

# PRISONERS ABROAD

Caring for Britons  
held overseas &  
their families

# news



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## Two views from Tenerife

**This edition of Prisoners Abroad News features two very different stories from Tenerife. On page 10 you can read about a man struggling to come to terms with why he is being held, whilst in our lead story KPG compares her prison life to a reality TV show...**

Prison life in Tenerife is one big reality show, including "Big Brother", "I'm a celebrity - get me out of here", "X-Factor" and probably many other programmes not yet invented.

On arrival at the island's women's prison, you are equipped with a general survival pack: two sheets, one pillow (rock hard) with case, one blanket, a plastic cup, and plastic

balloons on birthdays.) We also get bin bags. No, they're not to put over your head, they are actually used to put rubbish in! Two one-litre bottles of bleach and one bottle of bath gel are also supplied, which for those who bathe and clean their cells comes in handy, although not sufficient to get through the month. Then it's down to the patio to mix with your new



cutlery (shining red ones, not to be lost!). Then, once installed in your cell, with en-suite bathroom, the second part of your survival kit is given to you - this kit is supplied monthly. Its contents? Three toilet rolls, comb, toothpaste and condoms... lots of them! (These are quite handy to use as

inmates. This is when the "Big Brother" bit starts.

Have you ever seen a queue in Spain? No! Well, don't expect to find one in a Spanish prison either. Whatever, in normal circumstances, one would queue up for, here it's just one big fight to get to the front. If you are

>>continued on page 7

# Your letters

In a break from tradition, I'm going to handover this space to Gareth Hole – many of you may know Gareth as a caseworker at Prisoners Abroad. Sadly for everyone here, Gareth recently left us to take up a position with the Probation Service – but we're delighted that he will be putting the experience and skills he gained here to a good use.

*"After two and a half years of working at Prisoners Abroad, the time has come for me to move onto a new position. It has been a tough decision, as I have very much enjoyed my time at Prisoners Abroad – never before have I had a job which I have felt passionate about in the way that I have here. It is not often that you can use the skills and knowledge you have to provide guidance and support to others, and I certainly feel privileged to have had the opportunity to do so. Whether it has been writing to someone facing deportation, guiding them about what will happen upon their return to the UK, solving a problem for someone who has been unable to do so due to their circumstances, or helping a family member with queries about their relative's incarceration, I hope I have been of help to anyone who has spoken or written to me. I wish each and every one of you well for the future and can assure you all that you will remain in my thoughts for a very long time to come. All the best and take care, Gareth"*

A new caseworker will be joining the team in the next month or so, but in the meantime I'm sure I speak for everyone when I wish Gareth the very best in his future career.

As ever, the newsletter is brim full of entertaining and informative articles, so my thanks go to the respective contributors. The Newsletter would be nothing without your help, so if there's something on your chest please write in and share it with everyone!



## Your letters

Dear Sir

I am in Georgia, USA, and the conditions here are not the best. We are two to a cell, there is no air conditioning, and it gets very hot, about 98°F (37°C) degrees most days, and that brings out the gnats (little flies). We have about seven minutes to eat our meals, and on the weekend we only get fed at breakfast and tea (no lunch). We do not get paid for working, and I work in the kitchens three days a week from 2:30am to 10:30am. I do not get any money from England, so I have to survive on what I make from pilfering from the kitchens!

**SJ, USA**

Dear Sir

I have been in prison in California for 14 years now. After spending my first three years in the Los Angeles County Jail awaiting trial I thought: "What have I done to deserve this?". What I'm talking about is the food. County Jail food was very, very bad. After three months in a reception prison I was sent to CMC East Prison, the Country Club of California's State prisons. The food was excellent: hot breakfast, lunch and dinner. All other prisons serve only hot breakfast and dinner, with just a sandwich, fruit and a cookie for lunch. At CMC they served rib eye steak, pizza, excellent Mexican meals, bacon, fried eggs, watermelon, and desserts fit for cake shops. I never had a bad meal there in three years. Then I was sent to the worst and most violent prison at the time to spend 12 months in solitary. Immediately the quality of food went down. Minimal amounts, and stale bread and snacks for lunch. I have been to six other prisons since leaving the SHU (Secure Housing Unit) and the food has just gotten worse ever since.

I think part of the problem with the prison food is that the State Prison budget has priorities, and providing nutritious

food that actually tastes good is no longer one of them in a prison system that is overcrowded. There are 170,000 inmates in 33 prisons which were designed for just 100,000. We are allowed to have our family and friends send us money to purchase food items from the prison canteen. Different prisons sell various food items: noodles, rice, beans, dried meat, tuna, and other food you can fix up a tasty meal with. My mum tries to send me money every now and then so me and my cellmate can order as much food from the canteen as possible. We skip the dinner hall for the most part. They still serve fried eggs for breakfast on Sundays which I go to eat, and when we have hot dogs for dinner. My cellmate is certified in electronics repair, so when people's radios or CD players breaks, they bring it to him to fix for a reasonable fee. He usually asks for food items from the canteen. We seem to get by okay.

I know there are a lot of you who are locked up in foreign prisons where the food is so bad, or you don't even get half as much as in California, so I know what the prison serves here is far better than some of you have it. Over the last 14 years prison food here has gotten a lot worse, but is still probably better than a lot of countries some of my fellow Brits are locked up in. I hope things get better for all of you soon.

**Colin, USA.**

Dear Sir

I have been on remand in New York since May 2007. I am a Druid priest – the main religious practice is that we only eat and drink pure and natural uncooked (raw) food, free from chemicals (organic or wild). I have been eating this way for over nine years – I am a raw vegan.

When I got here I told them about this and they said they could not help me. So for the first six days I just drank boiled tap water (which is good here in New York, free from chemicals). Then I

# Your letters

was given a special diet which is normally, given to Jews and Muslims, called commonfare, which is fruit, fresh vegetables and kosher meat and fish. I tried the vegetables but they made me ill (too many chemicals). I ate the fruit but after a couple of weeks they had the same effect.

I can buy honey from the prison shop, and was also given corn grits sometimes for breakfast. I would mix the grits, honey and water together. After five weeks I tried mackerel which I also purchased from the shop. I was only eating this once a week but it started to give me haemorrhoids and upset my stomach. So I can't do this any more – remember I am a vegan). The honey has started to give me heartburn, so I am just left with powdered corn grits and boiled water.

I have just got the forms I need to get my religion recognised, but this can take up to 120 days. My trial date is in six weeks so I should be okay until then as I have fasted before. For the other prisoners the food is not so bad, but around 40% buy and cook their own food.

## LSD, USA

Dear Sir

I am a prisoner in Dillnynia Women's prison in Australia. It's my first time in jail – I am not proud of myself. The one thing I have discovered here is that I have a voice. I have joined the choir, and all the women I have met from all over the world have treated me with compassion and kindness. Girls, thank you! Dillnynia is a fairly new prison, set in woodlands and built on old farm land, but it is infested with flies. There are also rats which come out at night – sometimes I feel like the Pied Piper of Hamlyn!

