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December 2018

Power, Control, Restraint
The Category A prisoner in the Dispersal Prison System

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the grade of Doctor of Philosophy of the
University of Portsmouth

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the experiences endured and knowledge acquired during 14 years as a Category A prisoner in high security dispersal prisons. From that perspective the restrictive rules, regulations and regimes that impact on the lives of an academically overlooked cohort of prisoners '*whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public or the police or to the security of the State*' are subjected to critical appraisal. I have focused on the minutiae of institutional arrangements to illuminate an unmediated and unrecorded exposition of prison life for a category A prisoner.

The origins of dispersal prisons and security classifications are outlined to provide context to the central theme of what it means to be labelled as category A. An essential prerequisite for the continued existence of dispersal prisons is that there must always be a sufficiency of prisoners deemed worthy of category A status. Currently, less than 25% of the population in dispersal prisons is category A. I contend that the category A system is now redundant: the pool of criminality from which category A prisoners are so designated has shrunk. Armed robbers, once the mainstay of the system, are no longer extant and an organised IRA has been replaced by Islamic terrorists, the most dangerous of whom are isolated in anti-radicalisation units. Thus the typical Category A prisoner has, by and large, disappeared but sadly the system remains. The dispersal system is an obsolete, highly expensive anachronism with the original concept of '*a liberal regime within a secure perimeter*' barely a memory. In their current form dispersal prisons are cruel and oppressive and serve no meaningful purpose. Category A categorisation is flawed, obsolete and nonsensical. The effects of supply and demand have perverted the system and decision making on Category A status is unintelligent, ineffective and needlessly cruel. Finally, the use and abuse of a virtually unrestrained power to segregate those prisoners deemed to be troublesome and dangerous is placed in context and the current procedure is analysed.

CONTENTS SUMMARY

Chapter 1 :	Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. 2:	Methodology.....	27
Chapter 2:	The Law, Rules and Regulations relating to prisons	39
Chapter 3:	The Origins of Category A and Dispersal Prisons.....	52
Chapter 4:	Dispersal Prisons: Allocation and Transfer.....	73
Chapter 5:	Control and Inspection of Dispersal Prisons.....	92
Chapter 6:	Confirmed Category A status	119
Chapter 7:	Category A: Risk and Review.....	138
Chapter 8:	Legal Challenges to Category A.....	158
Chapter 9:	Soft Power: Incentives and Earned Privileges	178
Chapter 10:	A Continuum Of Exclusion.....	192
Chapter 11:	Islamist Extremism and Separation Centres	214
Chapter 12:	Conclusions.....	234

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

An Unusual Thesis

Introduction

1.1	Security categorisation and stigma	2
1.2	Dispersal prisons	6
1.3	Literature Review	8
1.4	Carceral tours for research	15
1.5	Methodology	16
1.6	The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)	19
1.7	Convict criminology and ethnographic analysis / 1	22
1.8	Becoming an expert by experience	25
1.9	My background	29
1.10	The aims and intention of this thesis	32
1.11	The structure of the thesis	34

CHAPTER TWO

Rules, Regulations and Directives

Introduction

2.1	The evolution of prison law	40
2.2	The Legislative Structure of the prison system	40
2.3	Oversight and Agency	42
2.4	The Ministry of Justice	44
2.5	The Prison Act and Rules	45
2.6	Discretionary powers	47
2.7	Prison Service Orders and Instructions	48
2.8	The National Offender Management Service	50

CHAPTER THREE

The Origins of Category A and Dispersal Prisons

Introduction

3.1	1964: The escape of Great Train Robber Wilson	52
3.2	1965: The escape of Great Train Robber Biggs	53
3.3	1966;The escape of the spy George Blake	53
3.4	The Mountbatten Report into Prison Escapes and Security	55
3.5	Mountbatten's recommendations on security	58
3.6	A single fortress prison	60
3.7	The Radzinowicz sub -committee's recommendation	61
3.8	The dispersal issue	63
3.9	The background to the dispersal regime	65
3.10	The Woodcock and Learmont reports	69

