FRIENDS OF
ERLESTOKE PRISON

THE FRIENDS OF ERLESTOKE PRISON

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025



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Report front cover painted by an HMP Erlestoke prisoner

Registered Charity Number: 1201388

1. Chairman's Report



The Friends of Erlestoke was established in 2011 to help prisoners with the challenges of resettlement and rehabilitation, and I am glad to say that, although the years roll by and the team of Trustees evolves, this report presents a very positive message about what we are managing to achieve. Indeed this year has seen an increase in the work we do in the prison, as we give our support to various new and important initiatives. We are so grateful to Sarah Coombs the Governor and her professional and dedicated staff for all the encouragement and help they give us.

It has been a difficult year for everyone involved with the prison service. In a recent speech, Lord Timpson, the Prisons' Minister, told the Prison Governors Association, that for the majority of offenders 'being locked up is a fork in the road.' One way 'can lead them to turn their lives around. The other will take them straight back to prison. Too often it's the latter.' In this country, 80% of offending is reoffending and that is a statistic that worries us all. Walking round Erlestoke one is immediately aware of how much is being done to encourage prisoners to make the most of the opportunities available, and to work towards taking the right turning at the end of their sentence.

As you will know from our previous annual reports, the Friends have aspired to support the prison with additional sporting facilities. Discussions with the prison are ongoing regarding this provision and we will be able to share the outcome of these in the coming months.

The Friends firmly believe that encouraging contact with families during a sentence is vital and the Transport Scheme is one of our longest running and most valuable services, helping and supporting families visit their loved ones; this year our dedicated band of 24 drivers has given a record of nearly 1500 lifts. It was also the first year of pioneering a new scheme of giving lifts to released prisoners who have neither friends nor family to pick them up. Thankfully the National Lottery has renewed its funding of the Scheme for another two years. We are keen to recruit more drivers if you should know of anyone who might be interested.

Although Storybook Dads has only been running for three years, 400 stories have now been recorded and sent home to prisoners' families, providing a vital presence. It is hugely popular within the prison, and would not be possible without the help of the Education and Library teams. Outside the prison the National Scheme has been recognised at the Charity Awards winning the Children and Youth category.

Origami Inside continues to thrive, moving to a bigger classroom with a window, providing views over Salisbury plain. Although the membership fluctuates, it is an enduringly popular activity, with

a waiting list, and fantastic output of cards which sell up and down the country, providing much needed revenue for the Friends.

In August 2024 we began sponsoring a new activity, the creative writing class which takes place every fortnight. It has been very successful and Max Porter, the Writer in Residence at Erlestoke has described it as “one of the most vital literature spaces I’ve ever worked in’.

As you will perceive from the beautiful picture on the cover of this report, the Art lessons sponsored by the Friends have produced some amazing results, and one of our Trustees has introduced, and is very generously sponsoring, an annual competition which has attracted many super paintings.

This year, over and above regular funding of various initiatives, we have reached out to support many more projects within the prison: the Penned Up Arts Festival, food and drink for the regular family days, as well as a family day play, toys and equipment for the visits hall, film and video equipment for the in-cell lap-top scheme, and support for diversity and inclusion initiatives.

We were very sad to say goodbye to Dr Olivia Chapple, who completed her year as the High Sheriff of Wiltshire in 2024/25. Dr Chapple has been particularly active in supporting the prison, and charities across Wiltshire. We are also grateful to the Wiltshire Gardens Scheme for helping to fund a pioneering gardening scheme within the prison. And of course, a huge and heartfelt thank you to the supporters, Friends and Patrons of our charity. Our work would not be possible without your help and encouragement.

Primrose Campbell
Chairman, Friends of Erlestoke Prison

2. Reference and administrative details of the Friends of Erlestoke Prison

1. The Charity is known as ‘The Friends of Erlestoke Prison’. No other name is used.

2. The registration number is: 1201388

3. The Charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

4. The address of the Charity is: HMP Erlestoke, Westbury Road, Erlestoke, Devizes, SN10 5TU

5. The Charity Trustees for the period of this report:

Primrose Campbell	Chairman
Sue Weber	Treasurer
Eve McBride	Transport Scheme
Sarah Gooch	Multi-Use Games Area
Charles Atterton	Art
Mark Mangham	Origami
Angela Hughes	Communications and Creative Writing
Nick Crean	Storybook Dads
Emma Leigh-Bennet	(until October 2024)

6. The Charity Patrons for the period of this report:

Royal Patron: Her Majesty The Queen (until May 2024)
and 5 Patrons:

Robert Hiscox, DL	The Lord Margadale of Islay, DL
Sir Charles Hobhouse	Belinda Southwell MBE
John Bush, CVO, OBE, KStJ (until May 2024)	

3. Objectives of the Friends of Erlestoke Prison

HMP Erlestoke is a public sector, Category C training and resettlement prison for adult and young adult male prisoners. It is the only prison in Wiltshire and is located in the rural village of Erlestoke, near Devizes. The prison was built in the grounds of the former Erlestoke Park House and first opened in 1960. The nearest railway station is Westbury, 8 miles away.

The prison is intervention focused providing a national resource of programmes which address offending behaviours and drug/alcohol issues. It is one of four prisons delivering the Progression Regime which aims to help Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoners (ISPs) serving life sentences and Indeterminate Sentences for Public Protection (IPP) prisoners provide information and evidence to the Parole Board to support release.

The total operational capacity of the prison for this reporting period was 512. There are 46 IPP prisoners and many of the prison's population are serving sentences of four years or more. Younger prisoners, aged between 18 and 25 make up just over 12% of the population, which is slightly higher than this time last year.