We live in bungalows which sleep 10 women. We have the option to cook our own food, but the food in the prison shop is expensive, and although you can work the wage is low. We're locked in from 6pm, when it's TV time when we watch DVDs. These things are luxury, but nothing takes away the love and loneliness in your heart. I am glad I came to this prison as I know others have it far worse.

## VN, Australia

Dear Sir

It's a pleasure to take part in the newsletter, and I have a couple of tips and advice about keeping healthy and fit behind bars.

The first thing that is important to keep fit in prison is motivation, which in the circumstances is very hard to find. However, it's one of the little things that we have left, and so we have to take advantage of it. It is important not to exercise more than the body can take because we can run ourselves down physically. Mind and body are brothers, so we must see our levels of nutrition are equal to our exercise. Even if the food in prison is filling it may contain such small amounts of vitamins and minerals that strenuous exercise could be difficult.

Try exercising a little for a couple of weeks and if you feel okay build it up over time. Keep well and keep fit.

## Andrew, Spain

For our new series on staying fit, turn to page 11!

## Your contributions please

Future editions of Prisoners Abroad News will feature the discussion points listed below. Please send any comments you have to the editor at the address below. If you have any ideas for future discussion points, please also feel free to write in with your suggestions.

**Writing to a pen-pal.** What makes a good pen-pal? How do you write an interesting letter from prison? If you are a regular correspondent, share your stories and experience with our readers. On page eight you can read advice for new pen-pals from Betty, one of our long-term writers.

**Deportation** is an issue that affects many prisoners, and always brings up lots of questions. Will my family be able to join me? Can I fight the decision? Will I be allowed back in to visit the country? If you are being deported, or if it is something which may happen, why not share your experiences with others.

**Keeping fit.** Following on from Andrew's letter, we're going to be offering fitness tips in the newsletter on a regular basis. Do you find these tips useful? What facilities are available for you to keep fit? Last year we heard from a Briton who was able to play football in Brazil, and we're always interested to hear more stories of your sporting excellence.

Being in prison means being cut off from the outside world, so how do you keep in touch with the news? We're interested to hear how you keep up-to-date with what's happening, from global events to news from your local community.

## 30th Anniversary

Prisoners Abroad was formed in 1978, and so we will be celebrating our 30th anniversary throughout 2008. The winter newsletter will feature some stories from our past, and hopefully some recollections from people we've been in touch with over the years. If you have been in contact with us for a number of years, why not write about what Prisoners Abroad means to you. All letters are welcome, and we are especially keen to hear from anybody who has been in touch with us from the early days.

## Send your letters to:

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# Transferring to the UK

**We have always received a high number of questions relating to transferring back to the UK. In this special article, Gary, who himself transferred from the USA, explains how the process works.**

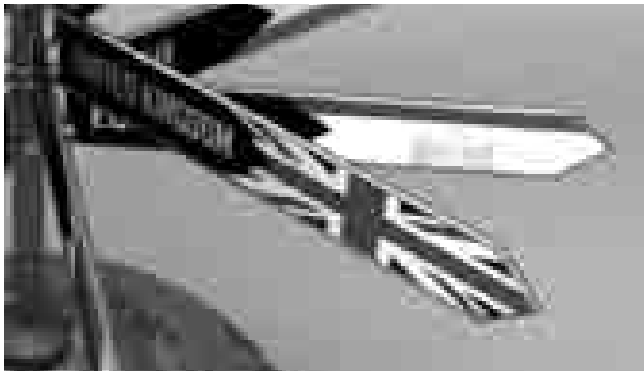
Treaty transfer is an arrangement where prisoners serving sentences abroad can apply to have their sentences transferred to a home prison. For British prisoners, that means that you can serve the remainder of your time in a UK jail, provided that you fulfil the following criteria.

First, there must be a transfer treaty between the UK and the country where you are incarcerated. Countries which do include USA, Canada, Australia, Thailand and most European countries.

Second, you need to have more than nine months left to serve on your sentence.

And third, you must be convicted, and facing no outstanding court cases (including appeals). Usually you will need to have paid off your court fines and confiscation orders, although this varies and some countries will forgive small amounts.

The local British Consulate will be a most valuable source of information. In my case, when I was in jail in the USA I dealt with the pro-consul at the Consulate in New York. This was very useful to me, as she supplied me with much information on sentence calculations, and how I could expect my sentence to be calculated in the UK.



## Calculating your sentence after transfer

As it stands, anyone convicted before April 4th 2005 would be classified under the UK parole laws if they were to transfer - although the situation depends on whether the original sentence was shorter or longer than four years. If it was longer than four years, they will be released after serving half of their "balance to serve"; that is, half of the remainder of the time at the point of arrival in the UK. If the sentence was more than four years, they would be eligible for parole at the halfway point in their sentence. Their non-parole date (when you get released if you have behaved, but the parole board turned you down) is calculated by looking at the date you transfer and then totalling how many

days are left on your sentence, and multiplying that by two-thirds. Confused? I'll give you an example.

Let's say that Fred got 16 years in the USA. He was sentenced in June 2004. He applies to transfer, and comes over in June 2008, four years to the day (by chance) after he started his time.

As Fred has a 16-year sentence and was sentenced before 2005, he is eligible for parole in the UK after eight years, that is June 2012. His non-parole date is calculated as follows.

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Start of sentence  | June 2004 |
| End of sentence    | June 2020 |
| Came to UK         | June 2008 |
| Time left to serve | 12 years  |

Two-thirds of 12 years is eight years, so even if Fred doesn't get parole he will be released in June 2016.

The law in the UK changed on April 4th 2005, and this affects anyone sentenced from 2005 who wishes to transfer to the UK. There is no longer parole; instead there is automatic release at the halfway point of the 'balance to serve' (ie the halfway point between your date of arrival in the UK and the end of your sentence). Let's do another example.

Bill gets 10 years in France in April 2006. He applies to transfer, and comes over in April 2008, exactly two years after he started his sentence. Bill falls under the new law in the UK because he was arrested after 2005. There is no parole, just the following calculation to make.

|                    |                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Came to UK         | April 2008                      |
| End of sentence    | April 2016 (10 years from 2006) |
| Time left to serve | 8 years                         |

Half of eight years is four years, so Bill will be released in 2012.

Of course, one thing about transferring is that you can't actually plan or predict when you come over, so it's difficult to calculate exact release dates at the outset. But it's probably dawned on you that the earlier you come to Britain, the earlier you will be released. For example, if Bill delayed his transfer and came back in 2012 he wouldn't get out of jail in the UK until 2014.

Transferring may not be right for every Brit abroad. For instance, Canada gives parole after a third of the sentence, so it's not worth transferring to a UK jail from Canada as you'll only do more time inside. But I was in the federal US penal system where there is no parole, just a measly 54 days a year good time, so transfer was a no-brainer.

# Transferring to the UK

The other thing about applying for a transfer is that either side can refuse you – so that means that the local authorities have it in their power to stop you going back to the UK.

The first thing I did, after I lost my appeal, was to contact the British Consulate, and they sent me details on how the sentence is calculated. I then talked to my case manager and I signed a form saying I wanted to transfer.

