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Damage and Humanity in Custody

Introduction

In 1993 both the authors of this work were serving two-figure prison sentences in HMP Whitemoor, a maximum security prison for long-termers, having been transferred from a 'B' category prison after conviction on drug related offences. Both of us had served about two years already. Contrary to popular belief, one of the more attractive features of the Whitemoor regime was the time spent behind the locked cell door, away from the general prison atmosphere, where one could 'escape' into reading or art. The rest of the time - we had some eleven hours out of the cells - we spent in education, playing cards, or the gymnasium, the only real alternatives to sitting doing nothing.

There seemed to be two basic types of inmates; those who 'kept their heads down' and became introverted, and those others who grew more and more outwardly angry, frustrated and violent, adopting the manners of the animals we were all treated as. Surprisingly the anger which we all shared was directed mostly at the prison regime and staff attitudes rather than the length of our sentences. We, the authors, tended towards the former approach.

HMP Whitemoor can only be described as a collection of locks, bars, bolts, fences, razor wire, gates, a high wall (believed at that time to be unbreachable), cameras, uniforms and guard dogs. Any 'social atmosphere' is non-existent, the quality of food was atrocious, and family visits were restricted to two a month, one of which was privileged, under camera observation.

Upon arrival at HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE in Kent - separately and several months apart - we independently carried with us the 'prison paranoia' which we had been forced to cope with in our previous prisons, part of which was the feeling of being watched; "Where are the cameras?" we asked ourselves. However, we both soon accepted that the reports we had heard in advance of our arrival were correct. We discovered BLANTYRE to be a prison with a regime based on trust, where a man was allowed to continue to serve his sentence but in a more productive way, largely free of blockages, and where we once again began to open up to our own humanity. We were able to engage in self-set targets and fulfillable projects. BLANTYRE HOUSE is, of course, surrounded by a fence, but

within that fence there exists a genuine community of convicts, officers and civilian staff, who treat each other with civility and mostly with respect.

One of the staff, in fact the Prison Governor, Jim Semple, who had instigated his ideals as a truly imaginative leap in the treatment of long term prisoners at BLANTYRE some seven years earlier, rapidly gained our respect as an individual who was interested in far more than simply furthering his career. He proved to be a man of high ideals and principles who practised what he preached. For example, the whole community operated on a first name basis; Jim never tolerated titles such as 'Sir'. He was also insistent that BLANTYRE was not a place to laze around, but rather a place to learn, grow, and progress.

Throughout our stay at BLANTYRE we both were able to achieve a great deal, and see other men doing the same, from our Open University courses in Psychology and Computer Studies, to writing works of prose including this, performing in the Prison Pantomime and organising Charity events and fund raising.

In early 1995 Jim Semple retired after a successful seven years at BLANTYRE HOUSE, leaving his baby, the BLANTYRE 'ethos' in the hands of others. We were soon approached by Jim with the proposal of producing and conducting the inmate questionnaire in Appendix B. Our joint objective was to extract the individual's perception of his imprisonment at BLANTYRE and his memory of his experience at his previous secure prison. We were both keen to get involved and produce a report which would reflect the success of the BLANTYRE experiment. This in itself must be demonstrative of the progressive inspiration which the environment had produced in us; neither of us feel we would have participated whilst at Whitemoor, even if it had been possible. We spent several informal sessions at Jim's nearby house discussing and preparing the depth of the questions, and then enthusiastically dived into the interviews with our fellow BLANTYRE 'residents' and assimilating the responses.

We believe that this is the first time that such a report has been produced or such a questionnaire exercised on inmates by inmates. The results we feel are quite remarkable and worthy of study, even if not entirely scientifically reproducible. We believe that the analysis of the responses is enlightening and a challenge to the present and future prison system.

The Present System

It is obvious to anyone who has entered the British Prison system, whether as a convicted or remand prisoner, as a civilian worker, officer or Governor, that a man or woman suffers as soon as he enters prison as a prisoner, and that this suffering becomes mostly the norm. This poses two immediate questions. Is this suffering imposed on the remandee or convict specifically with an intent to produce some positive or negative effect, or is it an 'accidental' product of a failed system and the prison environment? Is such suffering avoidable and curable? Whether the intention is to weaken a remandee or convict's resolve, it is certainly the effect.

For a man on remand, whether guilty or innocent, possibly preparing to fight in court for his freedom, the effect is a nightmare of alienation, mistrust, and impotency in his own defence. He has limited access to books, paper, (computers), and advice, which is far more easily obtainable for a man on bail. He is often 'forced' to rely on solicitors whom he may not even know. He will have to spend the nights before and during trial in false and often degrading conditions which are detrimental to both his physical and psychological health, as well as his view of the 'fairness' of the system. The poor diet by no means helps his well being. Already he has been punished by the removal of rights, possessions, and free contact with his family, which most people would otherwise take for granted. He may find himself sweeping the landings, living with slop-out - thankfully a problem being overcome with modern sanitation in prisons - or passing hours and months doing nothing productive.

For a convict life can sometimes be easier if only because the stress of the trial is over, although often the promise of appeal lingers on in a continually dis-settling way. However, the convict's suffering continues. The theoretical punishment imposed by the courts, that is the loss of freedom, albeit for an uncertain period, is only part of the true suffering. Often the convict may be given second hand and ill-fitting clothes and low quality food, be subjected to long periods of 'bang-up', limited to seeing his loved ones once or twice a month often in situations deprived of privacy, crowded and noisy and under constant scrutiny. He may be awaiting transfer to another prison, thrown together with other men who have been convicted of crimes far different to his own, from young thugs to professional criminals, alienated from other inmates and staff alike. Generally such a man will inevitably be at a complete loss as to how to plan his sentence or his life

in any positive way. Many men in prison, in fact, never even discuss modern day sentence planning techniques until well into a sentence. They are left in a state of mental stagnation and futility.

In the cases of both the remandee and the convict the inevitable result is psycho-physical debilitation. If this is not the intention of the prison system then there is something seriously amiss. But this much is obvious.

We now move on to the second question - is the suffering imposed upon the prison population necessary and is it avoidable? Within the requirements of security is it possible to operate a humane, educationally and psychologically productive regime where men can advance through positive fulfilment by achieving self-set established goals, or at least be given the chance to try, rather than being left to stagnate? We suggest that BLANTYRE HOUSE is the 'living' proof that such a system is indeed possible and realistic. This report is based on the perceptions of some of the inmates of BLANTYRE HOUSE.

BLANTYRE HOUSE and the Regime

This survey was conducted amongst the inmates at HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE, in Kent, in an attempt to investigate and understand the 'meaning' of the prison experience and the differences between this experience in a closed and secure prison such as Swaleside, Whitemoor, Parkhurst, Maidstone etc, and a prison with a more relaxed and progressive regime, such as BLANTYRE HOUSE.

BLANTYRE HOUSE reopened as a C category prison on December 12th 1987, housing about 95 men. About 30% of the prisoner intake over the seven years BLANTYRE HOUSE has been operating under the present regime, had been in the dispersal estate, mainly Parkhurst and Whitemoor. Many had previously been category A prisoners on the 'book' for substantial parts of their sentences, having been on the dispersal system 'merry-go-round'. The BLANTYRE HOUSE regime was said to be one based on trust. There is a minimum of supervision within the prison, and inmates are allowed to develop their own plans and projects and map out their own days. Education is encouraged although it is compulsory for an inmate to partake only of a minimum of half a day per week. Education is open from 8 am until 8.30 pm and is mostly unsupervised. As

inmates successfully remain in the prison they are allowed to progress to take part in outside community work or attend outside colleges. There is no adjudication system as such. Inmates who prove to be unsuitable to such a regime and ethos as BLANTYRE HOUSE upholds are transferred to other prisons. The rules are categorically explained to each inmate during a selection interview in the secure prisons. These rules prohibit the use of alcohol and drugs, violence and verbal abuse. All inmates must be within the building by 8.30 pm and within their own rooms by 11 pm. Inmates now have keys to their rooms. In effect these are the only rules and breaches are dealt with by returning the offender to a secure prison such as Maidstone or Swaleside, and re-categorisation as a B category prisoner.

BLANTYRE HOUSE Facilities

Facilities provided by the Prison include a chapel and a mosque, a weight training gymnasium and a sports gymnasium, a woodwork shop, computer room, art room, library and small allotments. There is a sports field and a small 'golf course' converted from waste land by previous inmates. Until recent Home Office legislation there were weekly escorted country rambles. Inmates can be escorted to the prison swimming pool, situated outside the perimeter, at certain times of day during the summer months, but must have been at BLANTYRE HOUSE for six months to qualify for this. Until recent (1995) restrictions this privilege had been enjoyed by all, including those arriving from dispersal prisons, from their first day at BLANTYRE. The current political mood has instigated or suggested the removal of many of these 'privileges', and seems to be destroying the BLANTYRE ethos to some extent.

All of the inmates, after some time at the prison, are encouraged to participate in the outside community. There is a 'project' works party which engages in work at local venues such as old persons' homes, schools etc. A number of inmates work out for several days a week, either in private homes, schools, or local animal sanctuaries. In addition some twenty inmates attend courses in outside colleges for one or more days a week. Inmates are presently engaged in outside full time paid employment and contribute financially to their keep within the prison. There are also one or two small businesses, operated by prisoners under the supervision of the Vocational Training and Education departments and these also contribute a share of their profits to the Education department.

As well as community work there is a large charity drive organised by the elected inmates' amenities committee which also voice suggestions and requests of a general nature to the authorities. There is another charity group consisting of several inmates and staff who work together to raise funds for nominated charities. The main annual event organised by inmates is 'Stir Crazy' a day of fun for hundreds of children and adults with learning difficulties, working with the registered charity, Mencap. In 1995 over 800 were invited in for games and food, along with about 300 helpers and nurses. All the funds for this event are raised by inmates through a raffle, a sponsored walk, donations and car boot sales. Approximately 90% of the BLANTYRE inmates helped with games, races, serving food and decorating the site, on the day, and many were involved beforehand. It was certainly a time when almost the whole prison pulled together for no purpose other than helping the deprived.

Other projects engaged in within the fence are an annual pantomime, an offshoot of which is a drama class producing a comedy film during 1995, an Aids awareness team which produces films, a monthly weekend Club for members of Gateway Clubs, and an annual Old Folks dinner each Christmas.

BLANTYRE HOUSE has a rugby team, cricket team and indoor bowls team. Alas, the opportunity for social interaction with village sport and recreational organisations has been lost due to recent Home Office regulations.

As an inmate arrives he is allocated a place in a three bedded room and can then be invited into a double. Meanwhile his name stays on a waiting list for single rooms of various sizes. Arriving inmates, regardless of 'status', also normally spend some time in the kitchen, starting on wash-up, until replaced by a new arrival. This can be days or weeks, and he will then move on to become a landing cleaner until again replaced and allocated a permanent job or full time education. About twenty or so inmates are on full time education and about six follow Open University courses.

When BLANTYRE HOUSE was re-opened by Jim Semple great emphasis was put on family contact and repairing any damage which may have been done to relationships. BLANTYRE does not operate an advance or limited V.O. (Visiting Order) system, and family and friends may turn up on any of the five visiting days per week, and book in on arrival. There is a minimum of supervision during visits, and tea, coffee and sweets are available from a canteen manned by inmates. In addition about eight or nine Family

Open Days are arranged per year. On these days visitors can come inside the fence from 1.30 to 5.30, and see their loved ones in an atmosphere even more relaxed than normal BLANTYRE visits. Visitors may obtain hot food from a buffet served by kitchen staff and paid for through weekly donations from the inmates. The inmates' Amenities Committee also arrange entertainment for visiting children, such as clowns, magicians, music etc, again paid for from funds collected amongst the men. These facilities which enable men to share food and fun with their families, both of course being basic human successful community requirements, go a long way to bringing families together on a very real level.

The Questionnaire

Inmates were invited to complete a questionnaire which served as a form of self-report. The questionnaires were mostly completed by conducting an interview on tape recorder and extracting and transcribing relevant comments later.

The theoretical starting point in the development of the questionnaire, was Ruggiero's statement that prisons are handicap factories, and our subjective observation of the damage which men appeared to be bringing with them into BLANTYRE HOUSE. These and the early anxieties and difficulties in adjusting to the BLANTYRE HOUSE 'provocatively challenging' community, suggesting major coping problems. We were also mindful of Zamble and Porporino's claim that coping behaviour is not diminished by short and medium term experience.

The questionnaire was designed to illicit both intellectual and emotional understanding on the part of BLANTYRE residents in terms of the possibly enhancing or diminishing effects of long-term imprisonment. Whilst the questionnaire was designed to remain as open as possible, our expectation was that the demands of BLANTYRE HOUSE, on both staff and prisoners, in terms of their experiences and opportunities associated with personal discretion would hopefully bring about change and growth. Nevertheless these had to be demonstrated through this research.

The questionnaire was largely developed by the ex-Governor of HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE, Mr Jim Semple. However, Alun Buffry and Will Hutchinson visited Jim at his home on several occasions to work with him on the development of the questions and to make constructive comments on the range and depth of questions. We were aware of problems relating to the scientific validation of introspection with regards to selective

memories but felt that the richness of the information potential in the answers far outweighed its scientific testability. All the questions were framed in such way that men were able to respond negatively or positively in relation to any particular dimensions of imprisonment in either the Previous Secure Prison or in BLANTYRE HOUSE.

We recognised the risk that the shared sense of ‘overwhelming civility’ in BLANTYRE HOUSE may have unfairly distorted recollections of what all the interviewees regarded as a hostile experience in their Previous Secure Prison, albeit that some men had engaged in what might have been seen as a useful activity in the Previous Secure Prison. This was not considered to be a significant or serious flaw in the design of the questions.

Some of the questions sought to identify damaging experience whilst others were seeking contributions to personal growth.

The subjects were selected during discussions at Jim’s house. Twenty inmates were selected out of a population of 95, consideration being given to the fact that a seriously demanding questionnaire would have an intellectual and feeling agenda, probing sensitive areas. Time limits dictated that twenty was the largest sample of men manageable. We drew an arbitrary line of not less than six months at BLANTYRE house. Our reasoning here was that few men, in a full sense, are able to make sense of and respond to, the demands of the regime during their first months.

We selected a broad spectrum of backgrounds including issues of ethnicity, breadth of criminality (first time offenders to ‘old lags’), a wide age range and a wide range of type of offence from non-sexual violence drug offenders to men who regard themselves as, or at least seem to wish to give the impression of, being professional villains.

