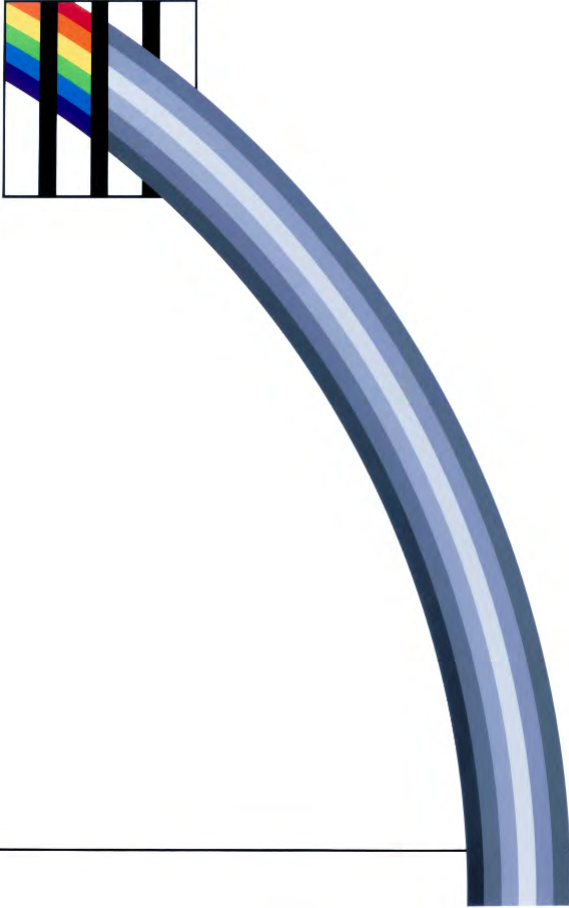


# Quakers and Prison Abolition: A Conversation



A Publication of the Scottish Quaker  
Community Justice Network



Front cover image “Prison Rainbow”(1976)by Patrick Hughes, back cover image “Phoenix” (1993) by Alison Clark, both reproduced with kind permission of the artists.

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## Introduction

On 13th April 2024, Quakers from across Scotland met in Glasgow Meeting House and online for the event 'Quakers and Prison Abolition: A Conversation', organised by the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network. It was an exploratory conversation and also a challenging one, which asked attendees to set aside conventional wisdom around imprisonment and imagine radical approaches to justice informed by Quaker principles.

This publication continues that conversation, featuring articles from the three main speakers, quotations from prisoners spanning the last hundred years, and artwork that aims to engage the heart and imagination in questions of abolition.

So, what are these questions?

One idea that both Pete Clarke and Mike Nellis engaged with in their talks is the Quaker tradition of refusal. Early Quakers refused to swear oaths, to pay tithes, to own slaves, to respond to violence with violence. They said 'no' often. And although we can and do discuss what could exist instead of prison — see Pete Clarke's piece on the Dovegate Therapeutic Community for one example — these speakers asked if we should we follow the example of early Friends and begin by saying 'no'. What comes after the 'no' will require reflection and imagination, but we are not starting from scratch. We can learn from the work of thinkers and practitioners both religious and secular — the abolition(ish) reading list at the end of this publication offers some places to begin.

As Quakers we hold a testament to equality, and a persistent theme across the days' talks was how prison systems perpetuate inequality. Whether we look at black and brown people being disproportionately incarcerated, the number of people arriving in prison from the country's poorest postcodes, or the huge numbers of prisoners living with mental illness, it's clear that prisons replicate and magnify the dynamics

Can prisons be reformed, then? Clearly, to proponents of abolition the answer is no, and speaker Kirstin Anderson offered some compelling reasons why not in her talk. For one, she said, prisons are already a reform of previous systems of punishment in themselves, and continual efforts to improve conditions have not prevented them steadily getting worse. And secondly, she argued that reform of the prison can reinforce the prison itself. She referenced the idea of 'criminalising care', which critiques the notion that care for the most marginalised in society can be siloed into the prison system. Instead, she offered a perspective of "prison abolition as a practice" which encompasses building care infrastructure and advocating for racial and disability justice, labour and housing rights and climate action alongside weakening the societal role of the prison.

I hope that this publication will offer a perspective on prison abolition as a position in keeping with Quaker testimonies and tradition. I also hope it can offer some imaginative space to explore what justice and abolition mean to Quakers living within a carceral state.

In collecting the creative pieces and photographs for this publication I was interested in the theme of the natural world and the human-made in conversation. Being in nature is an important part of many Quakers spirituality and wellbeing, but people in prison are largely denied access to the natural world. The cover image, Patrick Hughes' piece 'Prison Rainbow' feels profound in its simplicity; even the rainbow can't withstand the stultifying effect of the prison. Meanwhile, my own short story 'Inside, Outside' imagines a prison reclaimed by unruly nature.

While the prison system was clearly created by human beings, it has become so ubiquitous it too can feel natural. I believe that Quakers are in an excellent position to interrogate this orthodoxy of, and as individuals or as a collective, to say 'no'.

