



"I beg to inform you..."

An Analysis of the Governor's Journal 1871-72 of Major R.F. Hickey, Governor of Dartmoor Convict Prison

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Abstract

This article provides a detailed investigation of the contents of a journal kept on behalf of the Governor of Dartmoor Convict Prison, Major Robert Fayrer Hickey, between 1871 and 1872. The journal entries run from 1 January 1871 to 11 October 1872 (the last day of Hickey's governorship) and are a clerk's copy of out-bound correspondence from Governor Hickey (although a very small number of entries also include copies of inbound correspondence).¹ Thanks to the vast amount of bureaucracy involved in the recording of the administration of government-funded convict prisons, such journals contain a wealth of material concerning the day-to-day functioning of such establishments that is otherwise unavailable to both academics and the general public. This article aims to give a flavour of what new information can be gleaned from a careful study of such sources to highlight the lived experiences of both ancestors and convict prison governors of the time.

Keywords

Prisons, convicts, prison governance, penal servitude.

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¹ The journal entries appear to have been written by an unnamed clerk rather than by Hickey himself; although his name is appended to each entry; one of the authors of this article owns a copy of Edward Bannister Callow's anonymously written exposé of convict prison life (*Five Years' Penal Servitude by One Who Has Endured It*, 4th edition (Bentley & Sons, London, 1878) which has a handwritten and signed flyleaf inscription by Hickey dated 18 July 1880, and the writing and signature in the Journals are undoubtedly not by the same individual as those in the inscription.

I. BACKGROUND

The British convict prison system began in the early 1850s at a time when the transportation of those found guilty of indictable offences to Australia was coming to an end. Transportation to Australia had involved the forced exile of almost 170,000 men, women and children from the British Isles between 1787 and 1868, but by the 1850s it was becoming increasingly unviable as an option for a number of reasons, including the new colony's resistance to the influx of more criminals at a time when free settlers were increasingly choosing to emigrate to the area.² Consequently, the British government needed to construct what were known as convict prisons to house such offenders who would have previously been transported.³ A system of 'penal servitude' was instigated, whereby such offenders were sentenced to a minimum detention period of three years in such institutions, where they were subject to an extremely harsh regime both in terms of work and discipline.⁴

Dartmoor Prison (which originally had been constructed in the first decade of the nineteenth century to house French and later American prisoners of war) was deemed suitable as a site for one such establishment and between 1850-1 it was largely rebuilt to house several hundred convicts.⁵ Convicts were housed in small separate cells in order to be kept in isolation from each other except when working. They worked, exercised and prayed in association, but there were strict restrictions regarding communication between each other at all times; silence was the general rule except when work practices demanded a degree of verbal communication. Dartmoor was regarded as one of the harsher convict prisons in terms of both its regime and its physical location; it was not a well-regarded edifice in the eyes of either inmates or prison staff.⁶

With regard to the governorship of Dartmoor, Major Robert Fayer Hickey was appointed as Governor of Dartmoor Prison on 7 January 1870, after first entering the Convict Prison service as Second Deputy Governor of Portland Prison in late-1864 and then being promoted to Deputy Governor at first Portland and then Dartmoor. Like the majority of convict prison governors, he was a former commissioned officer, having served (and seen action) with the 1st Bengal European Fusiliers in India and Burma between 1845 and 1864.⁷ Hickey's time at Dartmoor was somewhat fraught, largely due to increasing friction between him and the Church of England Chaplain at Dartmoor, the Reverend James Francis (chaplains, medical officers and governors formed the 'triumvirate' of senior offices within convict prisons). There was an ever-increasing degree of personal animosity between Hickey and Francis over their respective rights and responsibilities within the prison, and this eventually led to a very public debacle

² See B Godfrey and DJ Cox, 'The "Last Fleet": Crime, Reformation, and Punishment in Western Australia after 1868' (Summer 2008) 41(2) *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 236-58, for further details of the ending of transportation.

³ Convict prisons were different to existing local prisons in that local prisons housed less serious offenders who had been sentenced to a maximum of two year's imprisonment with or without hard labour, whereas convict prisons housed those found guilty of more serious and indictable offences and who were sentenced to a minimum of three years' penal servitude.

⁴ See H Johnston *et al*, *Penal Servitude: Convicts and Long-Term Imprisonment, 1853-1948* (Montreal, forthcoming 2022) for a comprehensive discussion of the convict prison system between 1853 and 1948 including the range of punishments and regimes used within the convict system.

⁵ It was first envisaged to be what was known as an 'invalid' convict prison in order to house those convicts who due to health problems could only partake in less strenuous physical activities such as tailoring or sewing, but by the time of Hickey's governorship it housed both 'invalid' convicts and convicts without any physical disabilities.

⁶ In January 1932, a serious riot took place within Dartmoor, with convicts protesting against harsh conditions and the quality of food. The administration block was burned to the ground and several prison officers seriously injured. See A Brown, *Inter-War Penal Policy and Crime in England: The Dartmoor Convict Prison Riot, 1932* (Basingstoke, 2013) for an examination of the causes and aftermath of the riot.

⁷ For further details of Hickey's life and career as a prison governor, see DJ Cox and J Hale, "Major H" – the life and times of a Victorian Convict Prison governor' (2020) 249 *Prison Service Journal* 4-10.

involving the Chairman of the Directors of Convict Prisons, Major Edmund Du Cane.⁸ As will be shown below, some of this friction is hinted at in the Governor's Journal.

