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The Only Ones Who Can Tell the Truth

"There is a class of people in this world who have fallen into the lowest degree of humiliation, far below beggary, and who are deprived not only of all social consideration but also, in everybody's opinion, of the specific human dignity, reason itself - and those are the only people who, in fact, are able, to tell the truth. All others lie." Simone Weil, July 2015

"What grounds a truth is the experience of suffering and courage, sometimes in solitude, not the size or force of a majority." Slavoj Zizek, Strong Truths, 2017

The rise of far-right popularist nationalism throughout Europe and the U.S. And now manifested in England by the recent general election result evidences a fundamental shift in the political centre of gravity to the extreme right and the irrevocable demise of Social Democracy as the balance of social and political power tips massively in favour of the wealthy and privileged. Inevitably, as poverty and the material deprivation of the poor massively increases so too will the number of the imprisoned, especially as social unrest and the struggle for basic survival intensifies, and already the Tories have pledged to increase police numbers, and prison places as the carceral state increasingly replaces the welfare state, carnouflaged by the rhetoric of "getting tough on crime" and maintaining "Law and Order". As microcosms of the wider society prisons reflect the hard-edged reality of the power relationship between the state and the most disempowered and marginalized group in that society, and conditions within most British jails, which are now brutalizing ghettos surrounded by high walls, are a physical prophecy of conditions for the increasing poor in a society now dominated by the jungle law of unrestrained neo-capitalism.

Malcolm X once described prisons as "universities of revolution", and the state itself has described them as "sites of radicalization", and within the enclosed totalitarian society of prison, the seed of political consciousness in some prisoners is nourished daily by the direct experience of repression and powerlessness. And this is an experience that will increasingly characterize the lives of the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in the broader society as the social and political climate in Britain becomes increasingly more repressive and control-orientated. The criminalization of the poor, already apparent in the treatment of state benefit claimants as virtual offenders on probation or parole, and the racial targeting by the police of deprived ethnic-minority communities, will increasingly dissolve the walls between prisons and poor communities, and create a relationship of power between the state and poor almost identical to that which exists between jailor and jailed. And it is amongst the most disadvantaged and marginalized that resistance to that state will originate and grow. The recent re-election of a hard right tory government who for the last decade has focused its austerity policy on the working class, many of whom voted for the continuation of that government, reveals that the class struggle in a traditional sense no longer exists. It is now amongst the "Lumpen Proletariat" and criminalized that the class war will be fuelled

From Victorian times and the birth of modern capitalism, the factory and prison system were always the two basic life choices of the poor and dispossessed, and it was the former that the organized working class was born and developed, and shaped the contours of Social Democracy. Meanwhile the undeserving and criminalized poor were disappeared into the prison system and dehumanized in the interest of "Law and Order". And it was this most marginalized and scapegoated group of the poor who witnessed and experienced the true nature of the capitalist state and were deeply alienated from "ordinary society" as a result. Meanwhile, the balance of class power established in Britain following the Second World War reached its definitive end during the 1980s when the trade union movement was effectively destroyed and the era of unrestrained neo-capitalism begun. The de-industrialization of Britain and casualization of labour removed the backbone of organized labour and working-class power and established a total monopoly of ruling class authority and the re-shaping of its state from Welfare orientated to a naked instrument of social control and repression. The experience of the imprisoned poor is now being shared by an increasing number of the ghettoized poor, and it is amongst these that a new resistance will grow and transcend the boundaries of the traditional class struggle.

John Bowden A5026DM, HMP Warren Hill, Hollesley, IP12 3BF

Glyn Maddocks Appointed Honorary Queen's Counsel (QC Honoris Causa)

Glyn Maddocks is a South Wales-based solicitor in private practice. He is a specialist in general civil litigation, personal injury and human rights, including inquests and child abuse claims. He has also developed particular expertise in criminal appeal and miscarriage of justice cases, and has had a number of notable successes in overturning wrongful convictions. For his dedication, commitment and work on one of these cases over a 12 year period, he was named Welsh Lawyer of the Year in 2005. This work has been almost entirely pro bono, and Glyn has contributed to many developments in the way that wrongful conviction cases are dealt with through publications, broadcasts, lectures, and by giving evidence to parliamentary select committees. He is a founding trustee of the Centre for Criminal Appeals (now known as APPEAL), a charity whose aim is to overturn unsafe convictions by providing representation for those who claim they have suffered a wrongful conviction.

CCRC Refers Conviction of Human Trafficking Victim to CoA

The Criminal Cases Review Commission has referred for appeal the cannabis production conviction of a Vietnamese woman who was trafficked into the UK and twice trafficked within it. T was arrested in July 2014 after police raided a property adapted for growing cannabis and containing more than 100 cannabis plants and two carrier bags of loose cannabis. Later that month T appeared at Hendon Magistrates' Court where, on the advice of a solicitor, she pleaded guilty to the production of cannabis. She was later sentenced at Harrow Crown Court to six months imprisonment. Because Ms T pleaded guilty in a magistrates' court she had no right of appeal.

In 2015, the First Tier Tribunal of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber upheld her appeal against deportation and in doing so found that T had been a victim of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, then unpaid domestic service and finally work in a cannabis factory. In 2016, the Home Office granted her refugee status. In early in 2017 the Home Office recognised T as a victim of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation; in 2019 it recognised her as a victim of modern slavery for the purposes of forced criminality.

She applied to the CCRC for a review of her cannabis production conviction in September 2018. Having reviewed the case the Commission has decided to refer T's conviction for appeal at the Crown Court. The referral is made on the basis that evidence available at trial, and new evidence about T's status as a victim of trafficking, gives rise to a real possibility that the Crown Court will conclude that to allow her guilty plea to stand would be an affront to justice and, as a result, will: allow T to vacate her guilty plea and enter a not guilty plea; establish whether or not the CPS intends to prosecute the case again, and, if it does, stay the proceedings.