**Ren Clark, September 2024**



“

It will be readily inferred from what I have already said that prisons are characterised by an almost complete absence of trust in the honour or obedience of the prisoner; and that the warders and Governor rule not by love but by the fear which punishment and the threat to punish inspire. The regulations that hang on the wall of each cell give a portentous list of some twenty or thirty different forms of activity, for which punishment is prescribed; and the attempt to indulge in any one of these is punishable equally with the activity itself.

As we were moved about to and from chapel or workshop or exercise-ring, warders were stationed at different vantage points, with the object of cutting off every effort to communicate with the next man. ‘Keep that tongue quiet or you’ll soon be having a change of diet,’ was a frequent exhortation. Every step and action is watched and spied upon.

Stephen Hobhouse (1918)  
“An English Prison From Within”

Victor Serge (1931)  
“Men In Prison”

“

The unreality of time is palpable. Each second falls slowly. What a measureless gap from one hour to the next. When you tell yourself in advance that six months – or six years – are to pass like this, you feel the terror of facing an abyss. At the bottom, mists in the darkness.

So as not to lose track of the date, you have to count the days attentively, mark each one with a cross. One morning you discover that there are forty-seven days – or one hundred and twenty, or three hundred and forty-seven! – and that it is a straight path leading backwards without the slightest break: colourless, insipid, senseless. Not a single landmark is visible. Months have passed like so many days; entire days pass like minutes. Future time is terrifying. The present is heavy with torpor. Each minute may be marvellously – or horribly – profound. That depends to a certain extent on yourself. There are swift hours and very long seconds. Past time is void. There is no chronology of events to mark it; external duration no longer exists.

You know that the days are piling up. You can feel the creeping numbness, the memory of life growing weak. Burial. Each hour is like a shovelful of earth falling noiselessly, softly, on this grave.

”



“

Myself and Jimmy were working in the wire-shop once, and getting continual reminders from the shop office to keep working. Finally we told him that as we were on piecework we could go as fast or as slow as we wished. With a smile on his face he said, ‘I’m giving you a direct order to work.’ We pointed out that there were people sitting down doing nothing and demanded to know why he was always telling us to work and not them. ‘I’m giving you a direct order!’

It wasn’t planned and I don’t know who made the first move, but Jimmy and I rose, simultaneously it seemed, and began to wreck the shop, smashing everything we could. Of course, the alarm bell went, but by the time the heavy mob arrived we had caused enough damage to satisfy ourselves. Then we were escorted to the block where we would wait to see the governor the next morning. While on punishment for that offence we got talking to some Irish lads who were Provisional IRA. They had a peaceful sit-down on one of the wings over some grievance and were now down the block; some had some very serious injuries, including one next to me with a broken arm. As I’ve said before, everyone in prison is being punished, and that is sufficient reason for some kind of bond.

The Irish boys claim to be political prisoners, though whether others see them as that I suppose is down to the individual. I don’t make any judgement on that: when someone gives up their life not for money or gain but simply because of political belief then they

must believe that what they do is right and I am not their judge and juror.

The way that the Irish lads were treated by the screws disgusted me and Jimmy. While in my cell one afternoon I heard what appeared to be scuffling further on down the passage, and as usual people began to bang their doors. I didn’t know who it was until next morning on exercise, when Jimmy told me he had seen a screw spitting in the food. Jimmy asked him what he was doing and was grabbed and locked in his cell. As the news spread it was decided we should go on hunger strike, because who wants to eat food that’s had spit and God knows what else mixed in it? The hunger strike lasted five days, until the governor conceded that a prisoner from the kitchen should serve our meals.

The one thing I never want to do again is go on hunger strike.

”

Trevor Hercules (1989)  
“Labelled a Black Villain”



“

It's important to stress that my prison experience was very different from the norm. I had unwavering support from family and friends, and I was looked after by a decent bunch of people inside Wandsworth, so I survived pretty much unscathed. It also helped that I was educated, white, middle class, relatively affluent, and I didn't have a mental illness. This is not the case for the huge majority of other prisoners, and incarceration does irreparable damage to them and their families. You may well think that it's justly deserved, as they've broken the law, but this argument does nothing to tackle reoffending. Dostoevsky once said that 'the degree of civilisation in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.' On that basis, we are turning into a very uncivilised country indeed.

”

Chris Atkins (2020)  
“A Bit of a Stretch: The Diaries  
Of a Prisoner”

Sydney and Beatrice Webb  
(1922)  
“English Prisons Under  
Local Government”

“

We suspect that it passes the wit of man to contrive a prison which shall not be gravely injurious to the minds of the vast majority of the prisoners, if not also to their bodies. So far as can be seen at present, the most practical and most hopeful of “prison reforms” is to keep people out of prison altogether!

