

FURTHER COPIES ARE FREE with SAE  
from 80 Leicester Causeway, Coventry.

PRINTED BY: Lifespan Community Collective Ltd  
Townhead, Dunford Bridge, Sheffield.  
Tel: Barnsley 762359.

PUBLISHED BY: The Authors % 80  
Leicester Causeway, Coventry. Tel: 0203-58984.

13977 A  
**INSIDE!**



**PRISON NOTES FOR  
ANTI-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGNERS.**

**INSIDE!**

**PRISON NOTES FOR  
ANTI-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGNERS**

**CONTENTS**

**Seven days in Holloway** ..... 2

**A week in Holloway** ..... 3

**Information for prisoners (Holloway)** ..... 6

**H.M.Prison, Oxford** ..... 8

**Notes for people going to prison as a result of  
non-violent direct action** ..... 12

**References** ..... 15

by Fran Ryan, Catherine Robinson, Sian Charnley, Pete McPhail

## SEVEN DAYS IN HOLLOWAY

On my first night in Holloway, I lost my plastic knife and spoon, issued to me along with the number - D17322 - that was to be my identity for the next seven days. Although the prison is bristling with plastic cutlery, the regulations do not permit replacements, and for the rest of the week I was sentenced to eat my cornflakes and soup with a fork. This fact, ridiculous in itself, seemed to me to symbolise the futility and frustrations of prison life. The regulations are so complex that even the prison officers occasionally trip over them. Remanded prisoners may not have photographs of their families; civil prisoners (like me) may not spend their own money in the prison shop; no prisoners may have potted plants in their cells, unless they are serving more than three years. I was lucky to share a cell with two veterans of the system, who guided me through the maze of rules so that I did not unwittingly get into trouble.

Twice I got into trouble wittingly. On my first night, the assistant governor asked if I was willing to work; I said that I would, if it was useful work; but it consisted, he told me, of putting paper hats in Christmas crackers, for which I would be paid about £1.10 a week. The penalty for refusing was "loss of privileges", and four extra hours of confinement in one's cell each day. This was in addition to the sixteen hours of incarceration (from 4 p.m. to 8 a.m.) suffered by all the prisoners. (Prisoners are sometimes allowed out of their cells for an hour in the early evening to have baths and watch television, but this depends on the mood of the prison officers.)

On the third day came my second deliberate confrontation with the authorities. For protesting to the doctor about the squalor of the cells, I was put in a "strip cell" (totally bare, except for a mattress), in solitary confinement for six hours. I was very happy in the strip cell: for the first time, I was away from the incessant pop music and all-pervading tobacco smoke of my landing, and was able to think straight. With my book on Gandhi and the cards and letters from friends outside which a sympathetic warder slipped under the door, I was perfectly content, and quite sorry when they finally let me out.

Merely recounting the facts of prison life cannot convey its quality to anyone who has not experienced it. The food: mushy and stodgy. The exercise: twenty minutes a day, spent walking round and round a yard. The cell: 8 paces by 6 paces, with bunks for three prisoners, and an open toilet, with no privacy and no facilities for cleaning it. The company: shoplifters, drug smugglers, forgers, a few prostitutes and murderers, and (saddest of all) illegal immigrants, awaiting deportation, usually sunk in despair. But out of the degradation came laughter, sometimes, and kindness. Much kindness. The women comfort each other, and share what they have. There is no racial prejudice: black and white women walk arm in arm round the exercise yard. There is a code of honour which dictates that a prisoner will give away her last cigarette if another asks her for it; but if she has 200 hidden under her pillow and anyone steals one, the ensuing fight will be heard all over the prison. I found the brutal honesty of the prison community quite different from anything I had known in the world outside. There are no social or intellectual pretensions, and on moral issues there is no hypocrisy or sentimentality. I have no idea if my prison sentence for peace has achieved any effect in the outside world, but it taught me some uncomfortable lessons about myself.

Catherine Robinson

(Sentenced at Banbury Magistrates' Court, 16th March 1983, for refusing to be bound over to keep the "peace", having been arrested for Breach of the Peace at a non-violent action at USAF Upper Heyford Air Base, Oxfordshire.

Tel. Oxford 511307: I would be glad to talk to anyone considering the possibility of going to prison who has any questions.)