All the inmates have served some time in Previous Secure Prisons (hereafter referred to as PSP’s) for the first years of their sentences. Most of the inmates questioned had been at BLANTYRE HOUSE for from six months up to just over two years, many were past their Parole Eligibility Dates having been refused parole at least once, and were privileged by this time to home leaves and town visits, but several were still confined within the prison. Many of the subjects still had several years to serve upon their arrival at BLANTYRE HOUSE. The ages of the men varied from 25 to 50, and sentences varied from 5 years to 18 years, the men having been imprisoned from 2 years to 9 years before arriving at BLANTYRE HOUSE

The inmates were invited to place either their own name or an alias on the questionnaire, to serve as a reference name. Confidentiality was assured. The majority of inmates actually entered their own names. Interviews to help the inmates complete the questionnaire were conducted on a one-to-one basis with another inmate. These took from between one hour and two and a half hours depending on the level of additional explanation of the aim of questions, which inmates required. The 'interviewer', Will Hutchinson, made every effort not to solicit any specific responses whilst attempting to clarify the interviewees understanding of the questions and draw elaboration on short responses. No efforts were made to hurry the subjects at all, and breaks were permitted if desired. The interviews were openly recorded on cassette tape, and 'written up' from the recording later, which took from one to three hours per interview.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty six questions (see Appendix B). It was believed that to be of enhanced value it would be necessary to gain replies which went beyond simple descriptions of activities and personal responses, to the individual perceptions of their experiences and to what those experiences meant to them as individuals. The subjects were asked to comment on their experiences and attitudes in the last secure prison in which they were incarcerated, and then to answer identical questions on their experiences and attitudes whilst at HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE (hereafter referred to as BLANTYRE). It was believed that a marked difference would appear in their experiences and perceptions, between the two types of regime.

Discussion:

"Her Majesty's Prison Service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and help them lead law abiding lives in custody and after release". A notice with these words appears outside every prison in the U.K., and on various walls inside them. It is clearly the *intention* that those committed by the courts are sent to prison as a punishment for their crimes, rather than to be punished, and during their sentences it is intended that they be treated in a humane and reforming manner. Vincenzo Ruggiero, however, in his work 'The Disrespect of Prison', states that prisons are places of pain and legal suffering, in direct conflict to the Prison service's stated intention. Ruggiero said "Prisons, even the most reformed ones, produce damage and diseases, in varied forms and intensity. They

produce damaged and ill people”. Prisons, for Ruggiero, are ‘factories for the manufacture of psycho-physical handicaps’.²

As a challenge we would like to consider the answers (See Appendix A) to our questionnaire (see Appendix B) in relation to both BLANTYRE HOUSE and the more secure prisons which the subjects have been in, such as Whitemoor, Parkhurst, Swaleside and Maidstone, which is where the majority of Blantyre’s inmates arrive from - category B and dispersal prisons. It is quite clear from the answers to every question that there is a marked and consistent difference in the attitudes of the inmates to the regimes of BLANTYRE and of the PSP’s.

Although the interview and questionnaire was conducted on only about 20% of the inmates, and only on inmates who had been at BLANTYRE for at least six months and therefore had time to settle in and maybe appreciate the ethos to the full, even a new arrival after a few days has a remarkable change in attitude. One may, of course, point out that these are men who have experienced the strict, austere, inhumane conditions of the PSP’s for several years, and therefore would tend to answer positively in comparison. This nevertheless emphasises the differences in their perceptions. Firstly, when informally asked whether they would have considered participating in such a survey in their PSP, would they have agreed, most men said a firm “No”, or “I doubt it”. This in itself is demonstrative of the change in perception. Secondly we may ask why were these men ever in these PSP’s before? Why could they not have been accurately assessed and placed in a BLANTYRE-type environment instead, albeit in a more secure containment, since they were a lot earlier in their sentences and considered thereby to have a greater risk of escape?

One of the answers is remarkably and sadly obvious. BLANTYRE HOUSE is unique. It holds, at present, only 96 men. There is nowhere in the UK like it, so the remainder of the prison population must be dumped into unpleasant B and C category prisons, to fight for survival and respect until such a time that they can go to BLANTYRE or are released back into society, with, if Ruggiero is correct, psycho-physical handicaps. With a prison population in 1995 of over 50,000, the chances of the former are remote. So, if Ruggiero is correct, and if nothing can be done about it, the future for offenders and society as a whole, is bleak!

With the passage of time, institutional routines become the reality experienced by inmates, and the present reality always takes precedence. Because of the present structure of the PSP's, the desire for lasting change becomes a less pressing objective, to be dealt with in some remote future. This experience has led Zamble and Porporino (1988), in their study on coping behaviour and adaptation in prison inmates, to state "...Individuals who enter prison with inadequate behavioural repertoires or maladaptive modes of coping are bound to leave with the same (lack of) capabilities. While men are in prison their outside behaviour patterns remain, in effect, frozen in time." ³

Ruggiero stated "Prison distorts time, it deprives it of its use-value while riddling it with an institutional, alienated and amorphous rhythm. Stress, tension, nervous and psychosomatic diseases also derive from this institutional imposition of time" ⁴

With reference to the questionnaire, question 13 highlighted the psychological damage caused in the PSP's and their inner environments. The regimes seem to have led men to feeling mostly unwell, tense and agitated, degraded, intimidated, useless, isolated, disorientated, neglected, devaluing others and adopting survival-necessitated behaviour which was not natural to them as human beings. As Derek mentioned "It took away my self respect, you were just a wasted body". This prolonged suffering must seriously effect the psychological and physiological conditions, creating a despairing outlook, out of which nothing but negativity and anger can emerge. For men to be released back into society in psychological conditions such as these feelings indicate is highly dangerous, and in fact if they retain these emotions then they are in a condition highly likely to lead to more offences.

Prison can become a good place for contemplation, but it does not produce or reinforce the ability to plan or organise behaviour in constructive ways. Zamble and Porporino stated "Damage is linked to the lack of stimulation and monotony in prison, along with the lack of choices and the dependency imposed on inmates." ⁵

In contrast examine the same range of emotions applied to the men now that they have been at BLANTYRE for several months or so. They reported in question 13, that they now feel well in themselves, relaxed, respected, safe, fulfilled, well socialised, well motivated, cared for, with respect for others, and able to keep (or re-find) their identities. One cannot help but feel that these answers reflect the real aims of the Prison Service as stated above, and sound less supportive of Ruggiero's ideas. In fact, the answers may

well make one wonder whether BLANTYRE is a prison at all, as Ruggiero sees them, and yet BLANTYRE obviously fulfils all the requirements of a prison, keeping its inmates in custody until released. The difference is the humanity and the expectation of personal fulfilment. The character traits revealed in the subjects now at BLANTYRE surely illustrate particularly healthy individuals who, one could argue, are more likely to be 'reformed' characters, responsible men who engage in self-motivated challenges, handle life's problems in a positive manner, and participate in society rather than withdrawing from it. This transformation, however, may not have occurred over night.

At BLANTYRE a man is removed from the impersonal regimes obvious in the PSP's, where negativity, non-productivity, lack of trust and respect, are the norm. He becomes valued as an individual, a human being rather than a name and number only, and everything becomes so much more real and personal to him. As Ted remarked "BLANTYRE is about getting out of the routine of doing nothing". It is about taking control and responsibility, of keeping productive, compromising, and avoiding nonsensical and possibly violent confrontations (which seem to be everyday experiences in the PSP's). Greg mentioned that "BLANTYRE brings out the best in most men and allows you to re-establish yourself and your aims in life".

In his study on Human Breakdown in Prison, H. Toch (1992) suggested that during a prison sentence the prisoner "... as part of a state of mind, the individual sees himself as no longer active and influencing, as having no way of effecting his own life for the better. He abdicates his autonomy." ⁶ Examining the responses of the subjects to this present questionnaire this view is strongly confirmed with reference to the PSP's, although BLANTYRE seems to have generally produced a reversal and inmates seem to have re-found control over their lives.

It is surely very disillusioning to realise that one has no or little influence on one's environment, where one is forced to live, or upon the people one is forced to live with. Questions 23 and 24 dealt with this issue, trying to evaluate how much influence the subjects have at BLANTYRE and how much they felt they had in their PSP's. As regards the PSP's it is immediately obvious that most men felt impotent in affecting their surroundings. Gerry stated "The whole experience of prison is lived within ourselves, nothing comes out of it". When a man has lived for several years in such a system it is not merely a case of needing time to readjust to accept a responsible influential attitude again, after release, it actually will necessitate a period of healing the damage. If prisons

like the PSP's are intended to produce such suffering and damage then it is clear they do a good job. This, of course, is not the intention publicised by the Prison Service.

Once again there is a remarkable difference at BLANTYRE. Here the men felt that they could actually influence things to make them more responsive to their needs as human beings, and that they could fully express themselves. BLANTYRE appears to provide much of the healing needed after the PSP's, encouraging reparation and personal growth. Yet BLANTYRE HOUSE still fulfils the function of a prison.

Man is, naturally, a gregarious creature, and needs to communicate in order to survive in a psychologically healthy way. Questions 3 and 4 dealt with this issue, attempting to evaluate the prisoners' perceptions of the extent of their communications in the different regimes. In the PSP's the results were disastrously negative. Most of the conversations were between convicts, and centred around crime, the legal system and corruption within it, and the prison. Such limited conversations eventually seemed to have turned the men inwards, not in any positively introspective manner, but in a negative, repressive, insular way. They seemed to have valued the benefits of real social contact to such a small extent that they began to consider it did not even exist within the walls and fences, and in fact began to develop serious problems in communicating with the families and visitors. This in turn bred a sense that nothing was very 'real'. When an individual perceives himself or herself as valueless, and unable to express themselves in any meaningful, relevant and valued way, they enter the nightmare world of alienation. One pauses before even trying to imagine a society with such unsociable, negative, non-communicative beings wandering freely. The only place most individuals like this can go is back to prison, or else live in a destructive and self-indulgent fashion.

H. Toch has stated "It is one thing for prison to fail, to regenerate wolves. It is another thing for prisons to make beasts of lambs".⁷

BLANTYRE HOUSE, however, again produced a characteristic swing in the subjects' perceptions of themselves and their fellows. It allows a man to begin to come back out of his 'shell' and face the challenges of the 'real world'. The effect of the BLANTYRE experience seems to be one of freeing the mind from the overpowering and fearful need to survive which is so dominant in PSP inmate mentality, and broaden the outlook from the micro-focus of prison life, so that the individual retains a valid interest in the outside world, and regains the ability to communicate on a wide and social level, with family and

friends alike, without the overriding negativity, hatred, and bitterness which the PSP's have bred. Another consequence of this is the breakdown of the 'us and them' syndrome. Inmates not only converse with officers, but actually engage in mutually fulfilling projects together. This certainly does not happen in the PSP's, where one has to be careful to be seen even talking to uniformed staff.

The ability to plan productively, within established limits, for the future can be seen as an integral part of steering oneself away from a life of crime, creating the ability to visualise and realise a valid alternative. Yet, in the PSP's, the whole perception of planning is negative, as is the perception of time itself. The subjects seemed content to 'get through' their sentences, pass the time, 'keep the head down', and so on. Any attempt to plan the future beyond the gate, seems to have been thoroughly thwarted by the system. As Ken stated "I existed, I did not plan. It was enough to just survive". It seemed that, amongst all the men, a common thread was to get through the time, rather than to use it productively and constructively. It could be argued that in the PSP environment the men would not have had the ability to plan constructively, even if the regime facilitated it. The whole ethos, predicated on control, in those institutions, destroys the ability to plan. When one feels one's environment is so unnatural, unreal and transient, one can neither plan within it nor beyond it. As Gerry stated in response to this question "Years of not having any responsibilities does not prepare you for the future, it makes you incapable of making decisions". If the Prison Service has any serious intention of reforming its inmates the future planning abilities are an absolute necessity in offenders. Failing to teach or inspire planning is another serious fault within the PSP's.

Toch states "Men in despair choose not a way of life but a way to live. Much of the activity and energy of men in stressful situations is directed at making sense of incongruity and at limiting action to those areas that strike them as familiar and compatible with their stress-induced needs"⁸.

BLANTYRE seems to extract the need for survival and replace it with an emphasis on self-motivation and personal decision-making. Men can once again become responsible for their lives and involved more closely with their families, regaining the ability to plan constructively, not only for the remainder of their sentences, but also for after release. BLANTYRE does even more than this, apparently. It provides an environment and a freedom-within-the-fence, without continual blocks being imposed, so that a man may and does explore his own depths and experiment with his interests, so that he is able to

unlock and nurture new abilities. BLANTYRE is about personal discovery and responsibility. This concept would probably be almost unbelievable for inmates still trying to survive within PSP environments, and yet for the residents of BLANTYRE HOUSE it is the norm.

A hostile environment is certain to cause most people to withdraw into 'shells' whilst enabling the bully and real social criminal to thrive. Many inmates within the PSP's regard the system as a 'human zoo', jungle or 'garbage can'. The men see themselves treated with less respect than most people treat their pets. H. Toch stated "...self-doubt is a product - a social outcome derived from encounters with other people. It is nurtured by guilt, shame, fear. It is magnified by the looking glass he finds in every face he sees - his jaundiced self - image finding its reflection in the neglect and gloating and contempt for others."⁹ Being treated as a animal would lead most people to eventually acting like a animal. For instance, most people surrounded by swearing will end up swearing themselves. People who regularly witness violence begin to accept it as the norm, are less likely to want to prevent it (unless it is happening to themselves), and rapidly lose the normal basis for respect. Because the threat is so real the day to day focus must become survival, and to aid survival emotions must be buried beneath hard exteriors. Unsociable situations breed unsociable attitudes and actions. This is true whether inside or outside of a prison fence. Officers too, become caught up in this lifestyle. They must suffer tremendously from having to go in and out between the regimes and their families, relating to the former as lesser beings. An examination of stress related sick leave from the PSP's, together with constant applications for transfer, would be highly demonstrative of these problems. It is strange that a system which is considered so unpleasant by inmates and staff alike is allowed to perpetuate. Probably the only other time when 'both sides' hate the fight but cannot withdraw, is that of war, which is precisely the perception commonly held by large numbers of prisoners in this country. This is in no way consistent with the written intentions of the Prison Service.

"Factories for the manufacture of handicaps or moral surgeries, prisons", in the words of Nietzsche, "do not make people better, they merely annihilate them. One had better be terrified if prisons made people more vindictive and viscous, but, fortunately, most times they only make people demented"¹⁰

Should prisons be places of legal suffering as Ruggiero suggests they are? Do we make prisons such horrendous experiences that men never want to return, (even to the extent

that they will do anything to prevent it)? The expense of this attitude will clearly be to perpetually release psychologically damaged individuals back into society, incapable of communication, sharing or caring, until eventually they are discarded completely and locked up with the key thrown away. Or should society give individuals a chance to be remorseful and become socially orientated in environments which provide a man time and space to discover himself and his potential. As Jack mentioned “BLANTYRE has opened up abilities in me which I never knew I had, and increased my confidence in dealing with people in general”.

The impression gained from the answers to the questionnaire is that the PSP’s are about suppressing stimulating activities beyond the gymnasium and limited education, and provide an artificial environment, with false experiences and perceptions. They seem to place the focus on each day at a time, taking away responsibilities and decisions. Everything is done at the pre-determined time. There seems to be little value of the individual and little incentive to the inmate to use his abilities productively, let alone find more.

To quote Toch again “ An environment designed to confine men physically confines them psychologically as well. A prison creates a world that demands constricted acts, thoughts, and feelings. It is a world in which strong and tragic resentments are bound to fester and sometimes to explode.” ¹¹

BLANTYRE, on the other hand, is about encouraging stimulating activities, producing a ‘real life’ environment and micro society, with real and valid experiences. The focus is placed on individual and group responsibility, long-term planning, and achieving targets. Although a minimum half day of education per week is the only requirement which a resident must fulfil, it is highly relevant that the majority attend more, out of freedom of choice. A man is respected and valued, and gains self-respect. This grossly alters his perception of his imprisonment to a positive one.

