowledge could only be obtained by them while they were doing their duty in prison, as there are no special theories on deportment of officials towards prisoners' (Pears 1872, p.401). It was noted that the English speakers placed great emphasis on the selection of the governor and that most thought that the governor should not rise through the ranks but should be appointed from other professions where competency had been shown through experience (Pears 1872, p.401). However, by the time the Gladstone Committee sat, attention had returned to special training schools for officers.

The first training school for officers opened at Chelmsford in 1896; this was followed by schools at Hull for warders, and Wormwood Scrubs for wardresses (Hobhouse and Brockway 1922). This was partly a reflection of 'the attempt to "professionalize" many areas of public life in the last quarter of the century' (Thomas 1978, p.54). The training school for officers at Hull prison opened on 1 April 1897 and in the following year took three classes through a course lasting for four months. Thirty-eight trainees joined the course, of which eight were discharged having failed to qualify and the other 30 had their appointment confirmed and were appointed to other prisons in the system.⁹ The governor of Hull prison reported that he had given a 'thoroughly practical insight and ground-work of the various details of prison routine' and had written and delivered papers on a range of topics to the officers.¹⁰ Papers included duties of specific offices such as gate-keeper, or reception warder, registering marks under the progressive stage system, the employment of prisoners, reporting a prisoner and use of cards outside cell doors, trafficking with prisoners, duties when in charge of prisoners in hospital, or in the farm or garden, or at exercise, and comments on the bathing of prisoners, issuing clean linen and a summary of the standing orders.¹¹

On joining the school each officer was placed with a member of the permanent staff for the first two weeks to allow them insight into the working of a prison and 'to enable them to obtain some little amount of confidence in themselves'.¹² For the following six weeks, the trainees undertook evening duty (from 6pm to 10pm) with permanent officers, and followed the full routine of duty. For the remainder of their probationary period, the officers carried out all the work of the prison between 6pm and 6am, and all daily duties, under the

supervision of permanent staff to prevent any errors, but the staff taking no part. During the course of the training the officers also spent about 14 days in different departments, under instruction from the officers in charge; these were: gate-keeper, reception warder, treadmill, manufactory, exercise, hospital (when occupied) and kitchen.¹³

Officers were also given instruction in the special industries undertaken at the prisons. At Hull, the third class of probationers going through the school each made a hammock (Admiralty), mail-bag, and one pair of listing slippers, as made by the prisoners. Each officer was deemed competent by the governor, to instruct prisoners in these industries.¹⁴

In addition to the papers written and read by the governor, he also explained all the Standing Orders relating to prison officers (five times) and instructed them on all the special rules relating to prisoners for trial, debtors, first class misdemeanants, surety prisoners, juveniles and prison officers (five times). Extracts of the most important points were provided for the officers to study. After the first 14 days, the governor addressed the officers on average three times a week for about 20 to 25 minutes.¹⁵ During the last two months of the training the officers were also addressed by the chaplain, on a weekly basis; the topics for address were: 'truthfulness', 'humane treatment of prisoners' and 'strict sense of honour in the performance of duty'.¹⁶

With the exception of the first class of officers to go through the training school, officers also undertook a course in first aid, wounded, and ambulance drill, under the direction of the St John's Ambulance Association. Each officer successfully passed the exam and obtained a certificate of efficiency from that body.¹⁷

Outside the classroom and their duties, officers were expected to study in their private rooms and every third evening, they were given manuscript papers and rules and orders, by the governor or chief warder, to study. They also took written examinations, to test their knowledge and received very satisfactory results.¹⁸ In closing his report to the Commissioners, the governor stated:

In the course of instruction I have carried out with the officers who have passed their probation here, I have daily impressed upon them that discipline, strict and firm – firm as possible, but to the letter just, should always be maintained. This I consider most essential for the well-being of the establishment, and what is of equal importance the well-being of the prisoner: but at the same time it should be distinctly understood that a kind and humane spirit should be plainly seen in every word and act. I have only one character to give to each and all whose appointment has been confirmed by the Commissioners, that during the whole time they have been here their conduct has been most exemplary. I have never on one single occasion had to speak to them for any act of misconduct, and I am fully convinced that they are exactly the class of men, as far as I can see, that the Commissioners desire, and that they will be a credit to themselves and the service.¹⁹