## A WEEK IN HOLLOWAY

I am aware that not only does every person spending a week in Holloway see a different side of it, but also that spending a mere week there is qualitatively different from spending longer. Each person sees a different unit, different warders, comes up against different rules. Rules are different for civil or criminal prisoners, and prison routine changes in many respects for longer term prisoners. However, the details I recall and the general impressions may help someone to whom prison is a complete unknown . . .

I already knew that I could take two changes of clothes and six books. I had also assumed (mistakenly) that I could take my own toothbrush, comb, writing paper, etc. The police-women who had escorted me from the court in Banbury handed over the official plastic bag containing my possessions to the warder on "Reception" as soon as we arrived. To these I had to add all the clothes I was wearing and I was given a skimpy, beltless dressing gown to wear while myself and my possessions were being checked. It was highly reminiscent of a crowded waiting-room for ante-natal appointments in a busy maternity hospital. We then (for there were two of us, mercifully in a position to talk to each other) had not-very-private baths with hot, plentiful water, before being herded from room to room to have various forms filled in on our behalf, to undergo very basic medical check-ups, etc. Some officials we encountered were friendly; one so sarcastic that I failed to understand the sarcasm and felt bitterly bewildered. At some point during this herding and waiting, we were given our supper. It looked unpalatable beyond belief but in fact was worse than anything we were to receive later in our stay. We were issued with paper bags containing a toothbrush, comb, salt-like toothpaste, shampoo, etc., and the remainder of our belongings. I remember walking along endless corridors and endless stairs, almost unable to hold all these things plus bedding, while simultaneously trying to hold my dressing gown closed.

We spent the first night in the Reception wing, sharing a room with eight bunks with two other women who were friendly and informative. However, they were so nervous about their impending trials that they talked and smoked all night and we had very little sleep.

One of my nastiest experiences on reception was being told by one of the warders that should I keep my watch and my wedding ring, I risked having them stolen in my sleep. If I wished to find anything out, she said, the last person I should ask should be another prisoner. All this turned out to be nonsense, almost all the prisoners I met being helpful, and many warders only coming forward with information *after* one had broken the rules.

In the morning we were brought breakfast in bed (never to be repeated) at 7.30. Breakfast, as every day, was porridge, with an optional boiled egg (cooked the previous night and reheated!). By the end of the day we had decided to claim to be vegetarians, which among other things would entitle us to a tablespoon of bran on our porridge from then on.

I can't remember much of the following day, except that we walked along many corridors with doors being continuously locked or unlocked in front of or behind us and waited outside many doors to answer many questions. By the end of the day we were in the unit where we were to spend the rest of the week, a unit housing women on remand or convicted of such offences as non-payment of fines. We no longer shared a "room". Both of us were in small cells with two bunk beds, each sharing with one other woman. The rooms were much cleaner than those in reception, the toilets partitioned off. By the end of the day we had had our first warm, loving letters and our first flowers. These things transformed the whole experience, but made me feel humbled when I saw how the other (some of them very lonely) women survived without these things. I still wonder at their generosity when they admired

our flowers and expressed pleasure at our receiving so many letters.

By the next day we were aware of the daily routine, and I was beginning to be aware of how the breaking up of the day into different activities helped women remain sane. For this reason, I would think long and hard before protesting in a way which would cause other prisoners to be deprived of this routine.

About 7.30 a.m. (I can't remember the exact times) we were let out of our cells to spend quarter of an hour in the dining room (you had to learn to eat quickly) for breakfast. Then our doors remained unlocked as we carried buckets and mops to and fro to clean our rooms. On Saturdays we had to clean the corridors as well. No cleaners or cooks are employed in Holloway. Cooking is a privileged job for prisoners who have "toed the line".

Then we were locked up for about half an hour before being led to the exercise yard where we could spend half an hour sitting on a bench or walk up and down chatting. This was one of several points in a day where I could meet up with Sarah. Then back to our rooms and, if it was a weekday, we were led again to work assembling Britains' toy tractors for the sum of £1.20 a week. No prisoner ever sees any money; the wages are to be spent on credit in the canteen, at the end of a working week. This only benefitted us in that we could buy cigarettes for the other women before we left.