The role of the governor of a convict prison was perhaps best summed up by Captain J. A. C. Lewis, Governor of Pentonville Prison, who stated in his evidence to a governmental committee of enquiry that, "My duties are to have the general superintendence of the prison, I am held responsible for the good order, discipline and safe custody of all the convicts, and that the whole of the officers under my command properly discharge their duties...".⁹ Despite being one of the most senior executive officers within a convict prison, governors had surprisingly limited powers and discretion with regards to both convicts and staff. For example, they had the authority to constraint a convict in a punishment cell (basically solitary confinement in a darkened cell) for up to three days, but only a Visiting Director could increase this to a maximum of 28 days.¹⁰ All punishments such as placing a convict in handcuffs had to be accompanied by a written order that was reported to the Visiting Director; "Everything of that kind which the governor does is reported weekly to the director; every offence which a prisoner commits, which is punished by the governor, is reported weekly, with the circumstances under which the punishment was given."¹¹

With regard to staff, convict prison governors were similarly constrained in their powers. Hickey gave evidence to an 1870 Parliamentary enquiry stating that whilst he conducted interviews with potential employees, the power of appointment resided with the Directors; "They are required by the directors to appear before the governor that he may see their fitness by appearance but their testimonials and everything else go to Parliament Street [*where the Directors were based*]."¹² As Governor, Hickey could suspend officers for failures of duty, but the ultimate sanction of dismissal again lay with the Directors.

During his time at Dartmoor, Hickey appears to have been a somewhat strict disciplinarian, but a convict who served time under him recorded generally favourable opinions of him. Edward Bannister Callow, who served much of his five years sentence for fraud at Dartmoor, referred to him as "as gentlemanly a little fellow as ever stepped... [who] never, however, let a thing escape him...".¹³ As part of his duties as Governor, Hickey was required to "keep a copy of everything I do here connected with the prison, it is recorded for the information of the visiting director..." and his Governor's Journals formed part of this record.¹⁴ This Journal was one of several official records required to be kept by the senior and administrative staff of each convict prison; everything from the medical and punishment records of convicts through to the annual cost of running the prison was meticulously recorded should the information be needed by the Directors of Convict Prisons, based at 44 Parliament Street, London.¹⁵

⁸ See DJ Cox, 'Rights, Responsibilities and Religion in a mid-Victorian convict prison' (2020) 4 *Wolverhampton Law Journal* 32-45 for further details of this animosity which appears to have resulted in the forced resignations of both parties in late-1872.

⁹ Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the working of the Penal Servitude Acts Vol. II Minutes of Evidence (London, 1879) 113, line 1430.

¹⁰ Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the working of the Penal Servitude Acts Vol. II Minutes of Evidence (London, 1879) 20, line 223.

¹¹ Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the working of the Penal Servitude Acts Vol. II Minutes of Evidence (London, 1879) 18, line 189.

¹² Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol. II Minutes of Evidence (London, 1870) 24, line 820.

¹³ Callow, 149-50.

¹⁴ Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Treason-Felony Convicts in English prisons Vol. I The Report and appendix (London, 1871) 43, line 1920.

¹⁵ This body was ultimately responsible for the administration and maintenance of the convict system.

II. THE JOURNAL

So, what do such journals contain - what can they tell us about the everyday life of both convicts and prison staff in the early 1870s? Well, although ostensibly a simple and mundane record of the outward-bound correspondence of a Victorian prison governor, they in fact contain a wealth of information that is largely otherwise unavailable to criminal justice historians and other academics, as well as holding a surprising amount of personal details that are of interest to genealogists and family historians; for example, the entries in Hickey's Journal contain details of well over 250 individual convicts, including details of individuals incarcerated at the prison, names and address of relatives or friends of convicts, proposed destination addresses upon their release, details of any gratuities earned by them during their sentence and other personal details that may not survive elsewhere. Although recent research has digitised many official prison records such as convict's licence folders, criminal registers and similar official documents, Governors' Journals remain a largely overlooked source of information.

The entries give us an invaluable insight into the day-to-day running of a mid-Victorian convict prison; they contain the details and minutiae of which criminal justice historians would have remained unaware. Despite convict prisons being subject to a considerable number of Parliamentary Committee enquiries and reports, much of the mundane (though important) work of a convict prison governor remains under-researched. Even in the most authoritative account of historic prison administration, the discussion on the role of convict prison governors extends to less than two pages. To the best of the authors' knowledge very few if any Victorian convict prison governors ever published their memoirs, so much of the information about such individuals remains largely second-hand.

The journal entries during Hickey's time as Governor at Dartmoor have been transcribed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that will be made available to Dartmoor Prison Museum so that visitors, family historians and other researchers can search a digital archive containing the following information:

Day, Month and Year of journal entry.

Recipient's name (if recorded in journal).

Recipient's occupation or status (if recorded in journal).

Type of recipient *i.e.*, private individual, private company, State official (working in a non-prison or police capacity), State official (prison), State official (police), or an individual working on behalf of a Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society (DPAS).¹⁶

The address or location of the recipient (if recorded in journal).

