

# **Inverness Prison Visiting Committee**

## **Annual Report 2010/2011**



**HMP Inverness**

**Margaret Paterson  
Chairman**

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## **Foreword by Margaret Paterson, Chairman**

This year we have said a fond farewell to Governor David Abernathy who left to take up a position at Headquarters as Assistant Director of Prisons and welcomed the new Governor Angus MacVicar who took up post on 31 January, 2011 and we look forward to working with him.

Members raised their concerns regarding the increase in travel costs due to rising fuel prices. With the general rurality of the Highlands they felt that this was not reflected in the amount allocated to the Visiting Committee budget for expenses. Cost cutting measures are being implemented by the Visiting Committee and the situation was discussed at the last meeting with the new Governor who reassured members of the committee that there may be some flexibility in terms of additional funding being made available.

There have been some changes to the membership of our Visiting Committee this year and have welcomed two new members who have both received Foundation and other training in order to carry out their duties in full.

Finally, I would like to once again formally record my thanks to my Vice Chairman and our fellow members on the Visiting Committee for all their help and support over the last year.

**Mrs Margaret Paterson**  
**Chairman, Inverness Prison Visiting Committee**

# The History of HMP Inverness

Inverness Prison, known locally as Porterfield, serves the Courts of the Highlands, Western Isles, Orkney Isles and Moray, providing secure custody for all remand prisoners and short term adult prisoners, both male and female (segregated). It also holds a small number of long-term prisoners, prior to classification, on accumulated visits, or to support the operational needs of the SPS.

The present prison was opened in 1902, having relocated from nearby Inverness Castle to what was, at that time, the rural parish of Porterfield. There were 25 male and 10 female prisoners in accommodation comprising of 49 cells. Throughout its subsequent history the prison has had a mixed population of men and women, convicted and untried prisoners. Today, however, the numbers are significantly higher, averaging around 150, and the cellular capacity has risen to 104.

The accommodation halls within the confines of the original wall have changed internally over the past 100 years, although their facades have remained the same. A number of extensions and extra buildings have been incrementally added to cope with rising and changing demands. Examples include the new Gate complex, the workshops and laundry. Other areas, such as facilities for healthcare and catering have been modernised.

The original cells were barely furnished. Now they have in-cell sanitation, bunk-beds, fittings, electric power and TVs - reflecting modern standards of living.

Prison labour was used to build the establishment. Subsequent employment included oakum-picking, sack sewing and mat-making, as well as maintenance of the prison estate and further building work. Physical drills and Bible classes punctuated the week. There is no mention in the records of 1903 of learning centres nor fitness centres such as those provided today. Programmes to address offending behaviour did not feature either, although perhaps the Chaplain (who "states that he spends upwards of 2 hours weekly in the prison") and Mrs Werner, the "Lady Visitor" took such a role upon themselves.

The working environment for staff has also changed. The first Governor, John Nicol, had a house built for himself within the walls. Two houses were additionally erected for "married warders" and "female warders" had quarters provided too - supplied with drainage, gas, water and service pipes. Prison Officers now work an average of 37 hours a week and the concept of tied housing has been abandoned since the 1980s. Their job has evolved away from that of turnkey to actively engaging with prisoners in pursuit of the Scottish Prison Service model of correctional excellence.

# Statutory Role of the Visiting Committee

The statutory responsibilities of Visiting Committees and of their members are set out in Part 17 of The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2006 made under Section 8(2) of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 (c.45). That states: "Rules made under section 39 of this Act shall prescribe the functions of visiting committees, and shall among other things require the members to pay frequent visits to the prison and hear any complaints which may be made by the prisoners and report to [Scottish Ministers] any matter which they consider it expedient to report; any member of a visiting committee may at any time enter the prison and shall have free access to every part thereof and to every prisoner".

A Visiting Committee is specifically charged to

- co-operate with Scottish Ministers and the Governor in promoting the efficiency of the prison;
- inquire into and report to Scottish Ministers upon any matter into which they may ask them to inquire;
- immediately bring to the attention of the Governor any circumstances pertaining to the administration of the prison or the condition of a prisoner when they consider this necessary; if the Governor has not remedied matters within a reasonable period of time, they shall bring the matter to the notice of Scottish Ministers;
- from time to time, inquire into the state of the prison premises and inspect the food and drink provided to the prisoners and if at any time they find these unsatisfactory, record any deficiencies in their minute book and send a copy to Scottish Ministers and the Governor;
- hear and investigate any applications or complaints which prisoners may make to them and report their findings to the Governor and Scottish Ministers;
- visit the prison fortnightly by not fewer than two of its members
- at its discretion inspect prison records other than personal records, prisoners' records and security manuals or other papers which have implications for security and make a note of their inspection in their minutes;
- make an annual report for the period of 12 months ending on 31 March each year to Scottish Ministers about the state of the establishment and its administration and include any advice and suggestions they consider appropriate;

# Inverness Prison Visiting Committee Membership

- Margaret Paterson – Chair\*
- Jackson Hiddleston – Vice-Chair
- Christina Cameron
- Janet Campbell \*
- John Ford \*
- Laurie Fraser \*
- Paul Laidlaw
- Donnie Mackay \*
- Jean Urquhart \*
- Ian Williams