Visiting times for remand prisoners or civil prisoners including ourselves was 2.00 - 3.30 p.m.; during this time we could have one 15 minute visit of up to two people. Criminal prisoners are only entitled to a visit once a fortnight and none in their first fortnight until permits have been issued. There are no visits for remand prisoners on Sundays, and Saturday visiting time is 9.45 to 11.15 a.m. Before and after visits you are searched. You may receive certain items but to have unprohibited things (e.g. books) brought in from outside you have to make a special application which takes at least a week to process; pointless if you are only in for a week.

My most painful memory of Holloway is that of my three year old daughter sitting on the other side of a table from me during visiting time, then clinging to me like a piteous baby monkey when it was time to leave. I had thought the known is better than the unknown for children, but now I would never advise anyone to have visits from their own small children in prison.

Doors were locked and unlocked again for lunch, cell, exercise, cell, work, in the afternoon. The last meal of the day was at 3.30 p.m.; after that it was just a cake (not as appetising as it sounds) and a mug of tea in your cell about 9 p.m. On weekdays we were let out of our cells for about an hour of "association" during the early evening. During this time we could sit in front of the television in a communal space at the end of a corridor (very like the communal space at the end of a corridor of hospital wards), have a bath, choose a book from the shelves, or borrow an iron and ironing board to iron our clothes. The occasional newspaper, always a tabloid and usually the Express, appears in the communal sitting area.

Saturdays and Sundays, according to the longer term prisoners, are the worst; prison staff are fewer, the final lock-in is at 4.30 p.m., and there is no work, so you spend much longer in your cell during the day and the night is very long.

On admission every prisoner is given a reception letter on official paper which will be mailed on her behalf, so that she can inform someone of her whereabouts. From then on she receives a double sheet of letter writing paper once a week, and this again is posted for her, after it has been read by one of the warders. Apart from this I had no access to paper, but if

I had stayed longer I could have bought some from the canteen from my wages. It is rumoured that letters containing complaints about the prison are censored and returned to you to be re-written. Similarly all incoming mail is read before you receive it. Some of my letters were withheld and returned with my possessions when I left, because, I was told, I had received too many for them to have time to read them all. You are not allowed to receive letters without the sender's address, although postcards without addresses are acceptable, and you are given the opportunity to provide the address to the warder, and it is possible to make one up if you don't know the person who sent it. You cannot take out of the prison anything you write while inside, although exceptions are made. A woman in my position, sentenced earlier in March, was allowed an exercise book, and was allowed to keep it, since it was full, on release.

I am writing this three months after being in Holloway and can't remember all the details of the routine, especially as we never actually settled into it. As we were "new" we had to leave work to attend for instance the "special clinic", where I declined a V.D. test and had my wish respected. There are also such things as visits from chaplains, and a briefing from the deputy governor. At one point our room was searched, including the inside of the bed legs. It is on such occasions that peace prisoners are asked to remove peace graffiti, etc.

Longer term prisoners may have an entirely different routine, with access to (limited) educational facilities, etc.

Sian Charnley,  
July 1983 (imprisoned March 1983).

## H.M. PRISON, HOLLOWAY

(N.B. Don't assume that women will always be sent to Holloway Prison; it could be one of a number of different prisons. Also, rules for prisoners and visitors tend to vary from prison to prison, a point which is worth remembering: for example, it is difficult to know what you can take into prison. If in doubt take it in, just in case.)

What follows is taken from an information sheet given to women going into H.M. Holloway.)

### INFORMATION FOR PRISONERS (MARCH 1983)

1. Persons committed to prison in default of entering into a recognizance are not eligible for remission on their sentences. You will serve the full number of days given as sentence, counting the day you were sentenced as day 1.
2. You will be given a letter to write at public expense (first class) on reception into the prison, and thereafter one per week at public expense (second class). If you wish to send more letters you may do so, but the postage must be paid from either your prison earnings or from the cash which you have brought into prison.
3. You will be expected to work if there is work available and refusal to work when told to do so may constitute a breach of prison rules.
4. You may be transferred to another prison at short notice; if so you will be issued with a letter at public expense (first class) to notify your family.
5. GOVERNOR'S APPLICATIONS

There are many occasions when an inmate will wish to do or have something done which requires the approval of the Governor - for example, the bringing into the prison of personal possessions. Before a visitor can bring in certain items of property, the inmate must make a Governor's Application (see attached list).