In the same year, the Governor of Chelmsford reported on the fifth class of officers to undergo instruction at his prison. Fifteen probationers had reported, two were rejected on medical grounds and discharged on the first day. After about eight weeks of training another trainee resigned, finding the work uncongenial, and the governor reported that he regarded two others as unlikely to make good officers. Therefore, ten candidates completed the course and were recommended for permanent appointment as assistant warders;²⁰ the governor notes

they were 'a fine set of men, intelligent and extremely well-behaved, and there is not one of them who will not make a good prison officer'.²¹

The structure and delivery of the course at Chelmsford was similar to the one at the Hull training school; the governor and chaplain addressed the class, candidates were interviewed, and questioned on points of duty by the governor. Nine written examinations were undertaken by officers at Chelmsford and the papers were good.²² These officers also undertook a course on first aid; all except one passed the examination and the Prison Commissioners granted them permission to wear the badge of the St John's Ambulance Association on their tunics. The governor was particularly satisfied with the demeanour of the probationers and 'with the interest that they seem to take in their work, and with their treatment of prisoners; this last point is the subject of constant remark and advice'. He thought that the prisoners held at Chelmsford were 'fairly and intelligently treated, and that the example of the permanent officers is of great use to the probationers'.²³

By January 1898, on the recommendations of the Gladstone Committee, four training schools had been established at Chelmsford, Hull, Wormwood Scrubs and Manchester prisons.²⁴ During the period between 1898 and 1908,²⁵ all the governors reported annually to the Commissioners. The reports mainly focus on the number of candidates; there is little comment on the training given, and reports simply contain the numbers of successful candidates; therefore, there is no way of knowing how many were discharged or left during the period of training. Between 1898 and 1907, 1,015 officers were trained at the schools and made permanent staff, of which 677 were male and 338 were female.²⁶

From 1899, training was also offered for warders who acted as bakers or cooks (supervised by the inspecting and examining chef of the National School of Cookery), at Wormwood Scrubs prison. By 1902, the Commissioners commented that they were gradually appointed to all prisons, as superintending bakers and cooks, those officers who had been certified competent.²⁷ In 1900, the Commissioners reported that four officers had undergone training in hospital and nursing duties and had been appointed to the hospital staff of various prisons.²⁸ The training of female officers was moved to Manchester and Liverpool prisons in 1901; the training for male officers remained at Hull and Chelmsford.²⁹ In September 1902, the probationary period for trainee officers was extended to one year, although the period of instruction at the schools remained at four months.³⁰

All those appointed deputy governors were also required to undergo the training. Major Wallace Blake undertook his 'very intensive and thorough' training at Chelmsford prison in 1902. He spent 14 days in the role of assistant warder, warder, and then principal warder, followed by 14 days in clerical and financial duties. Yet the 'most arduous of all, I was required to learn the Standing Orders, which inasmuch as they seldom remain stationary for very long, experiments in improvement being constantly made, I found to be a contradiction in terms' (Blake 1927, p.16). Blake wrote that, besides the 'purely mechanical routine, I obtained an insight into the more human and personal side of the service in a series of incidents which, for the first time, brought home to me the human element of prison life; showed me, too, the curious and unexpected problems with which so constantly a prison governor is faced' (p.16).

A sample of Governors Journal reports from Hull prison during the period July 1911 to December 1914 provide some insight into the characteristics sought in officers, and their suitability for posts in the newly established borstal institutions, or in local, or convict prisons

on completing their training.³¹ Little is revealed on the nature of training undertaken by officers, but it is assumed it was not dissimilar to the early years of the school. One addition, however, was a course in ju jitsu undertaken by all the trainee officers.

The Commissioners of Prisons frequently wrote to the governor asking him to recommend probationary officers in the training school for vacant posts in the prison system. Those not recommended for convict work were deemed unsuitable due to 'boyish appearance and slight build', 'not smart enough in either appearance or ability for convict work' or they 'failed to reach standard chest measurements'. Physical appearance and stature were a concern, and in this snapshot of records there are a number of officers who are not recommended for convict work as their height or weight was below standard.³²

For Borstal work, the governor was looking for 'tactful, patient, good tempered' men who were 'likely to influence juvenile adults for good'. Those whom he did not recommend were 'slow', 'heavy', 'not perfect in temper', or those who 'does not possess the special tact, care and good temper necessary'. In 1913, photographs of the probationers were also requested, and enquiries were made as to whether they had experience of dealing with 'lads', and whether any of probationers played musical instruments. Some probationers were deemed suitable due to their experience dealing with younger recruits when they were in the Army or in schools.

