

Nigel Walker CBE, Professor of Criminology 1917- 2014

Many of us were confused by the title that Nigel Walker chose for his informal autobiography: “*A Man Without Loyalties: A Penologist’s Afterthoughts*” (2003). Nigel may have been without loyalties in the sense that he was always his own man, fiercely independent, and always prepared to speak his mind, but he inspired fierce (and fond) loyalties, especially amongst those whom he taught, and he showed extraordinary loyalty to the universities he served, and indeed to the prison populations that he wrote about.



After a career in the civil service, Nigel took up a post in Oxford in 1961, and moved to Cambridge in 1973, where he was Director of the Institute of Criminology for nearly ten years. He retired in 1984, but continued to write and to debate for another twenty years or more.

What will Nigel most be remembered for? Certainly his teaching: he engaged the class and made it work; he insisted that students should visit prisons and talk to prisoners if they were to write about them (student-prisoner seminars were an important and regular part of the curriculum throughout his teaching career). He wrote wonderfully thoughtful, engaging, student-friendly books: *Sentencing in a Rational Society* (1969), *Sentencing: Theory, Law and Practice* (first edition, 1985), *Why Punish?* (1991). Then there was the thoroughly detailed *Crime and Insanity in England* (1968), and a raft of other thought-provoking books on such topics as *Dangerous People* (1996) and *Aggravation, Mitigation and Mercy in English Criminal Law* (1999).

He was a debunker of myths, a stern critic of waffly thinking. Evidence mattered, methods were important. So were people. Let us hope that the Institute of Criminology’s annual Nigel Walker lecture (first given in 1997) lives on forever as a memorial to a splendid icon of penology - a man with a great mind, a strong sense of justice, who was scrupulously fair, meticulously clear and, to my mind, a model academic leader.

Nicola Padfield
University of Cambridge