”



## What does prison abolition mean?

**Kirstin Anderson**

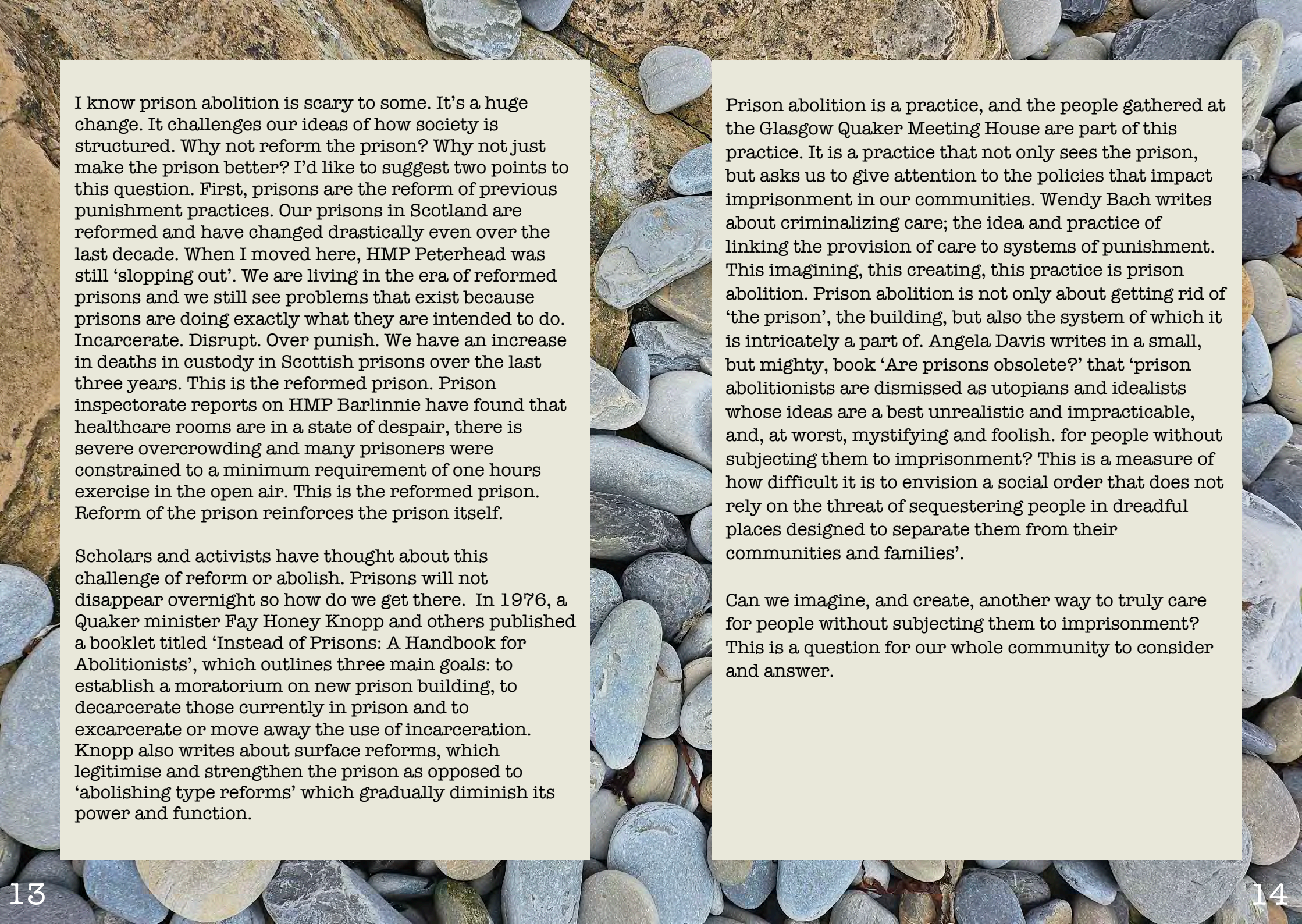
On 13 April 2024, I was invited to the Glasgow Quaker Meeting House by Mike Nellis to reflect on the question, 'What does prison abolition mean?' Before I give an answer to that question, I want to briefly tell you how I came to start thinking about abolition seriously. Twenty-two years ago, I moved to New York City from Birmingham, Alabama to start my first job out of university as a newly qualified music teacher. I became the music director at a school in NYC for children in Pre-K through middle school. I was responsible for teaching music across the school in classrooms, and directing a number of choirs. In our school, there were a number of children who had a family member in prison. I saw how this impacted my students, their families and our community. It was then that I started wondering, what happened in prisons? What did prison actually do? I also wondered what music making happened in prisons. As a music teacher, I saw how music impacted my students individually and collectively. I became seriously interested in studying music in prisons and five years later I moved to Edinburgh to do a PhD that looked at music education in the Scottish Prison System.