BLANTYRE HOUSE has a long list of inmates who have produced positive results from their own abilities both before and after release. There are inmates who have started successful ventures and completely adjusted their direction. This report and the co-operation and honesty which it has revealed is a shining example of this. Of course BLANTYRE HOUSE is a prison and houses men who have often committed serious offences such as drug importation or armed robbery, many of whom have been re-

offenders in the past. This shows that their previous experience, of PSP's has achieved nothing. The capacity to respond to the demands of BLANTYRE varies greatly with individuals. Some men fail, either unable to cope with the responsibility whilst in the regime and being shipped back to the system and a more secure prison, or re-offending after release. The Home Office are unable to provide figures for the recidivist rates on individual prisons, but it is suggested that the rate of BLANTYRE would in fact be lower than most prisons. It must be emphasised, as will be endorsed by the men, that BLANTYRE in fact offers no 'easy option'; it is far easier to hide away and bury one's head in books or the gymnasium, avoiding personal challenges and responsibilities. In BLANTYRE a man must deal with his family again, learn to re-adapt to society, often going out into the community to work, and often establishing long term aims and objectives which would prove difficult even for a free man to achieve. This must surely radically alter the man's perception of his life and greatly decrease the chances of re-offending.

Zamble and Porporino stated "We must stress the importance of graduated release programs, which allow inmates to alter some of their behaviours on the outside while still under the direct control and feedback of authorities. If such programs were made universal, and combined with programs aimed at teaching offenders better ways of coping with problems and of organising and planning their lives, then we would expect that the extra investment would pay substantial dividends in improved effectiveness of the correctional system".¹²

If BLANTYRE HOUSE can achieve this, which during its seven years it clearly has, then surely it is time to consider whether the ethos and spirit should be adopted in other prisons. There is no doubt room for strict regimes to contain those who will continue to cause severe disturbances or act violently within the prison although often such behaviour speaks of need and hurt, and calls for humane treatment rather than simply more deprivation or disrespect.

Toch said "Given the mission of the prison, it is slated to remain harsh indefinitely. For if prisons should ever move in the direction of benignity, segments of the public would resist the 'coddling of muggers' and 'country club housing' for adjudged rapists".¹³ Political and public opinion during the first half of the nineties has strongly supported this view.

If the popular consensus throughout society is that criminals are genetically or morally deficient, then treatment and socialization need to be addressed. Socialization would include conditioning to the 'rule of law' which pervades society. To achieve this society must promote faith in the system. Instead men are placed in hostile, brutalising regimes which damage psychologically and do nothing to secure rehabilitation.

The stigmatisation of criminals, which must surely impact on the dynamics of self-perception, influenced by adages such as 'once a thief always a thief', perhaps programme the individuals into further deviant behaviour, reinforced by the psychological incapacity to react socially, having been conditioned by environments where survival was of paramount importance.

However, to secure a sympathetic and generative environment, criminals need to be seen as purposeful human beings in need of direction and personal discovery. BLANTYRE HOUSE exemplifies the fact that most men do not want to live in factories of conflict and violence. Given an innate goodness in human beings, a sympathetic environment nurtures goodness; conversely a hostile environment can only conceal it.

Conclusion:

Under the present system, however, it is felt that a man is assessed as suitable for a more relaxed regime and progressive system far too late in his sentence, when much damage has already been done. As it stands convicts are thrown together into regimes which rob them of all respect, most family contact, ambition and everything human. They are numbers, not men. They spend their time in false surroundings, and become numbed to emotion, afraid to show their humanity or compassion for their fellows. It should be recognised that there is 'good' in everyone, although it may sometimes be buried deep, and this good must be allowed to surface and encouraged in a way which gives a person the ability to select and follow 'good', social, and productive paths. One wonders why society has allowed the creation of and perpetuation of such soul destroying factories of psycho-physical handicaps. Maybe because the prisons have "...taken on a quasi-independent life of their own, which enables them to survive the overwhelming evidence of their social dysfunction".^{14, 15}

Now an examination of Ruggiero's statement in respect to the PSP's makes it quite clear that he is correct. "Prisons...produce damage and diseases, in varied forms and

intensities. They produce damage and ill people”.² However, Ruggiero believed that this applied to “even the most reformed ones (prisons)”. It cannot be possible to ignore that the answers to the questionnaire when applied to BLANTYRE produced the impression that this is a prison which does not seem to produce damage beyond any possibly resulting from imprisonment itself (although it is arguable that BLANTYRE HOUSE does not even produce that). Furthermore it appears that BLANTYRE actually has a strong healing effect on the inmates, which counteracts the damage they bring with them from the PSP’s, enabling them to feel valued and become productive with their time.

We are mainly concerned with the experience of the imprisonment itself, rather than the experiences after release. Until now there seems to have been no scientific evaluation of the recidivist rate from BLANTYRE. We would, in conclusion, emphasise that even if many released do re-offend, that it must be considered how long they have been free, and remembered that the society to which they have returned may, in many cases, have been responsible for producing the offending behaviour in the very first place, and this may well be beyond the reach of BLANTYRE at all.

The experience of BLANTYRE HOUSE is one which fulfils the Prison Service’s stated intentions. If the individual is so motivated and has the desire for lasting change then BLANTYRE provides the necessary tools to accommodate this. At BLANTYRE a man can acquire a mature and positive outlook, which can be reflected in his ability to re-focus on his aims in his life and his direction before and after release.

Some men re-offend after release, which reflects the extremely complicated issues with regard to crime which are prevalent throughout contemporary criminology. Can one expect perfect results in an imperfect world? The vein of psychological damage runs deeper in some individuals than it does in others, and the cultivation of our essential goodness varies in degree from person to person, both inside and outside of prison.

The men residing at BLANTYRE HOUSE are aware that the regime here survives against the major consensus of public opinion. Perhaps if a re-adjustment of public opinion could be achieved, through the media and other information networks, then the community which is manifest in BLANTYRE could slowly begin to pervade the wider society.

The findings of our report indicate that, for the residents, BLANTYRE HOUSE is like none of their previous prisons. Whilst fulfilling every criteria necessary to contain people

BLANTYRE HOUSE goes a long way in 'humanising' the offender, and this is done at no extra cost to the taxpayer. A fact about BLANTYRE which cannot be ignored is that there is no violence amongst the inmates (or inmate - staff violence), no hard drug problem, no problem with wilful damage to property or equipment, no shouts of abuse and no cell thieves. All these problems are almost accepted as the norm in other prisons.

The prison system as it stands has shown that, since its inception, it does not work, if by working we mean reforming inmates. Evidence suggests that the PSP's damage even further, the damage being created by artificial, anti-social, hostile environments, perceived on the level of survival. Some psychologists would argue that our personalities are formed through experience. Society may therefore want to consider the benefits encouraged in an alternative system such as BLANTYRE HOUSE provides. However, BLANTYRE HOUSE would seem to stand alone in its efforts to humanise the offender. Sadly, the complex issues within criminology as to the causes of crime and the functioning of the criminal justice system are beyond the scope of our report.

We feel that a BLANTYRE HOUSE type of regime should come earlier in a man's sentence, rather than at the end where first it has to repair damage done by prolonged stays in brutalising systems. If a man were to be given opportunities such as those available at BLANTYRE HOUSE, at the beginning of his sentence, albeit in more secure environment where necessary, so much more could be achieved, and he would be enabled to make truly productive and fulfilling achievements throughout his sentence, without feeling totally rejected.

It is well within the policy and practical remit of the Prison Service to search for the highest proportion of positive and progressive endeavour, and yet find just and humane responses for those where such a prison does not immediately offer purpose, either because of the damage which the individual may already have sustained or through disinterest, for whom prison may remain a negative and time-wasting experience.

Any prisons which are to attempt to produce a BLANTYRE HOUSE type of regime and its results must be founded on solid principles adhered to by the staff, which may necessitate new training. The staff attitudes at BLANTYRE seem to be very important as this is the daily avenue for encouragement and support. This means establishing personal relationships beyond the us and them syndrome present in most British prisons, and possibly limiting the numbers involved so that nobody can be lost or ignored by the

community. We suggest that prisons should be organised to be as generative as possible, and that the energy of staff and inmates should be geared towards enablement and personal development. The way of life should be as humanising as possible, offering an inmate the opportunity for personal influence and planning as much as possible within the scope of positive imprisonment. There should exist a policy of positively engaging men in constructive activity, and this should be the overriding purpose.

It is a lamentable fact that the quality of experience and personal development for everyone living and working in BLANTYRE remains in the margins of penal development. In spite of the major academic criticisms of Zamble and Porporino, Toch and Ruggiero, it is as though BLANTYRE HOUSE and the results obtained does not exist and had never happened, except for the small percentage of men selected from the prison population who have become privileged to serve some of their sentences there.

APPENDIX A: The Responses

Figures in brackets after a quote such as (x2) or (x9) indicate the number of identical or synonymous responses.

Question 1

was divided into six sub-sections and required the men to report their daily routines and habits.

Part (a) of question 1

asked how much variety was included in the routines. In their PSP the vast majority of men concluded that there was very little, if any, variety within the days' routines. It was generally stated that one day was much the same as another.

John : "Every day was almost identical to the previous day".(x14)

Philippe : "The routine was so repetitive that you just became like robots"

Edward : "It's all laid out for you - you don't have to think for yourself".

Every subject responded very negatively to this question.

However, in response to the same question on BLANTYRE the answers were very different.

Gerry : "Each individual can exercise choice and personal planning". (x5)

Philippe : "You create your own programme at BLANTYRE, and this gives you the ability and confidence to think for yourself".

Jack "The variety at BLANTYRE is as much as I decide to utilise the facilities". (x8)

Nigel : "In full time paid employment"

Barry : "You do everything for yourself to make things better".

Every response to this question was positive regarding BLANTYRE and negative regarding the PSP.

Part (b) of question 1 asked the subjects which daily personal rituals they adopted to enhance the routine or to survive.

In the PSP the answers ranged from reading and writing, to lifting weights in the gymnasium, and smoking cannabis.

Jack : "I used reading as a form of escapism and to repress my emotions".

Steve : "The system was so controlled that I lost my imagination and just wore a mask to survive".

Derek : "I was just happy to bang my door and sleep".

Edward : "I used to make jackets to kill the time".

John : "I spent every hour I could with education".

Terry : “Gym was the only escape”.

Ted : “As much as possible, I took to smoking cannabis”.

Gerry : “Reading, yoga, meditation”.

Peter : “Extensive reading”. (x4)

Greg : “Cell exercise, art, cage birds”.

Barry : “I worked in the kitchen seven days a week to get off the wing”.

Bernard : “Go to sleep through bang-up”.

The responses to this question were all very negative with regard to the PSP’s.

In relation to BLANTYRE HOUSE the answers changed immensely.

Jack : “I occupy my day with a variety of productive tasks and classes”. (x5)

John : “There is such a variation here and, more importantly, it is directed towards my future”.

Dave : “I believe you don’t need to adopt anything to survive at BLANTYRE as everything is geared towards personal development and growth”.

Nigel : “It makes a difference having the freedom to go for a walk when I want to”.

Steve : “To begin with you fear being shipped out”.

Philippe : “Free to use time. Don’t need to survive”

Overall, once again, there was a marked difference between the negative responses concerning the PSP’s and the very positive responses and outlook at BLANTYRE.

Part (c) of question 1 asked the men to report on events which they regarded as satisfying or enabled them to cope.

In the PSP :

Greg : “The advent of telephone calls helped”.

Dave : “My family gave meaning to my existence”.

Bernard : “I just switched off and got on with it”.

Gerry : “Forced to do things to pass your time”.

Barry : “Nothing satisfying there”. (x3)

Steve : “Education”. (x6)

Ken : “Church activities, visiting discussion groups”.

Other answers ranged from visits to the gymnasium, education and even “booze parties” (home made alcoholic drinks called hooch) on a Saturday night. Overall the answers were extremely negative, as with the previous two parts of question 1, but it is interesting

to note that the responses were geared towards coping rather than experiences which gave satisfaction. There seems to have been very little satisfaction gained in the PSP's.

At BLANTYRE HOUSE:

Philippe : "You aren't forced to do anything and can take control of your own life".

Bernard : "It is very satisfying to do something and be able to follow it through".
(x2)

Tom : "More relaxed visits" (x2)

Nigel stated "I find (outside-the-gate) work satisfying and can almost lead a normal life".

John : "Personal freedom and choice not limited by narrow routines".

George : "I find everything satisfying, from community work to family contact".

Barry : "The whole regime here is OK".

Ken : "Interaction with staff on a civilised level".

Gerry : "Working on the future; contact with the community".

Terry : "Making one's own choices. Leading a normal life". (x2)

Jack : "Daily activities are satisfying. No problem coping".

Again all of the responses to this question were positive in favour of BLANTYRE. The noticeable distinction was between 'coping' strategies in the PSP's and 'satisfying' events at BLANTYRE HOUSE.

Part (d) of question 1 asked the subjects which routines they regarded as negative or personally restrictive.

In the PSP's all the inmates reported a very negative response to this question.

John : "The routines were preventative and everything was geared around security".

Dave : "The security measures" and "I felt hated and despised by society".

Ken : "An inmate is not an individual and that is negative and personally restrictive".

Philippe : "I was constantly under pressure, under orders".

George : "All of it. A horrible degrading system". (x2)

Jack : "Rigid timetable, limited movement, isolation within the building" (x8)

Geoff : "Bang up and regiments".

BLANTYRE HOUSE again produced completely different types of responses to this question:

Dave : “The system at BLANTYRE is geared towards actually helping you, and not negative or restrictive, because you have freedom to chose at BLANTYRE”.

Gerry : “Why would someone chose a negative routine for themselves?”

John : “The lack of finance is restrictive because it means I cannot take my plans to their maximum because of lack of money”.

Jack : “Not being able to study in my room is restrictive”.

Overall there were some negative responses with regard to BLANTYRE, which were directed towards isolated incidents and activities, whereas in the PSP’s they had been directed towards the whole regime. The vast majority of responses to this question in regard to BLANTYRE were positive.

Part (e) of question 1 asked the inmates which routines added to their quality of life and in which way.

The consensus with regard to the PSP’s was that there was nothing which added to the quality of the men’s’ lives. Some of the men stated that being able to get “down the gym” helped.

Ted : “I found the gym gave me motivation”.

Peter : “Children’s visits days added to the quality of my life”.

Gerry : “Education”.

Philippe : “Restrictions stop things for the future”.

Ken : “Bang up - privacy - enabled escape via books”.

Derek : “Nothing”. (x11)

Edward : “Gym”. (x2)

These, however, were the only positive responses to this question regarding the PSP’s.

In respect of BLANTYRE the responses were overwhelmingly the opposite:

Jack : “I enjoy everything I decide to do and it feels productive”.

Steve : “Social mixing times and the trust”.

Edward : “I have every opportunity to get on and get experience”.