### VISITING REGULATIONS

1. You may have a daily visit of 15 minutes duration. The visiting times at Holloway are:  
Monday to Friday 2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.  
Saturdays 9.45 a.m. to 11.15 a.m.  
No visits on Sundays
2. You may be visited by up to three adults at one time and children aged 10 years and over count as adults. Only your own children or grandchildren are allowed to visit you. Holloway has only limited space for visiting facilities and there may be times when visitors have to wait until others have finished before taking their turn. If there are visitors still waiting at the end of the visiting period they will be unable to take the visit that day.
3. Visitors are not permitted to pass any article or money to inmates during a visit.
4. Visitors may not communicate to any inmate other than the person with whom they have been allowed a visit.
5. Visitors are not allowed to make notes in writing during a visit.
6. If the Governor has good reason to suspect a visitor of not keeping to the visits' regulations, then he may either direct that the visitor be searched or he may suspend the visit. If a visitor refuses to let himself be searched then the visit may be disallowed.
7. Inmates may smoke during a visit. They may be offered cigarettes to smoke (NOT roll-ups), but they are not allowed to take cigarettes away with them.
8. Visitors may not place anything on the visits tables EXCEPT cigarettes, matches or a lighter.
9. Any cash for an inmate must be handed to an officer before the end of the visit.
10. Fees or gratuities to officers are forbidden.

## ARTICLES ALLOWED TO BE BROUGHT IN BY VISITORS

(\*Governor's Application necessary)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Birthday cards-not padded                      | *Pens,pencils,fibre-tip pens                    |
| *Books-(paperback)up to 6 (good/new condition) | Photos-maximum number - 10 (1 of self in group) |
| Cash-taken by visits officer                   | *Radio-M & L wave only-ear plugs                |
| Cigarette rollers                              | *Rings-plain wedding or signet only             |
| *Clothing-3 sets,LTIs-4 sets                   | Rosary  |
| *Comb-not steel or strong                      | *Shaver-battery operated                        |
| *Earrings-small sleepers or studs              | Stockings/tights                                |
| Emery boards                                   | *Sunglasses                                     |
| *Eyelashes-self adhesive                       | *Toilet bag, not quilted                        |
| Flowers-not pot plants                         | *Tweezers-small                                 |
| *Hair rollers & clips (plastic)                | *Wool   |
|  | *Wrist watch, not digital                       |

## H.M. PRISON, OXFORD (MEN'S PRISON)

The following are some observations on imprisonment based on my own experience (7 days in Oxford Prison), and on conversations both inside and outside prison with others who have experienced imprisonment. I am not yet familiar with the prison regulations and supplements (published by HMSO), and so I am not qualified to write about prisoners' rights or the sanctions which may be used within prison against those who are judged guilty of a "breach of discipline". I was imprisoned for refusing to be bound over to "keep the peace", which is a civil offence. Members of the peace movement may also be imprisoned for various criminal offences - for example "criminal damage" - and as "criminal prisoners" will be subject to different conditions and restrictions to those imposed on "civil prisoners". Conditions and routine differ between one prison and the next and between men's and women's prisons.

### RECEPTION

I was sentenced at Banbury Magistrates Court to seven days in prison and was taken in a police van to the Police Station next door. In a way this was very much like being arrested again since I had to surrender the contents of my pockets, my belt, my wristwatch and my shoes before being put in a cell. After about an hour I was taken out of the cell and into a police van for the journey to Oxford. My cigarettes and lighter were returned to me, my other possessions travelled in a polythene bag in the custody of an officer who sat with me in the back of the van. When the van was within the prison walls and two sets of gates closed behind it the police officer in charge of me led the way to Reception where he and a prison officer co-signed various papers before he was able to leave. Most of the reception procedure was covered by two prison officers. The first took note of my height, weight, race, eye colour, hair colour, build and "other characteristics" which would include such things as tattoos, permanent scars, missing or extra body-parts - and so on. He then asked a series of questions connected with my health and medical history: had I had any serious illnesses, or undergone major surgery? When had I last been in hospital? Did I have to take any drugs? Did I have any special diet? Had I ever seen a psychiatrist? Ever attempted suicide? - plus, of course, date and place of birth, married/single, number of children, name and address. At the end of this interview I was ordered through to an open cell to await the next stage of the procedure.