The type of correspondence *i.e.*, concerning a former or current convict, concerning a former or current member of staff, correspondence concerning the supply of goods or services, or miscellaneous correspondence. This information is further broken down within other columns of the spreadsheet to provide a detailed account of such correspondence:

¹⁶ Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies were charitable organisations created in many large cities throughout Britain whose purpose was to aid and guide prisoners who had recently been released on licence into their area with regard to employment and accommodation. If a discharged male convict applied to be helped by such a society, he became eligible for an additional release gratuity from the State; normally at the time of Hickey's Journal all male convicts could earn a certain amount of money (to a maximum of £3) whilst incarcerated which would be given to them on release, and this would be doubled to a maximum of £6 if the convict sought aid from such a society. This did not apply to female convicts, where the release mechanism was somewhat different – see H Johnston and DJ Cox, 'Gender and release from imprisonment: Convict licensing systems in mid- to late-nineteenth century England', in M van der Heijden, M Pluskota & S Muurling (eds), *Women's Criminality in Europe, 1600-1914* (Cambridge, 2020) 134-47 for further details.

Transcript of the journal entry;
 Convict initial/first name (if recorded in journal);
 Convict surname (if recorded in journal);
 Convict number (if recorded in journal);¹⁷
 Notes (to aid understanding of particular entries).

The journal contains a total of 1036 separate original entries. Where one entry details aspects of more than one convict a separate further entry has been made within the spreadsheet, creating a total of 1416 rows. All of the following statistical information has been extrapolated from the 1036 separate original entries rather than the 1416 extrapolated entries.

III. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE JOURNAL ENTRIES

Turning first to the recipients of Hickey's communications, analysis reveals the following figures:

Recipient	Number	Percentage
DPAS	111	10.7%
Private companies	177	17.1%
Private individuals	163	15.7%
State officials (non-prison or non-police)	40	3.9%
State officials (prison)	358	34.6%
State official (police)	187	18.0%
Totals	1036	100%

Perhaps unsurprisingly the main recipients were external prison staff (largely other governors). Just over a third of the journal entries (358) refer to correspondence with staff at other prisons, and this correspondence can be further broken down as follows:

Correspondence concerning current or former convicts	264	73.7%
Correspondence concerning current or former prison staff	74	20.7%
Correspondence concerning supply/payment of goods and services	20	5.6%
Total	358	100%

¹⁷ The convict number was a unique identification number issued by the Home Office to each convict, which followed them through their incarceration. This number was the method by which convicts would have been addressed by prison staff rather than by their first or even surname; it was designed to depersonalise the relationship between convicts and staff.

Focusing on the 264 entries relating to correspondence concerning current or former convicts, the following breakdown shows the nature of such correspondence:

Receipt of convicts at Dartmoor	14	5.3%
Removal of convicts from Dartmoor to other prisons (release or transfer)	102	38.6%
Particulars of convicts forwarded to other prisons	80	30.3%
Correspondence regarding old captions of convicts ¹⁸	11	4.2%
Correspondence regarding gratuity payments of former convicts	3	1.1%
Correspondence regarding location of current or former convicts	36	13.6%
Miscellaneous correspondence relating to specific convicts	18	6.8%
Total	264	99.9%*

*Rounding the percentages of entries to one decimal point results in slight discrepancy of the total percentage.

The next largest group of recipients (187) were police officers throughout Britain, and again the nature of correspondence is detailed below:

Correspondence regarding gratuity payments of former convicts	12	6.4%
Correspondence regarding supply/payment of goods and services	8	4.3%
Miscellaneous correspondence	12	6.4%
Particulars of convicts forwarded to police	141	75.4%
Correspondence regarding location of current or former convicts	14	7.5%
Total	187	100%

¹⁸ Old captions refer to an older system of recording information about convicts.

The next largest group of recipients was private companies (177 entries). Of these 25 (14.1%) were suppliers of administrative or financial services – e.g., banks or solicitors. The other 152 were suppliers of goods or services and can be further broken down as follows:

Railway companies	35	23.0%
Convict transport suppliers	57	37.5%
Other suppliers	60	39.5%
Total	152	100%

Private individuals accounted for 163 entries (15.7%). Of these entries, 85 (52.1%) related to correspondence regarding current or former convicts, whilst 69 (42.3%) related to correspondence regarding current or former prison staff. The vast majority of these entries were concerned either with applications from prospective employees or queries regarding the location of former or serving prison staff. The remaining 9 entries (5.5%) were miscellaneous correspondence.

Finally, various DPAS members made up the remainder of the recipients with 111 separate entries. The vast majority of such entries (69) were addressed to the London Aid Society (then by far the largest of all DPAS), with Manchester (19 entries), Birmingham (11 entries), Leeds (8 entries) and Stafford (4 entries) making up the remainder of recipients. The vast majority of entries (92) relate to the sending by Hickey of particulars of convicts and gratuities to the various DPAS so that the correct amount of money could be allocated to the correct convict. 8 entries related to payments made by Hickey to various DPAS in respect of such gratuities, whilst a further 9 relate to replies to queries about gratuities from the DPAS. The remaining 2 entries are of a miscellaneous nature.

IV. DISCUSSION

The above are the bare constituents of the entries contained in the Journal, but further investigation of both the statistics and individuals reveals much more about the way a Victorian convict prison was governed. Perhaps most interestingly the figures reveal the constant flow of convicts being released. Over the 22-month period covered by the Journal entries, almost 150 convicts are recorded as being released from Dartmoor, usually on licence. The licensing system began in the early 1850s and allowed a convict the opportunity to earn remission of part of his sentence through a combination of good behaviour and hard work; "perfect good conduct and a good report of the labour throughout would alone entitle him to a full remission."¹⁹ From 1863, a male convict who achieved full remission marks throughout his period of incarceration could gain a maximum remission of one third of his sentence.²⁰ Once released on licence, male convicts had to report regularly to the local police station in the area to which they had first

¹⁹ Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the operation of the acts (16 & 17 Vict. c. 99. and 20 & 21 Vict. c. 3.) Relating to Transportation and Penal Servitude. Vol. I. Report and appendix, (1863) [3190] [3190-I], 91. There was an incentive both to the convicts concerned and the prison authorities; convicts could be released early which also saved the authorities a considerable amount of money – then (as now) prisoners cost a lot of money to keep incarcerated.