It is difficult from this Governors Journal to assess the qualities looked for in an officer for the local prison service. From the records available, it was perhaps those who were conscientious, morally upstanding and well-presented officers but for whatever reason were not deemed suitable for convict or borstal work.

Registers of officers from Hull, Lincoln, Wakefield and Nottingham³³ all indicate that those who joined the prison service in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries were in their early to mid twenties. Male officers were often in their mid twenties, whereas female officers were slightly younger, more commonly in their early twenties. Many remained in the service for long periods of their lives, perhaps only obtaining promotion to principal warder after 15 years' service.

Working in Local Prisons, 1895 to 1914

Despite the removal of Du Cane in 1895 and recommendations of the Gladstone Committee there were only minor changes in local prisons before the First World War. As noted earlier, the Prisons Act 1898 introduced remission for those serving sentences in local prisons and introduced a new system of three classes of prisoner. Yet little changed for those who worked, and who were confined in local prisons between 1895 and 1914.

The officers' working life was still determined by the character of the governor and those supervising their duties. The influence of chief warders on prison regimes was not lost on Hobbouse and Brockway, who reported on the prison system in 1922. They noted the influence of chief warders, generally reflecting the attitude of the governor, but that sometimes 'his influence is felt independently'. Below the chief warder was the principal warder, although these roles also depended on the size of the prison and its population. The principal warder's role was largely a supervisory one, seeing that the prison timetable was kept, ensuring regulations were maintained, that each warder was insisting on order and cleanliness in the cells and that marks were correctly entered on the progressive stage cards

(Hobhouse and Brockway 1922, p.367). The following lines were written by an assistant warder at Wormwood Scrubs. John Burt, in whose reminiscences these lines are contained, notes that in the first two verses the author is referring to a principal warder who was far from popular:

*Here he comes with pompous stride
With his arms well out and his fingers wide
Now he settles on the 'three's'
'Chuck him over someone please'
Next you see him in all his might
Prowling around in the dead of the night
With his feet encased in slippers cloth
Doing his best to get one of us off
At six o'clock they come trooping in
Its then the barney does begin
From early morn till late at night
You get nothing but 'jaw' from Darky White
What with 'Officers down' and 'Send on the shops'
And 'Answer them bells' and 'Collect the Slops'
Then with 'Exercise', 'Visits', Chapel and Jews
I'm d_____d if he ain't enough to give you the 'blues'
And his deputy-assistant J.G.H. Lack
Who shuffles about with a hump on his back
With his keys on his arm, his big feet well apart
I'm sure before long from us all he will part
And now I must finish for I think I've said all
Concerning this 'clique' you will find in 'C' Hall
What with Goff, Darky White and J.G.H. Lack
I'm sure its surprising we've not all had the sack³⁴*

Hobhouse and Brockway (1922) argue that warders also felt the negative effects of the system during this period. One warder commented: 'doubtless you think warders are brutes, and speaking generally, they are. The reason is that when a person becomes a warder he loses or tends to lose his personality ... He is merely a victim of the general surroundings in which he is placed' (Hobhouse and Brockway 1922, p.369). The rigidity of the Standing Orders and the timetable of the prison left 'little room for reason or initiative'. The warders' witnesses speaking to the enquiry echoed these sentiments stating that: 'Every action is regulated', 'Our life is like clock-work', 'Initiative is dangerous to one's future progress', and 'It's a good machine the Commissioners want' (Hobhouse and Brockway 1922, p.371).