\* Denotes Local Authority Councillor

## The Work of the Visiting Committee

Visiting Committee Statistics	2010/11
Recommended complement of VC members (per Rule 155)	10
Number of VC members at start of the reporting period	10
Number of VC members at end of the reporting period	10
Number of new VC members joining within the reporting period	2
Number of VC members leaving within the reporting period	2
Total number of VC committee meetings during reporting period	4
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	7/10
Total number of applications/complaints received	3
Total number of visits to the prison*	52

### Nature of Applications/Complaints Received

There were only three formal complaints during 2010 which were dealt with accordingly, there have been no formal Complaints/Applications received during 2011, an indication that Inverness Prison is extremely well run. Members of the Committee on Rota Visits, through contact with Prisoners have informally picked up a wide range of issues which have received further enquiries such as visits, segregation, suicide watch, milk allowance etc. This is an indication that Inverness Prison Visiting Committee Members take an active interest in contact with Prisoners.

### Training

In terms of training issues provided by the Prison in which Members of the Prison Visiting Committee have been invited to participate, this has been very much affected by the difficulties experienced by the Prison in the appointment of a Staff Training Officer in that the staff training role is now seen as an additional responsibility placed upon a serving officer.

However, certain Members have been able to participate in Breakaway/Self defence training. At the June 2010 meeting a presentation was given by the Governor and the Addictions Team Leader on substance misuse and ways of managing woman offenders.

In June 2011, two members attended a workshop in the prison organised by Officers of the Northern Constabulary on developing an awareness of the possibilities of terrorist activity (WRAP). At the June 2011 meeting the Prison Training Officer delivered a presentation on physiological manipulation.

During the course of the year, our Training Officer provided for all members paper on the Role and Function of Visiting Committee members, Investigating complaints, the staffing structure of the prison and an updated timetable of the daily routine with the prison.

Further training courses were planned for implementation during the coming year.

# Chairman's Annual Report

## **Healthcare and Mental Health**

During the earlier part of the year a total of 108 completions had been achieved against a target of 68 in relation to SMART Recovery, Alcohol Awareness and Drug Action for Change. During the summer months a 100% completion was achieved in terms of Integrated Case Management and Addiction misuse assessments and action had been maintained.

During the summer months a proposal for a joint research project with Dr. Suzy Young, University College London, in relation to "Pathways in to Persistent Offending and the contribution of ADHD and Substance Abuse" had been approved by SPS Research Branch. The project was expected to last for 12 months and it was hoped that all prisoners at Inverness would be seen.

Story Book Dads/Mums was a free service made available to imprisoned parents enabling them to record a story and a message which could then be edited and enhanced using digital audio software and editors to remove mistakes and add sound effects and music. A CD was then made, with a personalised cover and the finished disc was then sent to the child.

## **Education, Training and Work**

Classes available included Art, Basic Education, Computer Studies, Creative Writing, English, Key Skills, Language, Life and Social Skills, Literacy, Maths, Music, Numeracy, Open University. Offence focused courses include Alcohol Awareness, Drug Action for Change and SMART (Substance Misuse and Recovery Treatment). Vocation Employment and workshops include Catering, Gardening, Industrial Cleaning, and Laundry.

All targets in relation to Through Care, Induction, Core Screen, Literacy and Numeracy, Integrated Case Management and Parole timescales had either been equal to or slightly higher than the previous year.

During the Summer period 77 work related or vocational qualifications had been achieved in the year to date, 39 programme completions had been achieved against an annual target of 68 for the year to April 2011, in excess of 45% of Education classes which were literacy based and 26% numeracy based.

## **Residential Accommodation**

In terms of residential, the average population figures for the year to date were 140 with the lowest at 138 and the highest population of 158 occurring on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010.

Regular meetings had been held with HMP Aberdeen, Cornton Vale, Highland and Aberdeen Councils Social Work Departments, NHS Groups and the Community Justice

Authority to progress the work of opening Independent Female Living Units in Aberdeen and Inverness. The Female Community Integration Unit in Inverness was opened with the arrival of 2 female prisoners from Cornton Vale on 13th May, 2010 and had continued to work well. Fergus Ewing MSP visited the Female Community Integration Unit facility on 23 July 2010 along with news crews and reporters.

The Governor expressed his gratitude to the staff involved in the project for their dedication and hard work which had been instrumental in creating a very successful facility for women offenders in HMP Inverness.

### **Prison Estate and Administration**

Earlier in the year the old D Wing had been converted into the new Community Integration Unit for female prisoners and had been completed to a very high standard.

During the summer months the completion of painting programme in A hall, with E Wing was completed by Friday 17th Sept 2010, the refurbishment of the old Intelligence Management Unit was to be used in future as the Human Resource office under the new HR structure which was currently being discussed and the decoration and refurbishment of the new Intelligence Management Unit to meet SPS standards in relation to Intelligence had been completed and the Intelligence Management Unit had been relocated.

David Abernathy, Governor, left to take up a position at Headquarters as Assistant Director of Prisons and new Governor Angus MacVicar took up post on 31 January, 2011.

### **Link Centre**

MSP's Des McNulty and David Stewart visited the prison on 27th August 2010 in relation to their interest in Education. They visited the Education Department and Links Centre and met with the Governor, Education staff and Links Centre staff and partner agency workers.