²⁰ The percentage of remission depended on original length of sentence; convicts sentenced to the minimum five-year period could get one-fifth remission, through to convicts serving a minimum of fifteen years could earn up to one-third remission.

travelled upon their release.²¹ The Journal entries show that over two-thirds of the convicts released from Dartmoor during the period were released back to addresses in London; this is perhaps not too surprising given the relative size of the metropolis compared to any other city in Britain at the time, but it also illustrates the difficulties faced by any relatives of such convicts who may have wished to visit their loved one whilst he was in prison – despite the advent of railways, travel remained prohibitively expensive during the period in question – even today the journey could take over 4 hours and cost well over £100 by combination of rail and taxi (the nearest station is Plymouth, over 15 miles south of Dartmoor Prison).

With regard to those convicts released into the metropolis, they were provided with a single third-class rail ticket to London, where they were expected to report to Southwark Prison before finally being granted their discharge.²² The prison, formerly known as Queen's Bench Prison maintained this function from 1869 until 1879 when the site was demolished.²³ The prison appears at the time of the Journal to have been governed by the Governor of Millbank Prison, as all correspondence regarding convicts sent to Southwark is addressed to him. It appears that Southwark Prison served the dual purpose of providing temporary accommodation for discharged prisoners before they physically received their licence (which they had to carry with them at all times – they could be challenged to produce it by a police officer) and a convenient central location at which Metropolitan Police officers could check out the physical details of any convicts who had been placed on the Habitual Criminals list (see below for further details).

A typical entry is reproduced below, showing the convict's name, number and details of his release:

Saturday 4 February 1871 [to Governor of Millbank Prison] I beg to inform you that during the present month it will be necessary to remove four convicts to Southwark Prison for release and Licence, viz two on the 6th and one on the 20th. For removal on the 6th 8054 Keen - now due for licence, Destination Mile End, London, 8071 G Williams Due for Licence 10th Feb. Destination High St, Boro. London.²⁴

Following panics regarding the influx of released potentially violent and dangerous convicts back into society after the ending of transportation, several Acts of Parliament were introduced in an effort to tighten up police supervision of such individuals.²⁵ Section 5 of the 1871 Prevention of Crimes Act stated that:

Every holder of a license granted under the Penal Service Acts who is at large in Great Britain or, Ireland shall notify the place of his residence to the chief officer of police of the district in which his residence is situated, and shall, whenever he changes such residence within the same police district, notify such change to the chief officer of police of that district, and whenever he changes his residence from one police district to another shall notify such change of residence to the chief officer of police of the police

²¹ If this requirement was not met, or if they carried out any subsequent offending, licence-holders faced severe penalties; they could be returned to convict prison to serve the outstanding portion of their original sentence as well as being prosecuted and sentenced for any new offence. If convicted of a second offence that resulted in a convict prison sentence, this sentence was for a minimum of seven years.

²² S and B Webb, *English Prisons under Local Government* (London, 1922) 1.

²³ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol25/pp9-21#anchorn46>.

²⁴ Capitalisation and punctuation are original in this and all subsequent reproductions of entries.

²⁵ See J Davis, 'The London Garrotting Panic of 1862: A Moral Panic and the Creation of a Criminal Class in Mid-Victorian England,' in VAC Gatrell, B Lenman and G Parker (eds), *Crime and the Law: A Social History of Crime in Western Europe Since 1500* (Europa Publications, 1980) 190-213.

district which he is leaving, and to the chief officer of police of the police district into which he goes to reside; moreover, every male holds such a license as aforesaid shall, once in each month [re]port himself at such time as may be prescribed by the chief officer of police of the district in which such holder may be, either such chief officer himself or to such other person as that officer may direct, and such report may, according as such chief officer directs be required to be made personally or by letter.

This was in fact a strengthening of one of the statutes of a previous Act, the 1869 Habitual Offenders Act, which had also introduced a requirement for the photographing and registering of all convicted persons with a view to aiding their future identification should they be suspected of any subsequent offending. The Journal contains over 80 entries from Hickey addressed to the Registrar, Habitual Criminals Office (based in Scotland Yard, London) forwarding particulars and photographs of individual convicts who were due for imminent release.²⁶ These particulars were clearly provided by means of a standardised Met Police form, as the following entry illustrates:

Saturday 3 June 1871 [To Registrar, Habitual Criminals Office] Particulars of 8151 Jas. Cartwright and 8318 John Smith. Memo: Will you oblige by forwarding more of these Forms, as my stock is nearly exhausted.

Despite photographs and detailed accounts of any distinguishing marks (including tattoos) or features, identification of particular convicts could still prove problematic; the Journal contains over 30 entries such as the one reproduced below replying to requests from both police offices and other prisons asking if an individual was or had been an inmate at Dartmoor:

Tuesday 25 June 1872 Particulars and photos of John Johns and Richard Wilson (rec'd from Portland [Prison] forwarded to Reg Hab Criminals) "not known".

