

HOLLOWAY JAIL: HOPE FOR THESE
WOMEN.

Behind the grim walls of Holloway Prison, over the New Year, between 350 and 400 women reflected perhaps upon what life would have for them by the end of 1961. Offenders of one kind and another, their punishment lies in being deprived of liberty, exercising and working under the eyes of prison officers. The supervision is kindly, and over Christmas time they were allowed to buy cards, out of their small prison earnings, plus the Christmas bonus of one shilling. At no time do the Prison Authorities seek to add to the punishment of taking away their liberty.

The women are allowed to visit each other; at such times the cell door being left open. But always they are in prison. People who suppose, as many do, that being in jail is something in the nature of a holiday are very much mistaken. Possibly Christmas emphasised what they have lost for the time being, liberty. And how much that means is proved by the fact that nine out of ten first offenders in Holloway are not convicted again. Women who have babies can give them motherly care in their spare time. In working hours the little ones are cared for by prison nurses. No babies are born in Holloway. Prisoners who are going to become mothers, are taken to outside hospitals for the birth.

Not only at Christmas time but always the official view is that the women shall not leave Holloway embittered. The rest of the nation is far better off without women who have a chip on their shoulder; especially mothers. They are taking their punishment. Their sins must not be visited upon the children.

Nurses of Westminster Hospital came to sing carols.

Their Christmas play, "King Arthur" was performed by the prisoners themselves.

Another high spot over the holiday period was the Christmas dinner, at which they were waited on by prison officers. But in spite of the kindness it would be surprising if many of the women did not vow that never again would they do anything to jeopardise their freedom.

Most of the women are in Holloway for some kind of theft. Many are brought up in bad homes and have been mentally unable to cope with the strain of life.

A few days later, in the Chapel, thoughts turned upon the New Year.

Fainlty; from outside came the sounds of the New Year. A message of hope to women who wish to lead a new life.