I was then called through by the second prison officer and told to sit down across a table from him. He had noted down a list of my possessions which I was asked to read and then sign. I was told that I would be able to take my watch and cigarettes in with me - the implication being that this was a favour, something they were not obliged to grant. He then informed me that I would be wearing the uniform of a civil prisoner. I asked what would happen if I refused to wear prison clothing and he replied "Look, you're a sensible chap. You don't want to make things hard for yourself". I said that I wanted to know and so he told me that if I refused to wear prison clothes I should be put on "governor's report" and segregated from the other prisoners. I did not wish to be separated from other prisoners and so I decided to wear prison clothes. I then had to remove my clothes and place them in a cardboard box which would remain in reception until my release. I was issued with a blue cotton bath robe, a towel and some soap and told to go and take a shower. After the shower I waited in another unlocked cell with another prisoner who was being admitted. Our uniforms were brought in by a prisoner who was employed at reception. I was issued with one set of clothes: a pale blue T-shirt, blue and white striped cotton shirt, white underpants, brown jeans (on which the zip would not stay up), grey socks and black imitation-leather slip-on shoes. We were then given some food and a cup of tea. (The time was now about 5.30. I had last had a meal at 8 a.m.)

A prison officer came to take us to the "wing". At the reception stores I was issued with the following: a roll of three blankets, a piss-pot, a pillow case in which were a pair of sheets,

a plastic razor and shaving-brush, plastic knife/fork/spoon. (Later on, by applying to the "No. 1 cleaner", I was issued with a toothbrush, comb and mug.)

### THE WING

The wing looks exactly like you might expect. Three "levels" of cells run along the sides of the building. Metal staircases run up to the walkways outside the upper two levels and there is netting stretched across between the first floor walkways to prevent things (or people?) being thrown down to the ground floor. On the ground floor (level 2) food is served and there are the doors out to the exercise yard and visiting block. Here are the cells in which the young prisoners are kept and also some of the punishment cells. The next level (3) is for civil and "convicted" prisoners and the top level is for remand prisoners. The exact number of prisoners in Oxford jail is classified information but is of the order of 300. The cells are about 12ft x 7ft x 8ft (high) with a small window high up on the outside wall and a metal-clad door. They contain two bunks and a single bed, three chairs, a small table and three built-in corner tables under each of which is a shelf and towel-rail. The only reading matter in my cell was a pile of back-issues of Country Life and Readers' Digest.

### THE PRISON DAY

- 7.00 "Slop out" - empty piss-pot, collect hot water in bowl for wash/shave, use toilet, fill water jug (one per cell).
- 7.15 Cell door locked.
- 7.30 Go to collect breakfast (served on metal tray with compartments) - porridge with sugar, one piece toast, four slices of prison bread, small pat of butter, piece of bacon or marmalade, mug of tea. Locked in cell to eat.
- 8.00 2nd "slop-out". Now is the time to collect your newspaper if you have one on order at the canteen.
- 8.15 Locked in cell again.
- 8.30 Those who are doing prison work go to work. The rest of us are locked up.
- 11.00 "Exercise" - prisoners are let out into the yard to walk round and round anti-clockwise while being watched by 4 or 5 prison officers.
- 11.30 Locked up.
- 12.00 Dinner: one scoop mashed potato, some sort of meat or pie, one or two vegetables (the only green veg are heavily boiled cabbage or mushy peas), gravy or sauce, bread and butter and a pudding plus a mug of tea. Eaten in locked cell.
- 1.00 "Slop-out".
- 1.15 Locked up.
- 1.30 Those who work go to work, otherwise locked up. Visiting hours are 1.40 - 3.15.
- 4.00 "Exercise".
- 4.30 Locked up.
- 5.00 Tea: similar to dinner but bun/cake instead of pudding (most inmates save this to go with the late tea).
- 6.00 "Slop-out" - this is the last time you can get out of your cell until morning.
- 6.15 Locked up.
- 8.00 Tea is brought round to each cell in a bucket.