Quite apart from the release of convicts from Dartmoor, there was a degree of 'churn' of convicts from one prison to another; the Journal contains several entries such as the one below:

Tuesday 10 October 1871 [to the Governor of Parkhurst Prison] Having two men here, inmates of the Infirmary who are to be removed to Parkhurst when there are vacancies I shall be glad if you will kindly inform me when you have room for them so that I may submit their names for transfer to your establishment. I am asking this at the Visiting Director's request. [a note in the margin reads] "As this has reference to Infirmary patients it is referred to the Medical Officer for his record as to the possible accommodation. 12.10.71 J H Noott [Governor of Parkhurst Prison] "No room at present" 12.10.71 H R" "There appears to be no room at present (see Medical Officer's Report) and our own invalids are more numerous than we have accommodation for" 12.10.71 J H Noott.

²⁶ Photography of prisoners had a somewhat stuttering start in Britain – see J C Clark, 'Through a Glass, Darkly, the Camera, the Convict and the Criminal Life' (especially Chapter Three, 58-109) for a detailed history – PhD thesis, 2015. Available: https://eprints.utas.edu.au/23009/1/Clark_whole_thesis.pdf.

Such movement could be the result of overcrowding (as exemplified in the above example) or for other operational reasons such as the requirement for particular skills of convicts as shown in the following example:

To the Governor of Portland Prison. Saturday 16 September 1871 Referring to your letter of the 14th inst respecting four Men, Tailors, who are able to work on officers' uniform I beg to inform you that I can receive them if you will kindly arrange for their transfer to this prison in accordance with Mr Padbury's request.

Dartmoor was originally conceived as an Invalid Convict Station, due to the perception that the clean air of the Moor would help with the medical rehabilitation of convicts suffering from respiratory diseases such as TB, and despite the fact that it later received more able-bodied men, even by the 1870s a significant percentage of its inmates were still classed as suitable for what was known as 'light labour' – tailoring and sewing for example.²⁷

In other entries it is impossible to discern the reason for the transfer of what could be large numbers of convicts; the following entry gives no details as to the need for the movement of convicts:

Thursday 9 May 1872 To the Governor of Brixton Prison. I beg to inform you in reply to your letter of the 3rd inst that I shall be prepared to receive 31 of the convicts referred to on Tuesday morning next providing you can receive at the same time a similar number from me. As I am quite full it will be necessary for me to remove that number before I can take in any and therefore propose to send the 31 for whose removal I hold a warrant on Monday evening next the 13th inst if this arrangement will suit you. The visiting Director informs me that the remainder of the 50 viz. 19 will be transferred from Brixton as vacancies occur at this prison. I find I shall have 8 more vacancies on Monday evening and could therefore receive 39 or 40 men.

Such movement of convicts was not within the purview of the Governor; as indicated in the above example, this was rather in the remit of the Directors of Convict Prisons. These men were in overall charge of the convict prison system and were each allocated a prison or prisons which they were expected to visit on a regular basis to ensure that everything was running smoothly and to the book. The Visiting Director for Dartmoor was Captain Walter J. Stopford, himself a former Governor of Dartmoor Prison, and from Hickey's point of view he was his immediate superior; his word was final and Hickey often used Stopford's instructions to keep his own staff in line. As previously mentioned, Hickey and the prison Chaplain, Reverend James Francis, were increasingly at loggerheads over minor matters of protocol and administration, and it is clear that Hickey resorted on several occasions to utilising Stopford's instructions to put Reverend Francis in his place; the following entry being a typical example:

Thursday 27 June 1872 To the Chaplain of Dartmoor Prison. I have the honor to forward for your information the following extract for the Visiting Director's Minute Book " The Roman Catholic Priest complains that the books selected for the Roman Catholic prisoners are not all circulated amongst them, and that many of the books marked as objected to by him are issued to them. The Governor will be good enough to call the

²⁷ There is anecdotal evidence that this perception proved correct on at least one occasion; Callow, the author of *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, was an invalid convict who stated that 'being of a rheumatic constitution, I gave myself up for lost when I saw the first two or three wet fogs, but during the three years I spent there I never felt one twinge' (*Five Years' Penal Servitude*, 150).

attention of the Chaplain to this complaint and request him to take steps to prevent its recurrence" Signed W J Stopford 21 6 1872

A couple of months after this instruction, Hickey and Francis were squabbling once more, this time over the keeping of cattle in the fields immediately surrounding the prison, which appears to have been a perquisite of the job:

Monday 2 September 1872 To the Chaplain of Dartmoor Prison. It having been reported to me that you have allowed certain strange cattle from the Moor to be brought into your field which is a portion of the Governor's lands, I have the honor to request you will be so good as to take steps to have them removed forthwith. Should the Inspector of Cattle become acquainted with the fact of their being there he would stop the sale of the Government Stock which would entail the loss of some hundred pounds or more. Under the existing stringent regulations on the subject, on account of the cattle disease which prevails to such an alarming extent in this district I cannot but regret you should have taken the steps you have without reference to me.

A note in the margin of the Journal rather unusually contains Reverend Francis' reply:

"Major Hickey. Your informant has not given you correct information respecting the cattle in the Chaplain's field. I have ascertained that their being there will not in the slightest degree influence the sale of the Prison Stock tomorrow nor affect in any way the public service. No regulation has been contravened in this matter 3 9 1872 James Francis (Chaplain).