Ireland Couple Convicted of Female Genital Mutilation Jailed for Five Years

Brion Hoban, Irish Legal News: A married couple convicted of the female genital mutilation (FGM) of their daughter in the first case of its kind in the nation's history have been jailed. The couple both pleaded not guilty at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court to one count of carrying out an act of FGM on a then one-year-old girl at an address in Dublin in September 2016. The 37-year-old man and 27-year-old woman also pleaded not guilty to one count of child cruelty on the same day. They are both originally from an African nation but cannot be named to protect the identity of the child. On the eighth day of the trial last month, December2019, the jury returned unanimous verdicts of guilty on all counts after almost three hours of deliberations. Passing sentence today 27th January 2020, Judge Elma Sheahan sentenced the husband to five-and-a-half years' imprisonment and the wife to four years and nine months' imprisonment.

At an earlier sentencing hearing, Detective Inspector Dany Kelly told Shane Costelloe SC, prosecuting, that on the date in question, the accused man attended at a hospital with his daughter who was bleeding from her perineal region. Det Insp Kelly said the accused man gave an explanation that the child had sustained the injury by falling backwards onto a toy. Medical professionals were of the view that this explanation was not credible and that the injuries were not accidental, counsel said. Gardaí were notified and carried out a search of the accused's family home. They seized the toy claimed to be responsible for inflicting the injury and no blood was found on the item following a forensic analysis. Dr Sinead Harty gave evidence during the trial that in her professional opinion, the injury sustained was not consistent with falling on a toy. She said the head and glans of the victim's clitoris had been completely removed. In interview with gardaí, both accused denied that FGM had been carried out on their daughter. The victim's father said he did not agree with the practice. His wife said she had been a victim of a different form of FGM herself. The court heard that the victim and her two siblings are currently in the care of their mother's eldest sister. The court heard expert evidence that FGM is a cultural phenomenon that goes back many thousands of years and arising predominantly from East Africa. Dr Deborah Hodes said it has no nothing to do with religious beliefs and is absolutely not a principle of the Muslim faith.

Time To Scrap 'Anachronistic' Criminal Dock, Say Howard League

Edie Martin, Justice Gap: It's time to scrap use of 'anachronistic' docks in criminal courts, according to a new report which argues that the historic fixture of our justice system represents an obstacle to fair trials and prejudices the jury against defendants. The Howard League for Penal Reform is calling on policy makers to 'make the bold humane move to finally rid English and Welsh courtrooms of the anachronistic dock'. The removal of the dock 'could be regarded as a symbolic and substantive change in the way justice is seen to be delivered and ultimately is delivered,' the authors argue. The new study, written by Linda Mulcahy, Meredith Rossner and Emma Rowden, adds to a growing list of critics of the dock that include the Law Society, JUSTICE and even senior members of the judiciary including the former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas.

The dock is the segregated area of the court, set aside for defendants and security personnel. Its use is standard practice in court rooms across the country, regardless of the severity of the crime committed. It is designed to protect against security breaches such as court room escapes and displays of aggression towards the judge. Statistics show, however, that in 2002 of the 67 escape attempts in Magistrates' courts only 27 were 'dock jumpers' and the pamphlet questions whether the the likelihood of these risks justifies the severity of the docks design. Although a version of the dock has existed in English and Welsh courts since the sixteenth century, it only became a widespread feature of criminal trials in the 1970's.

The report details the dock's transformation from a simple raised platform into today's 'secure docks' – sometimes known as 'glass cages'. According to their research, the evolution of the dock has left the defendant increasingly isolated in the courtroom. Built on a wooden base, a metre off the ground and surrounded by glass walls the secure dock can obscure eyelines and make proceedings difficult to hear. The position of the dock has also been relocated from the centre of the courtroom to its margins, increasing the inaccessibility of the defendant. The report argues the modernised dock has a profound impact on the fairness of criminal trials. Its marginalised location means defendants have restricted access to their legal representatives, and are often unable to pass them written notes let alone verbally contact them. 'Secure docks' are also a symbolic contradiction of the justice system's belief that a suspect is 'innocent until proven guilty', by enclosing them in a contained space before the trial has begun. According to the Howard League, empirical research has found that 'jurors who saw the defendant in the dock, be it standard or secure, were 1.8 times more likely to view him as guilty than jurors who saw the accused at the bar table'. The European Court of Human Rights has raised concerns that the secure dock may undermine the right to a free trial, by intimidating the defendant.

It is not only security concerns that have influenced the fortification of the dock. Research undertaken by the pamphlet's authors (Mulcahy and Rowden) shows that the increased use of the dock has coincided with economic cutbacks and the paring back of court security. In their words, the redesign has been 'motivated as much by reduced staffing levels as it was by a perceived risk of violence or escape'. The use of the dock is not a worldwide practice. Countries such as Holland, Sweden and the United States seldom use them in their criminal trials. Unlike in the UK, in America it is also standard for the defendant to sit beside their legal representative and for any restraint of the defendant to require permission from the judge. The pamphlet details a variety of methods used overseas to balance security risks with a fair trial, eg. the use of glass walls to separate the public from the hearing.

Longer Sentences Will Not Cut Crime, Say Prison Experts

Jamie Grierson, Guardian: Boris Johnson's hardline approach to justice will not cut crime and will only pile pressure on overstretched prisons, expert campaigners have said, as research reveals life sentences have already risen sharply. The Prison Reform Trust issued the stark warning just days after the government unveiled proposals to lock up some serious violent and sexual offenders for longer by scrapping automatic release halfway through a jail sentence. Offenders serving standard determinate sentences of seven years or more, where the maximum sentence is life, will be released at the two-thirds point, rather than halfway, under the changes unveiled last week.

Introducing a new report, the Prison Reform Trust director, Peter Dawson, said the government was looking in the wrong places to restore confidence in the justice system. He said: "Longer sentences haven't improved public confidence or safety before, and they won't now. But they have helped produce a prison system that fails to deliver either safety or rehabilitation. Good soundbites don't always make good policy – a coherent plan for reform is long overdue."

Researchers suggest England and Wales are already tougher on punishing serious crime than other countries. Prof Ben Crewe and Dr Susie Hulley, from the University of Cambridge, and Dr Serena Wright, from Royal Holloway, University of London, found a dramatic

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increase in the number of people serving life sentences. According to the findings, fewer than 100 people a year were handed a life sentence with a minimum term of 15 years in England and Wales between 2000 and 2003. By 2008, this had risen to 249 adults and as of September 2019, 1,872 life sentence prisoners had tariffs of more than 20 years. Last year, there were also 880 serving a minimum of 25 years and 291 with a tariff of more than 30, excluding those serving the whole-life tariff who are unlikely to ever be released.

