

anguish surrounding each case, affecting the convicted and their families and friends. Prison reform was high on his agenda.

Bruce did his national service in the Royal Tank Regiment and later obtained a law degree at Oxford. He was ordained a Catholic priest for the Diocese of Westminster. Between 1958 and 1987 he served in several London parishes, as secretary to Cardinal Heenan (who was, at the time, head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales) and as the Catholic chaplain to the University of London. In 1987, however, he resigned from the priesthood, taking a political path more consistent with his belief in the importance of the peace movement.

In 2004, he became a founder member of Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence (PPMI), a small voluntary group trying to help prisoners who maintain innocence to make progress through the system. His clarity of thought and communication skills helped to drive the campaigns, and he visited many a prisoner and corresponded with many more.

Although he retired from the PPMI executive committee in 2020, he still joined their meetings, both in person and via online links, until a few months ago. At the time of his death, Bruce was still a vice-president of CND, a vice-president of the Catholic peace campaign Pax Christi, and emeritus president of the Movement for the Abolition of War.

Above all he was a warm and encouraging man, eager to motivate others to take up the cause. He would let you know if you were not giving enough with a short, impatient outburst, followed by a constructive plan to move forward again.

Bruce welcomed visitors to his home, and few escaped without a bowl of soup or a slice of cake, to be consumed while planning next steps on the campaign.

His dedication and kindness, his insight, and his incisive sense of humour remain with us. In 2022, prisoners who maintain innocence are still disadvantaged, and the number of elderly prisoners is growing, so the work goes on.

Sue Stephens is the Secretary of PPMI. You can contact the organisation by writing to: PPMI, c/o Compass House, 57 Meridian Centre, North Street, Havant, PO9 1UW.

ALiant SPECIALIST IN
CONFISCATION AND
ASSET FORFEITURE

- POCA - Confiscation and Appeal Cases
- Protection of matrimonial homes and third party interests (s.10a)
- High Court - Civil Recovery Proceedings
- Complex fraud & money laundering

Life-enhancing Blue Sky thinker

Farewell to man who gave prisoners keys to a better life



Jonathan Aitken

Mick May OBE, the founder of Blue Sky, was a life-enhancing character who pioneered new ways of helping many thousands of ex-offenders to find employment. Bored in midlife with his career as a City banker, Mick met reformed robber Steve Finn and together they came up with the concept of a charity which would employ only ex-offenders and find work for them as they left prison on contracts for landscaping, catering, recycling, and grounds maintenance. The contracts were to be won from local authorities, industry and private companies. It sounded simple, but it needed all of Mick's entrepreneurial drive, salesmanship and charm to win the contracts; and all Steve's leadership skills to deliver the outcomes using prisoners whom he trained to become disciplined workers.

Mick: Champion of prison to work



Blue Sky was a triumph. It is still going strong. At the time when Mick's battle with cancer made him hand over his 'baby' to The Forward Trust, over 1,500 ex-offenders had become Blue Sky 'graduates'. This meant they had come out of jail, gone straight into work, and completed 6 to 12 months of paid employment on contracts. The reoffending rate for Blue Sky workers was 15 per cent, compared

to the national average of almost 50 per cent within 12 months of release.

Mick's footprint on the social history of the 21st century was to have revolutionised employment opportunities for ex-offenders by making them an attractive, unusual, and brave new world for charitable and corporate support.

Those three adjectives - attractive, unusual and brave - were wonderfully applicable for Mick himself. He had charisma, energy and joie de vivre in abundance. He thought out of the box. His originality ranged from being an expert on Bob Dylan to being an expert trout and salmon fisherman of international repute on the great rivers of the world, from South America to Northern Russia. On the latter's Varzuga river, where Mick caught 15 salmon in one day, his Russian speaking guide coined a most appropriate phrase to describe him as 'the one who is always happy'.

Even when struck down by a tumour of the invariably fatal cancer Mesothelioma, Mick somehow remained happy most of the time. He beat the clock for nearly ten years (most Mesothelioma patients are lucky if they last 12 months) finding the energy to be the hyperactive Chair of the Governors of a school at the foot of the Grenfell Tower, writing an acclaimed Memoir: Cancer and Pisces, and leading a joyful family life with his wife Jill and six children. Blue Sky and the rehabilitation of offenders through employment remained the cause closest to Mick's heart, as many past and present readers of IT well know.

Mick died aged 63 - he is survived by his wife Jill, their six children, and his two siblings, Georgina and Sarah.

The Reverend Jonathan Aitken is a former Minister and prisoner. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 2019.

ASN LAW SOLICITORS
Anthony Stokoe
Rasheed Nujerallee
Independent Prison Law
Expert since 1994
'People Before Profit'
Continuing the Fight and Challenge
Despite Legal Aid Cuts

Straight advice/representation
for Male and Female Prisoners

- Adjudications • Lifer/IPP Specialist
- Recall • Parole • Judicial Reviews
- Mental Health Law Expert
- Human Rights - European & International

DAVIES & JONES
SOLICITORS

Specialising in
**Criminal Defence and
Prison Law**
Offering
Nationwide Service

- All Criminal Court Proceedings
- Parole Applications
- Licence Recall
- Appeals
- Adjudications