Conclusion

Most of the training of prison officers focused on their daily duties, the regimented timetable and regime of the prison. Although the prison regime was ameliorated from the Du Cane years it was not significantly different in local prisons until the 1920s when the population had declined substantially. The local prison of early 20th-Century England remained a machine – felt by officers and inmates alike – the machine-like operation remained the most significant feature, and not new ideas about rehabilitation. Rehabilitative policies may have been beneficial to those groups who had been removed from the prison but for the mainstay of the population who remained in local prisons, they benefited little from the ambiguity and

paradox in official discourse. The power of the State to engulf the prison in an 'impenetrable bureaucratic shroud' (Pratt 2004) and separate the prison from the rest of society, enabled the formulation of a State-controlled 'acceptable' prison in public discourse. Adding to Pratt's (2004) argument regarding the 'acceptable' prison, 'acceptable' public discourse on prisons was that concerned with young offenders, inebriates, or those with mental health problems, and those serving sentences in local prisons, despite their prominence in numbers, were lost within this more appealing or 'deserving' cause in public discourse. As Sparks (1977) commented, the men who make up the resident population of local prisons 'are the residue which remains when the best of the prisons' input has been skimmed of its 'star' prisoners and dangerous criminals; they are thus the *lumpen-proletariat* of the whole English penal system' (p.90, italics in original).

Notes

1. 1 This research was supported by British Academy Small Research Grant Award No. SG 40723. The author would also like to thank the archivists at their respective record offices and museums for their assistance with the research. The author uses the term 'prison officer' except when documentary evidence uses another term such as 'warder'. 'Prison officer' was not officially adopted until 1922 (National Archives, HO 45/11082/427916).
2. 2 Report of the Commissioners of Prisons (RCP), 1878, (C.2174), XLII.1, p.36.
3. 3 RCP, 1878, Appendix 12, p.39.
4. 4 RCP, 1878, Appendix 5, p.30.
5. 5 RCP, 1878, Appendix 6, p.31.
6. 6 AAPSM 2003.0912 (Prison Service Museum (PSM)), Instructions to Prison Officers (1878), p.2.
7. 7 AAPSM 2003.0912 (PSM), Instructions to Prison Officers (1878), p.4.
8. 8 RCP, 1879, Pt II, (C.2442-1), XXXIV.1, Appendix, p.47.
9. 9 Report of Commissioners of Prisons and Directors of Convict Prisons (RCP & DCP), 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.157.
10. 10 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.157.
11. 11 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.157.
12. 12 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.158.
13. 13 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.158.
14. 14 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.158.
15. 15 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.158.
16. 16 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.158.
17. 17 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.158.
18. 18 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.159.
19. 19 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.159.
20. 20 The previous occupations of these officers were; soldiers (4), sailors (2), marine (1), mining engineer (1), gardener (1) and carpet weaver (1) (RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.159).
21. 21 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.159.
22. 22 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.159.
23. 23 RCP & DCP, 1897-8, (C.8590), XL.105, p.160.
24. 24 Statement by the Prison Commissioners of the action which has been taken up to January 1898 to carry out the Recommendations in the Report of the Departmental Committee on Prisons, 1895, (C.8790), p.19.
25. 25 The training schools are not mentioned in the reports of the Commissioners from 1909 to 1914.
26. 26 RCP & DCP reports years 1898 to 1907; the number of officers training is not recorded in the report for 1908, neither are any comments recorded.
27. 27 RCP & DCP, 1902, (Cd.1287), p.31.
28. 28 RCP & DCP, 1900, (Cd. 380), p.24.
29. 29 RCP & DCP, 1901, (Cd. 804), p.27.
30. 30 RCP & DCP, 1903, (Cd. 1800), p.32.
31. 31 Hull City Archives (HCA), DPHG/5/1 Governors Journal, pp.1-73. All the prisons concerned and their respective archives have been contacted and it appears that the training school at HMP Hull is the only one for which records remain. Further investigation is being undertaken into the school for female officers at HMP

Liverpool, although no records for HMP Manchester remain due to the disturbance in April 1990.

32. 32 HCA, DPHG/5/1 Governors Journal, p.41.
33. 33 HCA, DPHG/4/1 Register of Officers: HMP Hull; Lincolnshire Archives, Register of Officers: HMP Lincoln; West Yorkshire Archives HQ, Register of Officers: HMP Wakefield; PSM, Register of Officers: HMP Nottingham.
34. 34 ACC/3588 John Burt, Reminiscences of twenty-nine and half years as an Officer in H.M. Prison Wormwood Scrubs 1895–1925, London Metropolitan Archives, pp.130–2.