Dave : “Community interaction, staff attitudes, autonomy and choice”.

Philippe : “Preparing one’s own plans for the future”.

Barry : “Family days and town visits, all much better”. (x4)

Steve : “Social mixing and trust”. (x4)

Ken : “Church, education, rambles, responsibility”

Several men mentioned the importance of social activities, family contact, and being able to exercise freedom of choice. In answer to this question everyone had something positive to say regarding BLANTYRE, which is a mirror image in contrast to their responses to the question concerning their PSP's.

Part (f) of question 1 asked if the routine was destructive, and, if so, how damaging was / is it?

Once again when applied to the PSP's the question produced very negative answers:

George : "It was just a waste of life".

Jack : "It created the inability to communicate".

Steve : "I lost my sense of self and self pride".

Dave : "The overall environment was so threatening that I became withdrawn and stopped caring".

John : "I was so damaged by my experience that I developed anorexia".

Greg : "I was full of despair, alienated, and devoid of long term hopes".

Tom : "Some people turn to drugs and violence"

Gerry : "It could take years to tell".

Bernard : "It doesn't prepare you for society".

Barry : "After too long it would cabbage you"

Nigel : "It made me bitter".

Derek : "Damaging on family relationships".

Geoff : "Produced the animal instinct of self-preservation and uncertainty".

Every response to this question related to damaging effects, damaging in ways which "don't prepare you for your release back into society".

With regards to BLANTYRE:

Dave : "The system isn't destructive in any way". (x12)

Terry : "I believe BLANTYRE is about putting the damage right".

John : "I overcame my anorexia whilst here. I find the system at BLANTYRE the reverse of Whitemoor".

Greg : "You become master of your own future and your life is in your own hands".

Philippe : "There is nothing to damage me at BLANTYRE. It has given me the ability to plan for my own future".

Again all the men remarked on the positive aspects of BLANTYRE and its powers to 'put right' the psychological damage done by the PSP's.

The main themes of the answers to all the parts of question 1 are the damaging effects of the PSP's and how attitudes there are directed towards coping and 'killing time' in very negative regimes and environments. Zamble and Porporino (1988)⁶ described prison as a "deep freeze". It could be said that the men 'switch off' or escape into books or through drug taking and secret home brewed alcohol. The whole system would seem very damaging and psychologically unhealthy in a way which cannot prepare anyone for release back into the community. On the other hand BLANTYRE seems to bring out answers illustrating its healing properties, showing that over time BLANTYRE can heal the damage caused by the PSP's. The emphasis was very much on individual responsibility and this appears to give the men the confidence to think for themselves and structure their plans in ways which are positively beneficial to them upon their future release. Blantyre's emphasis is on personal development and growth, including satisfying and productive tasks.

Question 2

asked the subjects to report on the range of activities which they followed in terms of importance and satisfaction to them, and how and for what reasons these activities gave them satisfaction.

In the PSP's the four most popular activities were:

- Education
- Reading
- Gymnasium
- Bang-up

other popular responses included:

- Socialising
- Sleep
- Watching TV

Philippe : "Activities were restricted because of time"

Ken : "Teaching and private study helped to keep things in perspective".

Dave : "Education was a form of escape from the reality of the environment, as was sleep. The gym was a form of image projection".

Overall whilst some of the activities engaged in during the stays in the PSP's were positive it can be seen that the reasons behind them were mostly negative. That is 'passing the time' or 'escape from the realities of the environment'. Sleep was considered an activity by many. The range of activities in the PSP's was very narrow and most subjects reported that only small proportions of their days were used for anything at all. There was a lot of time wasting activities.

With regards to BLANTYRE the four most popular activities mentioned were:

- Education
- Personal choice and planning
- Socialising
- Community work (inside and outside the gate)

Although education, as with the PSP's, featured highly, it was apparent that this was for different reasons. Rather than being used as a means of escapism or time wasting, at BLANTYRE the inmates seemed to regard education as a means leading to a productive plan for their release, and stimulating genuine interest. Other popular activities mentioned were:

- Exercise

Freedom within the fence

The distinction was well made that the activities undertaken at BLANTYRE, as opposed to the PSP's, were for positive reasons such as building towards a secure future, having control over one's own life, feeling accepted socially. It was generally felt that because of the lack of restrictions at BLANTYRE, beyond the rules, one has the freedom to chose constructively from a large range of facilities and educational subjects, in consideration of one's future after release. This must affect one's perception of that experience.

Greg : "You are able to move and talk more freely. I am able to achieve so much more than in prison before. There is no feeling of restriction. Ever looking forward."

Question 3

asked the inmates to describe the social contact within the establishment and its value to them.

Considering the PSP's every response was very negative. What social contact there was had been limited to other prisoners and there was very little contact with outside groups such as Church Visitors.

Ted : "The social contact was to get through the time and it had no real meaning to me".

Edward : "It became us and them. You got into a gang for protection"

Barry : "I kept myself to myself and became isolated".

Dave : "The social contact was not fulfilling to me and I withdrew from the world of competing ego's, turned my thoughts inwards, and became insular".

Throughout the responses to this question one is profoundly aware of the common and damaging act of withdrawing from the environment instead of engaging with it in a positive way.

The responses at BLANTYRE were almost a mirror image of the above.

Geoff : "Freedom of association, relaxation of self-survival instincts and a better social life".

Edward : "I'm not in a gang any more. I talk to everyone. My wife has now become my best friend. We have so much more contact".

Nigel : "BLANTYRE got me used to socialising with other people again".

Derek : "The whole atmosphere here is socially orientated and that has been 100% valuable to me".

Ken : "The opportunity to work in the community has had enormous value in maintaining perspectives for me".

Terry : "BLANTYRE is the first step to proper socialising".

Every response at BLANTYRE mentioned the importance of the social experience and how valuable this is with respect to the outside world and preparations for the future. It would seem that at BLANTYRE the subjects had 'come out of their shells' in very positive and beneficial and reparative ways.

Question 4

asked the subjects to describe the content and breadth of conversation during their social contact which they described in question 3.

Bearing in mind the limited social contact at the PSP's it is maybe not surprising to learn that the conversation mainly involved the prison and prison life.

Jack : "Very negative and centred around trials, appeals, and police and court corruption".

Philippe : "Well the conversation takes place between inmates and are about crime, life in prison, routines and so on. People get more experience about crime".

Dave : "Mostly crime. A person can come into prison as a car thief and, through social contact and conversation, can become prepared to give armed robbery a try on release".

Overwhelmingly the responses for the PSP's highlighted a negative and non-progressive system which produced negative attitudes and results.

Concerning BLANTYRE:

Jack : "Conversations are positively creative, ranging from practical planning to soul-searching philosophy".

Edward : "The lack of unity at BLANTYRE over prison politics. 90% of the men go their own way and this makes a big difference to the experience".

John : "There is a variety of conversation at BLANTYRE".

Greg : "We are able to get together in small or large gatherings for constructive meetings - positive results invariably surface in the climate and ethos that prevails. You get more confidence in each other".

Dave : "The real life system at BLANTYRE demands real life responses".

Ken : "The inmates at BLANTYRE are much more aware of events and concerns outside the prison".

From the responses to this question concerning BLANTYRE it would appear that BLANTYRE HOUSE and the conversations there free the mind from the micro-focus on prison life and prison dominated discussion. This affects the social contact and leads men to adjust their thinking along positive lines in a way which is of real benefit upon release. An important difference between BLANTYRE HOUSE and the PSP's is that in the former the inmates often engage in conversations with officers and staff, whereas in the PSP's this seldom happens at all, and is generally heavily frowned upon by other, often more institutionalised, prisoners. This difference leads to joint projects between inmates

and staff at BLANTYRE, more friendly relations developing and first name acquaintance. This is true for the vast majority of inmates and staff, although it does take some prisoners longer to readjust to this more normal social environment. Inmates at BLANTYRE are usually referred to as 'residents' and the 'us-them' division is far less apparent. However, it was pointed out that not all staff adopt this attitude, and one or two seem content to retain their uniform and isolation from prisoners. The fact that BLANTYRE is a relatively small prison set in the countryside and complete with wild life, not in any way claustrophobic, and host to very many different individual and group projects enhance the breadth of conversation many fold. The emphasis at BLANTYRE, noticed by all the subjects, is to keep them as close to a normal and real social existence as possible, whereas the PSP's create a very false and limited environment and experience.

Question 5

asked the subjects to report on those features of prison life that they found restrictive and to further report their perception of the causes of such restrictions, if any.

In the PSP's the majority of responses concerned movement between wings, access to library, gymnasium, education, canteen, chapel, visits, and exercise.

Barry : "You have to get clearance for everything, work, canteen, chapel, library, visits".(x2)

Dave : "There is an inability to question rules and procedures and an inability for human expression".

Jack : "I found not being able to see the night sky or experience the weather restrictive".

Nigel : "They treated you all with the same contempt. So if one person caused a disturbance everyone got locked up. You are all tarred with the same brush".

Again the responses regarding the PSP's was very negative. The main causes of the restrictions in the PSP's was generally considered to be control, security, mistrust, staff shortages, drug problems, 18 hours-a-day bang-up, and the fact that there was no individualism.

In answer to this question concerning BLANTYRE:

Ted : "The restrictions at BLANTYRE disappear over time once you have been properly assessed".

most inmates questioned saw little or no restrictions within the system, worth mentioning.

Ken : "I find no aspect of life at BLANTYRE restrictive apart from the fact that it is still, obviously, a prison".

The general feeling was that the lack of restrictions at BLANTYRE was due to trust and a humane system of containment

Question 6

related to question 5 and required the subjects to describe their actions to overcome restrictions, or to make the best of the situations, describing how they went about it and what they thought and felt in doing so.

With regards to the PSP's:

Edward : "If the rules were not logical I had difficulty in accepting them. So I wouldn't accept them - I would bend them. This included stealing from the kitchen and buying clothes from other people who were in need of tobacco".

Bernard : "You have to steal everything or buy everything to get on. In effect the restrictions created a Black Market."

Geoff : "Confined to cell in order to preserve sanity".

Ken : "I overcame a restriction by getting permission for a battery operated computer in my cell and this made a big difference".

However, most men responded that they just stuck to and worked within the restrictions, but

John : "It made me feel totally useless" because he could not do things for himself.

Dave : "It was hard to make the best of a totally negative environment".

When the question was applied to BLANTYRE:

Ted answered "I accept the restrictions here because they don't seem to be petty. There is normally a reason as to why you can't do something, an acceptable reason".

Edward : "There is nothing to fight against, no restrictions".

Geoff : "No looking over your shoulder".

In fact most men questioned responded by saying there were no restrictions at BLANTYRE, which John claimed made him feel "valued".

Jack : "Creating a life for myself within the fence, where I find freedom of choice and ambition, makes the fence become less important".

Dave : "The restrictions at BLANTYRE would seem to be self-imposed ones, as to how long it takes you to trust and believe in a system which, until BLANTYRE, had shown you nothing but pain and distrust".

Overall, once again, there was a mirror image between the negative responses concerning the PSP's and the positive responses concerning BLANTYRE HOUSE.

Question 7

requested that the inmates report on which approaches worked best for them getting things done and how they went about this.

There was a diversity of responses when applied to the PSP's:

Barry : "Just kept quiet". (x3)

Nigel : "Aggression worked best for me."

Philippe : "Arguing, shouting and becoming violent sometimes worked, but this put me off trying to get anything done".

Derek : "...bypass landing officers and go direct to an S.O."

John : "Because you rely totally on other people you eventually just give up".

Steve : "I tried to be a little bit constructive, but got knocked back by obstacles. I accepted that I just couldn't do much".

Dave : "I was motivated into doing very few things".

Gerry : "I found it was a constant battle to achieve even the smallest task".

Greg : "There was no responsibility or faith placed on individuals and this created a general apathetic feeling of feed 'em, wash 'em, lock 'em up".

Bernard : "To get things done I had to become over-friendly with the staff, but resented it".

Overall in the PSP's the situation seems to have been overwhelmingly negative with regards to getting things done, with very little encouragement, co-operation or help from staff, or motivation. Bernard's response confirms the worst aspects of 'instrumental relationships'.

BLANTYRE HOUSE, however, produced responses which mirrored those dealing with the PSP's, and in much more positive terms.

Dave : "The more I take on the more I realise I can cope with".

John : "I find that being in control of my own life is very important".

Jack, Barry and Bernard all said "There is no problem in just asking the staff for help".

George : "Self-motivation is all that is needed to get things done". (x4)

Greg : "Gaining the confidence and support of staff works best for me".

Geoff : "Open doors policy of calling officers and inmates by first names"

Ken : "The staff never construct artificial obstacles and always consider reasonable requests".

It would appear that the regime at BLANTYRE HOUSE, coupled with staff attitudes and self-motivation, minimises conflict. This in turn produces a positive

and productive atmosphere and outlook in which inmates adopt the practice of planning their days and their future productively, and find great satisfaction and personal achievement in completing their individual and group projects within and outside of the fence. There seems to be no feeling that fellow inmates are looking down at or suspiciously at inmates who spend all their time on tasks requiring the co-operation of staff at BLANTYRE, whereas any such attempt at a project working with staff within the PSP is generally frowned upon by other inmates often in very threatening ways.

Question 8

required the subjects to report on what activities provided them with a sense of satisfaction or personal achievement. The question was divided into four sub-sections dealing with keeping fit, stimulating interest, of substantial quality or helping to develop, and gave the impression of being valued as a person.

(a) Keeping fit:

In the PSP's by far the most popular activity was the gymnasium, followed by walking or running (during daily exercise periods), badminton and volleyball.

At BLANTYRE the emphasis seems to have moved away from the gymnasium and centred more on outdoor sporting activities. The most popular was country rambles (now stopped due to a ruling by the Home Office in 1994), and the range of keep-fit activities also included cycling, running, indoor bowls, badminton, swimming (in the small prison pool), cricket, rugby, soccer and golf (on a small course converted from waste land by previous inmates).

Although the range of physical exercise activities has increased at BLANTYRE compared with the PSP this is largely due to the limits placed on such activities at the PSP's due to lack of facilities and security problems.

(b) Stimulating interest:

In the PSP's the most popular activity was education, followed by reading. Others mentioned were writing, cooking in the inmate kitchen, and playing cards. The overall response was, however, very negative and the range of possibly intellectually stimulating activities was very limited.

Greg : "No encouragement was given to get you involved in non-cellular activities"

At BLANTYRE once again the responses were much more positive and the range of stimulating activities far wider:

George : "Personal development through social activities".

Jack : "Day to day activities such as education, Open University studies, writing, and a lot of work in fund raising for charities and events such as the annual fun day for hundreds of mentally handicapped".

Edward : "Working for the future and having all the facilities to do so",
and

John : "Having so many choices that suit you personally".

In contrast to the PSP's it is interesting to note that in the majority of responses centred around BLANTYRE they were geared towards planning the future and using time constructively. It was generally felt that one could plan one's days and weeks and get on with projects without being constantly supervised, blocked or having to ask permission for even simple tasks, as was evident from responses to the question with the PSP's. It was generally felt that BLANTYRE encourages stimulating activities whereas the PSP's repress them, or at best the PSP staff show disinterest.