On Saturday the day starts an hour later and there is an opportunity to clean out your cell in the morning. You are able to watch T.V. for an hour and a half in the afternoon - of course this will be mostly horse racing but it is an opportunity to get out of your cell and talk to your fellow inmates. On Sunday there are Catholic and Anglican services in the morning and a film in the afternoon.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

In Reception you will be asked if you require any medication or a special diet. It is important to give this information at this point or there may be a delay before you are able to get what you need. Basic prison food is filling rather than of great nutritional value - water-soluble vitamins, in particular, are thin on the ground. The special diets that are available may not be a lot better. A vegan friend of mine said that his prison diet was characterised by an almost total absence of protein.

Needless to say, if at any point you feel that you need medical attention you should ask for it.

Prison officers may give widely differing answers to the same question either because they do not know what the regulations are or because they choose not to tell you - so don't be put off with the first response you receive to a request for information or material goods. To give an example, I wanted to know how much money I would be given to spend in the canteen. The first prison officer I asked said "You won't get any money because you're not working". The next officer said "Nobody gets any money until Monday". (It was Friday.) Later the same morning after exercise I went to the canteen where I was immediately allowed to take 66p. worth of tobacco and rolling papers - three days worth of allowance. Incidentally, if you are a smoker take a large pouch of tobacco with you to prison; they will probably allow you to take it in. Smokeables are in short supply in jail and are the source of a lot of ill-feeling between prisoners. You will probably also be allowed to take in a pen (but no paper) and a few books. I say probably because the regulations do not oblige them to allow you this.

You will be searched on entering prison and on going to and from a visit - as one officer put it "You go out with nothing, you come in with nothing", and you will not be allowed to take cigarettes or sweets into a visit so if you want either during the visit your visitor must supply them. I was strip-searched only once while in prison and that was on the way back from a visit. This was described to me as a "routine strip-search".

Oxford prison is not a long stay prison and so your cell-mates are likely to have been imprisoned for offences such as non-payment of maintenance, petty fraud, burglary, shoplifting, G.B.H., non-payment of fines, and so on.

### FEELINGS

The overwhelming impression of prison life is one of powerlessness and dehumanisation. Most people who have experienced prisons as an inmate say that they have to shut down a part of themselves for the duration of their sentence, and even a week in prison gives you a very clear idea of what it would be like to have to undergo a longer sentence. A prison sentence is an exercise in humiliation - you are given a number, you are addressed in a hostile manner, prison officers in their early twenties may order you to stop, go, tuck your shirt in, and so forth. Some inmates, for example those who have experience of life in the armed forces, find the idea of an externally imposed "discipline" easier to take than others. The amount of space in the cell is limited and after a few days I noticed that I was beginning to move about in a hunched manner and that I had become more clumsy in my movements.

I did not find any great material hardship in prison life but the long hours of cellular confinement and the lack of any creative outlet drove me in on myself. I started to think critically of every other institution I had been through - university, school, family - and underwent a certain amount of personal disintegration that I am still working through now (3 months later). There seemed little point in keeping a diary since I was told that I should not be allowed to take anything I wrote in prison out with me when I left, but I did write to a newspaper in response to an article on the aims of the peace movement. This was not sent by the prison authorities even though it contained no reference to prison other than that it was written on prison notepaper.

Getting to know other prisoners had more emotional impact on me than anything else. To get a glimpse of the lives of some of my fellow inmates, see the problems they faced and discover how they came to be in prison put my own situation in perspective and made me very angry. I was also disturbed to discover the effects of my early, unconscious, conditioning towards obedience, the fact that, despite my awareness that I was not in prison for behaving "immorally", I still found myself oppressed by the place.

Pete Mcphail  
(Imprisoned March 1983.)

## NOTES FOR PEOPLE GOING TO PRISON AS A RESULT OF NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION

The official Prison Rules (1) together with the Prison Standing Orders, the Home Office Circular Instructions, and the Governors' Handbook are the documents by which prison life is officially regulated. The first is freely available outside prison, and only quite recently has it become available inside as well (2). The other three are classified. This makes it difficult to know exactly what rights you do have, and even with free access to these documents, their complexity is such as to make any precise statements impossible. So we start by saying that the following is neither an exhaustive nor definitive account of prison rules but we hope it will give you some idea of what to expect.

The first thing to realise is that in prison you have no "rights" in the usual sense of the word - these rules have no formal legal status in that they do not fall under the jurisdiction of the English or Scottish legal systems. The Prison Rules delineate only a framework; to quote Graham Zellick, "They prescribe certain minimum standards, confer a few rights, impose duties, allocate responsibilities, but their striking feature is the discretion conferred (notionally) on the Home Secretary as to nearly all matters excepting a prisoner's right to food, clothes, shelter and medical treatment"(3).