There are nine residential units; four are standard units, one of which is used for induction. Four are enhanced units, housing those prisoners with enhanced privileges. There is a Drug Recovery Wing and a separate care and separation unit for vulnerable and difficult prisoners. The prison also comprises a kitchen, visitors' centre, chaplaincy, gym, sports hall, education department, library, healthcare centre and a number of workshops.

For further information about HMP Erlestoke, please visit:

http://www.justice.gov.uk/contacts/prison-finder/erlestoke

The objective of the Friends of Erlestoke Prison remains unchanged: 'to promote and support the rehabilitation of prisoners who are or have previously been prisoners at HMP Erlestoke, by the provision of funds and services as the trustees think fit, and in consultation with Prison Governors/ Governing Body'. The Friends of Erlestoke Prison aims to support prisoners with the challenges of rehabilitation whilst in custody and also helps them to keep in touch with their partners and children whilst completing their sentence. The Charity also aims to raise awareness and promote local understanding of the prison, which for many, is an unknown 'hidden' institution.

4. Structure and Management

In this reporting period, the Friends had eight trustees, a Royal Patron, four patrons, and a group of enthusiastic local volunteer drivers, supported by the Governor and the prison management team. There were no paid permanent staff.

Thank you to Her Majesty The Queen who was our Royal Patron from July 2013 until May 2024 and a great supporter of our work. Following a review of all Patronages held by The King as The former Prince of Wales and The Queen as The former Duchess of Cornwall, the Queen was unable to retain the Patronage of the Friends of Erlestoke Prison. However The Queen has continued to take a close interest in the work of former Royal Patronages for which we are grateful.

Very sadly, John Bush, one of our longstanding Patrons died on the 10th May 2024. John had been a Patron since the charity was launched in 2012 and had offered much sage advice over the years. He was a great supporter of our fundraising events, often bringing friends with him to spread the word about the charity more widely. We are grateful for all of his encouragement and support,

We were also saddened that Judith Squarey, a previous Trustee of the Friends, died on the 7th February 2025. Judith was a trustee with us for over 5 years and retired from the Friends in 2019. Judith had worked closely with the older prisoner group in HMP Erlestoke and organised many speakers for their meetings. She was a great supporter of our fundraising work, before and after she retired. We miss her friendship and enthusiasm for the charity.

New trustee recruitment is achieved through local volunteer recruitment websites and existing trustees' personal networks of interested individuals. Trustees are risk assessed and vetted by the prison security department. Trustees' backgrounds are diverse and include experience/knowledge in the Army, Technical Sales, Education, Human Resources, Marketing, Restorative Justice, Criminology, Victimology, Magistracy, Business Management, Fundraising and Event Management.

Trustees ensure that their knowledge is current and relevant to the work that they perform for the Friends. The trustees hold meetings approximately every 6 to 8 weeks to ensure that they remain up to date with what is happening in the prison, make decisions on requests for support, plan future events and discuss fundraising ideas. The Governor or Deputy Governor plus a member of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) attend these meetings to provide up to date information about the prison. Trustees also attend occasional Prison Council meetings.

For more information about the Independent Monitoring Board, please visit: **https://imb.org.uk**

5. Activities to support prisoners and their families

5.1 Transport Scheme



Our Transport Scheme, established in 2014, is a key part of the work of the Friends of Erlestoke Prison. It was set up in the knowledge that keeping families closer together during imprisonment leads to better outcomes on release. We aim to encourage visits through our friendly volunteer drivers giving free lifts to the families and friends of the prisoners to and from local bus and train stops to the prison and back. It is not only the money saving aspect of this that encourages the visits, we also know that the stress reduction of a guaranteed friendly, helpful face makes the journeys more pleasant experiences.

The scheme continues to thrive under the inspired organisational skills of Les Drage our Transport Scheme Co-ordinator. Les was appointed to this role in December 2022 and the Scheme is extremely lucky to have him with his efficiency, empathetic approach and enthusiasm for all that we are trying to achieve in promoting visits. Les also contributes by acting as a volunteer driver for the scheme himself and it is not unusual for him to fill last minute requests for lifts.

Our band of 24 volunteer drivers continue their extraordinary commitment to helping visitors with their journeys to see their loved ones in the prison. Like Les, they will often give lifts at the very last minute. The drivers will drive anyone who asks for our help whether they are old or young, mobile or compromised through physical disability or visual impairment. This year we have driven several babies of just a few days old, such is the dedication of their mothers to ensure that the babies' father gets to meet their child as soon as is possible.

Westbury Station was closed for a month this Winter and our drivers went above and beyond to collect visitors from more distant stations ensuring that they were still supported in their visits.

In November we held our annual gathering for our drivers when we again had the opportunity to share feedback and ideas about the scheme and the charity and also enjoy a jolly lunch together. In April, at our request, the prison organised a tour of the prison for the drivers which was very useful context setting for us all.

Funding

In May we heard that the National Lottery Community Fund had granted us funding for a further two years for our Transport Scheme. This was fantastic news and we continue to be immensely grateful to the National Lottery.

COMMUNITY FUND

Progress

We reported last year that we were in the process of developing a new aspect of our service, that of giving lifts to released prisoners who have no friend or family to collect them. We have now given seven of these lifts, this aspect having been slow to develop. Our drivers have gained satisfaction knowing that the men have a supportive person at the very first leg of their onward journey of life outside the prison.

Here is some feedback from the released men:

“Mr P was very grateful and very chatty. He said the service that we offer helps to restore his faith in human nature, that people can be kind.”

“Mr S said the view 'without bars' is amazing!”