CHAPTER FOUR

The Dispersal Prison: Allocation and Transfer

Introduction

4.1	Allocation to a dispersal prison	74
4.2	General considerations affecting allocation....	76
4.3	The primacy of security	78
4.4	Repatriation of category A prisoners	81
4.5	Transfer to a Dispersal Prison	82
4.6	Prison Service Order 67/2011: Searching the Person	85
4.7	The transfer process	87
4.8	The journey	88
4.9	Arrival at the destination	89
4.10	The reallocation of category A prisoners	90

CHAPTER FIVE

The Control/Inspection of the Dispersal Prison System

Introduction

5.1	An outline of the dispersal and long term prison system	93
5.1.1	Frankland	94
5.2.1	Full Sutton	96
5.3.1	Long Lartin	99
5.4.1	Wakefield	102
5.5.1	Whitemoor	105
5.6	The cost variables	108
5.7	The inspection of dispersal prisons by HMIPrisons	109
5.8	Inspectorate reports	111
5.9	Inspectorate Methodology	114
5.10	Segregation Units	115
5.11	Inappropriate use of Healthcare units	115
5.12	Provision of opiate-substitute medication	116
5.13	Same-sex relationships and supply of condoms	116
5.14	Sex in prison	117

CHAPTER SIX :

Categorisation of Provisional Category A

Introduction

6.1	The origins of Category A status	120
6.2	The current categorisation criteria for adult male prisoners	119
6.3	Criteria for Potential/Provisional Category A prisoners	121
6.4	The initial Category A process	123
6.5	Categorisation and classification	128
6.6	Supervision of Potential/Provisional Category A prisoners	129
6.7	Potential Category A prisoner Escorts	131
6.8	Reviews of Provisional Category A status	132
6.9	The evasion of disclosure	134

CHAPTER SEVEN

Confirmed Category A status

Introduction

7.1	First Annual Review: The Local Advisory Panel	139
7.2	The Category A Committee	142
7.3	Risk assessment	145
7.4	Sex Offenders Treatment Programme (SOTP)	146
7.5	The Pre-eminence of Offender Behaviour Programmes	150
7.6	Category A prisoners and prison psychologists	152
7.7	Psychology reports	153
7.8	Female psychologists in dispersal prisons	154
7.9	Hostility towards the categorisation process	157

CHAPTER EIGHT

Legal Challenges to Category A status

Introduction

8.1	Prisoners Rights	160
8.2	Disclosure and R(oao Lord)	161
8.3	Category A Team documentation and submissions	163
8.4	Risk Reduction variables	164
8.5	Judicial Reviews of Category A status	166
8.6	Disclosure	170
8.7	Oral Hearings: Parole and Category A - the legal position	171
8.8	R (Osborn) v Parole Board	173

CHAPTER NINE

Soft Power: Incentives and Privileges

Introduction

9.1	Staff information on prisoners: CNOMIS	179
9.2	Incentives And Earned Privileges (IEP)	181
9.3	Administrative punishment outside the disciplinary system	182
9.4	Appeals and complaints	185
9.5	The Prison Ombudsman	185
9.6	Other avenues of appeal	187
9.7	Disciplinary issues	188
9.8	Extra days	189

CHAPTER TEN:

A Continuum of Exclusion

Introduction

10.1	Segregation: Isolation: Solitary Confinement	193
10.2	Dispersal prison segregation units	194
10.2.1	HMP Frankland	194
10.2.2	HMP Full Sutton	195
10.2.3	HMP Long Lartin	197
10.2.4	HMP Wakefield	198
10.2.5	HMP Whitemoor	199
10.3	Unlocking in segregation units and close supervision centres	200
10.4	Time Limits to segregation	201
10.5	The Bourgass judgment	202
10.6	The deterrent effect of segregation	204
10.7	The Ghost Train: 1974 onwards	205
10.8	Special Units 1984 -1998	207
10.9	Close Supervision Centres 1998 onwards	208
10.10	Special Security/High Security Units	212