(c) Was of substantial quality - helped you develop:

When applied to the PSP's the responses to this question were again depressingly negative. Nearly all the men stated that there had been nothing of substantial quality at all. However, some positive responses tended to be repeats to answers to part (b), that is writing, cooking, education, reading and gymnasium. It could be argued, though, that these activities were undertaken more through a need to pass the time than for any real positive ambitions or plans for release. This sentiment was expressed by Terry with regard to a brick-laying course which he took and passed: "It pleased me, but it was not of value to me as a person". The general tendency was that the future and release was distant and unreal, which echoes the effects of the artificial environment and the false experiences which the PSP's unfortunately seem to create in all the prisoners. Within the PSP's day to day survival seemed to be the dominant factor.

At BLANTYRE the responses were very positive and geared towards the future:

John : "The quality of life here brings back your confidence and self-esteem, you start communicating and doing things for yourself again".

Nigel : "The trust that you are given at BLANTYRE helps".

Derek : "Being accepted as a human being and being part of a community" was important.

All the answers to this question applied to BLANTYRE were positive and showed a great change in individual experiences and perceptions, and most were directed towards social activities, interaction, charity and community work, and concerned trust.

Dave : "Interaction with other residents, staff, and the community helped me develop, coupled with improved quality of time with my family".

Edward : “Everything about BLANTYRE. Working towards my targets has been of positive benefit to me”.

(d) Gave you the impression of being valued as a person:

In the PSP the responses were again alarmingly negative. The few positive points mentioned concerned education and charity work.

Nigel : “On completion of a mechanics course they asked me to stay on and help others”.

John : “At Whitemoor I got the impression that as long as you were counted at roll call that’s all that mattered”.

Bernard “You are just a con aren’t you? Someone who is going to sweep the landings or make a cup of tea. That’s it really”.

Ken : “I raised money for charity and worked with handicapped kids”.

Applied to BLANTYRE the same question produced what has by now become a characteristically opposite type of response.

Dave : “Trust, respect and autonomy to create and manifest ideas makes me feel valued as a person”.

Edward : “Thanks and praise you get for the jobs that you do - personal reward and recognition”.

Bernard : “Having trust and being trusted were important”.

George “Everything, here I found that I could be myself again”.

Jack : “Feeling that my contributions to the community are of value. But what is it that makes such a difference at BLANTYRE, after all it’s still a prison”.

Derek : “Yes I am valued as a person. I have my self respect. You don’t get that in other prisons.

Tom : “I work with mentally handicapped, the pantomime, making a film. It is a great sense of satisfaction”.

Perhaps one answer is in the statement made by Derek “I have my self-respect. You don’t get that in any other prison”.

Perhaps regaining self- respect is a start in repairing the damage done by the ‘system’ as manifested in the PSP’s, altering one’s perception of imprisonment from a negative to a positive one.

Question 9

required the subjects to describe their working relationship with staff, also giving reasons why they thought things were as they experienced them. Question 9 consisted of six queries, and inmates were asked to comment on each query:-

- (a) Staff generally supportive of making the most of your time?
- (b) Staff content to be 'turn-keys'?
- (c) Staff disinterested in the quality of life?
- (d) Staff blocking positive development?
- (e) Staff broadly neutral - neither caring nor obstructive?
- (f) Staff falsely (pretending to be) interested / helpful?

As well as the report that follows *Figure 1* has been prepared and is presented :-

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Figure 1 was prepared by giving each positive comment on each query a score of +1, and each negative comment on each query a score of -1. The scores on each query were then totalled. Each query had a possible range of response from +18 to -18. *Figure 1* clearly indicates the mirror image responses between the PSP's and BLANTYRE which we have already become so familiar with, but also emphasises the extent of the differences to the subjects responses to the staff in two systems. The response totals for the PSP's range from -15 to -10. For BLANTYRE the positive responses range from +17 to +6. The smallest distinction between the PSP's and BLANTYRE appears to be with regard to query (e), that is concerning staff who are broadly neutral. The following individual comments were also made:

For the PSP's

Barry : "Too many inmates; if you were quiet they (the staff) didn't take any notice of you".

Bernard : "The staff are all brainwashed from college, there's no trust".

Peter : "Lack of personal contact due to conditions and regime".

Derek : "The amount of time allocated to each CPO is not sufficient for the amount of men that each one has to deal with".

John : "The staff were discontent. The place (Whitemoor) bred a hostile environment. Most of the staff were trying to get transfers".

Jack : "They are unable to relate to convicts as people. When I came to BLANTYRE and the probation officer contacted Whitemoor for reports, she found that very few staff even remembered me, although I had been there for 10 months and only gone for about 6. This was because I kept my head down and did not make a noise, but also because they were mostly not remotely interested in who I was as a person. I was just a number to most of them."

From these responses it would seem that the size of the prison or wings plus the CPO / inmate ratio produces a very impersonal regime. Perhaps a multitude of reasons, of which lack of trust is one, affect the inmates' perception of their experiences and produces a very negative bias. This negativity, it could be argued, is a major factor with regard to the non-productivity of prisons and the high rate of recidivism. It would be hard to produce something positive and worthwhile, particularly self-developing, in such a regime where staff appear to block development or only pretend to want to help. Such regimes are obviously extremely dangerous when frustrations grow, grievances are ignored, and communication between prisoners and officers collapse. The result is that

there is no outlet for such feelings which merely roll around the inmate population growing like a snowball, until the tension causes an explosion of anger. There can be no sensible claim that such a system is in line with any intention to rehabilitate the criminal.

The difference in the inmates' attitudes towards the staff at BLANTYRE is astounding and adequately visible in *Figure 1*. Some of the reasons for staff attitudes at BLANTYRE were said to be:

Greg : "We have a good system of support with staff and inmates alike".

Peter : "Personal contact allows us to evaluate staff and their motives".

Ken : "Staff seem to believe in the general environment at BLANTYRE".

Barry : "Everything is much more personal to you".

Nigel : "The majority of staff do want to see people go and not come back".

John : "The staff here are content, or at least seem to be. The working conditions are good and they really go out of their way to help you".

Jack : "They maybe see BLANTYRE as a community to which they too belong".

From these responses it would seem that the personal nature of an experience has an effect on the perception of that same experience. A lot of the responses related to "Officers seem to believe in BLANTYRE", and this obviously makes a difference to all concerned. Within the PSP's the negativity breeds violence, vandalism and verbal conflict, as well as stress for inmates and staff concerned. However, at BLANTYRE there appears to be no conflict at all, and absolutely no violence between staff and inmates or within the inmate population. The stress factor is virtually non-existent. In fact there is less violence at BLANTYRE than in most small villages of equal population! Creating a system without conflict and stress is a foundation upon which to build a productive and positive environment, with mutual understanding and joint projects. Such an environment as BLANTYRE gives the inmates a feeling that they matter as individuals, and have something to give, and helps restore them to a state fit to return to society.

Question 10

asked the subjects to report on what plans they made to improve their daily life within the prison and to develop for the future, including how these plans were put into action.

(a) Daily Life:

In response to the PSP's the answers included education, cooking, keeping fit, computers, card games and videos. However, looking at the responses one cannot help but notice the lack of productivity or progress with regard to the subjects' perceptions or plans.

Jack : "Most planning was simply to avoid getting bored when the door was open".

Edward : "You had to survive daily. You put on a prison head".

Bernard : "Stealing and scheming!".

John : "You just hoped for the best every day, that things would go smoothly and there wouldn't be a lock-down etc.".

Ken : "I existed. I did not plan. It was enough to just survive."

Philippe : "I just made sure I had a book and batteries".

Overall it would seem that the emphasis was placed upon surviving the system, with little or no time or opportunity to structure daily life in any productive way.

In application to BLANTYRE the responses were :-

Gerry : "By the slow process of repairing the damage of four years in a secure prison".

Derek : "You can improve life every day by changing your activities and making life different, instead of working to a complete routine".

Dave : "Slowly filling your day with constructive and positive activities".

John : "I tend to vary each day here. I change it to suit my needs".

Jack : "Directing myself into expanding my personality and abilities, and filling the day with productive tasks".

George : "Making the most of my time with the things that I enjoy doing".

On cannot help but notice the major shift from negative PSP replies to positive BLANTYRE replies. BLANTYRE seems to produce a more rewarding, fulfilling range of activities which are of genuine interest to the individuals.

(b) Developing for the future

It is argued that developing for the future should be an integral part of any existence and a key element in any system, particularly a prison system based on reforming and rehabilitating the individual criminal. From the previous responses to part (a) applied to the PSP's a small number centred around education and classes. However, the majority of responses indicated that this was a sort of blind education to pass the time, leading nowhere, and with no clear plans for the future.

Terry : "Too far away".

Bernard : "Nothing apart from meeting friends and planning to do more work (crime)".

Jack : "I did not think of or plan the future as it remained an unreal and unknown quantity".

George : "Writing, but no real plans for the future".

John : "There was no point in even considering the future at Whitemoor. I felt I had no useful purpose".

Although it could be argued that many men did not plan because they were too early in their sentences and too far from possible release, that is apparently not the reason for lack of planning. As the inmates arrived at BLANTYRE their plans began after only a few months, despite the fact that for many release was still possibly years away.

The majority of subjects reported their plans at BLANTYRE as positive, and said that they felt they had taken more control over their lives at BLANTYRE, and had structured plans for the future, which they were determined to achieve. Such plans seldom involved more crime; not the case for the PSP's. They all expressed hope that their own plans, and those of their fellow inmates, would lead to law-abiding, productive lives in the community after release.

George : "BLANTYRE brings you out of your shell. Everything is towards sorting yourself out and getting ready for release into the community".

Edward : "Everything about BLANTYRE is geared towards that. Helpful staff are always pushing in the right direction".

Nigel : "When I walk out the gate (to go to work) I'm walking into a new life".

Gerry : "The last two years here has given me the time, the space, to plan and put together a life and future".

Peter : "Identifying areas of work towards which future working life can be directed".

Question 11

requested that the subjects report whether their ability to plan and actions to fulfil their plans changed over time; ie whether they improved or deteriorated.

(a) Ability to plan got better:

With regard to the negative responses to the ability to plan in the PSP's the following answers were given:

Peter : "Simply restricted due to the lack of range of activities which could be undertaken".

Bernard : "Yes, because you had to scheme to work around the system".

All the other replies were basically "no". So Peter felt that planning was restricted by limitations in facilities regarding activities and Bernard improved his planning by getting round the system. These responses cannot be seen in any really positive light and whether they constituted any genuine future planning is debatable.

BLANTYRE produced an entirely different set of responses, which, with one or two exceptions were quite positive:

Bernard : "It gives you a proper perspective of your life. You don't demand things. You get back in touch with real life things again."

Peter : "Yes, long term career and job plans are necessary and vital to eventual release".

Gerry : "It got better as soon as I realised that I was at last somewhere where people cared about me and my family. I came to life again. I became a human being".

Nigel : "Freedom of choice did it. Being able to choose what you want to aim for and then being able to do something about it".

Dave : "Gaining the ability to function properly as a mature human being, enhance planning and the quality of plans...having the autonomy to manifest plans also helped".

Edward : "Yes, the longer you are here the more trust you get. This helps to realise plans at different stages."

Greg : "It was much better from day 1. Induction course very enlightening and encouraging. Hope and a feeling of advancement from the first few days".

The ability to plan and act to fulfil the plan is obviously a key element in the BLANTYRE rehabilitative structure, however, this raises a number of questions. Was it just the structure of the regime at BLANTYRE which made planning more positive? Did, perhaps, the regime at BLANTYRE effect the psychological condition of the subject? Perhaps it is a combination of both reasons. Becoming a human being again and dealing with 'real life' was a recurrent theme in relation to BLANTYRE. It could be argued that the structure of the PSP's manufactures psychologically unhealthy men. Individuals who exist in an impermanent environment where nothing seems real. Perhaps the physical and emotional separation from family and friends is felt strongest in the PSP's. In order to survive a threatening environment inmates seem to turn their thoughts inwards and become insular and withdrawn socially. Over time this must effect one's self-perception and therefore the ability to plan in any real, constructive sense. BLANTYRE seems to go some way towards repairing this damage.

(b) The ability to plan deteriorated

In the PSP's the responses were all that this ability deteriorated. It may be argued that this was due in the most part to a deterioration in the individual's psychological health. This theory is supported by some of the comments made:

Greg : "Things never seemed to get better, only worse".

Philippe : "You couldn't get anything that you wanted to do done, excuses all the time, you just gave up".

Ted : "I put plans on hold. I didn't use that part of my brain".

John : "I developed anorexia because of my mental condition".

Edward "Deteriorated badly. I became bitter. There was no hope, no parole, I had nothing to work for at all. I didn't give a damn".

Nigel : "There was no incentive. You just didn't give a damn really, you just went with the flow".

With regard to BLANTYRE there were NO EXAMPLES of how planning deteriorated, apart from new Home Office legislation affecting temporary release and home leaves. This, however, introduces wider issues which affect all prisons, and is beyond the scope of the BLANTYRE Experience. All the subjects felt that planning abilities at BLANTYRE improved.

Question 12

asked subjects to report on what institutional factors helped or obstructed planning.

(a) Helped planning

In regard to the PSP's once again the men responded negatively to this question:

Tom : "Having access to education and self-motivation".

Dave : "Knowing your rights within your security category".

Greg : "Very little. Emphasis was more on use of the library, get behind your door, see you tomorrow, I'm sure everything will turn out OK".

Colin's reply was typical of many of the responses concerning the PSP's. It would appear that staff attitudes are a determining factor with regard to the negative approach to planning in the PSP's. As the system operates a landing officer is the usual first contact for help, so many plans never pass this officer's negative attitude. Jack said he believed officers were trained to "smile when they say no". Even if staff were more positive it is unlikely that many inmates would be in a fit psychological state, due to the system's effects, to properly evaluate their plans for maximum benefit and value.

At BLANTYRE the factors which were reported as helping planning included:

Jack : "Many staff are very helpful and enthusiastic. Most seem to respect me as a human being".

Geoff : "Freedom of choice and assistance from staff".

Tom : "Knowing that there aren't going to be any factors which obstruct planning".

John : "Self-Motivation tailored to your own needs".

Dave : "Slowly becoming able to function as a human being. Belief in a system that is designed to help, rather than hinder".

Derek : "BLANTYRE has opened me up as a person and I am able to talk to people".

Bernard : "Discovering something that you could do and then arranging a business plan around it".

Nigel : "The trust, freedom of choice within reason. I am in a better position now than I was when I committed the crimes".

Every subject questioned had something positive to say about BLANTYRE and the factors which helped planning. This in itself points to a real rehabilitation.

(b) Obstructed Planning

With regard to the PSP's there were a flood of negative responses to this question:

George : "Security and staff attitudes. No flexibility, no self-drive". (x4)

Jack : "Everything had to be done at a certain time or else not done".

Dave : "Your sense of continuity and mental ability to plan constructively".

Terry : "Uncertainty. Never knowing when you were going to be shipped out".

Most of the responses concerned staff attitudes, rigidity of regimes, and personal uncertainty. Everyone's personal perception of planning was negative.