I also started learning more about prisons and their impact on people kept in them, people that worked inside them and the community where the prison was situated. I often heard from the men and women I

worked with in prison that taking part in the arts made them feel 'human' or 'they didn't feel like they were in a prison'. This impact, the 'feeling of not being in prison' or 'being human' should not be dismissed, but lately I have begun to ask why we often stop there. Why do we remain in the prison? Why do we feel anchored there? Since I arrived in Scotland seventeen years ago, the arts and justice sector has grown substantially alongside the prison population in Scotland. Arts in prisons, while valuable for incarcerated people as a means to survive custody, to 'feel human', do not stop 'the prison'. The arts and justice sector sustains the prison system and makes it look more humane, more 'good'. I started to change my mind. Providing arts in prisons wasn't enough for me. I wanted less prison to begin with.

Most of our society doesn't think about prisons at all, but when the questions of abolishing prisons is put to them, it's difficult for people to imagine a world without them. Where will the bad people be sent? How will our communities stay safe? These are reasonable questions but people are often uncomfortable with the answers that reveal the realities of what prison is and does, or does not, do. Across the world we see an overrepresentation of minority and aboriginal communities locked in prisons, an overrepresentation of people who are the poorest in our communities. This overrepresentation is not because these communities are inherently 'bad', rather it is due to the systematic structures that continuously over police and criminalise them.





I know prison abolition is scary to some. It's a huge change. It challenges our ideas of how society is structured. Why not reform the prison? Why not just make the prison better? I'd like to suggest two points to this question. First, prisons are the reform of previous punishment practices. Our prisons in Scotland are reformed and have changed drastically even over the last decade. When I moved here, HMP Peterhead was still 'slopping out'. We are living in the era of reformed prisons and we still see problems that exist because prisons are doing exactly what they are intended to do. Incarcerate. Disrupt. Over punish. We have an increase in deaths in custody in Scottish prisons over the last three years. This is the reformed prison. Prison inspectorate reports on HMP Barlinnie have found that healthcare rooms are in a state of despair, there is severe overcrowding and many prisoners were constrained to a minimum requirement of one hours exercise in the open air. This is the reformed prison. Reform of the prison reinforces the prison itself.

Scholars and activists have thought about this challenge of reform or abolish. Prisons will not disappear overnight so how do we get there. In 1976, a Quaker minister Fay Honey Knopp and others published a booklet titled 'Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists', which outlines three main goals: to establish a moratorium on new prison building, to decarcerate those currently in prison and to excarcerate or move away the use of incarceration. Knopp also writes about surface reforms, which legitimise and strengthen the prison as opposed to 'abolishing type reforms' which gradually diminish its power and function.

Prison abolition is a practice, and the people gathered at the Glasgow Quaker Meeting House are part of this practice. It is a practice that not only sees the prison, but asks us to give attention to the policies that impact imprisonment in our communities. Wendy Bach writes about criminalizing care; the idea and practice of linking the provision of care to systems of punishment. This imagining, this creating, this practice is prison abolition. Prison abolition is not only about getting rid of 'the prison', the building, but also the system of which it is intricately a part of. Angela Davis writes in a small, but mighty, book 'Are prisons obsolete?' that 'prison abolitionists are dismissed as utopians and idealists whose ideas are a best unrealistic and impracticable, and, at worst, mystifying and foolish. for people without subjecting them to imprisonment? This is a measure of how difficult it is to envision a social order that does not rely on the threat of sequestering people in dreadful places designed to separate them from their communities and families'.

Can we imagine, and create, another way to truly care for people without subjecting them to imprisonment? This is a question for our whole community to consider and answer.







## Why Quakers Should Consider Penal Abolition

**Mike Nellis**

Looking at the current state of the penal system in England and Wales and Scotland it is clear that the so-called liberal approach to penal reform practiced over the past fifty years has failed. This mostly entailed persuading state agencies, on the basis of technical evidence, to “run decent prisons”, “use prison parsimoniously” and “use community-based alternatives more”. This approach was premised on the illusion that prisons were nothing more than necessary means of deterring crime, punishing criminals and achieving rehabilitation at scale. As such, It has had negligible impact on deteriorating penal realities, because the truth about the real social functions of imprisonment is less straightforward than this.

England and Wales and Scotland are both in the process of expanding adult prisoner numbers, despite already occupying the top spots for imprisonment rates in West European league tables. In an era of collapsing welfare and mental health services, inside and outside prisons, neither jurisdiction has the resources to create decent regimes across a vast penal estate. This makes expanding it doubly immoral. Crucially, whatever government comes next, neither prisons nor probation will compete effectively with more popular public services like health, education and transport infrastructure for inevitably scarce funding resources.

Although British Quakers once promisingly considered abolishing punishment (without coming to unity on it) we have largely endorsed the shallow liberal penal reform tradition. In the face of impending atrocity, we must now use our testimonies to truth, peace and equality to discern a better way forward, and pursue it in alliance with others.

The drivers of penal expansion have far more to do with deepening social inequality, disciplining the poor and mentally disturbed, and shoring up state authority - alongside the collapse of community cohesion - than with a genuine government desire to reduce crime or address its causes, understandable as the popular demand for this is.