Transport Scheme Figures

We are delighted to report that this last year numbers increased to the highest they have ever been; new visitors join up to request lifts every week. This is facilitated by the fantastic support the scheme receives from the Visitors Centre at the prison who push our adverts under the noses of all new visitors. The Prison itself is also very helpful with advertising by regularly publicising information about the scheme on the prisoners’ in cell laptops. The information is also available on the prison’s website.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-2025
Total individual visitor lifts given	1410	4	188	767	1233	1486
Total lifts for children under 12 years	338	0	20	88	140	197
New visitors to the scheme				33	81	96

Cancellation of lifts by visitors has, unfortunately, increased this year from 115 to 149. This is often due to ill health and has, at times, been due to disrupted train journeys.

Testimonials from visitors

Some of the visitors we have helped commented:

"Thank you so much for all your help in arranging things so promptly. It is people like you and everyone at the transport scheme, that kindly gives their time and efforts in making the transition of a visit to our loved ones, very easy and straight forward. I'd like to say a big thank you for all that you and your team do. The support is greatly appreciated."

One visitor said how grateful she was to all the drivers, that we all come from different backgrounds but what we share is warmth, generosity and are not judgemental. This last comment was particularly important to her, she was so grateful that volunteers didn't pry or treat her differently because a loved one was in prison.

Another visitor was very jolly when she was picked up by our driver and she called our transport service 'life-saving' in terms of reassuring new visitors, providing a welcome face for her when being picked up.

"Unfortunately, Jamie has got transferred to another prison today. It has been a nightmare trying to get a visit there. Thank you for all the transport support received. It's a great gesture and wonderful scheme. I was very grateful for the help all the drivers have given me, it's just a shame other prisons don't offer the same support. Thanks again, x"

New drivers needed!!

With increasing numbers of lift requests we urgently need to expand our band of volunteer drivers. If you are interested in joining this happy band and discovering for yourself the rewards of this role, or know of anyone who may be, please contact us through our website:



www.friendsoferlestokeprison.com

or by contacting Les directly on:

07504 987190 or email friendstransportscheme@gmail.com

5.2 Family Days



The Friends continued to support HMP Erlestoke's Family Days to further improve the experience for the men, their partners and their children and help to keep them close. We provided the food and refreshments. Having a meal together is very much party of family life and on a Family Day it means that the family and the person they are visiting are able to be with each other for the whole day. Otherwise, families would have to leave the prison to eat their own packed lunch and then come back into the prison to be searched again before rejoining the Family Day in the prison sports hall.

Family Days are held in the Sports Hall and enable the men and their children to run around playing basketball, football and frisby. There are also table top craft activities run by volunteers as well as play on the rug for toddlers.

A grandparent who brought their grandchildren to meet their dad said *"you don't know what this means to us, my grandson (aged 7) will, for the first time, be able to tell his friends and teacher that he played football with his dad".*

A social worker who brought one man's children of 2 and 4 to see him as they were living in a foster home. They stayed the whole day and the social worker said that she witnessed the strong attachment the children and dad had with each other which she wouldn't have believed had she not seen it.

We strongly believe that these days are a valuable way to strengthen and maintain prisoners' family relationships, particularly with their children. In HMP Erlestoke, Family Days are run by PACT, the national charity which supports prisoners, their families and their children. PACT run 6 Family Days per year.

For more information about PACT and their work in HMP Erlestoke, please visit: **https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/**

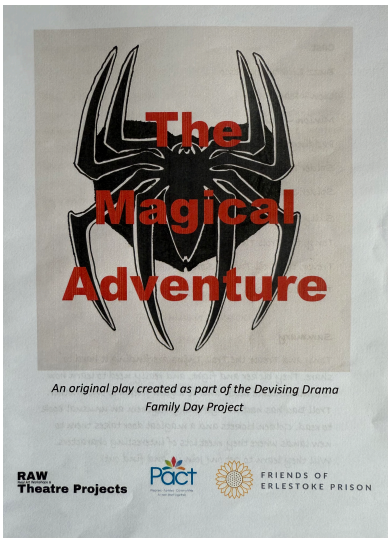
'The Magical Adventure' - a Family Day Play

At the October 2024 Family Day, the Friends were pleased to support, for the fourth time, the creation and performance of a play for the prisoner's children. The play involved a group of 10 prisoners who worked together over seven days to devise the play, inspired by their children's

interests. The men developed and rehearsed the play, created the costumes and helped to create the set pieces under the guidance and direction of Beth Fiducia-Brookes (RAW Theatre Projects). The event was also supported by PACT, the prison Art Department, the prison Education Department and a prisoner peer mentor who had been involved in a previous play. Two trustees from the Friends joined the event on the day and were impressed by the men's performance and the success of the day.

Feedback from the men, their families and prison staff was extremely positive.

From the participants:
"It boosts your family ties"
"1000% it was so much fun and the family loved it so much"
"*Brought me and people out of their shells"*
"*My children are excited about the play so it will give me something fresh to talk about*"
"Thank you so much, we need it and we are so glad that you are doing all this hard work here for us"



From the family members:
"*We loved the play and enjoyed socialising"*
"'t was a really good for the children'"
"*Because it something they will always remember, it broke the ice and made everyone instantly comfortable"*

5.3 Toys and Equipment for the Visits Hall

We are always enthusiastic about requests to support prisoner's children. When we were asked to purchase toys for the visits hall to replace the old, worn out and broken toys, we were happy to do so. This enabled PACT to provide a safe, welcoming, supportive and stimulating environment for the children. Also, children need that right level of support to reduce the stress which is associated with parental imprisonment and being able to play safely is very important.



We purchased several robust, sturdy toys: a wooden toy garage with wooden cars, a wooden play kitchen incorporating a sink/dishwasher and an oven with hob, a wooden play kitchen accessory set with saucepans, plates, cutlery and play food, several jigsaws for a variety of age groups and a set of plastic dinosaurs. The toys enable the prisoners and their children to play and have a positive and relaxing time together, enhancing the visit for all concerned.