The findings of the report indicate there was no clear evidence that the latest rise in lengths of tariffs is linked to changes in the nature or severity of offending. The research claims growing numbers of people serving long sentences will mean prisons are likely to remain overcrowded for the foreseeable future. A Ministry of Justice spokeswoman said: "Under this government, serious violent and sexual offenders will spend more time where they belong – behind bars. We are spending £2.75bn on transforming and modernising the estate, including creating 10,000 additional prison places."

Scotland: Man Wrongfully Arrested Given £100k Compensation by Police

In 2015 Gary Webb, from Gatehouse of Fleet in Dumfries and Galloway, was handcuffed and spent a night in a police cell and three nights in prison. The 60-year-old told The Sunday Post that police had his fingerprints and knew he was the wrong man. He said: "My life has been trashed after this. Completely trashed." Mr Webb, who has no criminal convictions, was arrested at his home by detectives who had a warrant for a different person. 'I thought I was going insane' He said the officers held a photo of the suspect next to Mr Webb's face and decided they were the same person. Mr Webb showed them his passport, driving licence and photos around his home as proof of mistaken identity. However, the detectives said they would need to take him to the police station and handcuffed him. "I was at home with my wife then being held in cuffs with no-one believing who I was and facing the worst kind of criminal charges imaginable, I thought I was going insane. How could no-one believe I was me?" He was taken to court and, after three nights in a cell at Addiewell Prison, he was released without any explanation or apology.

After his release, Mr Webb, a former timber yard manager, made a formal complaint for wrongful arrest but after two years this was rejected by an internal police investigation and recorded as a "quality of service issue". He then contacted the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (Pirc) who ordered the arrest of five officers and reported them to the Crown Office over allegations of criminal neglect of duty and attempting to pervert the course of justice. Following a two-year investigation, the Crown Office said none of the five officers would face prosecution. Mr Webb said: "I experienced things I should never have had to. I had to leave my work as my mental health was affected by everything. The Pirc did a fantastic job and left no stone unturned during its investigation, so without them and my own legal team I wouldn't be where I am now. But Police Scotland and its behaviour has been utterly despicable. They clearly know of wrongdoing or they wouldn't have paid damages."

'Unreserved apology': In a statement to the BBC, Gordon Dalyell, a partner at Digby Brown Solicitors who represented Mr Webb, said: "The life of an innocent man was completely ruined because of the deliberate and malign actions of police officers who are meant to keep people safe. I would like to think an inquiry will occur in due course to ensure innocent people are not illegally detained and Police Scotland staff who act illegally will be held accountable." Police Scotland's Assistant Chief Constable Alan Speirs said: "We recognise the significant impact this incident and our poor initial response had on Mr Webb and, following the conclusion of legal proceedings, will seek to discuss these matters with him and offer an unreserved apology. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service instructed the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner to investigate the circumstances and the COPFS has instructed there should be no criminal proceedings. Our officers and staff work with commitment and professionalism day in, day out, to provide a high-quality policing service for the public. When learning opportunities are identified, Police Scotland is committed to supporting officers and staff who have acted in good faith, however we will not comment on internal misconduct matters."

Elderly Abuse Suspect Should be Allowed to Starve Himself to Death

An elderly man who stopped eating after being accused of historical child sexual abuse could be allowed to starve himself to death, a judge has said. The man, in his late 80s, is at the centre of litigation in the court of protection, where issues relating to people who may lack the mental capacity to make decisions are considered. Mr Justice Hayden has been asked to decide whether the man should be fed through a tube against his will to keep him alive. At a hearing in London on Monday 27th January 2020, the judge was told that hospital medics were giving the man water on the basis that he lacked the mental capacity to make decisions about eating and drinking. Hayden said there was evidence that the man did have the mental capacity to make such decisions. He said: "If he wants to starve himself to death, and that is his view, then that is his entitlement. The court of protection is not here simply to protect people from outcomes that we don't like. It is also here to protect their autonomy." The judge has been told the man went on hunger strike after learning that police had begun an investigation into allegations of historical child sex abuse. There are a number of alleged victims, including the man's daughter. Hayden is due to oversee another hearing on Wednesday. He said the man, who lives in a care home in the south-west of England, could not be identified in media reports of the case. The judge heard submissions from lawyers representing the man and those representing the council with responsibility for the man's care. Lawyers representing the man initially launched litigation after he said he wanted to leave a care facility and return home. The dispute relating to his hunger strike arose later.

Miami Showband Murders: Files Delay 'Appalling', Says Judge

BBC News: A high court judge has criticised the police for not disclosing documents in an alleged collusion case about the Miami Showband murders in 1975. Three members of the band were killed by loyalists in a bomb and gun attack when their bus was stopped near Newry. Victims of the attack are suing the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). They say there was collaboration between the killers and serving soldiers. On Friday 24th January 2020, Justice Maguire said delays in receiving the material from the PSNI were "appalling" and he warned he may strike out their defence to the claim. "This case has been going on since 2012, and we are at a stage in 2020 where the obligation of discovery on the police service has not been complied with. The court seems to be getting the runaround. It makes me angry (and) shows so much disrespect to the court."

The attack in July 1975 happened as the band, which toured across Ireland, were travelling home to Dublin after a gig in Banbridge. Their minibus was stopped by a fake army patrol involving Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) members. The band was made to stand by the roadside while a bomb was placed on the bus. It exploded prematurely, killing two of the attackers, Harris Boyle and Wesley Somerville. The rest of the gang opened fire, murdering

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three members of the band, singer Fran O'Toole, guitarist Tony Geraghty and trumpeter Brian McCoy. Two other band members, Des McAlea and Stephen Travers, were injured but survived.

In 2011, a report by the Historical Enquiries Team raised concerns about collusion around the involvement of an RUC Special Branch agent. It found that mid-Ulster UVF man Robin Jackson claimed in police interviews he had been tipped off by a senior RUC officer to lie low after his fingerprints were found on a silencer attached to one of the weapons. He was later acquitted on a charge of possessing the silencer. Two UDR soldiers were convicted for their roles in the attack.

