



## Reading Group Round-up

Promoting reading and reading groups in prisons

### No Surrender



No Surrender by Constance Maud, read by the group at HMP Send

To mark the hundredth anniversary of women getting the vote - and in the week of International Women's Day - the reading group at HMP Send celebrated in style with No Surrender, a suffrage novel from 1911 by Constance Maud.

No Surrender, what a great title! Not such an easy read, though. To help us along the difficult path to votes for women, we were delighted to have Lydia Fellgett with us. Lydia had written the preface to the reprinted edition of No Surrender and works for Persephone Books, the publishers of the reprint.

What did we already know about suffragettes and the campaign for women's voting rights? Mary Poppins to the rescue here: some of the group remembered Mrs Banks and her large Votes for Women sash. The campaign for the vote coming from across the classes was one of the main themes of the book. Lydia explained how the movement started in the mid-nineteenth century, among women working in the mills, as well as more middle-class women. The book is partly set among the Northern mill-workers, and we found some of the dialect words the author uses quite difficult at first. Trying to read it aloud (with apologies to northerners) was a help.

We asked Lydia what was the difference between suffragists and suffragettes? 'Good question!' The word 'suffragette' was, it turns out, first coined by the Daily Mail as a term of derision, but then adopted by the movement. The characters in No Surrender are based on real people, such as the mill-worker Annie Kenney, with their hard work to get their mes-

sage across, and their inventive tactics. These women understood that they needed publicity for their cause, and that wit and humour could help, such as getting themselves delivered by Express Post to the Prime Minister, or planting bulbs in public places which would come up four months later spelling out the words 'Votes for Women'. Other lines of action included chaining themselves to railings, smashing windows and painting slogans on public buildings; these were less peaceful methods, but they were always about damaging property rather than people.

The women's movement a hundred years ago wasn't just about the vote, we learned from this book. It was also about equal pay, about women's rights concerning their children, and about issues of domestic abuse. Sad to think how some things they suffered from then are still going on now, was one comment. No Surrender was written when the suffrage movement was at its height. Constance Maud also makes room in her book for the 'Antis' - those who were opposed to women getting the vote - and the book is full of arguments and different points of view.

We were appalled to read about the conditions of the suffragette hunger-strikers in Holloway prison, and how they were force-fed. They were protesting, the author tells us, because they wanted to be treated as political prisoners. Holloway prison was familiar to some in the group. Closed in 2016, it is now at the centre of a social housing campaign to protect the site from up-market development. Proposals include a 'women's building', to create a positive legacy from the women's prison. The suffragettes would have approved.

Our thanks to Lydia Fellgett for joining us and also to Persephone for their generous gift of free copies of No Surrender. The group at HMP Send is part of the Prison Reading Groups project (PRG). If your prison doesn't have a reading group, encourage your librarian to look at the Prison Reading group's website [www.prison-reading-groups.org.uk](http://www.prison-reading-groups.org.uk).

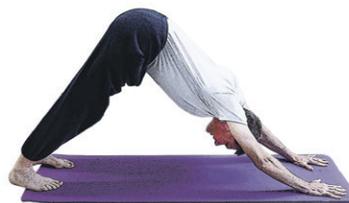
## Yoga for strength

### The Prison Phoenix Trust

A lot of people think that yoga is about relaxing and being more flexible. While that's true, it also helps make your body strong. It strengthens and relaxes your mind too, and makes it more flexible. If you want to build strength in your body

AND mind, but can't get to the gym, try these poses instead. As you do them, keep breathing, slowly and deeply. We suggest holding each pose for five breaths, but you might want to start with three. With practice you could build up to ten or more. Listen to your body and work with it, not against it.

#### Down Dog 5 breaths.



#### Extended Side Angle 5 breaths.



#### Boat 5 breaths.



#### Plank 5 breaths.



#### Bridge 1 Breathe in.



Then flow slowly between these two poses in time with the breath: move into down dog as you breathe out and come into the plank as you breathe in. Start with three repetitions. You can build up to five or even ten.

Flow up and down 5 times. The 5th time you go up, stay up and hold for 5 slow breaths.

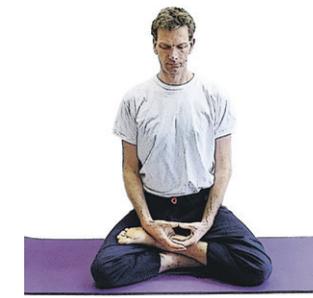
#### Triangle 5 breaths.



#### Bridge 2 Breathe out.



#### Warrior 1 5 breaths.



#### Warrior 2 5 breaths.



#### Side Plank 5 breaths each side.



Sitting  
Sit like this, or on a chair or the edge of your bed, comfortable and upright. Focus on your breathing. Count your out-breaths up to ten and then start again at one. If your attention wanders, don't worry, this is completely normal. Just return to counting your breaths. Do this for 5 minutes, or longer if you like. Try it every day, building up to 25 minutes over a week.

While these postures may seem to just be building strength in your body, they are all also helping you build inner strength. This last one in particular builds strength in your mind. Yes, it leads to more discipline and concentration, but real strength comes when you let go of thoughts about yourself and your situation - no matter how troubling - and merge with the breathing, one breath at a time. This practice can also lead to a sense of peace. Write to us, and tell us how you're getting along.

If you want a free book and CD to help you set up a regular yoga and meditation practice write to The Prison Phoenix Trust, PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF.

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If you would like more information on how to become involved, as either a Mentor or a Learner, contact the Reading Plan Lead in your prison (ask a Shannon Trust Mentor who this is) or write to: Shannon Trust, Freepost RTKY-RUXG-KGYH The Foundry, 17-19 Oval Way, LONDON SE11 5RR.

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