5.4 Storybook Dads

Storybook Dads continues to be well supported in the prison. A number of readers of all ages, from fathers to grandfathers, uncles to brothers, regularly attend the fortnightly sessions. This year, we will surpass 400 individual recordings since the Friends engaged with this nationwide project some 3 years ago. From its small beginnings in Dartmoor prison, Storybook Dads and Storybook Mums is now running in over 100 prisons all over the UK.

Each recording lasts approximately 20 minutes, usually comprising the chosen book, followed by a friendly catch up about life in general. Building trust is a key component in ensuring everyone is feeling relaxed and able to communicate completely openly with their intended. Nick Crean, our trustee who films the men said "I hope I am fairly 'invisible' as the men read." In addition to the chosen book, some prisoners read or even sing their own poems or tell their own short stories. No doubt the memories that the readings create foster connections and inspire creativity, hope and that huge dollop of love that can go such a long way to help heal the damage and separation that families so often endure.

Reading standards are on the whole good. We have an unwritten rule that Nick is happy to help with any reading or pronunciation, but personally draw the line at the intrinsically complicated dinosaur names: acrocanthosaurus, being a fine example!

We remain grateful to The Wates Group for a regular supply of new books and of course to Storybooks HQ for their great support too. Many do not realise that once the readings are recorded and coordinated by the prison library team, that they are sent to be edited by prisoners in other prisons. With Nick's experience as a documentary maker, he knows that editing is such a key role. The age of the child will influence how the edit and sound effects are added to the story. The aim being to reassure the child not scare the living daylights out of them. In addition, some of the prison editors show such dedication and creativity that, when funding allows, Storybook Dads offers them temporary work as editors when they are released. This very much echoes the rehabilitation aims of the Friends.

Many congratulations to Storybook Dads for winning the Children and Youth category at the 2024 Charity Awards. The judges noted that the winners *"exemplify best practise and sustainable benefits to communities and society".*

We could not run Storybook Dads without the help of HMP Erlestoke Education and Library teams. A warm thank you to them for their constant support and greatly improving coffee making skills. The testimonial below from Penny, who is a member of the Library team summarises the impact of the storybooks:

"Watching the DVDs from this wonderful project, I can quickly see the confidence of the men grow. The way they smile and tell the story to their loved ones increases with every recording. This in turn can increase their reading ability; going from a struggling non reader to trying to read for pleasure. They start the project for their families, with some encouragement, but once they have watched their first dvd they can see how great they are. They are told by their families how much they are looked forward to. When the discs are returned the men are able to watch them before they get sent out. Many are amazed at how good they are and are keen to record again. Some of them find watching themselves too emotional and they are happy for me to watch without them. I always let them know how well they have read. This vital project to help maintain family ties is so valuable. This is shown by the amount of men that participate and how they imagine them being dropped through letterboxes for their loved ones. It is a pleasure to be part of this."

The testimonials below from two Storybook participants show what Storybook Dads (SBD) means to them:

"SBD is amazing and my kids love it. It is like being able to tell them the story without being there but feeling that you are there. They watch the DVDs time and again."

SBD helps me fill a tiny bit of a gap which is left by me not being there. It feels so good to be able to read to the children. It makes me feel good and connected. It helps replace that family part I am missing out on."

For more information about StoryBook Dads, please visit: **https://www.storybookdads.org.uk/**

5.5 Creative Writing - ‘Rite to Write’



Since August 2024, the Friends have funded creative writing workshops. They originally started as a weekly activity by Jo Derrick, who has an extensive background and qualifications in creative writing. Jo was doing this in her own time and as the sessions became more popular we were approached by the prison to fund this as a regular, fortnightly activity.

The group consists of around 6 men which creates an environment where everyone’s voices can be heard and the men feel confident to contribute. The creation of this group is also supportive of the national drive to increase engagement with reading and improve literacy skills generally. Session themes include poetry, memoir and autobiography, how to generate ideas, short story writing and song writing.

As part of Penned Up in 2024, the author Max Porter delivered a workshop and talk. He has subsequently returned to HMP Erlestoke as the Writer in Residence supporting the creative writing group at intervals throughout the year. Max and Jo have been working with the group to create an anthology of prisoner writing which will be launched after Penned Up 2025.

The men tell us that they are learning to improve their writing, feel more confident to share their work in the group, try different genres and techniques outside of their comfort zone. The sessions are lively and enthusiastic during teaching and discussion times but quiet and thoughtful when writing. The testimonials from the men below also show the value of the sessions:

“Working with others is an inspiration. Before the group, writing was a nightmare; in the group, writing is a pleasure.”

“An ongoing creative writing group makes a wonderful change from just the odd short course.”

“The course has really helped me develop as a writer.”

“Some people had no confidence. They were too shy to read their work. This group has given them the confidence. Writing is an individual thing and the group gives people encouragement.”

Max Porter commented:
“The men are thriving in these workshops. The quality of the work is incredible, but more importantly the quality of the conversations, the shared insights, the emotional and creative epiphanies they have are really remarkable. It’s one of the most vital literature spaces I’ve ever worked in.”