The victims' case has alleged that military chiefs knew about paramilitaries infiltrating the UDR, but failed to stop it. Damages are being sought in writs against the MOD and the PSNI Chief Constable for assault, trespass, conspiracy to injure, negligence and misfeasance in public office. Some army files have been disclosed to the plaintiffs, however, they were redacted on national security grounds. A barrister representing Chief Constable Simon Byrne said "administrative problems" were to blame for the delay in submitting documents and asked for two weeks to arrange any application for Public Interest Immunity. Justice Maguire ruled there would be a two-week adjournment, but said: "I would be inclined to consider seriously striking out the police defence". "I think the time is coming in this case where the court's patience is (running out)."

Convicted Drug Dealer's Attempt to Clear Name Fails

Tom Wright, Justice Gap: Court seven in the Royal Courts of Justice played host to the latest act in David Reece's fight to overturn his conviction for conspiracy to import and supply Class A drugs. Found guilty in March 2018 for his alleged role in trafficking cocaine and heroin worth over £65 million, Reece is currently serving a 19-year prison sentence. On Friday afternoon the Court of Appeal dismissed his appeal. Reece was one of eight men convicted after police discovered 58kgs of cocaine and 83kgs of heroin hidden in the back of a lorry at King George Dock, Hull, in 2017 (see here). The jury deliberated for 37 hours before finding Reece guilty by a majority verdict of 10-2. All the while Reece and his family have protested his innocence, denying all involvement and knowledge of the drugs.

Reece's was taken up the legal charity Inside Justice. After the hearing chief exec Louise Shorter commented: 'We disagree with the decision, of course. I hope we will regroup, take a long hard look at the case as a whole and decide if there is anything else at all that we can investigate which might help David avoid spending the next decade, or more, in prison.' The Reece family, present in court on Friday, expressed their dismay and disillusion at the outcome of the hearing, shaking their heads at the judgment and vowing to continue the fight to clear David's name.

The ground of appeal argued before the Appeal judges centred on the assertion the trial judge had erred in his summing up. During the course of the original trial the prosecution applied to introduce evidence of Reece's previous conviction for drug importation offences in Belgium in 2011. The prosecution argued the similarity of the two offences demonstrated Reece had a propensity to commit crimes of this nature. However, Reece argued that despite pleading guilty to the Belgian offences he did not know of the existence of the drugs until they were discovered by Belgian customs officers. Mark Harries QC submitted that the trial judge's handling of this matter was deficient when directing the jury.

At trial the judge had not invited the jury to consider that if Reece was unaware of the existence of the drugs in the Belgian case then the prosecution would not be able to demonstrate he had a propensity to commit such crimes. In the absence of such an instruction to the jury, Harries asserted Reece's conviction must be unsafe as this evidence of bad character tainted his whole credibility. Delivering the judgment of the whole court, Lord Justice Singh rejected this argument, dismissing the appeal. The court ruled that in the absence of further evidence Reece's claim to lack knowledge of the drugs, and his acceptance of the Belgian conviction, did not require any specific instructions to the jury. Furthermore, Lord Justice Singh intimated that even if the Court had been minded to accept that the judge erred in his summing up in relation to the Belgian case, they would have nevertheless affirmed the safety of the conviction on the basis of the prosecution's circumstantial case against Reece.

Fight Breaks Out in Court as Killers Jailed

Violence broke out at the Old Bailey as five gang members were jailed for murdering a man in a knife attack. Kamali Gabbidon-Lynck, 19, was stabbed to death at a Wood Green hair salon last year. He was killed as a result of "a longstanding and mutual hatred" between two rival gangs, the court heard. Police officers and prison staff were attacked after the judge gave the killers - two men and three teenagers - life sentences. Tyrell Graham, 18, Sheareem Cookhorn, 21, and 17-year-olds Jayden O'Neil-Crichlow, Shane Lyons, and Ojay Hamilton began fighting in the dock as they were led out of court. One officer suffered a head injury when he and nine colleagues attempted to restrain the defendants. Police also had to stop people in the public gallery from jumping into the courtroom.

The court heard Mr Gabbidon-Lynck's friend Jason Fraser, 20, was chased, stabbed, and shot by a rival gang on 22 February 2019. He survived the attack. While his friend was being attacked, Mr Gabbidon-Lynck drove towards the attackers to try to scare them off, prosecutor Oliver Glasgow QC told jurors. The court heard he became trapped after reversing into parked cars, forcing him to run to a hair salon. He was stabbed five times and died after an artery was severed.

Judge Foster told the gang the attack had "terrified members of the public". Mr Glasgow said it was "more reminiscent of a Hollywood film than a winter's night in north London". Mr Gabbidon-Lynck was linked to a north London gang called the WGM, the court heard. His killers were said to be linked to Tottenham gang the NPK. Cookhorn was jailed for a minimum of 28 years for murder, attempted murder and possession of a firearm. Graham will serve at least 25 years for murder and attempted murder. Lyons, O'Neil-Crichlow and Hamilton were each jailed for 21 years for murder and wounding with intent. The defendants had denied all the charges against them.

Use of Taser by Devon and Cornwall Police Contributed to Death of Marc Cole

The inquest into the death of Marc Anthony Cole has concluded with the jury finding he died from excess use of cocaine resulting in paranoid and erratic behaviour, with the use of a Taser by Devon and Cornwall Police having a more than trivial impact on Marc going into cardiac arrest. The medical cause of death included the use of cocaine, an episode of altered behaviour including self-harm, excitement, exertion and restraint including the discharge of a TASER X26 device. Marc died on 23 May 2017. He was experiencing a mental health crisis, precipitated by the death of his father. Following a period of self-harm and after having ingested cocaine, the police attended, and Marc was subject to prolonged use of Taser, for a total of 43 seconds, followed by handcuffing. Marc went into cardiac arrest on entry to the ambulance, at approximately 9.30pm and was sadly pronounced deceased at 11.20pm.

Marc's family and friends described him as a loving, popular young man who was a confidante for many of his friends. Growing up, Marc had excelled at sport but sadly had to cease playing following a car accident when he was a teenager. He was the father to two young boys, and his partner described him as an amazing Dad and partner. Exemplary of Marc's caring nature and empathy for those around him, he became primary carer for his terminally ill father. The death of Marc's father in 2016 profoundly affected him, and he would visit his father's grave every day. Marc's family told the inquest that he had been showing signs of severe depression, anxiety and delusional thinking in the weeks leading up to his death. They believe Marc was reluctant to come forward for help due to the considerable stigma that still exists around mental ill health in young men.