BLANTYRE again produced a overwhelmingly positive set of responses and the general opinion was that nothing obstructed planning. However, there were a few negative responses but these did not go to the extent as the PSP's negative responses.

Bernard : "Education. They let you go so far, but funds become a problem".

Jack : "The works department offer the least support and greatest obstructions when you are trying to fulfil some plan to achieve some community benefit within the prison."

Edward : "Michael Howard is an obvious one"

John : "Finances. I have many plans but cannot do them because of cost".

Nigel : "Thee are certain limitations. But the more that they trust you and the more that you respect that trust, the more you can do".

Geoff : "None". (x8)

Question 13

asked the subjects to ring a number from 1 to 4, to describe how they managed themselves in prison, and how they rated their responses. Generally the number 1 related to a positive response, and the number 4 related to a negative response. The question was divided into eleven sub-sections (see Appendix A).

The results were tabulated by awarding points as follows:

$$1 = +2; 2 = +1; 3 = -1; 4 = -2$$

Figure 2, on the following page, was prepared from the totals of all the points over all the subjects questioned, and clearly illustrates, once again, the mirror image of the responses between the PSP's and BLANTYRE.

In regard to the PSP's the responses were all negative with the exception of sub-section 9, "I kept mellow", as opposed to becoming aggressive. This is hardly surprising since all the inmates at BLANTYRE were chosen because they had not shown signs of aggression or been on disciplinary charges during the last six months in their PSP's, but it is relevant when remembering that there has been no violence (even unreported) over the last two and a half years. The total negative scores ranged from -4 to -30 (out of a total possible minus score of -38). Overall this illustrates that the subjects:

felt mostly unwell
 were tense / agitated
 felt degraded
 felt intimidated
 felt useless
 felt isolated
 felt disinterested
 wore a "mask"
 felt neglected, and
 devalued others.

It is argued that with all this negative feeling and negative input, one could not help but become psychologically impaired and damaged to some degree. This would effect any ability to plan or fulfil any plan, with a totally negative and despairing outlook.. This reinforced the idea that most prison regimes damage men. One may well wonder what would become of such men if released straight onto the street with an anti-social instant

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gratification attitude, bitter, and unable to communicate or relate to society. The high rate of re-offending is a direct result of this. At BLANTYRE HOUSE the scores produced by the same questions, as seen in *Figure 2* were all positive, ranging from +25.5 to + 34 (out of a maximum positive score of +38). Scores of 0.5 were awarded to questions where the numbers 1 and 2 were both ringed signifying a choice which lied between the two numbers. Overall the subjects

- felt well in themselves
- felt relaxed
- felt respected
- felt safe
- felt fulfilled
- were well socialised
- were well motivated
- kept their identities
- felt cared for, and
- respected others.

The positive feeling towards BLANTYRE HOUSE, considering it is still a prison, is astounding in comparison to the PSP's. It is suggested that BLANTYRE HOUSE, given time, can produce content, purposeful, kind, human beings with direction and a positive outlook on life, with the ability to think, communicate and relate to society and their families. It seems to have repaired much of the psychological damage caused by the PSP's. Of course, the counter-argument is that prisons were not intended to provide a 'soft option', that they were intended to punish offenders for their crime. However the prison service in the UK is committed to handling prisoners in a humane way, and it is widely believed that an offender is sent to prison 'as a punishment' rather than 'to be punished'. It cannot be that the purpose of prison is to psychologically damage individuals who will then be thrown back into society, so that in all probability they would be in a worse position than they were when they offended in the first case. It is argued that deprivation of freedom and separation from family is, in fact, enough punishment, and there is scope for human compassion and kindness within the prison system.. In fact BLANTYRE house exemplifies this.

There does seem to be a way of imprisoning men yet releasing them back into society as mentally healthy and reformed characters .

Question 14

asked the subjects to report on what ways being in prison changed or restricted their manner of dealing with people and situations.

Applied to the PSP's the question produced the following responses:

Geoff : "Lack of trust in people meant I had to go into a shell for self-survival".

Philippe : "The pressures of the environment, the violence, the suicides...it makes you feel isolated. You keep yourself to yourself".

Bernard : "You can't handle relationships, but you don't realise until you have a home leave. You just start blanking people".

Gerry : "To cope with living in a secure prison I withdrew into myself and built up layers on layers of barriers. I stayed within my own mental and physical space, put on a mask and pretended to be something and somebody I'm not".

Nigel : "I invented another person to act out. I used my size my to project the image of someone to say 'hey, don't fuck about with me'".

Dave : "I became withdrawn...you bury all the better sides of human nature".

John : "I lost a lot of my self-esteem and went into a shell".

Greg : "It was very sad to see and hear about what happened to inmates who couldn't cope. Violence and degradation were normal regular aspects of daily life".

Again the vast majority of men only had negative responses to their PSP. The above replies illustrate the average answer, that is that the men withdrew into themselves as a form of defence mechanism to protect themselves from a hostile and threatening environment. Maybe these men should never have been placed in such an environment. It is possible that over a period of time such withdrawal and such 'acts' could become the norm and the distinction between the actor and the role become blurred to the extent that the actor is lost. This would surely create a host of psychological problems and unsociable attitudes and actions.

Applied to BLANTYRE the question produced a different type of response entirely, one of healing and repairing the damage caused by the PSP's:

Gerry : "Here it is the opposite. No violence, physical or verbal, no need to hide in the self, no need to be someone that I don't want to be. The pressures are removed".

Nigel : "I reverted back to being myself".

Derek : "I can talk to people now".

Dave : “At BLANTYRE, over time, I have found that I could be myself. I no longer have to wear a mask in order to survive”.

Jack : “BLANTYRE has opened up abilities in me which I never knew I had, and increased my confidence in dealing with people in general”.

Peter : “Initially, I found it hard to adjust to BLANTYRE HOUSE with its open approach and flexibility in daily activities”.

Geoff : “It’s given me back my identity and self-respect, and there is a relaxed mood to socialise, and ability to self-manage my life”.

Steve : “I socialise with people. I have come out of my shell here”.

Almost every response, in regard to BLANTYRE, expressed in one form or another its healing properties. It would seem that BLANTYRE can repair the damage created by the other environments. But more than this, Jack’s response illustrates how BLANTYRE opened up abilities within him which he never knew he had. These are positive and constructive abilities, like organising and adapting, and increased confidence and self-esteem, as echoed in the other responses. It can be argued that opening up abilities gives a man a real alternative to a life of crime and goes a long way towards rehabilitation.

The question is whether prison should be such a horrendous experience that men never want to return, but in doing so returning psychologically unhealthy individuals to society, and in turn increasing their likelihood of re-offending, or whether to create an environment within prisons which produces healthy personalities who will be able to live within society without breaking its laws. All the inmates at BLANTYRE are well aware that at this time they have no chance of returning to this regime should they re-offend.

Question 15

asked the men to respond as to what aspects of prison life created the greatest demands on them, expressed in both negative and positive terms.

(a) Negative demands.

In the PSP's the responses generally covered strip searches, cell searches, total confinement, lack of privacy, censorship of mail, and bang up, all of which are symptomatic of any regime regarding maximum security as an absolute necessity, as in all PSP type prisons. The extra demands created by the old sanitation arrangements of plastic buckets and 'slop out' which many of the men had experienced in previous prisons, especially the Victorian locals (also B category) which was mentioned by several men, has, thankfully, mostly been replaced by in-cell flushing toilets and washbasin, or easy access to communal ones. Other negative demands mentioned were:

Geoff : "Lack of time on visits".

Gerry : "Trying not to react in kind, that is violently, and with disrespect".

Ken : "Association with volatile and dangerous inmates".

Ken and Gerry both illustrated the unfortunate consequences of throwing together men because of comparable lengths of sentences irrespective of whether the individuals have a history of persistent violence or a violent and disrespectful nature, continual re-offenders, or first time offenders often of with a history of non-violence but unfortunate to have been given a long sentence. Many men in PSP type prisons find themselves living daily in such fear as Ken and Gerry expressed, and many may unfortunately be unable to cope even as well as Gerry coped.

In relation to BLANTYRE HOUSE the majority of men were unable to find anything which they considered a negative demand. However here are three comments which were made:

Steve : "The fear of being shipped out".

Dave : "Moving into a three man room and getting to a single over time". (x2)

John : "Being held back by what you can or can't afford".

None of the negative demands experienced in the PSP's have spilled over into BLANTYRE. Moreover the negative demands at BLANTYRE do not grow out of inhumane treatment or fear, but are more in line with coping with problems which arise even in free society, such as lack of finance or shared accommodation, and lead to compromise responses. It can be argued that the ability to compromise is a valuable social asset which one must learn in life.

(b) Positive demands

The great majority of subjects could find nothing in the PSP which they could regard as a positive demand. The only three answers regarded the positive demands as education, in-cell reading, and having to be up in the morning.

Applied to BLANTYRE there was a wider range of responses:

George : "Taking control of your life".

Jack : "A need and desire to use my organisational skills to help improve life for all".

Tom : "Education. No drugs or violence".

Derek : "Having responsibility".

Terry : "Getting a job".

Ted : "Getting out of the routine of doing nothing".

Nigel : "Walking away from confrontations".

Bernard : "Being forced to make compromises".

Once again the demands which BLANTYRE appear to put on inmates concern taking responsibility and control, keeping productive, compromising and avoiding confrontations, all aspects of living in a normal social system.

Question 16

asked the inmates to report on the skills or behaviour that they developed to survive prison, or to derive personal benefit.

(a) Survive prison

almost all the subjects reported some form of behaviour which they adopted to aid survival in their PSP's. A lot of these involved keeping quiet or isolated:

Philippe : "Isolating myself from certain activities and keeping distant from officers". (x7)

Edward : "Learning how to steal and get round the system". (x2)

Nigel : "Developing eyes in the back of my head; learning cunning".

Terry : "Avoiding prison politics".

Derek : "I became very cautious of everyone, inmates and officers".

Dave : "I became submissive and subordinate. I had to relinquish some self-respect".

John : "I escaped into education".

Jack : "Keep quiet, escape into literature; don't trust anyone".

As stated the predominant themes are keeping to oneself, withdrawing into a shell, and escapism. It is argued that this is because in prison one puts on a false front and projects a powerful image, and those unable to cope with these falsities have to retreat. One therefore has very little opportunity to get to know another person on any genuine basis, and people remain, on the whole, 'unknown quantities'. This could also be symptomatic of the size and impersonal atmospheres of the PSP's.

It is interesting to look at the corresponding answers for BLANTYRE, that is what do the inmates have to do to survive. BLANTYRE, as stated, is a smaller community prison housing only 95 men, smaller than one single wing at Whitemoor for instance. It is said that here should be a much better opportunity to get to know other inmates, and in fact staff. Every inmate and member of staff will agree that BLANTYRE is not a threatening environment and the residents are not aggressive, and perhaps, as a consequence of this, men are able to let barriers down communicate better, and find themselves again, without the need to act out a projected hard image. The responses to this question endorse this concept:

Gerry : "Just being myself".

Edward : "Learning how to use my tongue and not my fists".

Jack : "Nothing beyond that required of a normal human being in society".

(b) Secure personal benefit

In relation to the PSP's the activities undertaken to secure personal benefit were very much limited by the range of available activities and schedules employed by the regime.

Geoff : "Studies". (x8)

Greg : "Carpentry, bird breeding, reading and keeping up with the media news".

Peter : "Learning to be persistent but polite in dealings with prison bureaucracy".

Philippe : "Read and write letters".

Gerry : "Work, when available".

When applied to BLANTYRE the responses revealed a much wider range of activities:

Philippe : "Preparing for the future". (x3)

Geoff : "Computers, business studies, carpentry".

Barry : "planning my day. Getting up and being able to walk around with no-one having to keep turning keys".

Bernard : "Educating myself. Finding my limits".

Peter : "Maintaining a positive outlook and developing a yearly plan".

Ted : "Seeing results, seeing things come together made me happy".

Dave : "Interactive skills, education, charity work, being valued and respected as a purposeful human being".

George : "Taking control of my own life".

Jack : "Following my OU course, learning languages, doing charity work. Often it is merely the case of asking the right person for help".

All these activities are identical to the type of activities one would have to engage in after release, and are preparatory to release, being futuristic, planning, controlling and seeing positive results. Given the opportunity to expand all of the inmates at BLANTYRE have engaged in a wide range of productive and learning activities, for the benefit of themselves and for others.

Question 17

asked subjects to report on those features and activities which diminished or enhanced them personally.

(a) Diminished you?

In respect of the PSP's the vast majority of the men questioned reported something which diminished them as people, mostly concerning the general regimes, the treatment of family and friends, and the lack of respect. Other diminishing factors were security measures such as strip searches, but also searches of visitors.

Philippe : "Bad food. Strip searches. Violence around. attitudes of officers".

Greg : "Visits were official and not catered for reassuring family".

Bernard : "The treatment of my visitors; not getting phone messages and not getting mail on time".

Gerry : "Being treated with total disregard".

Derek : "It took away my self-respect. You were just a wasted body".

Dave : "We were made totally subordinate to authority".

Edward : "Being treated like an animal. The regime was degrading. Especially visits".

Jack : "Mostly being ignored. It seemed that those with the loudest voices gained most".

When the question was applied to BLANTYRE the overwhelming response was that there was nothing diminishing. The few features mentioned were not a structural part of the BLANTYRE regime:

Edward : "You aren't at home, that's all".

Jack : "The distance from my friends means infrequent visits".

(b) Enhanced you?

In the light of the responses to part (a) we would expect the opposite pattern of responses to appear. The only enhancing activities reported with regard to the PSP's were:

Gymnasium

Education

Private study

It could well be argued that these activities were enhancing because they provided a relief from the wings.

When applied to BLANTYRE almost all the subjects mentioned something which they felt enhanced by.

Geoff : “Freedom of choice. Sense of reality”.

Greg : “Most aspects of daily life and routine. BLANTYRE brings out the best in most men and allows you to re-establish yourself and your aim in life. “.

Dave : “Being regarded as a healthy human being”. (x2)

Jack : “Being given responsibilities, trust and encouragement”. (x2)

Nigel : “The quality of the food. Having control over choices”.

Edward : “Retaining family ties”. (x2)

Bernard : “Just being yourself”.

It is difficult to group these answers together under topic headings but overall they are the type of enhancements one would hope to find in a healthy environment.

Question 18

asked the subjects to describe the impact of imprisonment on family relationships by identifying the factor and reporting the impact.

Applied to the PSP's almost all the responses were highly negative and unproductive. Most of the responses concerned damage of one form or another, with regard to family relationships. The breakdown of family relationships is an occurrence well known throughout the prison and probation services. The PSP's do nothing to prevent this.

Geoff : "Disorientation of my life and that of my family; very strained relationship".

Jack : "Isolation, lack of privacy on visits, little to talk about except prison life; we lived in two different worlds, I began to lose interest in their lives". (x2)

Steve : "Time tore my relationships to shreds".

Dave : "My mental state; visiting was an horrendous experience and produced a lot of tension - we were growing apart and my wife saw my mental state deteriorating".