The institution had 90 days to send of the file to the US Justice Department, which they used. The Justice Department are the ones who are most likely to reject your application. I was relieved when, five months later, I got a letter from the Consulate saying they had accepted my transfer. Everything then passed to London for their approval [if you're applying to transfer back to Scotland or Northern Ireland, the decision will be made in Edinburgh and Belfast respectively - Ed].

Two months later I was told by the Consulate that my application had been approved. The first official note I got from the US side was a court summons some two months later, over nine months after my initial application. The summons was for a removal hearing at the nearest federal courthouse. When I went there, each hearing lasted about 10 minutes, was quite relaxed, and I just had to sign a few documents. After that I was sent to the Metropolitan Correctional Centre (MCC), where all Europeans are sent prior to being repatriated.

I was in the MCC for about three weeks; I had to sign some more documents. I was not told when I would be returned, for security reasons.

One day I was in the exercise yard when I was called to come to the desk. Waiting for me were two US Marshalls (the ones who look like extras from police Academy) and two suited British police officers. It was looking at the US and British police side-by-side that I realised I really wanted to go home, after four years living in New York and another three in jail. It was my repatriation day, and the whole transfer process had taken exactly 12 months.

The transfer itself was memorable. We had a convoy of two police cars. I was in handcuffs, waist chain and leg irons as they drove at breakneck speed through the side streets of Brooklyn and Queens all the way to JFK airport, with sirens blazing. We stopped at the airport police station for the final paperwork, and I watched the sun go down on distant Manhattan on a beautiful warm, early spring day. My love affair with New York was over.

With nightfall approaching, we drove to the British Airways jet and (still in cuffs and irons) I walked up the steps and onto the jet. The marshals then came on, undid the cuffs and chains and asked the British (into whose control I was being delivered) how I would be restrained for the flight. I will never forget their look of astonishment when they got the answer: "Oh we don't restrain prisoners during the flight."

The Marshalls then reminded me that they were armed, and said they would wait just outside the plane. They left. One of the British policemen said, in his Yorkshire accent, "Everything's going to be alright now, son". And it was. The passengers came onto the plane, the air hostesses were really friendly, and it was like a regular plane journey. Okay, I couldn't order brandy, but the hostesses spoilt me a little which was nice after doing time in the US system.

We arrived at Heathrow the following morning, and I stayed on the plane with the two policemen whilst everyone else got off. Two more police boarded the plane, put a simple pair of cuffs on me, and I walked onto British soil (tarmac) clutching my pillowcase full of possessions (handluggage only, no metal, no fluids). I got into the waiting police van and was driven to HMP Wandsworth, where all repatriated prisoners go [female prisoners go to HMP Holloway, also in London - Ed].

By the time you read this I should be home, as I hope to get parole in January 2008. If I do, and I should do, I will have saved three years. Even if I don't, I'll be released in December 2009, so will have saved one year.

I personally think it's a good idea to transfer, as long as you calculate your dates correctly. There are one or two other things to consider. You will get a proper criminal record, so only transfer back if you have a longish sentence. I had a sentence of seven years and three months. The other thing is, you don't know how long it will take to transfer. I saw two other Brits in the MCC – one had waited six months, the other two years. You should count on 12 to 15 months. [Other countries may be longer, especially if English isn't the main language and so documents need to be translated – Ed]. But if you decide to do it, do it as soon as possible.

**Prisoners Abroad has an updated factsheet on transferring to the UK, which explains which countries are eligible and how to calculate your release date, as well as answering other common questions. To obtain a copy, please write to the Casework Team at the usual address.**

# The ICE Man Cometh

**Philip M Jones spent 19 years living in the USA before being deported by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) . On his return, he wrote a book, “Diaries of doing time until the ICE men cometh” describing his time in San Diego correctional facilities. The following extracts are from the end of the book, and recount his arrival back in the UK.**

When we arrived on British soil at Heathrow Airport, all the passengers were still seated when the stewardess came up to me with the envelope that had my British passport enclosed. She had a stern look on her face; she never uttered a word, just handed me the envelope, said nothing, and walked off. I said, ‘thank you’, as she headed off back to the exit door to say goodbye to passengers.

The document envelope had instructions on the front to the stewardess:

Please do not place these documents in the hands of any alien concerned.

The cost of my flight was \$239.50, one-way of course. Quite a deal, I thought, for an American Airlines flight from Los Angeles to London Heathrow on a Boeing 777 jet. No stops, of course, and I was not met by any immigration officer when on British soil; I just had a warm smile from the immigration officer and was welcomed back to the UK as I walked through British customs and immigration!

## Life after prison

The after-effects of prison still linger on into my life in everyday society. I still wake in the very early hours of the morning, only this time I hear the dawn chorus of



Philip Jones

the birds singing before sunrise. This exchange is a lot better than the constant loud snoring of many inmates or the clang of steel doors. It is difficult to adjust to life, not really knowing what purpose or position one now has to establish.

I still look to every day that I am free with anticipation and excitement, and I have faith that everything will work out. It will take a lot of hard work, researching, meeting people, phone calls and travelling to places for me to eventually have a place to rest my head that I can call home. Just having a roof over my head is a start and being able to walk free on the streets in the rain or sun, in the day or night of any town or city is such a wonderful feeling. I just have to pick up the pieces of life and carry on.

People on the outside also prejudge people who are incarcerated. I can understand in some ways how a person on the outside wouldn't want any contact with an inmate. I asked friends on the outside, who have known me well over the years, to carry out some requests for me. They refused, and I respect their decision. What I wanted to achieve was to only place some small amounts, \$50 each, in commissary accounts for the inmates who were a tremendous amount of help to me. I took care of this when I was finally released. Smith, who works for 60 cents a day, getting up at 5am to go to work in the kitchens (eight hours a day), earning \$14.40 a month was one person I wanted to help.

I am happy to have been able to do this for the guys that are still inside. They can now buy some comfort food every week.

**Phil's book, “Diaries of Doing Time Until the ICE Men Cometh” is available now, priced £5.99 (ISBN 1-84748-093-4).**

# A view from Tenerife

>>continued from page 1

accustomed to shopping on the first day of the January sales you would probably be quite good at getting your coffee, bread and jam at 8:30am. By 9am 130 women have all finished their breakfast and are getting prepared for "medication time"!

If you haven't "flown over the cuckoo's nest" by then, your pills or methadone is your next treat on the list of daily activities. Not everybody has medication, but every now and again a large one-gram paracetamol comes in handy. On a good day you can get away without taking one, on a bad day you'll need to take it before the post is handed out. Did you know that you can fit about 100 women in a lobby which is just nine square foot? Luckily, as the post is opened, scrutinised and handed over to its owner, the pile of women gets smaller. Love letters are the in-thing here. A man from the men's wing writes to you, and you write back (if you want to!). From that moment, "love is in the air"! Some women are lucky and receive a photo with their second letter, therefore putting a face to their "loved one".