The inquest heard that on the day of his death, Marc had gone to a friend's house where he had appeared fearful that people 'were coming to get him'. He had a kitchen knife with him, which his friends describe him holding as though he was trying to defend himself. Marc exited his friend's property through a first floor window. In entering a neighbour's garden, he accidentally caught the neighbour with the knife causing a superficial minor injury that was later described as a 'graze'. Following this, the police were called to respond to a 'stabbing'. Other neighbours also called the police as Marc was now in the street with the knife. Witnesses described him to the police as wandering and not appearing to threaten anyone. One witness told the inquest that Marc looked like a 'lost soul'. Marc was seen holding the knife to his neck, and officers described him beginning to self-harm on their arrival. The police immediately shouted at Marc to 'drop the knife', following which the Taser was discharged, causing Marc to drop to the floor 'like a sack of spuds' in the words of one witness.

The inquest heard how the effect of the Taser can cause a person's muscles to 'lock up' through Neuro Muscular Incapacitation, and the police officer involved acknowledged that this may have occurred in Marc's case as he maintained a firm grip on the knife. In total, Marc was subjected to 43 seconds of near continuous Taser, during which time the knife was knocked from Marc's hand using a baton. Marc was then handcuffed by at least two officers whilst on the ground. Witnesses described hearing Marc shout for his mum and ask, 'what have I done?' appearing confused rather than aggressive or angry. Shortly after, he lost consciousness and paramedics arrived responding to the initial 999 call, and were faced with an unexpected scene. The officer who Tasered Marc admitted during the inquest that he had given inaccurate initial statements to the Independent Office for Police Conduct investigation. He said this was on the advice of the Police Federation solicitors, who encouraged him not to "express uncertainty" and to state he had discharged the Taser only twice. However, during the Inquest, the officer admitted discharging the Taser three consecutive times. Other officers echoed the advice of the Police Federation Solicitors in responding to questions regarding why their first accounts differed from later statements.

Dr Soar, a medical expert, told the inquest that there is an issue with research and literature on Taser use and dangers, as the majority of research is produced by the manufacturers of Taser, Axon. The expert indicated that in his view, bolstered by his clinical experience and the research of bodies such as DOMILL*, while the manufacturers' position was that Taser is not lethal, it is not a device with zero risk. The jury accepted the evidence of Dr Soar and found that the use of Taser had a more than trivial impact. The jury described the actions of the paramedics as appropriate on the evening in question, in contrast with their conclusion relating to the evidence of the police which they rejected. The family feel that this shows that the use of force in this case was clearly not justified in the circumstances. Marc was Tasered for nearly 43 seconds despite the jury not finding that he had been aggressive or posed a threat.

Lisa Renee Cole, Marc's sister, said: "Marc's tragic death has destroyed our lives and we miss him terribly every single day. We were hopeful that this inquest would finally give us some clarity on the critical minutes leading up to his untimely death. Instead we have been confronted with officers

falsifying evidence, closing ranks and deferring to the Police Federation. This is not only an insult to our grieving family but leads to a lack of accountability. While there is no transparency or accountability for loss of life, preventable deaths during police contact will continue, and those with mental ill health will continue to be overrepresented in this marginalised group. The Jury have found that the Taser had a more than trivial impact on Marc's death. What is needed is an urgent review of police use of Taser, considering the lack of robust training in responding to those experiencing mental ill health or intoxication, and the risks associated with repeated and prolonged exposure to Tasering. It is too late for Marc, but we believe this would save lives."

Nadine Kinder, Marc's partner, said: "An inquest is meant to be about truth, but the only truth I remain sure of is that two innocent children were robbed of a life with their dad and me. Police walk around every day with people's lives in their hands, but I now believe they are protected from the moment they put on their uniforms. Admitting giving inaccurate statements and raising more questions than they have answers, they have shown no emotion or sympathy for the family they have destroyed. Next time you call the police, who we are meant to trust to help us in crisis, know that it could be your family, friend or neighbour at the blunt end of this. Something needs to be done within the force to ensure that the police understand the ramifications of Taser use, and the pain that is caused when they close ranks during an inquest."

Deborah Coles, Director of INQUEST said: At a time when the Home Office are spending £10million on arming more officers with Tasers, this inquest has exposed a disturbing lack of understanding and sufficient training on the dangers. Use of force by police is disproportionately employed against those experiencing mental ill health and intoxication, the very people for whom the risks are highest. The data shows Taser use has already rapidly increased, raising questions about whether it is becoming a first not last resort. To prevent further deaths and protect those in crisis like Marc, we must look beyond policing and instead fund our communities' health, welfare and specialist services."

Emily Comer of Broudie Jackson Canter Solicitors said: "The circumstances of Marc's tragic death paint a disturbing picture of police use of Taser, particularly against those in mental health crisis. The inquest heard how the use of Taser played a more than trivial part in Marc's death, while officers involved in both the incident and in training appeared confused over the possible effects of the weapon. The family have conducted themselves with enormous dignity throughout this lengthy and protracted process, in the face of admissions from the police officers regarding inaccurate statements made at the advice of Police Federation solicitors."

Secret Justice": An Oxymoron and the Overdue 'Closed Procedures' Review

Since at least the 16th century the personification of Justice has been depicted wearing a blindfold to represent impartiality.

The Government has still not implemented the review of Closed Procedures that Parliament had dictated should take place when passing the Justice and Security Act 2013. A review is required to cover the first five years after the Act came into force, and should have been completed "as soon as reasonably practicable" thereafter. That period expired in June 2018, and there are still no signs of a reviewer being appointed.