Influential media and politicians routinely claim that systematically “increasing punitiveness” - more criminalisation, longer custodial sentences, more spartan regimes, reduced early release, lessening aftercare - makes society safer. It doesn't, and there is ample reason to think that many violent men now leave prison with their rage unabated, new victims only days away. Multiple forms of criminality - including online fraud originating abroad, sexual violence, drug trafficking and knife attacks - do blight society, but to invest in more imprisonment as a catch-all solution to them - as we are doing - at the expense of prevention, victim support, community-building and the pursuit of social justice, is delusional.



There are no easy or immediate ways out of this, but “living in truth” in respect of prisons, exposing them for what they are, is a good place to start for people of faith. Contemporary penal abolitionists in Europe and the USA dare to believe that prison need not be accepted as a necessary evil, even less as a positive good, just as eighteenth century Quakers (eventually!) concluded that chattel slavery was morally intolerable and had to end, no matter how divinely ordained or economically indispensable its beneficiaries deemed it to be. More often than not, Quaker testimony has been formally against injustice and untruth, disrupting false claims and harmful practices, clearing space for something better to emerge. So it should be with our response to prisons.

It is true that when slavery was finally “abolished” it was on terms far more congenial to the well-compensated slaveowners than to the mostly destitute slaves - not the Quaker intention at all - and there may be sombre lessons here for penal abolitionists. Furthermore, present generations have no right to inflict abstract solutions on later generations whose specific challenges they cannot anticipate, so in a fairer world properly therapeutic forms of confinement for the minority who needed it may well be ethical. Replacing prison with ultra-punitive forms of personalised monitoring technology, or “clockwork orange-style” behavioural manipulation, would not be moral progress.

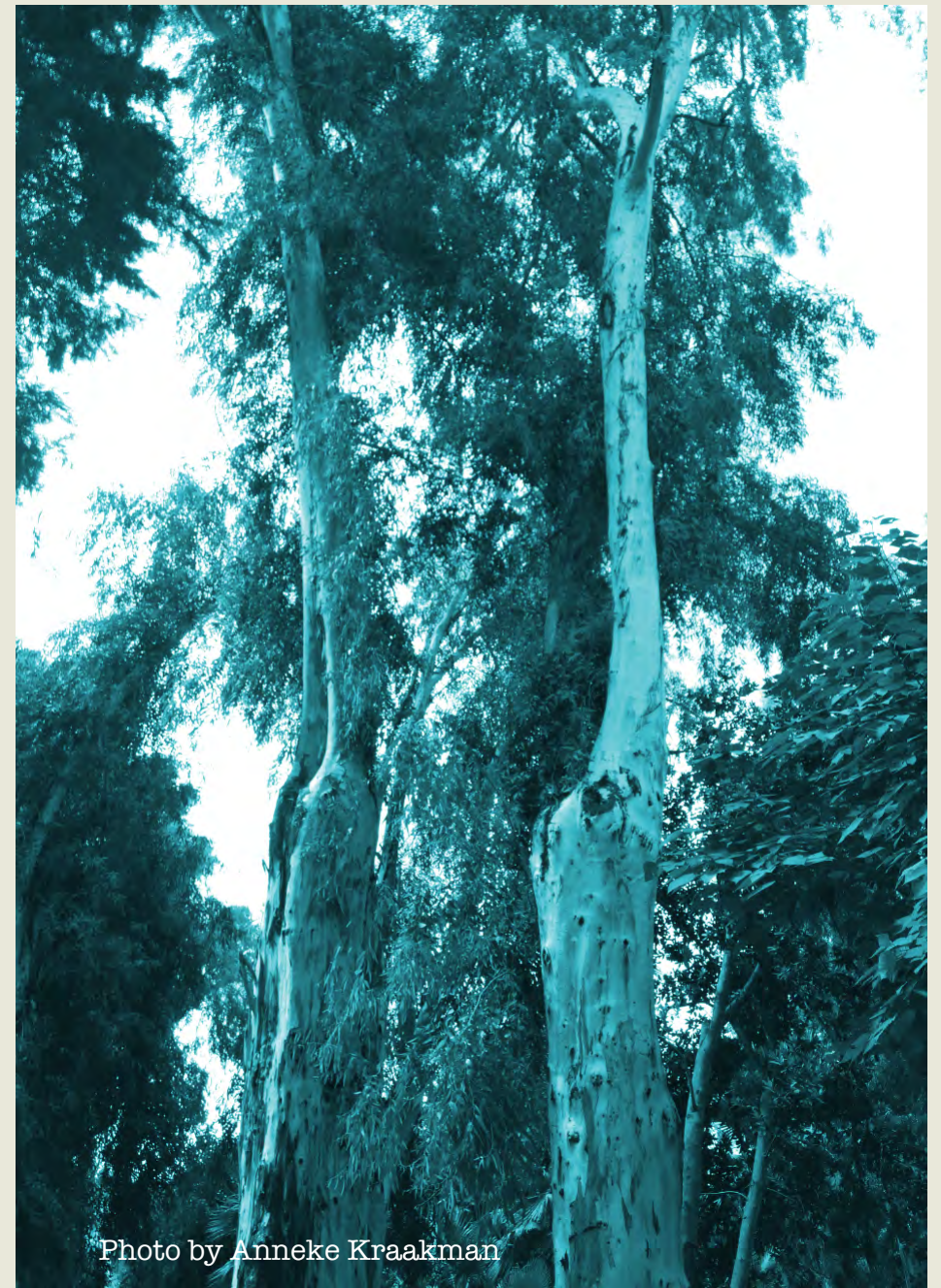


Photo by Anneke Kraakman



## Bower Bird, 2

Phil Crockett Thomas

Tame

the robin

might still

be there:

visiting or red-breast up

under a

running machine.