One high point of the week or month is a trip to the theatre. That's where the "X-factor" bit comes to life. Watching a show with dancers, actors, musicians and comics, all prisoners, is quite good fun. They do their best to entertain "the troops" and some are actually quite good. Whatever the show is, it breaks the monotony of the daily routine. It also has another benefit: you could be lucky and see your "loved one" in the theatre, as both men and women go to see the shows.

Some inmates try to go back to studying, whilst others just pass the day doing nothing or complaining about the food etc. Some women learn the basics - reading and writing or counting. Now this could seem incredible to someone on the outside, but, as heartbreaking as it may sound, many inmates have had no chance of studying. After being brought up on continual abuse, they carry on abusing themselves, living under the effects of drugs. Here they are offered another chance to clean up their act. Some take it whilst others continue as before.

**“One high point of the month is a trip to the theatre. Watching a show with dancers, actors, musicians, and comics, all prisoners, is good fun.”**

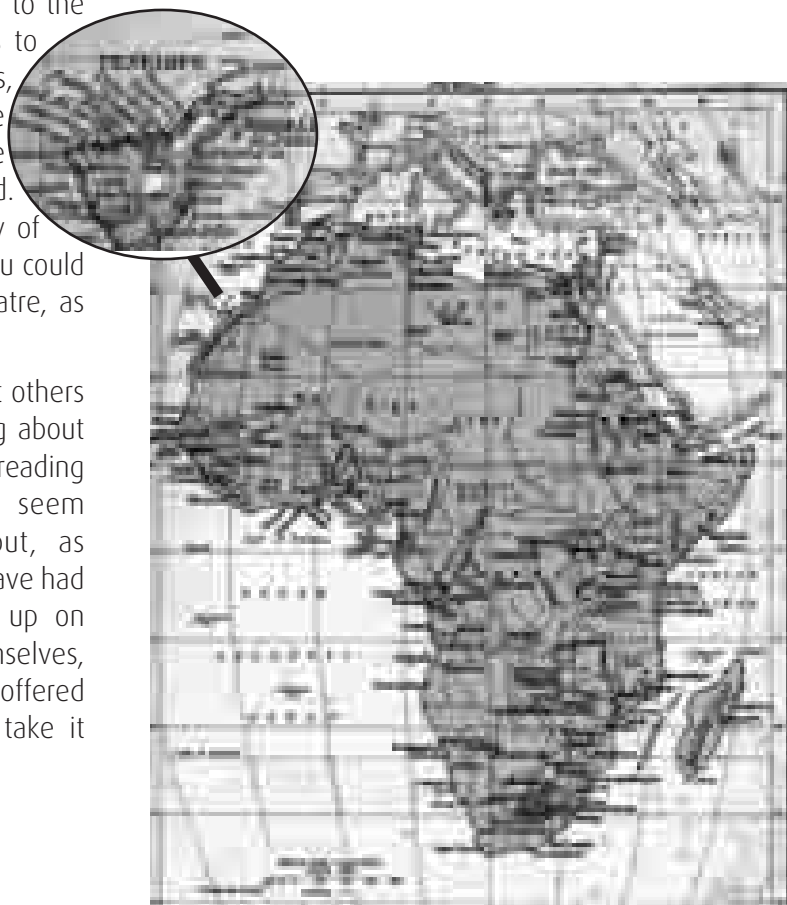
Lunch arrives at 1:30. Some go into the dining room to eat, whilst others (me included) just go in to do the CSI bit on the food, which basically entails dissecting it to see what it was before being cooked... good fun. After lunch the sirens sound, we are re-counted and locked up in our cells until 4:30 (for the very Spanish siesta).

After our siesta we go back out to the patio. The afternoon routine is much more relaxed. Drink coffee and smoke a few cigs, if you have the money to buy them. Money here is a real need. Without it, once your "survival kit" toilet rolls are used up, if you can't buy them you're back to the "bad old days". Big problem! The ink of the Spanish newspapers rubs off a lot easier than

that of The Mail, Sun or Daily Mirror! Ha ha!

Teatime is at 7:30. Once again a re-count and back to the dining room to repeat the lunchtime routine. At 8:30 the siren sounds and... back to your cells until the next day. One day more in, one day less... and so it continues, life in prison in Tenerife.

**KPG, Spain.**



# Becoming a pen-pal

**Betty Costello has been a pen-pal with Prisoners Abroad since the early nineties. Here she gives some practical advice on writing to prisoners.**

## Why write?

I have always written to let the prisoner know that he or she is not forgotten, that somebody on the outside cares about what is happening to them. Most of Prisoners Abroad's clients rarely get visitors, and you only have to have been in hospital to know what it feels like when the ward is full of visitors but you don't have anyone. It's a terrible feeling.

It's the same with mail. Lots of prisons read out a list of names of people who have mail each morning. Imagine what it feels like if your name never gets read out. If you are writing to a prisoner, you don't just have to send letters. Send postcards or greetings cards as well; any excuse to give the prisoner the pleasure of receiving something through the post. All it needs is "I saw this and thought of you" to give a prisoner a lift when he hears his name called out. Look out for funny or relevant newspaper or magazine articles. Whilst some prisons don't allow prisoners to receive anything other than letters, the mail-room usually accepts flat pieces of paper stapled to your letter.



Betty Costello has been writing to prisoners for over 10 years

However, the original idea of the pen-pal scheme was to inform those who have been away from the UK for a long time, what it is like now. Work into your letters descriptions of everyday life in modern Britain.

Always try to remember how difficult it can be for a

prisoner to write a letter to you. Even if, prior to imprisonment, they were well educated, they might well be going through a traumatic time when they can hardly think straight, let alone write a sensible letter. Even if that is not a problem, then the conditions in which they find themselves might make writing difficult. Most likely your reply will be written while the prisoner is sitting on his bunk in a noisy shared cell, balancing the writing paper on a bit of stiff cardboard.

## Practical advice

Don't use air-mail envelopes, the ones where you write on the inside of the envelope before folding it. When letters are opened in the prison mail room they are often cut open along the top, sometimes by a slitting machine (especially in the USA). This can remove a section of the envelope, so if you've written on the inside your words will be lost. Although it can be slightly more expensive, it's definitely worth writing on separate paper, making sure you fold it to ensure that it's not right up against the edge of the envelope where it could be damaged by a slitting machine.



If you can, I find it's best to type letters on a computer. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, it will help the prisoner read the letter. Some prisoners have poor eyesight, or they may have difficulty reading your handwriting. Also, people with dyslexia often find it easier to read typewritten words.

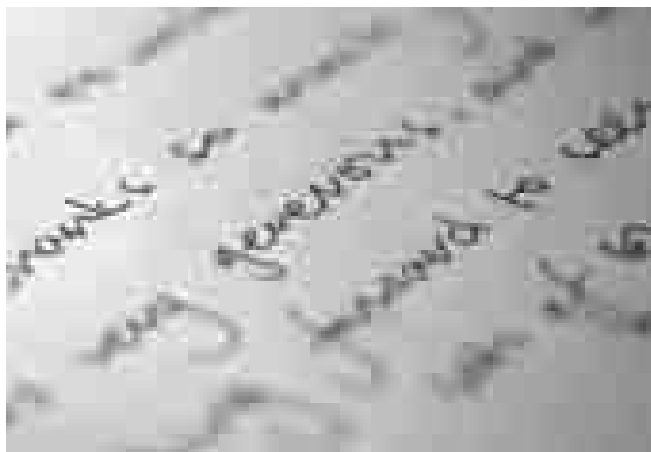
Secondly, incoming mail is periodically vetted in prisons. If they cannot easily read your handwriting, they may delay the letter. Using a computer makes it easy to read.