5.6 Origami



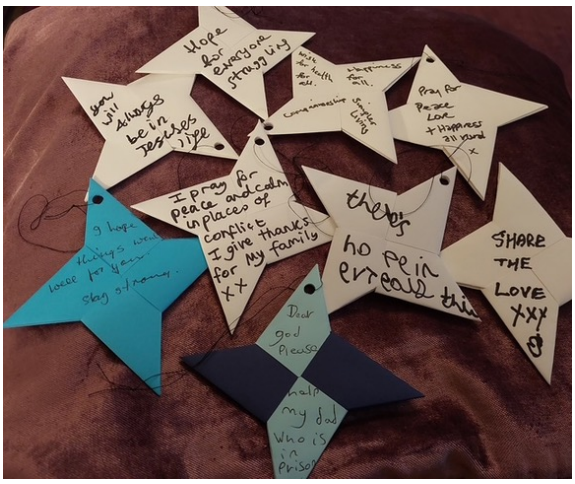
Our Origami sessions on a Friday morning continue but in a new venue… The new classroom in the Education wing is only a few yards away; it is slightly bigger and has more space for our two cupboards that hold supplies, emerging work and reference books. But the big change – it has a window!

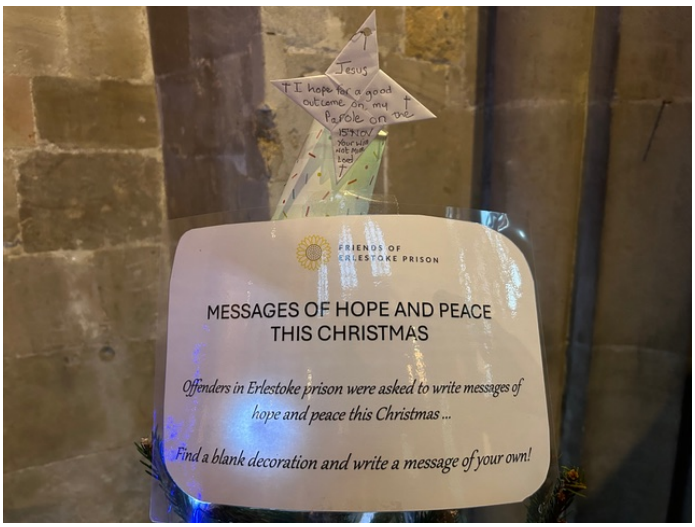
This year has been rewarding both for the prisoners and the team that engage with them. There have been a series of hails and farewells – some offenders move to category D prisons or are released, others have joined… In fact, it's so popular we have a waiting list.

Beginning her third year now, Becky our chaperone/guide/invigilator is the lynchpin without whom the sessions would not take place. Her continuity and level-headed approach make the session a calm and nurturing experience, which is much valued by prisoners negotiating the ups and downs of life in HMP Erlestoke. Continuing his role as the origami teacher, Wayne is the technical backbone for the activity – and his expertise, significant enough in origami, extends well beyond this area. He is the embodiment of the maxim – 'if you want something done give it to a busy person!'



At Christmas we again decorated a Christmas tree – this year in Westbury where the transport scheme often picks up prisoners' family members from the station. The usual set of simple decorations was to be our contribution to the two-day festival, but a bright idea emerged.





Prisoners were asked to suggest a short message to write on the decoration for the visitors to the church to read. No direction was given, and a wide variety of comments were produced – only a few were not appropriate to be used! As an afterthought I left a pen and chance for the visitors to respond. Clearly the sight of a Sharpie was too enticing, and comments came back a plenty – some mundane but many poignant.

This unexpected dialogue touched all who saw it – here is a flavour:

'Please pray for my parole hearing on Thursday' 'I hope things went well for you stay strong!'

'*I pray for peace and calm … and I give thanks for my family'* 'Hope for everyone struggling'

'Happiness for all' 'Dear God please help my dad who is in prison'

Lastly thank you to Helen Holtam who remains tireless and supportive of the Origami project, which continues to generate a significant financial contribution to the Friends.

If you would like to purchase any of the origami products made by the prisoners, please visit the **https://origamiinside.com** website.



We mentioned the window. The privilege for those of us who can visit the prison is to see life from a different perspective. Whatever the weather, the window provides a southwards view of the edge of Salisbury Plain. Whilst potentially bittersweet – a beautiful view is also a reminder of the world beyond the wire - the overall impact is refreshing and positive. Add the access to fresh air (the education wing is usually warm) and our new origami lodgings suit us very well.

5.7 Art



Our Art activity on Thursday afternoons continues to be successful and very much appreciated by the attendees. Sue Martin teaches and inspires the men to attend her weekly sessions. Her time and materials are funded by the Friends.

Due to capacity constraints only a half-dozen men are able to attend classes each week. Those who do greatly enjoy the 'normality' of the sessions which fall outside of the prison's more structured, qualification-based educational programmes. They are able to create art that stimulates them, whether painting, drawing or sculpting. They are very supportive of each other's work and wellbeing.



The quotes below demonstrate what these sessions mean to the men:

"Coming to art inspires me. I really look forward to coming and here and feel good when I leave. I thought about leaving the jail but I love coming here. It keeps me sane."

"I'd miss it, I really would. There's nothing really here except this class."



"Art relieves the pressure of everyday humdrum. It gives us something to look forward to. It's not a class as such, but if we need to work out a colour, we're allowed to make mistakes."

"I enjoy coming here. I look forward to it, even if I don't do any art. It's the only thing I do. It's a social thing."

Various pieces of their art will feature in an exhibition at Messums West art gallery in May 2025 alongside works by Henry Lamb RA. Also later in 2025, the men will be competing in an inaugural ‘Erlestoke Prison Art Prize’, also funded by the Friends.

The sample photos illustrate the variety and quality of work produced but the men over the last year. The art work on the cover of this report was also painting by one of the men who attends our weekly art sessions.











5.8 Penned Up 2024

Alongside the Arts Council, the Friends once more supported the 'Penned Up' arts festival in the prison this year. This was the sixth Penned Up within Erlestoke and there is nothing like this festival anywhere else in the prison estate. The Friends are proud to support this initiative which has grown year on year.