Derek : "I didn't like my family visiting the prison because it was degrading with searches and I didn't want young children subjected to it".

Ted : "I could buy two VO's (visiting orders) a week in Maidstone, from a screw; it meant we could see each other more often".

Nigel : "I severed all ties because I didn't know the type of person I would be at the end of it".

Peter : "Inward-looking by me to cope with conditioned; feelings of remoteness from my wife; at one stage I desired to break off all contact as I began to feel that I didn't need her".

Greg : "My young sons and daughters hated to visit me in the conditions of uniforms, times and rules; this made for a tense, agitated visit of sometimes a short duration".

It is noteworthy that the visiting facilities in the PSP's seem to promote a feeling of separation from family and friends in both a physical and emotional sense. The visits seem to have been tense and agitated, with little communication or identification with each other's lives. This cannot possibly be in keeping with any movement towards rehabilitation. If a man leaves prison having lost or having become alienated from his family he will not have this type of valuable support which is needed to help him readjust. This, coupled with feelings of disorientation, anger and bitterness, are unlikely to produce useful, law-abiding citizens. A recent study by Samson & Lamb (1992) shows that long

times in prison leads to long term breakdown of relationships, which in turn leads to re-offending.

In relation to BLANTYRE all the responses were very positive and often seemed to counteract the effect of the PSP's, again repairing serious damage. One notices from the replies which follow that BLANTYRE seems to promote family contact in a relaxed environment. Inmates do not have to post out Visiting Orders, rather they are obtained at the gate. There is no strict limit placed on the number of visits an inmate may have in any given time. It is noteworthy and relevant that this system is not abused. The relaxed visits environment is viewed by the men as extremely positive and must therefore effect their perception of imprisonment. At BLANTYRE it would seem that a partnership is formed in relationships, with both partners relating and working towards common goals. This is in stark contrast to the PSP's where each partner had to adopt an attitude of coping.

George : "positive visiting; encouraged family contact and future planning". (x7)

Jack : "I have a life here and feel quite positive; friends worry less about me and I realise more of their hardships and problems too".

Steve : "Visits are open and warmer; it has greatly improved my relationship with my children".

Derek : "The regime; my contact with my family has grown really well here, but they can get the wrong impression of BLANTYRE; they are having it harder out there".

Ted : "It has made me realise just how good my wife is, she and my daughter bring me so much pleasure; I feel tremendously guilty for what I have put them through".

Nigel : "I started getting in contact with people again; I've created a new life for myself".

Greg : "I have regained my relationship with my sons and daughters; it is much better all round".

Barry : "Family days, town visits, sitting in the gardens; it helps you get back to normal ways of living - you talk about other things apart from prison".

Edward : "Quality and frequency of visits; treated like a human being". (x3)

Geoff : "I'm re-uniting with my family; it is making my relationship stronger than ever".

Philippe : "You have enough time on visits to talk about positive things. I have never had that chance before".

Question 19

required the subjects to report on the ways that the impact on their relationships affected or altered their situation within the prison.

With regard to the PSP's the vast majority of the men reported feeling anger, hostility and frustration, which is all very negative. It is argued that this is not conducive to re-addressing offending behaviour nor structuring new lives for release. Rather than facing the future the men focused on day to day battles against the system and aimed at venting their anger.

Geoff : "Lack of concentration, and stress".

Philippe : "Made me hostile towards the system". (x5)

Greg : "I lost any faith I had in the prison system and in the system in general. I developed an apathetic attitude towards the future as a father and a family man".

Peter : "I became more remote and isolated from others and became anxious and fearful about every little incident that occurred at home".

Gerry : "Worry and stress caused what I would call stress related illness".

Nigel : "I had the attitude that I didn't have to worry about anyone but myself.

Then I had to ask whether I really cared about myself".

Tom : "Coping with a break-up of relationship makes prison twice as hard".

At BLANTYRE the perception of imprisonment is once again totally different and positive. The responses seem to point towards the healing properties of such a system as is upheld at BLANTYRE, and this again promotes a positive perception. It is argued that this perception will pervade a man's existence and be a key factor in rehabilitation and attitudes to offence.

Geoff : "Created stronger bonds with my family and the community".

Philippe : "I am not hostile at BLANTYRE; I understand BLANTYRE is the best place that I could be".

Greg : "Reversed my faith in the system. I am able to pick up the threads and start to work on fresher approaches to my family unit and problems. It is much easier to sort things out. Help and advice are always at the forefront".

Peter : "I still seem stand-offish, although I am now more relaxed and friendlier towards all inmates and staff".

Gerry : "An easing up of mental and emotional stress and worry, a healthier living, and wounds begin to heal".

Nigel : “I’ve made new friends outside and have created a new life for myself. I feel like a person. I’m not in the rat race anymore”.

Terry : “I have more chance of a relationship”.

John : “The normal way of life made me realise just how important families are. I want to be with them”.

Edward : “It takes away pressures; there is no us and them”.

Jack : “I am more relaxed and positive. I feel less anger. I feel that relationships will survive. I am able to relate to normal life outside the prison and am not estranged”.

Dave : “The positive impact of BLANTYRE brought nothing but positive results. Once I had mentally adjusted to what is offered here I was in a good position to take advantage of opportunities. Having a stable home environment made a big difference.”

Question 20

required inmates to report on what activities undertaken by them made worse or improved their family relationships.

(a) Improved relationship

In relation to the PSP's most of the responses were negative to the extent that the replies were simply 'none'

Terry : "None". (x12)

Jack : "Constant letter writing". (x2)

Tom : "Moved closer to home".

John : "Being in prison brought my mum and brothers closer to me because I need them".

Peter : "Using children's visits to the full".

With regards BLANTYRE, however, again we see the mirror image of the PSP responses. The replies centred around a relaxed atmosphere and general improvements of the quality of time spent with the family. This has had a very positive effect on the men and their outlook with regard to their imprisonment. It is argued that this is one of the reasons BLANTYRE has shown to be so productive. Some of the responses were:

Geoff : "Town visits, open days".(x5)

George : "Lack of stress; being able to have much more contact".(x3)

Jack : "Being able to get a visit without the advanced preparation with sending out VO's relaxed visits; increased access to phone cards; sharing food - a basic family custom - on Open Days" (x2)

John : "One brother I didn't get on with, now we get on really well".

Dave : "Visits and family contact; charity and community work. This has all enhanced me as a person".

Barry : "Took away the strain; gets you used to outside again".

(b) Worsened relationship

In referring to their PSP the majority of men reported things which worsened their relationships. The general feeling was that visits were of poor quality in poor surroundings, and general lack of contact with the family. Some found the distance from home a problem, and others had become pre-occupied with themselves. The treatment of visitors had a bad effect on the inmates. It is argued that such worsening of relationships is a sign of the times in a system which seems designed to produce a gradual decline in

the inmate's psychological health. This is not in keeping with a drive to bring about rehabilitation, and the bad feelings and anger felt must be repaired before release. This is a big step backwards in reforming offenders. Some of the responses are:

George : "Everything about the system".(x3)

Terry : "Visits took their toll". (x3)

Tom : "Distance".(x2)

Gerry : "Access to communication facilities". (x2)

Philippe : "Friends and family being searched which made them feel criminalized. I felt guilty and couldn't ask them to visit again".

Jack : "I was pre-occupied with my predicament and felt they did not understand".

When asked the same question about what worsened the relationships during their stay at BLANTYRE the response was unanimous:

all : "Nothing". (x19)

This must speak for itself.

Question 21

asked the men to describe their experiences of imprisonment which helped them survive and prepare for the future.

(a) Aided Survival

In the PSP's most of the men had adopted some mechanism in order to survive. These included the general theme of image projection, isolation, and switching off. Some of the responses are:-

Geoff : "A mask". (x2)

Philippe : "Isolation".(x2)

Barry : "Going to work and keeping my mind occupied".

Greg : "I kept close counsel and kept my opinions to myself".

Bernard : "Visits and letters".

Peter : "Advice from old hands".

Ken : "Bang up".

Ted : "Switched off".

Dave : "Image projection. I put on a false front to impress others and to compensate for my lack of self-esteem. Also going to the gym".

John : "I became totally negative towards people".

Edward : "I joined a gang".

George : "I became a harder person and distanced myself from people".

Jack : "Simply the knowledge of having survived".

All of the responses seem to have involved adopting a behaviour which seems not to be in keeping with the true character.

At BLANTYRE the majority of the men said that they did not feel that survival was an issue. The two responses made were:

Jack : "I improved my ability to deal with people and increased my confidence through successful projects".

Ted : "Keeping occupied".

(b) Prepared them for the future

In the PSP's Tom, Steve and Geoff felt that education had helped prepare them for the future. Everyone else, however, simply said "nothing". The general feeling was expressed by

Gerry : "Years of not having any responsibilities does not prepare you for the future, it makes you incapable of making decisions".

"Nothing". (x14)

"Education".(x3)

When the subjects responded to the same question applied to BLANTYRE their attitudes changed dramatically and the major response was that BLANTYRE had prepared them for the future in every way. Some of the replies are:-

Steve : "Education". (x3)

Tom : "Everything". (x2)

Barry : "Town visits, community work, gets you used to things again".

Greg : "All of the attributes of Blantyre's policies and programmes that constructively and actively help in so many ways, to prepare and help men for their futures".

Bernard : "Going to work and learning to do things".

Ken : "The ability to decide for myself and control my day".

Gerry : "I learnt to be motivated to work towards targets".

Nigel : "I got the confidence to act like a person. I've learned that if you want something then go for it, but not tooled up".

Terry : "Working"

Dave : "The most important must be helping and aiding one to become a fully functioning human being".

John : "A general build up of trust, planning and social contact helps".

Jack : "Able to plan and foresee possibilities".

George : "BLANTYRE helps you take control of your life".

The majority of these responses seem to include things such as increasing abilities and giving back self confidence. It is argued that if these abilities were lacking then they had been destroyed through years of stress in the PSP's. Once more BLANTYRE illustrates how a constructive regime can help make men aware of their shortcomings and enable them to address them, and thus prepare men for a life with a real alternative to crime.

Question 22

asked the subjects to report on what events, relationships, opportunities and activities gave meaning to their experience of imprisonment.

Applied to the PSP's again the replies were very negative:

George : "Being treated like an animal. It didn't mean anything, it was all false. You leave it all behind when you leave prison". (x3)

Jack : "Bang up, bad diet, cameras. It was a punishment on top of imprisonment and made me withdrawn and angry. It was a pointless existence and I was paranoid"

John : "The way you can't get anything done for yourself and have to rely on others, even simple things like posting a letter. It made me feel useless and helpless, you had no usefulness left".

Steve : "The brutality of officers. I was shocked that one human being could treat another in this way, breaking a man down to pieces".

Edward : "You are treated like an animal and become an animal".

Derek : "Nothing. A complete waste of time". (x3)

Gerry : " The lack of interest for your welfare. It made me angry and depressed".

Tom : "Lock downs. Made me angry and disrupted my plans".

Ken : "Church. An opportunity to renew my faith".

Bernard : "Whatever they wanted me to do I just accepted and got on with it. It was pointless arguing".

Philippe : "I was depressed and isolated, I got hostile and became very bitter towards the establishment"

These responses reflect the negativity and lack of productiveness in the nature of the PSP's. The general feeling was of being treated with total disregard, and that prison was a complete waste of time as far as the future was concerned.

Applied to BLANTYRE the question produced a whole range of responses which reflect the positive and productive nature of the regime. BLANTYRE seems to prepare people for the future. This is some of the responses:

George : "Everything". (x3) " A sense of direction for the future and there is still a life after prison".

Jack : "Charity work and organising events; and being in the pantomime. I feel useful and successful, and it has helped me feel less reserved".

Steve : “I am baffled that BLANTYRE is part of the same penal system as my last prison”.

Edward : “You are treated as a human being. You become a human being”.

Derek : “You can sit down in company and discuss yourself, aims and everything”.

Ted : “I don’t feel that I am wasting my time as much”.

Nigel : “I have used BLANTYRE to its fullest. I have a life with a mortgage and secure employment. I will walk out of prison to a new life”.

Gerry : “The opportunities at BLANTYRE have enabled me to go back into society equipped to handle the demands as a human being”.

Bernard : “Getting a job. It gave me a feeling of success”.

Philippe : “It made me feel like why couldn’t other prisons be like this, more humanly inhabitable. I can’t come to any conclusions to the reason why it works so well here”.

Question 23

asked whether it was possible to exert influence to make situations more human, more positive and more responsive to one's needs.

The basic response to the PSP's was that it was not possible to exert any influence at all:

"No". (x10)

Jack : "No. It was like being on a different planet where about 20% of the population was human".

Greg : "Very difficult. There was always suspicion and looking for ulterior motives".

Ken : "I talked to some inmates I was hopefully able to help by writing to their families".

John : "The regime just didn't allow it".

Edward : "Turn everything into a joke".

Tom : "Most times I failed to steer people off drugs"

Applied to BLANTYRE HOUSE all the men felt they had some influence and could improve things. This reflects a flexibility which is prepared to adjust to individual circumstances:

"Yes". (x8)

"Greg : "The scope of man's humanity towards his fellow man is immeasurable in this environment".

Bernard : "I wanted a pair of trainers for running but they had to be measured. I was allowed to go out to a shop and get it done properly".

John : "Here you use your initiative. Yes you can influence things"

Jack : "Communication with fellow inmates and staff alike seems much more genuine"

Nigel : "No, not at BLANTYRE".

Question 24

asked to what extent their experiences of imprisonment either allowed them full expression as a human being or took away from them the opportunity for human expression.

The answers for the PSP's speak for themselves, being overwhelmingly negative:

“None” : (x11)

Jack : “I was not a human being. I was a prisoner with a number. There was no opportunity to express myself beyond pen and ink in private”.

Tom : “ Art class, writing, help with a charity slim”.

Dave : “No, it tries to make you subordinate to total authority”.

Gerry : “The whole experience of prison is lived within ourselves, nothing comes out”.

Barry : “I just switched off. I wasn't allowed expression”.

At BLANTYRE the question produced as many positive answers as the PSP's produced negative answers:

“Yes” : (x12)

Geoff : “It brings out your worth and gives a sense of purpose”.

Dave : “It removes you from the environment where survival is the primary concern”.

Gerry : “Here, for me, I am constantly encouraged to express and discuss my thoughts and share my feelings”.

Question 25

referred to the expression “Prison paranoia”, and asked the men if they recognised it and if they had any experience of this, and if so to describe the feelings and the impact.

With regard to the PSP’s the vast majority of the men were aware of the expression and the damaging consequences:

Geoff : “An inmate came up to me and told me about someone stabbing me for no reason, and it made me paranoid”.

Bernard : “Yes, all the time. It creates a lot of mistrust”.

Derek : “It makes you cautious. You think twice before asking for something or talking to someone”.

Edward : “Microphones in the electric doors! You feel you are being watched all the time, like rats. It’s a horrible feeling, nothing in your world is private”.

Jack : “Constantly feeling vulnerable to attack, thieving by fellow inmates and staff alike”.

As expressed above paranoia is a very negative emotion and over time has a very detrimental effect.