# Becoming a pen-pal

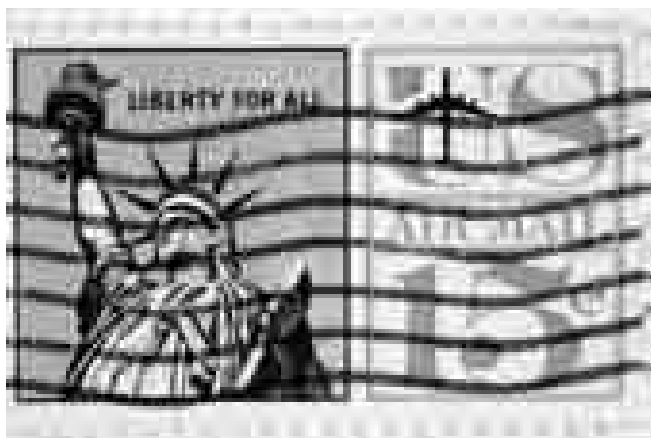
I would also advise that you number your letters. This will help the prisoner know if a letter has gone astray – otherwise he might be confused about something you have written, especially if you are having an ongoing conversation in your letters. Numbering letters is much easier if you write them on a computer.

If you have a letter set up on your computer you can add little bits to it in the times between writing. A funny thing that happened to you, something to make the prisoner smile, items of interest, little things you would forget if you just sat down to write a long letter in one sitting.

When it comes to actually writing the letter, you should consider writing across just half the page. This allows the prisoner to write on the other half and send it back as a reply. Just remember that you will need to



send two copies of your letter; one to be returned and one for the prisoner to keep. Again, this is no problem if you are using a computer – you can simply print two copies of the letter. But you should print on both sides of the paper – it will reduce your postage costs, and help the prisoner who has a limited amount of storage space.



You should also consider the size of the font you are using. Is it big enough for the prisoner to read? If the prisoner has a problem with his eyes he might not want to tell you about it. Spectacles are difficult to obtain in many countries, so it is best to always use a font size of at least 12, and you may want to use 14 if the prisoner is advanced in years or has problems with his eyes.

## What to write about

The most important piece of advice I can offer is always, from the very first letter, try to write as if the prisoner was already a friend, and use the same words and language as you would during speech.

- Write about subjects that interest the prisoner. If the prisoner is interested in a subject about which you know nothing, then try to learn. Being a pen-pal is a two-way process; both sides can learn from each other.
- Be prepared to seek information on the prisoner's behalf, and to tell him the truth. Prisoners may ask about prison transfers, life in the UK, or even subjects like their old school.
- Ask the prisoner to describe his daily routine and his cellmate (if he has one).
- Be honest with the prisoner and, if they arise, don't be afraid to tackle difficult issues.
- But don't forget to write about yourself! By sharing yourself with the prisoner, as you would with a friend, you can only enhance the relationship, and you will receive more interesting letters in return.

**Do you have any advice for pen-pals? Write to the Editor to share your thoughts with our readership.**

## TOP TIPS

- **Write friendly and open letters, from the very first**
- **Write in short paragraphs**
- **Number your letters**
- **Make sure you address the envelope correctly!**

# Another view from Tenerife

On Christmas Day, 2006 I received the greatest present ever from my fiancée, when, after a year's trying for a baby finally she was pregnant! I was ecstatic. I had a busy business here in Tenerife, all my family had flown over to spend Christmas with me, life was good, and had been for the previous 11 years. On the 29th December I was busy getting ready for New Year's Eve when a plain clothes policeman identified himself to me and asked for a word. No problem. He asked me to confirm my name, and could I come to the station as the 'boss' wanted to speak with me. I said no problem, and went back into work and told the staff I would be away for a few hours. I got into the back of the unmarked police car, whereupon handcuffs were put on me. I protested and asked why, and they told me they were under orders from the boss.

When I got to the Police Station I was asked to sign a form, which I refused as they would not tell me why I was there. I was taken to the cells where I recognised five other Brits. I asked why they were there and all replied "I don't know". Two days later I was taken to court and asked questions about the other defendants which I could not possibly know the answers to. I asked my lawyer and the judge what my charge was and was told that the case is *secreto summario*, which roughly translates as 'secret case'!

I was in solitary confinement for New Year's Eve 2006-2007. My whole world was torn apart worrying about my fiancée and my unborn child. *Secreto summario*, according to information in a pamphlet from the Foreign Office, is used in Spain in cases involving national security, terrorism and crimes against the State! There are now several British people in this prison in Tenerife on *secreto summario* charges. We have learnt a little but know that all of us are on the same case, and it involves drug trafficking. My house, car or business have never been searched by the police. I have never even taken an illegal drug before. The only thing most of us have in common is that we all know each other as we all live in a small ex-pat

community. Some of the people involved in the case may be guilty of something, but it seems the police have rounded up the suspects and anyone acquainted with them. As of today I have been sat here for 396 days without being told why!

My fiancée gave birth to our first child in August last year and sadly I was not there. Now, due to financial pressure, she has had to leave the island. The mental pressure is enormous. Try to imagine everything being taken away from you and not being told why! This is actually happening in Europe, and the British Consulate can't get involved with judicial procedures. There are older gentlemen on the same case as me, and I really do fear for their health, mentally and physically.

The prison is actually okay. The wardens are decent people and tend to feel sorry for us as they know it is wrong that most of us are here. I take each day as it comes and have made some great friends in here. The scary thing though is I can be held *secreto summario* for up to four years – I pray to God not. I am assured by my lawyer that I will be able to get bail once the evidence is opened, but when will that be? Am I still in Europe??

**Anon, Spain.**

**Although Prisoners Abroad cannot get involved in judicial matters, there are a number of other organisations who can help. In particular, Fair Trials International help people whose fundamental rights have been abused or have suffered a miscarriage of justice in a criminal justice system outside their home country. Prisoners Abroad has a factsheet listing other groups that may be able to help. To request a copy of this factsheet, or to contact Fair Trials International, please write to Prisoners Abroad at our usual address.**



# Keeping Fit

**Over the next few issues we're going to be giving you some basic fitness tips, to help you stay in shape during your time inside. These tips are designed to be helpful to everyone, whatever your current level of fitness is, and however much space or equipment you have. In this first instalment, we guide you through some of the things you'll need to consider from the start.**

## Warming-up

Every exercise session should start with a warm-up and finish with a cool-down. The warm-up should raise your body temperature, increase your heart beat and breathing, and mobilise your joints. Even on its own, these exercises should help you stay supple and keep your joints in good working order.