Prisoners were involved in the festival organisation including nominating and inviting the speakers to the event and helping with logistics. The event, which ran in May 2024 gave prisoners insights into other people's lives and an opportunity to think critically about their own.

One prisoner, who had been involved with the Penned Up committee since 2016/17 said: *"In the 15 years I've spent in the prison system, Penned Up is like nothing I've experienced before. It is an idea that is wholly inclusive of everyone, no matter who you are or what background you come from. There are many prisoner at Erlestoke who suffer from a range of complex issues, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. These include those with neurodiverse needs, mental health of behavioural issues, learning difficulties and/or personality disorders. To find a safe space in which all of these complex characters can come together and respectfully listen, question, take part in, share their own experiences, and then have the opportunity to reflect on what they have seen or heard is a very rare thing in a prison. Yet Penned Up always manages to create this type of safe, non-judgemental space in which everyone's welcome."*

The 2024 programme is shown on the next page.

For more information about Penned Up, please visit: **https://pennedup.org.uk/**

PENNED UP ERLESTOKE

PROGRAMME MAY 2024

- Book via 'Penned Up' requests on laptop or sign up in the library
- You'll get the same sessional pay for attending an event as you would for your usual work or activity

WEEK 1



Emmanuel De Silva II

Wednesday 1 May
Emmanuel De Silva II
2pm-3pm Room 27

Through a decade in jail Emmanuel went from struggling with literacy to creating his own courses for people in prison. For Penned Up he talks about his book *Killing Time*, and how he built a life after prison.



Ashleigh Nugent

Thursday 2 May
Ashleigh Nugent
10.15am-11.30am Room 27

A motivational talk from the author of *Locks* – a novel based on the experience of spending his 17th birthday in a Jamaican Detention Centre. Ashleigh was Liverpool Artist of the Year 2022.

WEEK 2



Adrian Scott

Wednesday 8 May
Adrian Scott
9am-11.30am Room 27

Rare chance to see a film and then question one of the writers. *Victim* (2012) is the story of part-time thief Tyson (Ashley Chin) struggling to pay off debts and raise his sister while escaping his gangster past. Followed by Q&A.



Wallis Eates

Wednesday 8 May
Wallis Eates
2pm-4pm Art Room

Drawing / visual storytelling workshop with comics creator Wallis Eates. Wallis has worked in many situations, from an amateur boxing club to HMP Wandsworth. Can a picture really be worth a thousand words?



Max Porter

Thursday 9 May
Max Porter
10.15am-11.30am Room 27

Max talks about and reads from his latest book, *Shy* (now filming for Netflix with Cillian Murphy). Shy is supposedly 'a dangerous young man' but is more interested in drum 'n' bass than fitting in. Most novels are about what's happening on the outside. Shy is all about the inside.

WEEK 3



Steve Gallant

Monday 13 May
Steve Gallant
2pm-3pm Room 27

Famous as the man who battled a terrorist on London Bridge with a narwhal tusk, there is much more to Steve's story. That day was his first out of prison in fourteen and a half years. Hear the story direct from Steve.



Saili Katebe

Tuesday 14 May
Saili Katebe
9am-11.30am Room 27

Saili Katebe is a Zambian-born writer and performer. He strongly believes that we all have something to say. This writing workshop is called *The Art of Recklessness or Finding Your Voice.*



Matthew Torbitt

Tuesday 14 May
Matthew Torbitt
2pm-3pm Room 27

Matthew is now a Communications Advisor to Labour MPs but at 19 he was groomed into a gang and became homeless. He says he got interested in political because of these experiences and believes Labour's "tough on crime" stance won't work. So what will?.



Dr Rachel Clarke

Wednesday 15 May
Dr Rachel Clarke
10.15am-11.30am Room 27

The author of *Breathtaking*, recently adapted as an ITV series, gives the inside story on what it was like to be on the NHS frontline in the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Ian Winwood

Wednesday 15 May
Ian Winwood
2pm-3pm Room 27

Ian's book *Bodies: Life and Death in Music* challenges us to see deeper than the image of musicians as outlaws beloved by the industry. A story of fame, drugs, addiction and mental collapse, seen from a journalist's perspective.

WEEK 4



Jeremy Deller

Monday 20 May
Jeremy Deller
2pm-3pm Room 27

The Turner Prize winning artist in conversation. Famous for his bouncy replica Stonehenge at the 2012 Olympics, Acid Brass, (brass bands + acid house) and other works of collaboration and protest. He is curator of the 2024 Koestler exhibition.



Dr Dave Maguire

Tuesday 21 May
Dr Dave Maguire
10.15am-11.30am Room 27

A look at how conditions such as dyslexia and ADHD affect people. Dave, a dyslexic writer with a PhD for research into masculinity, crime and imprisonment, is a recovering addict and former prisoner.



James Purefoy

Tuesday 21 May
James Purefoy
2pm-3pm Room 27

The many faces of James Purefoy, from fantasy film *Solomon Kane* to Netflix sci-fi *Altered Carbon*, and crime drama *Hap & Leonard* (with Michael K. Williams). We'll talk to James about the world of film and how it's changed over the years.



John Niven

Wednesday 22 May
John Niven
2pm-3pm Room 27

How can anyone write a book about a brother's suicide and make it full of laugh-out-loud moments. *O Brother* shows two brothers taking very different paths (both paved with music and drugs) as well as what they have in common.



Angela Findlay

Thursday 23 May
Angela Findlay
10.15am-11.30am Room 27

Can guilt be passed down the generations? In *My Grandfather's Shadow,* Angela searches for the truth about her grandfather, a proud Wehrmacht General. But how much did he believe in the Nazi cause?