'Secret Justice' is a deliberate oxymoron, used by some legal commentators as a term for Closed Material Procedures (CMPs). Justice, of course should generally be open and transparent, not secret. The principle of open justice dates back centuries, and the law reports are full of reiterations of its importance. Here's one example, this from Lord Woolf in R v Legal Aid

Board, ex p Kaim Todner [1999] QB 966: The need to be vigilant arises from the natural tendency for the general principle to be eroded and for exceptions to grow by accretion as the exceptions are applied by analogy to existing cases. This is the reason it is so important not to forget why proceedings are required to be subjected to the full glare of a public hearing. It is necessary because the public nature of proceedings deters inappropriate behaviour on the part of the court. It also maintains the public's confidence in the administration of justice. It enables the public to know that justice is being administered impartially. It can result in evidence becoming available which would not become available if the proceedings were conducted behind closed doors or with one or more of the parties' or witnesses' identity concealed. It makes uninformed and inaccurate comment about the proceedings less likely. If secrecy is restricted to those situations where justice would be frustrated if the cloak of anonymity is not provided, this reduces the risk of the sanction of contempt having to be invoked, with the expense and the interference with the administration of justice which this can involve.

An equally fundamental principle of fairness in legal proceedings is that in a party should know the evidence and case against them. This has even been given a Latin epithet (audi alteram partem). But you don't need to be a scholar of either classics or law to appreciate that that being aware of the material that the other side is putting before the court, and having the opportunity to challenge and answer it, is a cardinal feature of fair legal proceedings. The personification of Justice is blindfolded, to represent her impartiality; but litigants are expected to have an unimpaired view of the proceedings.

CMPs represent a departure from both of these principles. At least part of the proceedings takes place at a hearing from which one party is excluded and is held in secret. And at that 'closed' hearing, the Court hears evidence produced by the other party of which the absent party is unaware. In order to reduce the unfairness that is inherent in this, CMPs make provision for a 'special advocate' to represent the interests of the excluded party. This special advocate is made privy to the secret material and is appointed to represent the interests of the person from whom it is being withheld. The special advocate works under significant constraints, most notably a prohibition on speaking to the person whose interests he or she is representing, or their legal team.

As may be imagined, CMPs are controversial. The justification advanced for them is that they enable cases to be tried that would otherwise be un-triable and so would be destined to fail: compromised justice is better than no justice at all. Parliament passed the legislation that set up the first CMP in the Special Immigration Appeals Commission Act 1997. That Act created the Special Immigration Appeals Commission, SIAC, to hear immigration appeals such as challenges to deportation, where the Government wanted withhold information from the appellant on the basis that its disclosure would cause harm to the public interest. The appeal of Abu Qatada, the infamous extremist preacher, is one of the best-known cases that has been through SIAC – and repeatedly covered on this blog.

Over the years, Parliament provided for CMPs to be made available in a range of other tribunals, including employment tribunals. Then, in 2011, the Coalition Government published the Justice and Security Green Paper. This included a proposal for CMPs to be permitted in any civil litigation, if certain criteria were met. This proposal led to concern and vigorous debate in Parliament, the press, and across the wider public. Among the many responses to the consultation was one from the Special Advocates. The Special Advocates (including me) highlighted inherent difficulties with CMPs from our experience in practice and questioned whether any sufficient justification had been established by the Government for their extension to be available in the full range of civil proceedings. Deep-seated concerns about the Bill were voiced during the Bill's passage, and led to substantial amendment. One amendment was the provision that now appears as section 13 in the Act as it was eventually passed. This may be seen as a measure to provide reassurance that the controversial measures to be enacted would be properly reviewed and evaluated. The Government asserted that there was a compelling need for CMPs in civil claims, but how could that assertion be evaluated? As we shall see below, an important answer to that question is that Parliament has required that there should be a review of CMPs under the Justice and Security Act 2013 after 5 years.

Since the Act came into force in June 2013 it has been deployed by the Government to obtain CMPs in a wide variety of cases. These include civil claims in which UK officials are alleged to have been involved in serious misconduct (such as the claim brought by Mr Belhaj and his wife) as well as challenges to government decisions (such as the UK's licensing of arms sales to Saudi Arabia). These examples are among a total of 54 applications for CMPs under the Justice and Security Act up to 24 June 2018, according to the MoJ's statistics. These applications have almost all been brought by the Government or police bodies.

Section 13 requires the Secretary of State to appoint a person to review the operation of CMPs under the Act for the first five years after it came into force. The review must be laid before Parliament, subject to any redactions required by national security. Here are the main terms: (1) The Secretary of State must appoint a person to review the operation of sections 6 to 11 (the "reviewer"). (2) The reviewer must carry out a review of the operation of sections 6 to 11 in respect of the period of five years beginning with the day on which section 6 comes into force. (3) The review must be completed as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the period to which the review relates. (4) As soon as reasonably practicable after completing a review under this section, the reviewer must send to the Secretary of State a report on its outcome.

The first backbencher to raise a formal query in relation to the review to be performed was Ken Clarke MP, who as Secretary of State for Justice had overseen the Bill's passage through Parliament so may be taken to have a particular interest in compliance with the Act's provisions. On 23 April 2018 the Justice Minister (Lucy Frazer MP) gave the following written answer to Mr Clarke's question: In accordance with s.13(1) and (2) of the Justice and Security Act 2013 ("the Act"), the review of the operation of sections 6-11 of the Act should cover the period from 25 June 2013 to 24 June 2018. On 13 November 2017, the previous Secretary of State for Justice, the Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP, wrote to his counterparts at the time in the departments that use the Closed Material Procedure (CMP) under the Act, to draw attention to the 5-year review and to discuss arrangements for the review. Discussions between officials are ongoing and an announcement will be made in due course.

This was picked up by Jim Cunningham MP, who asked about the appointment of the reviewer and when the review was scheduled to begin. The response of the Minister, Lucy Frazer MP, was given on 14 June 2018: As I indicated in my answer of 23 April 2018 to Question 135211, the review should cover the period from 25 June 2013 to 24 June 2018. It will therefore need to take into account the 5th annual report to Parliament on the use of closed material procedure under the Justice and Security Act 2013, which the Government aims to submit in the Autumn. A reviewer has not been appointed yet. Discussions between officials are ongoing and an announcement will be made in due course

Whilst the need for the review to take account of the last year of the five year period is obvious, that could not be a sensible reason for delay in appointing the reviewer. In any event, that 5th annual report was submitted in December 2018. These annual reports are required by section 12 of the Act, and simply list the CMPs in the relevant year, with numbers of applications and revocations broken down.

Next up was Alistair Carmichael MP, nearly a year later. He asked two questions in relation to the review; how the terms of reference for the reviewer would be determined and when the review would be announced. The Minister (Lucy Frazer again) responded on 11 April 2019 to both questions in the same simple terms, as follows: A reviewer has not been appointed yet. Discussions between officials are ongoing and an announcement will be made in due course.