A further marginal note from Hickey reads "I decline entering into any correspondence on the subject and shall submit the matter to the Visiting Director 4 9 1872."

Moving onto a discussion about the large number of entries written to private companies, the Journal give us a unique insight into the minutiae of the logistical difficulties of running the prison. Dartmoor was in many ways a very inconvenient place to locate a large establishment which needed a constant supply of goods and services. This is exemplified by the fact that the nearest railway station with a good connection with larger towns and cities was at Plymouth, some sixteen miles south of the prison. To remove convicts from Dartmoor, Hickey was forced to use a number of carriers who provided horses and carts to convey convicts from the prison to the station. Contracts were awarded on an annual basis for this service, and in 1871/2 the supplier was a George Harry Moreton of 72 George Street, Stoke Damerel, who is listed in the 1871 Census as an 'omnibus proprietor'.²⁸ Several entries request the services of Mr Moreton's omnibuses; a typical example being given below:

Saturday 8 June 1872 To Mr G H Moreton. I have to request that you will provide conveyances for the removal of 30 convicts and 4 officers from this prison to Plymouth on Monday evening next the 10th inst, in time for them to proceed to London by the 7.45[pm] train; also for a similar number on Tuesday morning next the 11th, in time for them to proceed to Portsmouth by the 10.25[pm] train. In each case the prisoners will be shackled in tens.

²⁸https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/7619/images/DEVRG10_2131_2135-0102?backlabel=ReturnSearchResults&queryId=f1a68a591601b2ed7bc31b78b35298f5&pId=9214837.

This entry is interesting both in that it shows the relatively short notice (just 48 hours) given to the carrier to arrange transport, and also acting as a reminder that the convicts were shackled in both chains and handcuffs. Callow remarks that the officers rode on the outside and on the steps of the omnibus to prevent escape attempts.²⁹ Once arrived by horse-drawn omnibus the convicts and accompanying officers needed accommodation on trains. This again fell to Hickey to arrange:

Saturday 8 June 1872 To the Station Master, Plymouth Station. I beg to inform you that I purpose removing 30 convicts in charge of 4 officers to London on Monday evening by the 7.45[pm] train and a similar number to Portsmouth on Tuesday by the 10.25am train, in each case I shall be much obliged if you will kindly arrange for them proceeding in a carriage with open compartments.

Such accommodation was third-class and often involved the night mail train, both so that the convicts would arrive at their destination early in the morning and that their chances of being observed by the general public were limited.³⁰ Callow gives a vivid description of such a journey (though in reverse from London to Plymouth):

A large third-class saloon carriage was set specially apart for us in the night mail train [...] and so soon as we were all in and our warders, the men began begging tobacco [a forbidden item] from the people thronging the platform. Those next to the windows, in spite of chains and handcuffs, thrust their heads out, notwithstanding the oft-repeated orders of the warders to desist. [...] No sooner was any thrown in than it was distributed, and in a few minutes three-fourths of the men had their mouths full of tobacco.³¹

Similar arrangements with omnibus providers were used to transport the convicts from their destination railway station to their new prison.

Unfortunately, some convicts never completed their sentences whilst at Dartmoor. The Journal also occasionally and implicitly highlights the harshness of life and conditions within the convict prison system; over 15 entries relate to the death of convicts in custody. Most of these were as the result of natural causes, but one was the result of an accident at the prison:

Tuesday 20 August 1872 To [an unnamed Reverend] I regret having to inform you that an inmate of this establishment named Joseph Harl whose wife and family reside at 68 Camden Grove, St George's Road, Peckham, London, met with his death yesterday by being struck accidentally on the head by a piece of wood while at work, and shall be glad if you would kindly break the intelligence to his wife and family. Should the above locality not be within your parish, would you kindly forward this letter to the clergyman of the district wherein the parties referred to reside. A Coroner's inquest will be held on the body of the deceased prisoner this afternoon after which his remains will be interred in the churchyard of the village of Prince Town.

²⁹ Callow, *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, 148.

³⁰ The platform at Shrewsbury Railway Station nearest to the adjacent prison illustrates the lengths that authorities would go to in order to separate prisoners from the general public; there remains a high brick wall which shielded the public from prisoners arriving to begin their sentence within the prison.

³¹ Callow, *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, 139-41.

When Hickey contacted relatives of deceased convicts, his tone seems somewhat lacking in sympathy to modern eyes; a typical such entry is shown below:

Thursday 11 July 1872 To Mr James Webster, New Mill Roberton, Lanarkshire. I regret to inform you of the death of your son Samuel Watson Dempster which took place in the Hospital of this prison at 3.5am [sic] today. A Coroner's inquest will be held on his remains in the course of a few days after which his remains will be interred in the churchyard of the village of Princetown. Yourself or any of his friends have permission to attend.

It is very likely that due to the prohibitive cost of long-distance travel, along with the difficulty of communicating with relatives that few mourned the passing of the convict at the time of his funeral. Convicts were buried in the churchyard with simple headstones.