You should start with a series of mobility exercises. These are gentle movements performed while stationary, to help warm-up your major joints. You should perform each exercise five times. When standing to do these exercises, your feet should be slightly more than shoulder-width apart.



**Neck:** Gently drop your chin towards your chest. Now, slowly rotate it to the left. Repeat, but rotate to the right.

**Shoulders:** Bring your shoulders up your ears, and then roll them backwards and down. Swing both arms together; first forwards five times, and then backwards.

**Trunk:** Put your hands on your waist, and gently rotate your torso to the left and right, keeping your hips still. Next, drop your hands to your sides, and slide each hand in turn down your thighs, bending the trunk to each side alternately. Again, keep your hips still.

**Hips:** Make a big circle with your hips, first clockwise, then anti-clockwise.



**Thighs:** Bring each knee alternately up to your chest, in a slow and controlled fashion. Next, bend your leg so that your foot is behind your bottom. Repeat five times for each leg.

**Ankles:** Whilst standing, raise one foot slightly. Alternately point your toes and flex your foot. Circle your ankle, in both directions. Repeat with your other foot.

You're now ready to get your pulse up before starting on your main exercise. You can do this by running around the yard, or even marching on the spot. Whatever you do, you should start slowly and then build up, so that after about four minutes your pulse is increased and you are breathing fairly heavily. You shouldn't push yourself too hard at this stage. The idea is simply to get your heart and muscles warmed up so that you are ready for your main exercise session – which we'll guide you through in the next edition of *Prisoners Abroad News*.



# Poetry corner

## The Story of the Pear

The winter was o'er, and blossom was blooming.  
Spring became Maytime, and Summer was looming  
White petals on breezes; now fruit could be seen  
For those who look closely – pears: small hard and green.

Their roots searched for moisture and watered them well  
Their skin felt deep warmth, as the sun's rays they fell  
From childhood and youth, then to adults they grew  
God's mellow fruitfulness; natural and true.

Autumn arrived. The fruit: large ripe and mottled  
Were harvested in; then tinned, dried, bottled  
But one pear: a lady from England decreed  
Must stay juicy-fresh, to fulfil a good deed.

For sad and alone, in a prison there dwelt  
An Englishman living; who now rarely felt  
The love of humanity, the simplest touch,  
To look for a smile was often too much.

Romania, of course, is too far away  
For friends and relations to just spend the day  
No-one came when visiting times would allow  
So this special lady decided to vow.

She vowed that she'd search, seek and finally find  
Romanian folk – so incredibly kind  
Who, on her behalf, would visit the prison  
and thus carry out her personal mission.

The World held its breath as that special day came,  
Selflessness seeking neither fortune nor fame.  
When three innocent folk: to prison they trod  
And so entered Hell with the presence of God.

The convict therein, as normal was dreaming  
Of life after Prison; perfect and gleaming  
What else can he do with 24 7  
And only a bed as transport to Heaven.

By the cell came a guard with news quite bizarre  
Visitors were waiting but not from afar  
Bewildered and confused; escorted away  
Thinking that prison-humour must be at play.

A smile, he first noticed reduced him to tears  
Anxiety melted, and so did his fears  
Unlike others he'd met; these meant him no harm  
For the first time in months, he felt only calm.

Bags of food they brought him; ham, peaches and cheese.  
First-class fine fare, for which he only said "please"  
Please spend the next hour, simply chatting with me  
Your time more important than all China's tea.

So two sisters and their brother: siblings three  
Who work countless hours and are rarely free  
Sat talking with him, about nothing and much  
But, in giving their time, gave God's gentle touch.

Then, back to his cell, with bags overflowing  
His heart full of joy, his soul simply glowing  
No judgement they'd given; just love, time and food  
And took from the prison his depressive mood.

These gifts, freely given, so gladly received  
From Romanians, yet by England conceived  
And when he unpacked, the so juicy fresh pear  
Kindness from many – friends – the symbol of care.

**Anon, Romania**

---

## A Free Man

The pillow still wet, from the tears the night before.  
The heartache that stays all night, since they locked the cell  
door

You are on your own again, and there is no way out.  
No-one to hear your crying, no-one to hear your shouts.  
Like your mates, you're locked away, no fun, no laughter  
from day to day.

But the day will come.

You will return to a normal life.

To return to your Mum and Dad, or your children and your  
wife.

So don't despair, hold on in there, and do the best you can.

Remember, one day, the door will open

And again you will be A FREE MAN.

**AP, Germany**

## City

The blood of the city coursing along the deep canyons  
With streams of reds and whites along with flashes of  
greens

People like cells, flowing without purpose or direction  
Forever repeating, yet new like a thousand dreams  
The sounds of vehicles blending into a rhythm's beat  
Always changing, like the road songs on the radio.

**ST, USA**

# Poetry corner

## The Debt

They sent us off to fight their war,  
when we came back they said forget the gore.  
They say, get a job and make a stand,  
but Vietnam produced a forgotten man.

No more fighting, is what they say,  
but it's a fight just living from day to day.  
If you get lost in the jungle of the mind,  
it's yourself you may never find.

When you snap, they put you in prison,  
and it's just another war for some.  
You keep on striving; no-one knows what for,  
no matter what, you can't forget the war.

Given a number, take away your name,  
after being in this place, you're never the same.  
Behind these walls, I may forever stay,  
but for which crime do I really pay?

**Morgan, USA**

## I close my eyes

Stuck in this cell with nowhere to go  
I close my eyes  
I think of home  
To be with my family  
Laughing joking, having fun  
Playing football with my sons  
My daughter is picking flowers with my Mum  
Even my brother and sister have come  
Where we sit under a tree shading from the morning sun  
Where the dog is watching the cat watching the birds  
Singing at the top of the tree  
Under the bright warm morning sun  
But now the time has come  
For me to leave all this  
Laughing and joking and fun  
To say goodbye  
I love you all  
I will see you soon  
When I close my eyes.

**PJS, Japan**



John Dryden

**Please send your poem to the Editor,  
at the address on the front page.**

## We Appreciate You

It's been 30 years this year, we all appreciate your help  
The kindness and commitment that you've shared can still be felt.  
You've bridged the gap between us and our families each day  
We appreciate your efforts and for you and yours we pray.  
Prisoners Abroad and all your staff we take this time  
To tell you that we're glad you're here and that you're doing fine.  
Please believe we love you not because of what you do  
Because you're special people your whole entire crew!!  
You've helped us make the best of being far away from home  
In every way you've proved you care and that we're not alone.

**Phil G, USA**

*John Dryden (1631 – 1700) was an influential English poet, literary critic, translator and playwright, who dominated the literary life of Restoration England to such a point that the period came to be known in literary circles as the Age of Dryden.*

## Happy the man

Happy the man, and happy he alone,  
He who can call today his own:  
He who, secure within, can say,  
Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today.  
Be fair or foul or rain or shine  
The joys I have possessed, in spite of fate, are mine.  
Not Heaven itself upon the past has power,  
But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour.

## Hidden Flame

I feed a flame within, which so torments me  
That it both pains my heart, and yet contents me:  
'Tis such a pleasing smart, and I so love it,  
That I had rather die than once remove it.