Mr Carmichael returned to the question this month, asking whether a reviewer had been appointed. The answer this time was provided by the Minister, Chris Philp MP, on 20 January 2020: Further to the answer provided by Minister of State Lucy Frazer MP QC to the Honourable Member's questions in April of last year on the Justice and Security Act 2013, I can advise discussions are ongoing and an announcement will be made in due course

So there we are. Still no reviewer appointed, let alone a review produced in relation to the operation of CMPs under the Justice and Security Act 2013. This is despite the fact that the requirement for a review was inserted to meet concerns about the operation of the Act, and that the period to be reviewed ended in June 2018, with the review to be published "as soon as practicable" thereafter.

As explained above, the subject matter of the review is legal proceedings that constitute an exceptional departure from conventional standards of fairness and open justice, and are largely insulated from public scrutiny, so underlining the importance of the review and the public interest in it. In every ministerial response to a parliamentary question, from April 2018 to January 2020 the same form of words appears: "discussions are ongoing and an announcement will be made in due course", but with no indication as to when this announcement will be made.

The series of apparently formulaic and uninformative ministerial answers to questions from Parliamentarians seeking to establish when the Government is proposing to comply with an obligation imposed on it by Parliament is not uplifting. Nor, perhaps, does it give much reassurance as to the effectiveness of the Executive's accountability to Parliament in an area of legitimate public concern and debate.

Angus McCullough QC barrister 1 Crown Office Row with experience of acting as a Special Advocate in closed proceedings since 2002.Start Here

White Men Still Dominate Judiciary, Says Justice Report

Simon Murphy, Guardian: Progress to improve diversity in the judiciary is too slow and there has been stagnation in the appointment of BAME judges, according to a damning report by an influential law reform group whose head warns that senior roles are still "dominated by white men". The report by Justice said that only a third of judges in courts are female and just 7% are BAME (black and minority ethnic) compared with 13% of the population in England and Wales, although it did note there had been modest improvements in the past three years. The report finds there have been more efforts to bolster outreach to BAME judge in the supreme court. Meanwhile, data gathered by the group also found that higher socio-economic groups dominate, with three in four existing senior judges having attended Oxbridge and 60% having been privately educated despite only 7% of the country attending fee-paying schools.

The report, Increasing Judicial Diversity: An Update, was compiled by a working group following the organisation's 2017 review exploring the structural barriers faced by underrepresented

groups trying to make it in the legal world. The report notes: "The working party is particularly troubled by the stagnation in the appointment of BAME judges since our last report." It acknowledges that some minor recommendations have been adopted by the Judicial Appointments Commission since its 2017 review, but adds "despite these changes, the senior judiciary remains predominantly made up of white, male, able-bodied and privately educated barristers".

The report comes after Lady Hale, who was succeeded as president of the 12-seat supreme court earlier this month, last year called for greater diversity so that the public feel those on the bench are genuinely "our judges" rather than "beings from another planet". The report makes a series of recommendations including a continued call for the introduction of targets for minority appointments, rather than specific quotas, as well as the creation of a permanent "senior selection committee" for top judiciary posts. It also urges the establishment of more structured judicial career paths to diversify judge appointees at top levels so that more come from tribunals, in-house and private practice solicitors, as opposed to the bar. Meanwhile, the group recommends tackling "affinity bias" so that there is a move away from appointing senior judges from similar backgrounds to themselves.

Andrea Coomber, director of Justice, said: "Nearly three years since our last report there has been only modest progress towards a more diverse senior judiciary. Our senior judiciary continues to be dominated by white men from the independent bar ... The judiciary play a critical role in our democracy and hold immense power in society. They can take away people's liberty, their children, their rights and more. That such power is held by such an unrepresentative group of people – however meritorious – should be of concern to us all." Since Justice's 2017 report there have been some notable strides to improve diversity in the judiciary, including the appointment of two more female justices to the supreme court, as well as Sir Rabinder Singh to the court of appeal. A Ministry of Justice spokesman said: "We are working across government to ensure we have a judiciary that represents the communities it serves. A programme which supports candidates from underrepresented groups to become judges is ongoing and we are looking at other ways to increase representation across the criminal justice system."

France Must End Overcrowding In Prisons and Degrading Conditions Of Detention

In Chamber judgment in the case of J.M.B. and Others v. France (application no. 9671/15 and 31 others) the European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been: a violation of Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights, and a violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment). The 32 cases concerned the poor conditions of detention in the following prisons: Ducos (Martinique), Faa'a Nuutania (French Polynesia), Baie-Mahault (Guadeloupe), Nîmes, Nice and Fresnes, as well as the issue of overcrowding in prisons and the effectiveness of the preventive remedies available to the prisoners concerned. The Court considered that the personal space allocated to most of the applicants had fallen below the required minimum standard of 3 sq. m throughout their period of detention; that situation had been aggravated by the lack of privacy in using the toilets. With regard to the applicants who had more than 3 sq. m of personal space, the Court held that the prisons in which they had been or continued to be held did not, generally speaking, provide decent conditions of detention or sufficient freedom of movement and activities outside the cell. The Court further held that the preventive remedies in place an urgent application to protect a fundamental freedom and an urgent application for appropriate measures - were ineffective in practice, and found that the powers of the administrative judges to make orders were limited in scope. Furthermore, despite a positive change in

the case-law, overcrowding in prisons and the dilapidated state of some prisons acted as a bar to the full and immediate cessation of serious breaches of fundamental rights by means of the remedies available to persons in detention. Under Article 46 the Court noted that the occupancy rates of the prisons in question disclosed the existence of a structural problem. The Court recommended to the respondent State that it conside the adoption of general measures aimed at eliminating overcrowding and improving the material conditions of detention, while putting in place an effective preventive remedy.

Challenging a Broken Justice System - Fighting Miscarriages of Justice in England & Wales

Emily Bolton, Director and Founder of APPEAL. I launched APPEAL in 2014 after nearly a decade spent fighting the death penalty and wrongful convictions in Louisiana. Returning to the UK, I was optimistic about working in its famously fair and high-minded system. How wrong I was. Although "British justice" is often said to be the best in the world, I have found it to be more intransigent than its American counterpart. In fact, I would rather be the victim of a miscarriage of justice in New Orleans than Newcastle. America's tradition of open justice has led to height-ened public awareness of the that system's fallibility. But on this side of the pond, it feels like public concern with miscarriages of justice ended with the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four.