The women don't use the gym.

Sat in tracksuits coloured grey

as pumice

like their food, no water

will be squeezed from these stones

that smile shyly

some scatty as schoolgirls.

Rapt hands press out scissor-free decoupage

tender attention to scenes of normal life

Loaves of bread are milled by the rain  
as they shiver on silver carts outside the hall  
abandoned in a sudden shower.

We inspect

pale sandwich fillings that have been hastily spread  
the contents restrained by cling film.

Almost charmed by the glitter on the floor

a sprinkling

These chairs cannot be weaponised.

We are singing in the broom cupboard.

Count the pens back into the bag and  
moisten the dust.

Paper kittens, hearts and flowers –

The bird is gone – bedecked in decoupage  
or binned.

Reprinted with kind permission from Phil Crockett Thomas's  
2020 collection 'Stir'.



## **The Therapeutic Community as a Provision for the Most Dangerous - a Detail of the TC Model**

**Pete Clarke**

As Quakers we have a long and honourable 'record' for campaigning on behalf of penal reform and delivering ministry in prisons in several forms. However, this paper, in the context of a TC, looks more closely at 'cause and effect' and in so doing introduces us to a more comprehensive reform to the role of incarceration. In this paper, through a discussion around a TC, I will introduce the idea that the existence of prisons and their use to punish individuals who have experienced traumatic backgrounds and/or events is not effective and is in fact counterproductive in any sense beyond mere societal revenge. This understanding is in essence the bedrock of the approach of TCs. TCs are designed to be constructive, and primary psychological treatment is delivered by the 'community'. It is a residential and 'social' environment not usually experienced by prisoners or staff - together, 'this provides a context for other forms of treatment' (Woodward et al 2000).

### **Philosophy and Principles of a TC**

At this point then it perhaps useful to state explicitly what the primary philosophy and principles of a TC

- An emphasis on unlabelled normal living, (Less use of jargon)

- An emphasis on personal growth through enhanced interpersonal relationships. [Here it is possible to see the link between the lack of such in a previous life experience and the experience of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - author's note]
- A belief in self-help and that residents can help each other, sometimes more than professionals can help through advice
- An emphasis on 'moral treatment', i.e., treated as normal within a consciously sustained social atmosphere
- An emphasis on open honest communication between all community members, staff and residents
- Support and activation of the belief that the more people are empowered, the greater your empowerment
- The instillation of hope
- Understanding that others share your problems
- Receiving through giving

To achieve the best outcomes for prisoners, therapy is delivered in small groups in a very structured day split into community business meetings, education/training, and therapy. Within group therapy, trust building was crucial, and in a non-hierarchical structure, prisoners were encouraged to share life stories including earliest memories, childhood experiences, experiences they identified as having the most effect on their life and particularly their criminality.



I'll conclude this paper here with the comments of TC prisoners, and register my thanks and reference to Brown J, Miller S, Northey S and O'Neill D for their work which I have unapologetically referred to, paraphrased, quoted, and largely based this paper on. I have chosen to do this to give an overview of the development, philosophy, practices, and outcomes of a TC that they presented in their book, 'What Works in Therapeutic Prisons - Evaluating Psychological Change in Dovegate Therapeutic Community', and which I found as detailed nowhere else.

Advocates of prison abolition, (like myself), are often misunderstood as promoting an 'easy path' and letting criminals 'get away' without punishment. As an abolitionist I support the need for a redirecting of criminal justice to deliver non-custodial sentencing which as well as fulfilling a need for the community to believe offenders have been 'dealt with' effectively, also delivers a positive pathway for those who contravene societies laws. Such non-custodial sentencing can, and should, include many of the interventions that the TC uses, and which have proved effective. However, I also recognise the need for the most dangerous offenders to be removed from society, (for whatever period), but instead of being the subjects of punishment, isolation and more 'trauma', they should be 'treated', 'cared for' in a positive and life changing 'prison'...the TC, or something very like it.

"When I got my head into thinking in a different way...I wanted to change" (in Brown. Miller et al 2014 p 252)



Photo by Anneke Kraakman



## Inside, Outside

Short story by Ren Clark

In 1882, the new prison's neighbours are the graving docks, a fish market, the "Royal Lunatic Asylum". Up above, men in duck cloth and rolled shirtsleeves work the vast shipbuilding crane; inside, men stamped with broad arrows walk the penal treadmill in silent lockstep.