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Power and Control

11.1	Regime change	214
11.2	The Whitemoor studies	215
11.3	The Muslim prisoner population	216
11.4	Conversion to Islam	218
11.5	Radicalisation	219
11.6	The impact of the Bourgass judgment	221
11.7	The Acheson Report	222
11.8	The thrust of the Acheson report	223
11.9	Separation units	228

CHAPTER TWELVE

Conclusions

Introduction

12.1	Category A	234
12.2	Dispersal Prisons	234
12.3	Conclusions	236
12.4	Personal reflection	237

Table of Abbreviations

List of Tables

Bibliography

Appendices

List of Abbreviations

1. ACCT : Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork
2. BOSS : Body Orifice Security Scanner
3. CBT : Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy
4. CM : Custodial Manager
5. CNA : Certified Normal Accommodation
6. DIRF : Discrimination Incident Report Form
7. DSPD : Dangerous Severe Personality Disorder
8. FOIA : Freedom of Information Act
9. GBT : Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
10. HMIP : Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons HMP
11. HMP : Her Majesty's Prison
12. HMPPS : Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
13. IDTS : Integrated Drug Treatment System
14. IEP : Incentives and Earned Privileges
15. IPP : Imprisonment for Public Protection
16. IR : Information Report
17. LTHSPG : Long Term and High Security Prisons Group
18. MAPPA : Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
19. MQPL : Measuring the Quality of Prison Life
20. NOMS : National Offender Management Service
21. NRC : National Research Committee
22. OAO : On the Application of
23. OASys : Offender Assessment System
24. PIPE : Psychologically Informed Planned Environment
25. PPE : Personal Protection Equipment
26. SOTP : Sex Offenders Treatment Programme
27. SSJ : Secretary of State for Justice
28. TSP : Thinking Skills Programme
29. ViSOR : Violent Sex Offenders Register
30. VP : Vulnerable Prisoner

Foreword

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted or any other academic award.

Signed

Simon Price

Dated 25 December 2018

Word count: 79,147

List of Tables

Table	Description	Chapter	Page
1.6	<i>FOIA requests submitted 2014 2018</i>	1	21
3.1	<i>Escapes from prisons pre Mountbatten 1955/66</i>	3	57
3.2	<i>Escapes from prisons post Mountbatten 2006 -17</i>	3	57
4.1	<i>The population of Dispersal Prisons in 2018</i>	4	79
5.1	<i>A statistical snapshot of HMP Frankland</i>	5	94
5.2	<i>A statistical snapshot of HMP Full Sutton</i>	5	97
5.3	<i>A statistical snapshot of HMP Long Lartin</i>	5	99
5.4	<i>A statistical snapshot of HMP Wakefield</i>	5	101
5.5	<i>A statistical snapshot of HMP Whitemoor</i>	5	105
5.6.1	<i>Cost per place in Dispersal Prisons</i>	5	108
5.6.2	<i>Cost per place in Long Term Category B Prisons</i>	5	108
5.6.3	<i>Cost per place in Category C Training Prisons</i>	5	108
6.1	<i>Unspecified offences for category A</i>	6	127
6.2	<i>Specified offences for category A</i>	6	128
7.1	<i>Category A review dates</i>	7	140
7.2	<i>Local Advisory Panel Reviews</i>	7	144
7.3	<i>Psychologists employed in dispersal prisons</i>	7	156
8.1	<i>Oral Hearings for category A prisoners</i>	8	175
9.1	<i>Complaints to the Prisons Ombudsman</i>	9	187
9.2	<i>Additional days imposed at Dispersal Prisons</i>	9	190

LIST OF ANNEXES

	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
1	Telephone Application	17
2	Security Assessment for N. Ireland	72
3	Reporting in Form	78
4	Pre-Transfer request	145
5	Annual Review of Category A status	90
6	High Security Transfer report	131
7	Activity Allocation for Category A	81
8	Intelligence Request	83
9	Search Procedures	17
10	Categorisation Review	71
11	Close Supervision Unit Manual	194
12	Separation Centre Manual	224
13	Facilities List	233
14	Canteen List	233