Turning to a discussion about the supply of goods and services to the prison, although the prison had a productive farm which supplied cows, horses and pigs, there remained a need for the supply of other foodstuffs and goods which was met by external contractors. The Journal contains numerous entries concerning such supply, which was controlled by the Directors of Convict Prisons rather than by Hickey, although he clearly played an administrative role:

Thursday 16 February 1871 To Mr George Sampson [haulage contractor] In reply to your note of yesterday's date I have to inform you that the assignment of the Contracts for supplies to this Prison does not rest with me but with the Board of Directors. With regard to the manner in which the Contract for the Current year has been performed, I have to refer you to the repeated complaints I have made relative to the quality of your Coals, and it will be my duty to bring them to the notice of the Directors if any further report should be required of me.

The Directors were very concerned to ensure that the prisons under their control were being run as economically as possible; this is evident in their published annual reports, which devote a considerable amount of space to the financial expenses consumed, and income generated by prisons, and is also reflected in a Journal entry replying to a prospective contractor:

Monday 20 March 1871 To Mr J Barnett. I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter of the 19th inst, and to inform you that the Contract for the attendance to the Farm Stock must be taken by a duly qualified V. Surgeon and that all reasonable facilities will be offered for carrying it out, including the recognition of occasional visits by the regular assistant made under his direction and responsibility. The number of Cows calving during the year is from 50 to 60, and 12 of the Horses are in work the other three being unbroken Colts. Castration is included under the head of operations, but in the case of young calves and pigs it has been done here (when there has been a man competent to do it) under the permission of the Contractor who takes the responsibility of any subsequent treatment that may be necessary. PS The Contractor is required to make periodical visits and on any sudden emergency is communicated with by telegraph or otherwise and expected to attend without delay.³²

³² John Barnett was at the time a 26-year-old veterinary surgeon from Market Drayton boarding with a wine merchant in Plymouth; he was obviously looking to establish a practice in the area – see <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBC%2F1871%2F2121%2F0188&parentid=GBC%2F1871%2F0004817742> for further details of his entry in the 1871 census.

As Dartmoor was by this time still partially used as an Invalid Convict Station, light labour was important to the finances of the prison; whilst the fitter convicts were sent out under armed guard to work clearing fields and creating roads over Dartmoor, less fit individuals were employed in less physically demanding tasks such as shoemaking and tailoring. One of the major contracts held by the prison was for the supply of Metropolitan Police boots; one can imagine that the irony was not lost on convicts employed at this task. Hickey was often writing to the suppliers of raw materials complaining about the quality of items sent to be further worked upon at the prison (there are over 20 such entries in the Journal):

Thursday 27 April 1871 To Messrs Warne & Co, 9 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. I beg to inform you that 290lbs of the Kip received from you on the 25th inst has been rejected by a Board of Survey, being too light for the Service and of very inferior quality and is accordingly been returned to you. I must impress upon you the necessity of your exercising great care in the selection of the Leather demanded for the use of this Prison as none but the best can be made available for supply to the Police, and there has been great difficulty found for some time in getting sufficient of anything like the proper quality from that which you have sent for the purpose.³³

Hickey was also concerned about poor service as well as the physical quality of supplies; his exasperation and anger at the insubordination and ignorance of the staff of the Telegraph Office at Tavistock is clear in the following entry:

Wednesday 30 August 1871 To the Postmaster General. I have the honor, with regret to be obliged to bring to your notice the carelessness and insolence of some of the officials connected with the Telegraph at Tavistock who are in the habit of receiving the messages from this Station. Last month a message was sent from this to meet a Mr Morton who was expected by a particular train at Horrabridge. Altho' he came by that train the message was not delivered as the Station Master had received it for Mrs Morton! Again yesterday Captain Du Cane, Chairman of the Board of Directors Convict Prisons telegraphed as below: 'From Captain Du Cane Two Bridges Princetown to Duke of Cornwall Hotel, Plymouth. Send wagonette or open carriage and pair here at once to go to Ashburton'. The message was delivered as enclosure will show, so incorrectly, as to render it necessary for the hotel proprietors to telegraph back enquiring where the carriage was to be sent, and also a further telegram from this repeating the information given in the first message. Moreover I have to report that when the Government servant on duty at this Station telegraph this morning to the Station at Tavistock that the messages sent by Captain Du Cane were official ones, he returned answer "They were not" and when asked if he knew who Captain Du Cane was he replied "No, and I don't care". I would further state that the insolence of some of those there is not confined to one or two instances. They have more than once disconnected the wire in the middle of an important message and declined to work. I have also to complain that they have charged persons in Tavistock for messages to me when they have been sent from that office, from which I believe there is no authority. May I beg the favour of this matter being investigated. [original underlining]

³³ This was the second time within a month that Hickey had complained to this company about the quality of the kip leather being supplied, and in total the Journal contains four such complaints. Kip leather is made from the hide of calves and as such is softer than leather made from adult cows. Warne & Co were a long-established wholesale leather supplier, who also supplied the British Army and Royal Navy – see <https://londonstreetviews.wordpress.com/2014/01/21/thomas-warne-currrier/>.

Things clearly did not improve to Hickey's satisfaction, as he sent another complaint about the same office on Friday 22 September 1871:

To the Postmaster General. I regret having again to draw your attention to the irregularities on the part of the Clerks employed in the Telegraphic Department at Tavistock as shewn in the accompanying complaint from the Principal Gatekeeper who has charge of the Telegraph at this Prison.