With regards to BLANTYRE the overall feeling was that there was no paranoia there, but it would appear that it did not automatically stop as soon as inmates arrived:

Jack : “When I first arrived here I was looking for hidden microphones and cameras in the trees. I wondered why the pace was so different, as it was some sort of plot to catch us out. It took a while to trust anyone.”

Greg : “For the first few months I think that I felt some paranoia at BLANTYRE, until I realised that the daily routine was honest”.

Peter : “It has taken me some time to come to terms with my paranoia hangover from Whitemoor”.

Nigel : “The only paranoia here is whether you will be shipped out if you do do something wrong”.

Dave : “On my initial reception into BLANTYRE I felt paranoid, I couldn’t come to terms with being accepted and valued, and the acts of kindness”.

So it seems then that BLANTYRE HOUSE creates a regime where mistrust does not fester and breed. On the contrary BLANTYRE could be credited with actually repairing the damage which was caused by the PSP’s within the dispersal system, which is where

30% of Blantyre's residents have been. It is argued that paranoia is a tool in the PSP's, which is designed to keep control, and meant to prevent people from trusting each other and getting together to plan. It prevents both negative and positive planning and genuine communication. How can someone give their all to a system or group which they mistrust? Whether the paranoia is deliberately created or whether this idea is in fact another remnant of PSP paranoia is another question.

Question 26

asked the men to recall any activity or routine that they regarded as degrading for themselves or for others, including their families.

With regard to the PSP's the overall response was very negative. Routines reported as degrading included sharing cells and slop out. Steve did not like the fact that his family were treated like criminals and searched. Dave mentioned "You live under the constant threat that if you don't toe the line you could be moved to a prison miles from your family". However, by far the most predominant factor mentioned was strip searches, cell searches and searches of family on visits. It is argued that this is an intrusion of personal privacy, although it may be necessary in the light of heavy security measures and the mistrust which the system has for all inmates. Personal space and personal relationships become sacred to a man, particularly in such a confined and negative environment where little else seems to matter. Perhaps this is an expression of man's basic animal instinct. Whatever the underlying causes they reflect negative aspects towards trust, and create anger towards the system.

At BLANTYRE HOUSE:

George: "There's nothing degrading here".

John : "It has developed a positive approach in me".

All the subjects were in agreement that they had experience nothing degrading at BLANTYRE HOUSE. This is yet another positive response to a positive regime, a theme which has been recurrent throughout this questionnaire. BLANTYRE HOUSE appears to work because of the mutual trust among and between inmates and staff alike.

Subjects Additional Comments

The final part of the questionnaire asked inmates to add any additional comments which they thought may be of value. The very fact that the inmates conducted the questionnaire in the first place, and the complete co-operation of the inmates who spoke openly and frankly about their experiences, is demonstrative of the ethos of BLANTYRE HOUSE. These extra comments are an important bonus.

Greg : "I think the ruling of one visit to BLANTYRE in a man's life is to a greater degree the best bit of psychology introduced into any system. If a man is worth half his salt he will, and does, take full advantage of all that BLANTYRE has to offer. This enables a man to plan for the future with a non-return policy firmly embedded in his heart, his mind and all of his preparations".

Ken : "The essential punishment is the deprivation of freedom. To that extent BLANTYRE punishes as much as any other, and of course it should. The difference is that BLANTYRE recognises the fact that one day the inmate will be released, and then what? The regime at BLANTYRE provided for a positive rehabilitation for those who can respond, and this must serve society by reducing the chance of re-offending".

Nigel : "Dispersal is only for people who want to be an animal. At BLANTYRE if you want to do something to improve your life you have every opportunity".

John : "When I went to Whitemoor I became quite ill, seriously ill, due to the system there. It was my way of coping with things. No drugs would have made it better. What worked and made me better was coming to BLANTYRE HOUSE where I felt I had a purpose in life again. You can achieve so much more here".

Ted : "There must be a better way of designing the system that satisfies the punishment aspect but still gives a person a chance to succeed once he is out. most, not all, will respond to being treated with humanity and respect, and progress from being given more opportunities".

Jack : "At its very best prison means separation from loved ones and restrictions from all sorts of activities normally accepted as part of everyday social life. One is forced to stay in a place with people one may prefer not to be with. Plans have to be abolished or postponed. The future is uncertain. Family relationships can break down. The secure prisons like Whitemoor add to this by divorcing men from nature; the night sky, the moon and stars, the weather, trees, wildlife, children, rivers, everything which is natural and beneficial to a human being. They replace these with constant views of bars, bolts, gates, fences, razor wire,

locks, surveillance cameras, uniforms and dogs. They rob you of all normal social contact as well as hope and ambition. They throw all sorts of men together. I desperately tried to cling to some sort of connection with the outside world whilst it became increasingly unreal. BLANTYRE HOUSE brings many of the positive things back into one's world so we can reap the benefits a human should be entitled to. We can walk outside and experience the world of nature. We learn to communicate again and re-adjust and prepare for the real outside world. It is a healing environment but at the end of the day it is still a prison, and fulfils all the requirements of the sentence handed out by the Court, but in a humane way. The ethos and experience of BLANTYRE HOUSE is an example not only of how most prisons should be run within the necessary security systems, for which inmates should be accessed early on in their sentences, but BLANTYRE HOUSE is also a shining example of how society should be. The residents are 100% convicted criminals, drug importers, robbers and those guilty of domestic violence, all frowned upon by society. Yet there is less violence and thieving, less drug abuse if any, less verbal abuse and degradation, than in many small villages in the so-called free society. This is my experience of imprisonment".

Steve: "If they are going to produce human beings out of the penal system and send them back into society, they need to produce more places like BLANTYRE, instead of the other human zoos that I have been in".

Appendix B : The Questions

The Meaning of Prison Experience

The questionnaire used in the preparation of this report, was devised by Jim Semple.

The interviews with the inmates of HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE were conducted largely by Will Hutchinson.

The report was written by Alun Buffry and Will Hutchinson.

The final report was organised and typed by Alun Buffry.

Mr A. Buffry and Mr W. Hutchinson were inmates of HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE during the whole process of preparing this report.

Although the majority of inmates questioned provided their own names willingly, these names have been changed in this report in the interests of confidentiality.

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The Meaning of Prison Experience

The value of this questionnaire and your contribution will be greatly enhanced by you describing not only what occurred (activity and personal actions) but also stating what you **thought** and **felt** in different situations. You are asked to comment on your current experience in BLANTYRE, and your experience in your previous secure prison.

Reference Name :.....

Date.....

Previous Prison.....

Question 1 : Daily Routine and Habits.

Please describe the variety and the limits included in daily routine as follows :
(please state the routine and your thoughts and feelings about it):

Previous Secure Prison

- (a) How much variety was included in your routine?

- (b) What daily personal rituals did you adopt to enhance this, or to survive?

- (c) Which events did you regard as satisfying, or enabled you to cope?

- (d) Which routines did you regard as negative, or personally restrictive?

- (e) Which routines added to your quality of life, and in what way?

Buffry, Hutchinson & Semple 1995

- (a) How much variety is included in your present routine?
- (b) What daily personal rituals do you adopt to enhance this, or to survive?
- (c) Which events do you regard as satisfying, or enable you to cope?
- (d) Which routines do you regard as negative, or personally restrictive?
- (e) Which routines add to your quality of life, and in what way?

Question 2 : Please list the range of activities which you followed in terms of **importance** and satisfaction to you (Ie most important = number 1, and so on):
Examples are work, TV, Sleep, Bang-up, Reading, Private Study, Education, Talking to Friends, Keeping Fit, Exercising Choice, Personal Planning etc;
Please comment on how and for what reason these gave you satisfaction)

Previous Secure Prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

Question 3: Please describe social contact and **its value to you** :

(Examples: Cell drop-in get together; informal groups on association; focused get-togethers such as card games; social cooking and /or eating; other social contact such as gym, education, exercise, chapel; external contacts such as visiting groups, or people you met on community projects)

Previous Secure Prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Question 4 : Please describe the content and breadth of conversations during these social contacts described in question 3. (Please comment on the extremes, that is the activity where prison life dominated the discussion, and those where ‘normal’ everyday matters were discussed.

Previous Secure Prison.

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Question 5: Please describe those features of prison life you found restrictive, and what appeared to you to be creating the restriction. Examples: limited movement around wing or prison; limited access to friends; narrowness of conversations; access to activities and facilities such as work, exercise, library, workshops, keeping fit, religious activity.

Previous Secure Prison

Restriction

Cause of Restriction

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Restriction

Cause of Restriction

Buffry, Hutchinson & Semple 1995

Question 6 : Describe your actions to overcome such restrictions, or to make the best of situations. Please say how you went about it and what you thought and felt in doing this.

Previous Secure Prison:

BLANTYRE HOUSE:

Question 7: What approaches worked best for you in getting things done? (Please describe how you went about this)

Previous Secure Prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Question 8: What activity provided you with a sense of satisfaction or personal achievement? (Please answer under headings below).

Previous Secure Prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a) Keeping Fit

(a) Keeping Fit

(b) Stimulating Interest

(b) Stimulating Interest

(c) Was of substantial quality - helped you develop?

(c) Was of substantial quality - helped you develop?

(d) Gave you the impression of being valued as a person

(d) Gave you the impression of being valued as a person?

Question 9: Please describe the working relationship with staff. Also give reasons as to why you think things were as you experienced them.

Previous Prison

Reasons why this should be?

Staff generally supportive of making the most of your time;

Staff content to be “turn-keys”?

Staff interested or disinterested in quality of life?

Staff blocking positive development?

Staff broadly neutral - neither caring nor obstructive?

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Reasons why this should be?

Buffry, Hutchinson & Semple 1995

Staff generally supportive of making the most of your time;

Staff content to be “turn-keys”?

Staff interested or disinterested in quality of life?

Staff blocking positive development?

Staff broadly neutral - neither caring nor obstructive?

Question 10: What plans did you make (a) to improve your daily life in prison, (b) to develop for the future? Please say how you put these into practice.

Previous Secure prison

How you went about and achieved them

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a) Planning to improve your daily life

(a) Planning to improve your daily life

(b) Planning for your future?

(b) Planning for your future?

Question 11 : Did your ability to plan and act to fulfil your plans change over time? Eg improve, deteriorate? Give examples.

Previous Secure Prison

Buffry, Hutchinson & Semple 1995

(a) Ability to plan got better? Give example of planning and how things changed for the better

(b) Ability to plan deteriorated? Give example of planning and how things deteriorated

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a) Ability to plan got better? Give example of planning and how things changed for the better

(b) Ability to plan deteriorated? Give example of planning and how things deteriorated

Examples: Prison routines; staff attitudes; flexibility; external pressures; self-motivation

Previous Secure Prison

Buffry, Hutchinson & Semple 1995

(a) Factors which helped planning?

(b) Factors obstructing planning?

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a) Factors which helped planning?

(b) Factors obstructing planning?

Question 13 : Please comment on personal coping skills.

In managing yourself in the prison how would you rate your response? Please indicate which of the following best describes that. Circle 1 to indicate positive etc.

Previous Secure Prison.

Buffry, Hutchinson & Semple 1995

I felt well in myself	1	2	3	4	I mostly felt unwell
I felt relaxed	1	2	3	4	I was tense / agitated
I felt respected	1	2	3	4	I felt devalued
I felt safe	1	2	3	4	I felt intimidated
I felt fulfilled	1	2	3	4	I felt useless
I was well socialised	1	2	3	4	I felt isolated
I was well motivated	1	2	3	4	I was disinterested
I kept my identity	1	2	3	4	I wore a “mask”
I kept mellow	1	2	3	4	I became aggressive
I felt cared for	1	2	3	4	I felt neglected
I respected others	1	2	3	4	I devalued others

Question 13(continued) : Please comment on personal coping skills.

In managing yourself in the prison how would you rate your response? Please indicate which of the following best describes that. Circle 1 to indicate positive etc.

BLANTYRE HOUSE.

Buffry, Hutchinson & Semple 1995

I fell well in myself	1	2	3	4	I mostly feel unwell
I feel relaxed	1	2	3	4	I am tense / agitated
I feel respected	1	2	3	4	I feel devalued
I feel safe	1	2	3	4	I feel intimidated
I feel fulfilled	1	2	3	4	I feel useless
I am well socialised	1	2	3	4	I feel isolated
I am well motivated	1	2	3	4	I am disinterested
have my identity	1	2	3	4	I wear a “mask”
I keep mellow	1	2	3	4	I feel aggressive
I feel cared for	1	2	3	4	I feel neglected
I respect others	1	2	3	4	I devalue others

Question 14 : In what ways did being in prison change or restrict your manner of dealing with people and situations? Please say how you adjusted your approach or changed your behaviour to meet the pressures of being in a prisoner.

Previous Secure prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Question 15: What aspects of prison created the greatest demands on you? Please express these first as those demands you saw as negative, and second those you saw as positive.

Previous Secure Prison

(a) Negative demands:

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a) Negative demands:

(b) Positive demands:

(b) Positive demands:

Question 16: What skills or behaviour did you have to develop to (a) survive prison, (b) derive personal benefit? Eg develop distance learning skills,

Previous Secure Prison

(a) Skills / behaviour to survive?

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a) Skills / behaviour to survive?

(b) Skills / behaviour to secure personal benefit?

(b) Skills / behaviour to secure personal benefit?

Question 17 : Describe those features / activities that (a) diminished you personally, and (b) enhanced you personally.

Previous Secure Prison

(a) Diminished you?

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a) Diminish you?

(b) Enhanced you?

(b) Enhance you?

Question 18: Describe the impact of your imprisonment on family relationships by (a) identifying the factor and (b) its impact on your relationship

Previous Secure Prison

(a) Factor

(b) Impact on relationship

BLANTYRE HOUSE

(a)

Factor

(b) Impact on relationship

Question 19 : In what way did the impact on your relationship affect or alter your situations within the prison?

Previous Secure Prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE



Question 20 : What **activities** undertaken by you (a) improved, and (b) made worse, your family relationship. Please say what it was and in what way it affected your relationships.

Previous Secure Prison

- (a) Improved relationship

- (b) Worsened relationship

BLANTYRE HOUSE

- (a) Improved relationship

- (b) Worsened relationship

Question 21 : How would you describe the experiences of imprisonment that (a) help you survive, and (b) prepare you for the future?

Previous Secure Prison

- (a) Aided survival?

BLANTYRE HOUSE

- (a) Aided survival?

(b) Prepared for future?

(b) Prepared for future?

Question 22: What are the events, relationships, opportunities, activities, that GIVE MEANING to your experience of imprisonment? Comment on those that made you feel valued, angry, withdrawn, depressed, successful, and so on.

Previous Secure Prison

Event/opportunity/relationship etc.

What these meant for me

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Event/opportunity/relationship etc.

What these mean for me

Question 23 : Did you feel that you could influence people and situations to make them more human, more positive, more responsive to your needs? Please say in what ways you could exert influence?

Previous Secure Prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Question 24 : To what extent does your experience of imprisonment either (a) allow you full expression as a human being, and (b) take away from your opportunity for human expression?

Previous Secure Prison

BLANTYRE HOUSE

Please write any additional comments you wish to make in the space below.

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