Seven days for vagrancy, forty two for debt, eight months for fire-raising, nine for larceny, two years for assault, three for manslaughter. On and on, sentence after sentence, one hundred and forty years on the outside is multiplied through thousands of inside lives. As the prison grows old, barnacled with extensions and looped with barbed wire, time saturates the bricks. And when authorities declare the prison decrepit, the building rebels.

2023, in the laundry, and a stagnant pool of time meets the nub of a stalactite. Leon, 15 months down, is elbow-deep in a musty hamper when he sees the ceiling swell. Accelerating, elongating, all at once, the yellowed calcium spike drives downwards, impaling a washing machine. Crunch. Ears ringing in the sudden silence, Leon sees the stalactite as the tobacco-stained finger of God.

On the outer wall, too a slick of time drips from a gutter and digs a vertical groove in the red brick. Esther, waiting visitor, is transfixed as the groove deepens to a slot, the sides smooth as gingerbread. The wall winks to her, inviting her into an office peepshow. She sees a slice of polyester-clad shoulder, a grey head bent over a keyboard, a pink neck, close enough to brush her fingers against through the brick. Welcome in.

The prisoners are at association when time floods a wing. Fifty cells with ceilings crumbling to sand, bed-frames reduced to smears of rust. Something has fermented, bubbled to a spongy mass that sours the halls. Lichen grows fat-fingered. The men are hurried into sweatboxes, staring out at motorways through square portholes.

The prison is declared ungovernable. Local adventurers who breach the cordon bring back stories of woodlice big as cats, rats strong as pitbulls. When a teenager's bones join the rubble, the prison's rebellion is curtailed. Bad luck for developers sensing a real-estate opportunity, the building is too dangerous to demolish. Instead, the old prison is encased in a plastic dome, chemicals that time can't eat.

Leon, two months free, walks the perimeter with Esther, the blue-grey bulk of the old shipbuilding crane towering overhead. The face of the prison has dissolved, baring itself to the city. Leon peers up into it, trying to point out his old cell among the purple hydra of thistles. He tries to count windows and landings but the building's too far gone. Memory won't superimpose over the ruin.

Pressing a palm to the thick plastic, he feels a tingling pulse, a connection. It's not a jutting-down finger of God but a bubbling-up, spontaneous and chaotic. His own fifteen months are part of the churn, a stream feeding into an underground river. It's burst into the open, desperate to be seen.



# An Abolition-ish Reading List

## By Mike Nellis

This list mixes secular with faith-based contributions to radical thinking on penal questions. Not all the books here are committed to abolition (a term which has a range of meanings) but they leave no doubt that a moral case for it can be made, and that it is not alien to Quaker tradition. Between them these books can inform the critical thinking and discernment vital if Friends are to play a part in addressing the current penal crisis. The list is not exhaustive: the point is to show that in reason and faith abolition can legitimately claim Friend's attention.

### **Prison Research Education Action Project (1976)**

**Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists.** A lucid and readable report commissioned by the New York State Council for Churches in the aftermath of the brutally crushed rebellion in Attica Correctional Facility in 1971, which presaged a significant intensification of punitiveness in the American penal system. The report was compiled by a committee, but Fay Honey Knopp (a Quaker) and Jon Reiger (a Mennonite) are usually credited as the main authors. Honey Knopp, a longstanding Quaker prison visitor during the Vietnam War, had become an abolitionist before Attica, but this event galvanised her and others to pursue it more assiduously. Although its "attrition model" of abolition is moderate and pragmatic the report was welcomed and republished as an important, pioneering document by a much more radical abolitionist body, Critical Resistance, in 2005. Only available online.

### **Thomas Mathiesen (1990/2006) Prison on Trial.**

Winchester: Waterside Press. Third Edition. Mathiesen, a Norwegian law professor and anti-prison activist, was the foremost European theorist of abolition from the 1970s. Key to his argument is that the social functions served by imprisonment have very little to do with crime control, that prison makes a negligible contribution to preventing or responding to crime, and that so-called penal reforms either achieve little or consolidate unjust practices.

### **Hermann Bianchi (1994) Justice as Sanctuary.**

Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Reprinted with a different publisher in 2010. Bianchi was a Dutch-American criminologist but his thinking had Christian theological underpinnings. This off-beat, but interesting, contribution to abolitionist thought would not be accepted by more doctrinaire champions of abolition, but may well make sense to people of faith.

### **Ruth Morris (1995) Penal Abolition: the practical choice.**

Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press. Morris, a Quaker, was the guiding influence behind Canada Yearly Meeting's discernment and adoption of an "abolitionist minute" in 1981. This is a short, lucid guide for practitioners and activists to work both outside and alongside established reformist frameworks. It owes a lot to Honey Knopp (who died in 1995) and *Instead of Prisons*, but takes account of knowledge, ideas and experience gained in the intervening 20 years.

### **Ruth Morris (2000) Stories of Transformative Justice.**

Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. This was one of her later books, going beyond calls for penal abolition and even restorative justice, recognising the need for broader social changes, which she called "transformative justice". Intellectually ambitious, but full of human stories.