So our best advice to you is to read the rules yourself before you go to prison - they should be available at your local Public Library, or alternatively read them as soon as you can when you arrive there. Also the rules set the minimum standards - frequently you are allowed more freedom than they appear to give you.

## INFORMATION TO PRISONERS

You should be given a booklet (Rule 7) when you enter your prison cell which contains all the information the Home Office thinks you need. It is not the Prison Rules themselves.

## COMPLAINTS

Rule 8 states that you may make an "application" to see the governor at any time. The governor is bound to see you except on a Sunday or a Public Holiday. You may also ask to see a visiting officer of the Secretary of State or a member of the visiting committee or board of visitors. Your request must be recorded and that person informed when they next visit the prison.

## RELIGION

Rules 10 - 16 concern religion and state that prisoners can practise whatever religious faith they wish. The chaplain visits all C. of E. prisoners daily if they are sick, undergoing restraint or undergoing cellular confinement, and can visit any prisoner in the same position should they request it. The recognised books of your religion, provided they have Home Office approval, should be available for your personal use.

## MEDICAL ATTENTION

Rules 17 - 19 say that you can ask to see the medical officer at any time and that this request must be recorded and passed on promptly.

## GENERAL WELFARE AND CLOTHING

Women can wear their own clothes; men cannot, with the exception of remand and civil prisoners. However, if a civil prisoner wears his own clothes, he may not be allowed to associate with others (Section 12, Standing Orders, Rule 20(1)).

## FOOD, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

Rule 21 states that the food provided shall be "wholesome, nutritious, well-prepared and served, reasonably varied and in sufficient quantity". Alcohol (Rule 22) is not allowed except as prescribed by the medical officer.

Tobacco is a privilege. What you are allowed to keep of the cigarettes and tobacco you take into prison will be *entirely* at the discretion of the prison warders. If you are allowed to take any through, please note that you must have safety matches; no lighters or non-safety matches will be allowed. You will get a weekly allowance, which you can spend in the canteen on tobacco, unless you refuse to work.

## EXERCISE

You should have at least one hour of open-air exercise every day, but this is only if weather permits (Rule 27).

## WORK

All convicted prisoners are required to work, according to Rule 28, but this may not be applied if for example there is no work available. Rule 28(6) states that "prisoners may be paid for their work".

## BOOKS AND PAPERS

Rule 30 says you may use the prison library. The Standing Orders add that you may have a total of 6 books. A pamphlet is counted as a book. You won't necessarily be allowed to take books in with you, but you usually are, so it's worth taking some in with you. Prisons have different ways of operating this rule. Sometimes books have to be posted in. As well as these books, you will be allowed 2 periodicals, a daily paper, a weekly paper, a Sunday paper, and in some prisons more.

You can order these through the prison using your "private spends" (money sent in to you or brought in by you to a total value of not more than £86 per year), or your friends or relatives can arrange for it to be done. Such papers are usually delivered to you through the canteen. The governor has power to stop them if s/he thinks they contain contentious material likely to affect prison order. Please note too that it can be a disciplinary offence to lend books or papers to another prisoner without permission. Other privileges you may be entitled to, not mentioned in the Prison Rules, include radios (transistors - no shortwave or VHF - but remember to ask about this), hobby materials, games, cards, calendars, writing materials, wrist watches, battery shavers, all of which can be bought with your "private spends" money.

## EDUCATION

According to Rule 29, prisoners are to be encouraged to make use of the educational opportunities available. Bear in mind that this is really more applicable to people with sentences of one month or longer.

## VISITS AND LETTERS

Following several petitions to the European Commission of Human Rights, the full text of Standing Order 5 relating to visits and letters was published in 1981. Rules 33 and 34 in the Prison Rules set down the minimum standards of one visit (usually ½ hour) every four weeks. In fact in most prisons visits are allowed once a fortnight. In addition to this you would have a visit after admission. If you are in prison for only one week it is important to ask for a visiting order as soon as you are admitted to ensure that you get your visit arranged in time. As a civil prisoner, you are entitled to one 15-minute visit every day, by up to three adults. If no-one can visit you and you are a criminal prisoner then you should be allowed an extra letter.