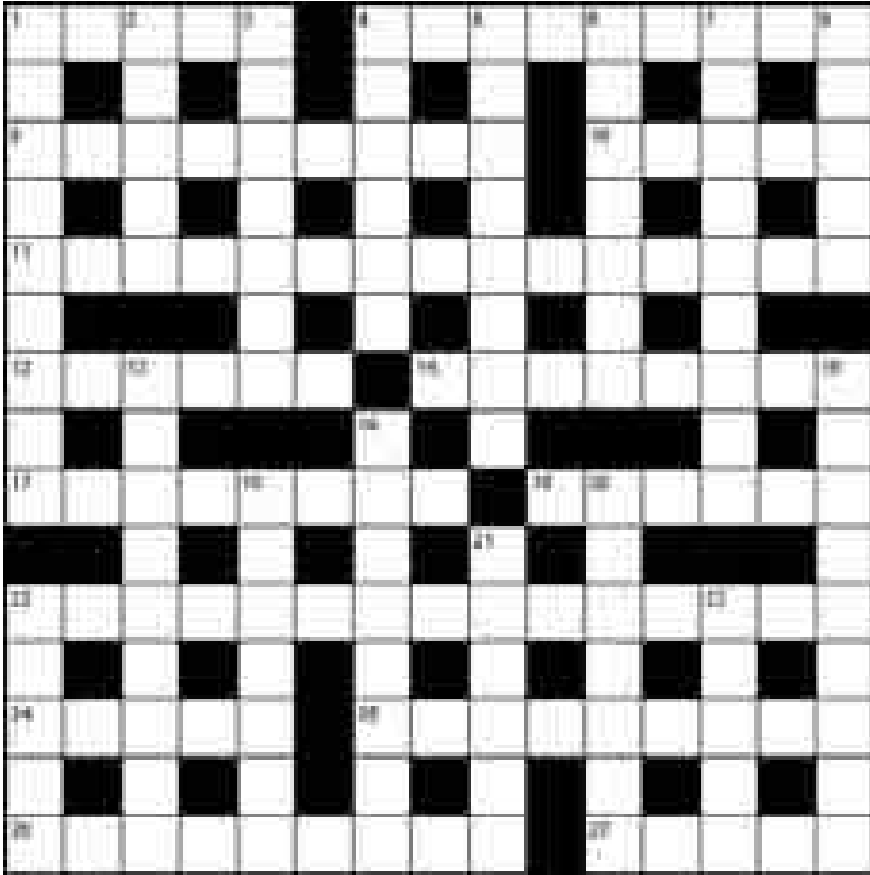
Yet he, for whom I grieve, shall never know it;  
My tongue does not betray, nor my eyes show it.  
Not a sigh, nor a tear, my pain discloses,  
But they fall silently, like dew on roses.

Thus, to prevent my Love from being cruel,  
My heart 's the sacrifice, as 'tis the fuel;  
And while I suffer this to give him quiet,  
My faith rewards my love, though he deny it.

On his eyes will I gaze, and there delight me;  
While I conceal my love no frown can fright me.  
To be more happy I dare not aspire,  
Nor can I fall more low, mounting no higher.

**John Dryden**

# Games and puzzles



## Across

- 1 Axes elm, possibly, to obtain woody tissue (5)  
 4 Wise guy runs story during interminable strike (5,4)  
 9 The Italian general is set back by information deficit ultimately - that's careless (9)  
 10 Wine producing region prepared for unfavourable weather? (5)  
 11, 22 **dn** I hope inn's cooking with some quality ingredients - thus observing this motto (4,4,3,3,1,5)  
 12 Powerful drug needed by hospital department (6)  
 14 Going hungry around Spain? Far from it (8)  
 17 Approved translation of Norse Edda mostly (8)  
 19 One has to go through the wardrobe to locate it (6)  
 22 Travelling bag accompanying wife to old road motel, perhaps (11,4)  
 24 I complain about her (5)  
 25 Slow scoring? (9)  
 26 Never failing to be naive at all times (9)  
 27 One is required from the stage designer - and then again, not! (5)

## Down

- 1 Will she get cross with husband that is very quietly engaged digesting a set of books? (9)  
 2 Stone has a new record at No 1 (5)  
 3 Pottery made originally by one in German city (7)  
 4 Have a mind to observe seizure (3,3)  
 5 As describes quite new pieces in collection? Yes and no (8)  
 6 Birds - cat's eating one of them (7)  
 7 Reportedly was short of an empty container for milk production? (9)  
 8 Shrewd woman invested in Cyprus (5)

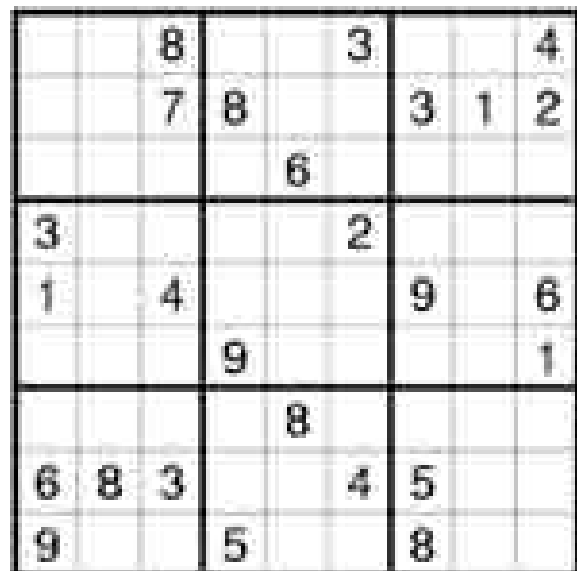
- 13 Henry VII stood for it - and vice versa (5,4)  
 15 Ostentatious dignitary is reserving love for the higher placed of the two Europeans (9)  
 16 Once more use fruit that's no good (2-6)  
 18 Swindling cartel includes a politician (7)  
 20 Article - one of five - on God by Italian philosopher (7)  
 21 Inert metal principally extracted with nitrogen (6)  
 22 See 11  
 23 I'm stoned, man - that's not right (5)

Crossword set by Alberich and provided by [www.freecrosswords.net](http://www.freecrosswords.net). Answers on the back page.

## Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. There's no maths involved, and there's only one correct solution. The answer is on the back page. Good luck!