### **Tim Newell (2000) Forgiving Justice: A Quaker vision of criminal justice.**

London: Quaker Books. This was the first ever Swarthmore lecture on a penal theme, despite Quakers' long history of involvement in penal affairs. Tim was a former governor of HMP Grendon and reminds us of the therapeutic potential of some prisons. Not a political book (and in my view overoptimistic about what can be achieved by liberal reformers) but the stance of "forgiving justice" that Tim commended to Friends offered a significant challenge to the relentless punitiveness of prevailing penal policies in the UK, and remains relevant.



**Lesley Moreland (2001) An Ordinary Murder.** London: Aurum Press. A mother's - and a Quaker's response to the murder of her adult daughter, Ruth, in 1990, and her efforts to overcome the Home Office bureaucracy that initially prevented her from meeting and confronting the man who killed her, convicted and imprisoned. The meeting eventually happened. She chose not to forgive him. A vital reminder for all would-be abolitionists (or liberal reformers) never to disregard the pain and anguish of victims and survivors of violent crime, or to be glib about forgiveness. Murder, and other violent crimes, requires severe moral censure, and if not imprisonment for some proportionate period of time, what? Conceding the point, as *Instead of Prisons* did, that some forms of violence require subsequent incarceration - no-one reading this book will doubt that - does not however justify the mass use of it as a substitute for addressing the social injustices and cultural values that stimulate criminal behaviour.

**Marian Partington (2003) Salvaging the Sacred.** London. Quaker Books. Marian, a Friend, discovered in 1994 that her sister Lucy, missing for 20 years, had been the victim of a notorious serial killer of young women. This short booklet - originally a Guardian article - describes what Marian and her family did when Lucy's long-buried bones were returned to them. Everyone engaged with penal questions, from whatever perspective, has to read this booklet.

**Angela Davis (2003) Are Prisons Obsolete?** New York: Seven Stories Press. In this legendary essay America's leading scholar-activist on abolition (and co-founder of Critical Resistance) answers "no" to her own question, prisons are not obsolete in the world as it is, but should be in truly just world, which is worth working for. She makes clear that the roots and subsequent development of imprisonment in the USA had more to do with class and racial oppression after the formal end of slavery than with crime control, and that those legacies remain.

**Danielle Sered (2019) Until We Reckon: violence, mass incarceration and a road to repair.** New York: The New Press. Sered runs a not-for-profit project working with victims, offenders and communities in New York. She indicts the racial violence of the US prison system and grasps that prisons serve many more social purposes than responding to crime, but falls short of calling for abolition. She values old and new forms of restorative justice. Favourably reviewed in *The Friend* by Tim Newell.

**David Scott (2020) For Abolition: Essays on Prisons and Socialist Ethics.** Winchester: Waterside Press. a British academic/activist, in many ways the intellectual successor to Thomas Mathiesen. Like Mathiesen, he exposes both the myths and illusions that sustain prisons' credibility as an indispensable and ineradicable response to a wide range of crime, and the entrenched moral blindness which normalises its existence and makes us fail to see how harmful it is.

**Mariame Kaba (2021) We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organising and Transforming Justice.** Chicago: Haymarket Books. A Black organiser and writer rather than an academic, Kaba works or develop local community responses to harmful behaviours outside formal criminal justice processes, which she regards as forms of harm in their own right, irretrievably unjust. In the aftermath of Black Lives Matter, this book garnered more mainstream attention than it might otherwise have received, and shifted popular and practical understandings of what abolition might mean, and why its urgent. Danielle Sered approves.



**Rachel Herzing and Justin Piche (2024) How to Abolish Prisons: lessons from the movement against imprisonment.**

Chicago: Haymarket Press (With a foreword by Mariame Kaba).

As with all American books on penal abolition, you have to adapt the ideas put forward here, but they are worth attending to.

**Phil Crockett Thomas (ed) Abolition Science Fiction.**

A collection of short fictional pieces, produced in Scotland, intended to inspire creative thought on how a world without prisons might devise different ways of doing justice.

**Ben Jarman (forthcoming October 2024) Getting What We Deserve: Imprisonment and the Challenge of Doing Justice.**

London: Quaker Books. Ben gave his Swarthmore Lecture in July 2024 and the book, expanding on the lecture, will appear shortly.

Drawing on his own reaction to a murder by a convicted but recently released “terrorist” offender (in an academic setting in which he was present) Ben maps the wrenching emotional and psychological consequences that victims and survivors of violence experience. These get in the way of any simple and straightforward opposition to punishment and imprisonment .... and don’t necessarily lend themselves to forgiveness. Ben resolutely ignored all aspects of the contemporary prison crisis in his lecture – expanding numbers, rising levels of violence and under-resourcing. The book may be different, but this feels uncomfortable to some of us. Nonetheless, the issues Ben is inviting Friends to engage with can’t be shirked by abolitionists, even if they do not exhaust all that Quaker thought and practice might contribute to penal debate.