Finally, turning to Hickey's correspondence with the various DPAS, the vast majority of the 111 entries concern details of the gratuity, clothing allowance and rail fare costs for convicts released into the care of a DPAS. The London Aid Society (also known as the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society) was first created in 1824 and by the time of the Journal had become the largest such society in the country.³⁴ An article in a contemporary newspaper detailed the procedure undergone by prisoners released into the care of the Society:

By an arrangement made with the prison authorities, the prison clothes in which the men are released are all sent back to Millbank, an allowance of £1 17s 2d per head being made by Government in lieu thereof. This sum, and when necessary, a few more additional shillings, is expended by the society in furnishing the men with clothes adapted to their future work or business, these clothes being selected by the men themselves. It was found formerly that a ticket-of-leave man was not only immediately recognised as such by the police, by his prison clothes, but also known thereby to all the criminal class, and his chances of becoming an honest man were few indeed. Now, in ordinary clothes, he is placed by our agents in respectable lodgings until he can obtain work, and if he really intends to do well he in all probability obtains employment in a few days.³⁵

Many of the Journal entries to the DPAS reflect this; for example, the following is a record of Callow's release on licence:

15 June 1872 To Major Tillbrook, Secretary of London Aid Society. Particulars of Gratuity forwarded of 8949 Callow £2 17 10 Clothing £1 17 2 Fare nil, 9813 Jones £2 4 8 Clothing £1 17 2 fare nil.³⁶

Callow was scathing about the clothing provided by the prison authorities to newly released convicts who did not take advantage of joining a DPAS:

I will venture to say that not one suit of clothes I saw go from Dartmoor would stand a month's wear out of doors. [...] I have been told that, providing a man goes straight from prison to Monmouth Street, Soho, or to Rosemary Lane, Minories, and is lucky enough not to be caught in the rain on his way, the clothes dealers will allow him 6 s[hillings] for the whole turn-out of coat, trowsers [sic], vest, hat, and handkerchiefs. These they use for export, as no one in this country would buy such arrant rubbish.³⁷

³⁴ For further details of the Society, which is now merged with St Giles Trust, see <http://www.royallondonsociety.org.uk/about-us/our-history/>.

³⁵ *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, 22 June 1872, 392.

³⁶ The fare refers to the cost of railway tickets; if discharged into the provinces a special 'convict ticket' was purchased by a prison warder at Horrabridge Railway Station (the nearest station to the prison) and this cost was reimbursed by the DPAS into whose care the convict was released – see Callow, *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, 357. For convicts released into the care of the London Aid Society, the fare to London was pre-paid by the Government.

³⁷ Callow, *Five Years' Penal Servitude*, 353-355.

V. CONCLUSION

The Governor's Journal of Major Hickey illustrates how a seemingly insignificant remnant of Victorian bureaucracy can be utilised to throw new light on the convict prison system; by a detailed analysis of the entries, it has been possible to examine aspects of the day-to-day working life of a prison governor that would otherwise have remained unknown. The daily life of the prison from the receipt of convicts via their incarceration and subsequent release is revealed in considerable detail. The Governor's Journal obviously only covers the daily outward correspondence written by Hickey and does not deal with other aspects of his work, but it still allows us a window into the often workaday and mundane administration of a large public organisation, and one moreover that was largely otherwise hidden from public view.

The range of Journal entries has illustrated that the work of a convict prison governor was at times complex and demanding, as he was responsible for maintaining the supply of goods to and from the prison, organising the receipt and removal of convicts to and from the prison, liaising with both the police and other prison officials to ensure that records of convicts were kept up to date and widely circulated, and finally organising the dispersal of gratuities for discharged convicts. It is clear that Hickey was closely involved in both the successful wider administration of his prison and the day-to-day management of convicts and staff within its walls.

Whilst modern-day governors undoubtedly carry out many similar duties to those performed by Hickey, following changes under New Public Management and the creation of the Prison Service Agency in 1993, together with developments in managerialism, it can be argued that their time has become ever-more focused on paperwork and delegation, arguably making them less available to form effective relations with both offenders and staff.³⁸ This is further amplified when considering the scale of some prisons today; HMP Berwyn for example (opened in 2017) is the largest prison ever constructed in Britain, with a certified normal accommodation capacity of 2,106 offenders – a far cry from the significantly smaller convict prisons of the 19th and 20th centuries, where numbers rarely reached four figures.³⁹ Such prominent involvement with day-to-day administration and personal interventions from governors such as illustrated in the Journal entries (for better or worse) are likely to be increasingly unlikely for the future management of prisons. As the hierarchy and bureaucracy of prison administration and management thickens, governors are likely to find themselves operating a system from distant headquarters with the purpose of achieving political targets, something which will be of little comfort to the prison officers responsible for ensuring such targets are achieved in a very difficult environment.

The unique records evident in the Governors Journal and discussed above are just one of a range of unresearched sources of information including other types of administrative records pertaining to convict prison and therefore much more remains to be learned about the inner workings of such edifices, but this article has hopefully shone at least a little light on the topic.

³⁸ For a discussion of the issues pertaining to the introduction and implementation of NPM see A Boin, O James, & M Lodge, 'The New Public Management 'Revolution' in Political Control of the Public Sector: Promises and Outcomes in Three European Prison Systems' (2006) 21 *Public Policy and Administration* 81-100.

³⁹ Portland Prison was by far the largest convict prison in mid-Victorian England with a maximum capacity of 1,520 convicts, followed by Chatham and Dartmoor, each with a maximum capacity of 1,100 (Reports of the Directors of Convict Prisons, 1875 (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1876). Dartmoor currently has a certified normal accommodation capacity of 642 prisoners (see <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/11/Dartmoor-SV-web-2020.pdf>).