

as a guide to the various firms that exist throughout the UK – some in places where you would expect to find them, others in more obscure locations. Partway through my sentence, I was transferred to HMP Wolds, bringing me into contact with prisoners from another diverse range of towns and cities. Gangs are rife within the worst estates of every town in Britain – and even in the most surprising places.

The true extent of the problem is far greater than the authorities currently admit. From feral groups of territorial youths to major drug-dealing cartels, gangland violence is a threat to the fabric of our society. For those at the more affluent end of the social scale, the UK is a gang-free paradise, where fear is an abstract concept. For those within the bottom one per cent, it is a different story altogether.

Sheffield

TO THE NATIONAL newspapers, he was 'The General'. To fellow inmates in HMP Wolds, Nigel Ramsey was 'Rocky'. He was a popular prisoner with a lot of friends; he had a kindly demeanour and, when I arrived, did his best to make me feel welcome on the wing. You can imagine my shock when I heard that he had ordered a gangland execution. I knew that Rocky was involved in gangs in his native Sheffield but I had assumed that he stuck to drug dealing and robberies. I had no idea that he was responsible for the shooting of a seventeen-year-old boy. He had called an accomplice on a mobile phone and arranged for a rival gang member to be shot in the back in broad daylight. It was the talk of the jail.

Rocky was the leader of the S3 gang, named after the postcode for Burngreave and Pitsmoor. They are a largely black and mixed race firm who sell crack and commit armed robberies. Their main rivals, S4, live a matter of minutes away. 'It's some dumb shit really,' another inmate from Sheffield told me. 'Some of Pitsmoor is in S3 and some of it's in S4, so it isn't even two rival areas, it's parts of the same area.' The conflict is thought to have stemmed from a row over drug money. It has since escalated and claimed the lives of several members on both sides.

Sixteen-year-old Jonathan 'Venomous' Matondo was the