British criminal justice is a system in denial: Our justice system is at breaking point, with judges and juries being forced to make decisions about sending people to prison based on a fraction of the evidence for or against them - evidence that has not been adequately scrutinised by the prosecution or the defence because of rules and resource constraints that curtail transparency and accountability. We believe the ensuing miscarriages of justice can be most effectively combatted by an integrated team of lawyers, investigators and campaigners working full time on exposing both individual "impact" cases and the underlying causes of system failure. APPEAL is that team, and has made significant progress in the last five years thanks to the support of progressive funders who recognise appeal cases as the engine that can drive reform. APPEAL is the first step in our longer journey towards bringing a non-profit model for criminal defence to this country for both trials and appeals, based on the holistic, investigation focused, community-based models pioneered in the US. Please read this report, learn about the catastrophes concealed beneath the brand of "British justice," and consider how you can become part of our work.

Deaths In Prison At Historically High Levels As Self-Harm Levels Reach New Records

Despite significant scrutiny and investment, the latest statistics on deaths in prison published today show the number of deaths remains at a historically high level, while self-harm once again has reached new record levels for the sixth consecutive year. Every four days a person takes their life, and high numbers of 'natural' and unclassified deaths are too often found to relate to serious failures in healthcare. The Ministry of Justice report that in the 12 months to September 2019, self-harm incidents reached a new record high of 61,461 incidents, up 16% from the previous 12 months. This is more than double the number of self-harm incidents than in the same period in 2014 (24,748).

In the 12 months to December 2019 there were a total of 300 deaths in prison, more than five deaths every week. Of these deaths: Eight were in women's prisons. 84 were self-inflicted. 165 deaths were classed as "natural causes", though INQUEST casework and monitoring shows many of these deaths are in fact premature and far from 'natural'. 48 deaths were recorded as 'other', 41 of which are awaiting classification. There were also three homicides.

INQUEST's recent report Deaths in prison: A national scandal (January 2020) offers unique insight and analysis into findings from 61 prison inquests in England and Wales in 2018 and 2019. This revealed that people are consistently dying because of repeated safety failures including in mental and physical healthcare, communication systems, emergency responses, and drugs and medication. The report found that the lack of government action on official recommendations is leading to preventable deaths.

Deborah Coles, Director of INQUEST, said: "Despite investment and scrutiny, the historical context shows that still more people are dying in prison than ever before. A slight recent reduction in the number of deaths comes alongside unprecedented levels of self-harm. While repeated recommendations of coroners', the prison ombudsman and inspectorate are systematically ignored. This is a national scandal and reflects the despair and neglect in prisons. Despite this, the health and safety of people in prison appears to be very low on the agenda of the new government. Prioritising prison building and punitive policies will only do more harm and exacerbate this already failing system."

HMP & YOI Doncaster - Overcrowding and Troubling Number of Deaths

The prison, which holds around 1,100 men, was found to be badly over-crowed with worrying levels of violence, self-harm and self-inflicted deaths. However, it was also found by inspectors to have benefitted from consistent leadership. Doncaster was assessed, in a new report published by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, as reasonably good in the "healthy prison test" for respect. Its rehabilitation and release planning was also reasonably good in a prison with a complex population of short-stay prisoners and where one-quarter of the population had been convicted of sexual offences. Peter Clarke, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, said: "We were very concerned by the increased levels of self-harm, and by the fact that there had been five self-inflicted deaths in the year leading up to the inspection. Tragically there was another shortly after the inspection." Not all recommendations from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, which investigates prison deaths, were regularly reviewed, nor was action taken to ensure that they were embedded in operational practice. "The number of prisoners subject to assessment and care procedures because of the perceived risk they posed to themselves was in danger of becoming so great as to be unmanageable," Mr Clarke added. There was no Listeners scheme in place (Listeners are prisoners trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support). A recent downward trend in assaults was welcome, but levels were still higher than at the previous inspection (in 2017) and higher than at comparable prisons. Sixty-one per cent of prisoners said it was easy to get hold of drugs. "This is a very high figure, but at the same time it was reassuring to see that the positive mandatory drug testing rate had fallen to around 16%. The prison had put many sensible measures in place and I hope these will have an impact on this serious problem."

Serving Prisoners Supported by MOJUK: Walid Habib, Giovanni Di Stefano, Naweed Ali, Khobaib Hussain, Mohibur Rahman, Tahir Aziz, Roger Khan, Wang Yam, Andrew Malkinson, Michael Ross, Mark Alexander, Anis Sardar, Jamie Green, Dan Payne, Zoran Dresic, Scott Birtwistle, Jon Beere, Chedwyn Evans, Darren Waterhouse, David Norris, Brendan McConville, John Paul Wooton, John Keelan, Mohammed Niaz Khan, Abid Ashiq Hussain, Sharaz Yaqub, David Ferguson, Anthony Parsons, James Cullinene, Stephen Marsh, Graham Coutts, Royston Moore, Duane King, Leon Chapman, Tony Marshall, Anthony Jackson, David Kent, Norman Grant, Ricardo Morrison, Alex Silva, Terry Smith, Hyrone Hart, Warren Slaney, Melvyn 'Adie' McLellan, Lyndon Coles, Robert Bradley, Thomas G. Bourke, David E. Ferguson, Lee Mockble, George Coleman, Neil Hurley, Jaslyn Ricardo Smith, James Dowsett, Kevan & Miran Thakrar, Jordan Towers, Patrick Docherty, Brendan Dixon, Paul Bush, Alex Black, Nicholas Rose, Kevin Nunn, Peter Carine, Paul Higginson, Robert Knapp, Thomas Petch, Vincent and Sean Bradish, John Allen, Jeremy Bamber, Kevin Lane, Michael Brown, Robert William Kenealy, Glyn Razzell, Willie Gage, Kate Keaveney, Michael Stone, Michael Attwooll, John Roden, Nick Tucker, Karl Watson, Terry Allen, Richard Southern, Peter Hannigan.