WEEK 5



Terry Ransome

Tuesday 28 May
Terry Ransome
2pm-3pm Room 27

Everything you wanted to know about Mars exploration from Terry Ransome, who worked in the aerospace industry for over 30 years building and testing satellites and spacecraft, including the Beagle 2 Mars Probe.



Lucy Marten

Thursday 30 May
Lucy Marten
10.15am-11.30am Room 27

Vikings: Myth and Reality. What do we really know about the Vikings? Were they really more violent than other people of the time? And what is their legacy? Medieval historian Lucy Marten takes us through what is really known about the Vikings.

Registered Charity Number: 1201388

5.9 Diversity and Inclusion

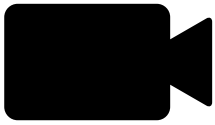


Following feedback from last year's Black History month that food is an integral part of the celebrations, the Friends funded a shared meal for this year's event. Over 70 prisoners attended over two sessions. There were information boards displaying pictures and write ups, music and games including dominoes, chess and cards and a quiz for the men which was really well received.

Black History month is an annually observed commemorative event originating in the United States. It first took place in the UK in 1987, the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean. It provides an opportunity to share, celebrate and understand the impact of black heritage and culture.

The Friends also funded various smaller items to support diversity and inclusion, such as refreshments, lanyards and a wheelchair rain cover.

5.10 Film and video equipment



As reported last year, HMP Erlestoke was one of the first prisons where in-cell laptops were rolled out in September 2022. They have enabled prisoners to receive national and local information in their cells and include online apps which facilitate more effective communications between staff and prisoners. The Digital Communications Team create and produce the podcasts and short films which make up content for the laptops and for example, are now able to record events such as Penned Up so that the talks and speakers reach a wider audience. The Friends supplied the Digital Communications Team with equipment last year which enhanced the quality of their recordings.

We were approached by the Team again this year as the requests for programmes and podcasts continues to grow and now includes work with the Neurodiversity, Diversity and Inclusion, the IMB, Young Adult Olympics and Drug Recovery. As the department has continued to develop work in these and other new areas, they required equipment with more capabilities to achieve improved results for the prisoners. The Friends are fully supportive of the Digital Communications Team, particularly as their work reaches a wide audience amongst prisoners and staff. Also, two prisoners who had worked in the department went to work in the field of podcasting or presenting when they were released.

We funded a range of equipment including a new camera, a podcast mixer, lights, a gimbal and a tascam recorder.

6. Other Activities

6.1 Work with Recoop

The Friends have once again supported the work of the Recoop charity (Resettlement and Care of Older Ex-Offenders and Prisoners) who believe that older people in the justice system can lead healthy, dignified and fulfilling lives. Two of our trustees were invited to give talks to the older prisoner group run by Recoop. One gave an autobiographical talk followed by Q&A, reflecting on the differences between his experiences and theirs, particularly how societal perceptions set up barriers between groups of people when we're not actually so different after all. Our other trustee spoke about her experiences of working as a GP in the current system, but was somewhat diverted by the men wanted to talk about their own health related experiences in prison.

For more information about RECOOP, please visit: **http://recoop.org.uk**

6.2 In the community

Two trustees attended the Wiltshire Community Foundation International Womens' Day event in March to join other organisations/charities who support women and girls. Although HMP Erlestoke is a men's prison, it is their wives, girlfriends and children who also have to live with the impact of a prison sentence and often need support.

The Friends joined the 'Omens ad Unum' autumn craft fair in Devizes to promote the charity by exhibiting various pieces of prisoner artwork and selling our origami cards, making £81.00.

A group of trustees, past and present, attended the 'Art Behind Bars' talk in Devizes given by Angela Findlay. She has had a long career of teaching art in prisons in Germany and England and has huge insights into the impact that arts can have on rehabilitation. We gave a short talk about the Friends as Angela visited the prison the following day as part of the Penned Up 2024 event.

One of our trustees was invited to talk to a local Womens' Institute group about her experiences of working as a volunteer in the criminal justice system, including her work with the Friends in HMP Erlestoke. The group gave the Friends a donation of £50.

The highlight of our fundraising activities this year was our 'Summer Dreams concert held in Chitterne in June with the Farrant Singers. Based in Salisbury, they are widely recognised as one of the most articulate and eloquent chamber ensembles in the England. (Review in the Church Times, 20 June 2022). We were honoured that they agreed to support us and the concert raised £2,450.



7. Financial Review 2024/2025

Our total income for this year was £46,870. This was a combination of personal, corporate and charity trust donations and a small fundraising event. We have a steady stream of income from our generous regular supporters for which we are very grateful. We received a grant from the National Lottery of £18,450 to pay for our transport scheme. The substantial funds we hold at the moment have been put into 95 day accounts and have earned interest of over £8,500.

The proceeds of the sale of the origami work produced by some of the prisoners is still a major contributor to the charity; with the support and enthusiasm of Helen Holtam the work continues to provide us with a good income and this year we raised £4,232.

Our total expenditure this year was £27,465 and was directly linked to the charity aims. Art classes continue to be well attended. The Transport Scheme, which is funded by the National Lottery, is being well used. We supported the Drama Project and the annual Penned Up talks and have started creative writing sessions for prisoners. We spent £6,617 on Prisoner Support items:

Film equipment for Digital Communications team	£3,320
Penned Up Arts festival contribution	£500
Family Day play	£1,700
Diversity and Inclusion support	£244
Family Day costs	£457
Toys for the Visitor Centre	£396
TOTAL	**£6,617**

Our insurance and admin costs overheads are similar to previous years at £978.

The trustees have agreed to maintain sufficient reserves to fund key projects for 6 months which we estimate as £15,000. Our reserves are much higher than that at the end of the year because funds raised for the MUGA project.