You may send and receive a letter immediately after your reception and after that, once a week. These letters are paid for by the Home Office. You may write more letters than this minimum if you can afford the postage out of your earnings (you cannot spend private money on stamps). All letters in both directions "may" be read (Rules 33(3)) although in practice this is not always done, but mail can be slowed down by a shortage of manpower to inspect it. This censorship is in fact a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention. As far as the

content of your letter is concerned, you may write what you like, and to whom you like, provided it is not judged to be prejudicial to good order and discipline. Standing Order 5(6)28, empowers the governor to stop any correspondence if s/he thinks it is bad for the prison. You can make a complaint in a letter, provided you have first made it internally.

#### LEGAL ADVISERS

Rule 37(1) states that your lawyer or solicitor can visit you should this be necessary. If s/he does, you are then allowed to see him/her out of hearing although within the sight of a prison officer.

#### SEARCH

Rule 39 says that you will be searched when taken into custody and thereafter as the governor thinks necessary. You should not be stripped and searched in the sight of another prisoner (39(3)).

#### RECORD AND PHOTOGRAPH

Rule 40 states that a personal record will be kept and you may be photographed for this purpose. However, Standing Orders, section 17, which states the above, also says that civil prisoners and criminal prisoners with sentences of under 3 months (or those with the option of paying a fine) will not normally be photographed. You may consent to be photographed; however, if you do not then the matter should be raised with a higher authority.

#### PRISONERS' PROPERTY

Rule 41 is about your private property - it will be packed away in a plastic bag for the duration of your stay. Any cash you have will be paid into an account which is under the control of the governor. You may be able to spend some of it on certain things, for example, newspapers (see above) but *not* on tobacco or stamps.

Rule 42 is about money and other items received through the post. Basically it is at the governor's discretion as to what you may keep with you.

#### SPECIAL CONTROL AND RESTRAINT

Rules 43-46 deal with special controls and the circumstances under which they can be used. Basically, if the governor considers you to be a threat to the good order or discipline of the prison, then s/he may have you removed from association.

#### OFFENCES AGAINST DISCIPLINE

Rule 47 covers these offences, which are not only quite numerous but also are quite wide in scope and are therefore open to many interpretations. Note particularly that among the offences are (12) "making false and malicious allegations against an officer" and (16) "repeatedly making groundless complaints".

Rules 48 and 49 say that you must be charged and informed about any charge as soon as possible. You may also be kept apart from other prisoners pending adjudication.

#### PUNISHMENTS

"Governors' Awards" (Rule 50) are the punishments meted out for disciplinary offences. These can range from a caution through withdrawal of privileges to loss of remission (this last one only applies to sentences of over one month).

#### IN CONCLUSION

There are other rules - about 100 in all - which we haven't mentioned due to pressure of time and space. We think we've picked out the most important ones but the best way to inform yourself is to read the actual Prison Rules.

A couple of last points:

- if you are in prison for non-payment of a fine, anyone can pay it, even against your wishes, and you will be released. Equally, if you have been imprisoned for refusing to be bound over to keep the peace, you can, at any time, agree to be bound over (though you may need to arrange to see a solicitor to help you do this) and you will be released.
- you could be sent to any suitable prison in the country where there is space.

Finally, a quote from a recent article in the Abolitionist (1983 No. 1). Speaking of the admission of some Greenham women into Holloway it says "Of course, to have such an influx of politically motivated prisoners, especially when they include many who wouldn't normally see the inside of a prison, is the last thing the prison authorities want".

#### REFERENCES

1. Prison Rules (Statutory Instruments) 1964, HMSO.
2. Circular Instruction 33/1983 Standing Order Amendment Order 356 has conferred this right.
3. "Prison Rights in England", Graham Zellick, University of Toronto Law Journal 1974 U24 p332.

#### USEFUL BOOK

"British Prisons", Mike Fitzgerald and Joe Sim, Blackwell 2nd edition 1982.

#### USEFUL ADDRESSES

PROP (the National Prisoners' Movement), BM-PROP, London, WC1N 3XX. telephone - 01-542 3744.

Women in Prison (a newly-formed organisation to help women prisoners), 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL. telephone - 01-602 3205.