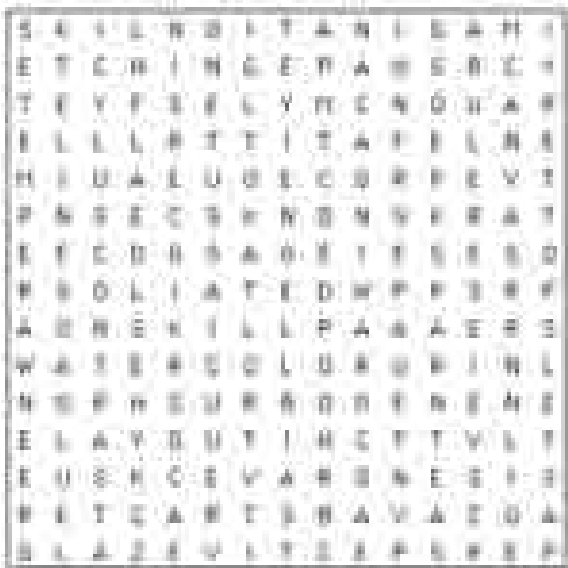
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Send your jokes and puzzles to the editor at the address on the front page

# Games and puzzles

Net



- |          |             |            |
|----------|-------------|------------|
| ABSTRACT | BLUE        | POSTER     |
| BRUSH    | GREENWARE   | POTTERY    |
| CANVAS   | IMAGINATION | PRINT      |
| COLLAGE  | FILM        | RULER      |
| CONTRAST | LAYOUT      | SCALE      |
| DETAIL   | LINES       | SHAPE      |
| DISPLAY  | MARVER      | SKETCH     |
| DRAWING  | ON          | SKILL      |
| EASEL    | PRINT       | STONEWARE  |
| ENGRAVE  | PASTELS     | STYLE      |
| ERASER   | PEN         | TEMPERA    |
| ETCHING  | PENCIL      | WATERCOLOR |
| FONT     | PERSPECTIVE | WOODCUT    |
| GLAZE    |             |            |

Copyright 2007 John R. Potter. John's wordsearch puzzle  
[www.thepotters.com/puzzles.html](http://www.thepotters.com/puzzles.html)

## Puzzles

1. Can you name the ten parts of the body which contain exactly three letters? (Hint: five of them are in your head.)
2. On a train, Smith, Robinson, and Jones are the fireman, brakeman, and the engineer, but NOT respectively. Also aboard the train are three businessmen who have the same names: a Mr. Smith, a Mr. Robinson, and a Mr. Jones. Using the clues below, can you determine the identity of the Engineer? (*Warning this puzzle is very difficult and will require a lot of thought*)

## Jokes

### Did you hear about...?

...the short fortune teller who escaped from prison?  
 He was a small medium at large!

...the butcher who backed up into the meat grinder?  
 He got a little behind in his work!

...the thief fell who fell into wet cement? He became a hardened criminal!

...the thief who stole a calendar? He got 12 months!

...the dentist and the manicurist who had an argument? They fought tooth and nail!

...the chicken that crossed the road? It was poultry in motion!

...the man who didn't pay his exorcist? He got repossessed!

...the guy whose whole left side was cut off? He's all right now!

...the dead batteries that were given away? They were free of charge!

### Random thoughts...

I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger.  
 Then it hit me.

The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Conference.

To write with a broken pencil is pointless.

A bicycle can't stand alone; it is two tired.

A will is a dead giveaway.

A backward poet writes inverse.

A lot of money is tainted: 'Taint yours, and 'taint mine.

A boiled egg is hard to beat.

When you've seen one shopping center, you've seen a mall.

# Backpage bulletin

## Evaluation

Many thanks to everyone who returned their evaluation form. We're very happy that so many of you said nice things about us, and that our efforts are appreciated. However, the questionnaire did highlight a weakness with some of the information sheets we send out, so we'll be working hard this year to try to improve these. Remember, if you ever have any comments about the way we work, please feel free to write to us to let us know what you think. All suggestions are gratefully received.

## Koestler Award for Art

Thank you to everyone who has sent us their artwork for the Koestler Award – we've had an extremely wide variety of works, ranging from pictures, poetry and short stories to a handmade chess set and a crocheted t-shirt to celebrate the football World Cup in 2010! We'll be handing out prizes in the next month or so, and will print / include photos of all the winning entries in the next newsletter.

Don't forget that although you may have missed the deadline for this year, the Koestler is an annual event, so please do send us your artwork for next year's competition. Simply send it to our normal address with your name and the title of the piece, and saying whether you want the item to be available for sale. There is a maximum of five entries per person.

## Reminder

Please note that Prisoners Abroad can only offer Resettlement services to people who have registered with us prior to their return to the UK. If you wish to use our services when you are released, it is essential that you complete an Authorisation Form. If you have any doubts about whether you, or a family member, are registered, please contact our Casework team.

## Thanks

Our thanks go to Alberich, John R Potter and [www.dailysudoku.co.uk](http://www.dailysudoku.co.uk) for allowing us to reprint their puzzles; the Noel Buxton Trust for their ongoing support with the production of the newsletter.

## Freepost envelopes

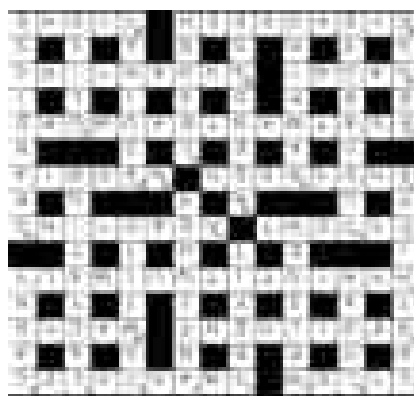
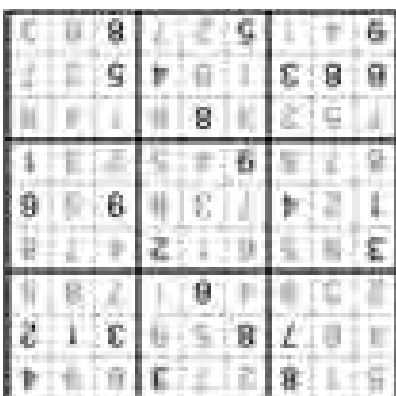
If you use freepost envelopes to have your mail forwarded, please note that it is not necessary to use a separate envelope for each letter. Several letters can be enclosed in a single envelope. Remember to tell us the addresses to which you wish them to be sent. This will help us to keep costs down.

## Prisoners Abroad

Please note that it is the remit of Prisoners Abroad to offer help to British citizens detained overseas. We regret that we are unable to offer help to, or correspond with, anyone who is not a British citizen because of a lack of resources, not a lack of caring.

## Change of address

Mail is frequently returned to us at Prisoners Abroad because people have moved on. If you and your family wish to continue using our services, you need to inform us as soon as possible of your new address. A lot of time is spent processing returned mail and investigating where people have moved to. In future, if mail is returned to us, there will be a temporary hold on further mail. If there is no further contact, after 3-6 months the individual case will be closed.



a) Who is the brakeman's neighbour? It's not Mr. Robinson (he lives in Glasgow). It's not Mr Jones, as he earns £20,000, which cannot be exactly three times the brakeman's salary (20,000 isn't divisible by three). Therefore, the neighbour must be Mr. Smith. b) Which passenger lives in Edinburgh? Well, it's not Mr. Robinson (he lives in Glasgow). And it can't be Mr. Smith, as he is the next-door neighbour of the brakeman, who doesn't live in Edinburgh. Therefore, it must be Mr. Jones who lives in Edinburgh. That means that the brakeman is called Jones. c) What is Smith's job? He's not the brakeman (that's Jones) and he's not the fireman (he couldn't play snooker against himself). Therefore he must be the engineer.

1. Eye, ear, jaw, gum, hip, arm, rib, hip, leg, toe.

## Puzzle solutions