Our annual accounts have been independently inspected by Chris Vaughan, Accountants, 195 Ermin Street, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 4NA, are available on our website:
https://friendsoferlestokeprison.com/

Receipts and Payments Accounts: 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025

	2024/25	Last year 2023/24
Receipts		
Fundraising Income		
Grants Received	18450	2,041
Donations Received	12,409	17,907
Gift Aid Income	302	891
Origami	4,232	3,527
Concert fundraiser	2,492	0
Investment Income	8,985	7,597
Total receipts	**46,870**	**31,963**
Payments		
Transport Coordinator	7,292	6,841
Transport Scheme Expenses	794	1,079
Insurance	444	401
Prisoner support	6,617	4,690
Art classes	7,427	5,621
Origami costs	2,532	2,018
Website costs	234	212
Admin costs	300	390
Bank charges		38
Total payments	**27,465**	**21,290**
Net of receipts & payments	**19,405**	**10,673**
Assets		
Cambridge and County	94,913	90,898
Redwood Bank	107,507	92,634
Hampshire Trust Bank	80,000	0
Metro Current Account	9,008	17,819
Metro Deposit	0	70,000
Less Accruals	-1,669	-998
	289,758	**270,353**
Total Funds Brought forward	270,353	259,680
Total Funds Year End	289,758	270,353

Registered Charity Number: 1201388

8. The Year Ahead 2025/2026

We are excited about the year ahead and are particularly pleased to be sponsoring an exhibition of prisoners' art work at Messums art gallery near Tisbury in May 2025.

We have also recently approved several projects which will come to fruition in the coming months. These include Penned Up 2025, another Family Day play in October half term and the printing of a creative writing anthology. We have also agreed to support the refurbishment of the portacabin outside of the prison gates. We look forward to it becoming a family friendly room where visitors can wait before accessing the prison and released prisoners can wait to be collected.

The prison is keen to keep bees in the prison grounds giving prisoners the opportunity to learn a new skill, understand how bees are important to our environment and encourage them to care and nurture the bees. Two hives are proposed initially and the Friends have agreed to support this initiative.

For 20 years, the prison has been supporting Changing Tunes, a music charity who visit the prison once a week to deliver sessions for beginner and more experienced musicians. However, the prison budget can no longer support this activity and the Friends have been asked to match fund with Changing Tunes to enable this activity to continue. As there is no other musical avenue for Erlestoke prisoners, we have agreed to help keep it going.

To support the prison's reading strategy to give men the opportunity to improve their reading skills, the Friends have agreed to support the provision of 'book nooks' on the residential units and work areas and the introduction of a reading corner in the Visits Hall to encourage the men to read to their children. As well as improving their reading skills, this will also strengthen relationships with their families.

These are just a few of the initiatives and activities for the next financial year and there will be others. Sustainability of the charity is therefore a key objective for us in 2025/26. Although we are in comfortable position as we enter a new financial year, we are mindful that we need to continue fundraising throughout the year as we make new investments. We are also aware that we need to have clear plans for when trustees retire or leave the Charity. We will continue to ensure that we have a robust and talented group of individuals who will fundraise and lead the development of the charity throughout the year ahead and beyond.

9. Public Benefit Statement

Our perception of how the Friends of Erlestoke Prison benefits the public is unchanged from when the charity was launched in 2011. Prisons are often the subject of news stories, documentaries and more recently, TV dramas. Many of these highlight overcrowding, increases in self harm, violence and drug use, staff retention issues, facilities not fit for purpose and inadequate resources. And yet the individuals in the care of the Prison Service represent a diverse, challenging population, many with highly complex needs including mental and physical health problems, substance misuse, disabilities, neurodivergent conditions and poor or no qualifications. Unless effective interventions are made whilst the men are in custody and their needs addressed, it is unlikely that the behaviours that led them to prison will change; many will revert back to old habits upon release, leading to reoffending and more victims of crime.

Most prisoners will eventually be released from prisons into our communities and have to re-establish themselves back into society. HM Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS) work to help the men in these areas, but there is always more that can be done. The Friends passionately believe that, given the right opportunities and support, people can change. Therefore, as a group of local individuals, the Friends aim to increase those opportunities for the men in HMP Erlestoke.

It is well documented that the risk of individuals re-offending is much reduced if they have a home and a job upon release and have been supported throughout their sentence by friends and family. Any rehabilitated prisoner, who becomes a law-abiding citizen, will provide benefit to the community, particularly if they are employed and supporting themselves and their families. The Friends work with HMP Erlestoke to help prisoners take responsibility for themselves, develop new skills, improve their well-being and positive self-perception.

The Friends also offer volunteering opportunities for the local community to help the men in HMP Erlestoke maintain contact with their families. We aim to raise awareness of prison life and build understanding of how many of the prisoners ended up in prison, often through, for example, mental illness, drug/alcohol addiction, abusive childhoods and poor education. Prison is an opportunity to change. The Friends are realistic and know that even with powerful interventions, some prisoners will reoffend. However, if the interventions work for a percentage of the prison population, communities will benefit from the integration of non-violent, employable individuals with skills and trades who are able to support themselves and their families. People are often prejudiced because of what they don't know – as more locals become involved with the prison and understand what it is trying to do, they may become more accepting of ex-prisoners, particularly those who want to transform their lives.

10. For more information

If you would like more information about the work of the Friends, please visit our website: **www.friendsoferlestokeprison.com,** or email: **info@friendsoferlestokeprison.com**

You can also follow HMP Erlestoke on X: **@HMPErlestoke**

If you would like to make a donation, please visit:
https://www.friendsoferlestokeprison.com/donate.html

Any contribution that you could make would be of great value to us, particularly with the current challenges in raising charitable funds.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in our charity.
The Trustees
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