Preface and acknowledgements

This book is an attempt to examine the roots and context of the British criminal justice system and challenge basic assumptions about the roles of institutions and participants within it. In our discussion, a critical, at times acerbic edge is evident. This simply reflects what we see as a fundamental shift that has taken place in criminal justice, not only through the sentencing bandwagon with its official inducements to plead guilty, but more especially in the language of the law, the antipathy towards individuals (suspects and defendants) caught up in the system increasingly being matched by an open disrespect for criminal defence lawyers and contempt for the conventional understanding that the actions of State officials (including judges) should be justified. It is one aim of the book to puncture the dogmatic and high-handed (often, unintelligible and unintelligent) manner in which this 'sea-change' is being brought about. If it succeeds at all in this regard, then our task has been greatly facilitated by many individuals who generously helped to make the publication of this book possible.

We have been supported throughout by all of our colleagues at the Centre for Rights and Justice at The Chinese University of Hong Kong as well as by our other colleagues at the Faculty of Law. Professor Eva Pils was especially supportive with her early guidance and belief in the project. The University Law Librarian, John Bahrij and his assistant Lily Ko excelled in chasing down arcane and obscure references for us and both were always ready to give advice and assistance. Similarly, Sarah Wheeler of the library at Lincoln's Inn and James Woolf and Emma Pateman at the Bar Council provided help in digging up various works almost forgotten.

We would like to further record our appreciation to Professor John Jackson and Professor Gary Edmond whose comments helped us to explore some of the themes contained within the book's analysis. The research and writing of this book was also assisted as a result of time spent by one of its authors as a Visiting Scholar at Columbia Law School, New York during the winter term of 2013, where Professor Barbara Schatz and Edwin Rekosh were especially supportive.

Appropriate expressions of gratitude must also go to the many excellent criminal law practitioners in London who offered lasting insight into the

difficulties facing the profession as a whole; notably, the leading figures HHJ Anuja Dhir QC, Denis Barry and Ben Douglas-Jones, who were all a source of unfailing support, encouragement and patience (perhaps in unequal measure). The usual disclaimer applies: the views, and any errors, contained within this book are entirely our own.

More generally, we owe an enormous debt to those scholars who have written about plea bargaining over the last fifty or more years. As always, we have drawn wisdom and insights from their endeavours and hope that, as a result, we have added to the already great stock of knowledge about the practices of State officials in criminal justice.

We owe a further great debt to Tim Williams at Edward Elgar for having faith in the project and to his colleagues, John-Paul McDonald and Victoria Nicols for guiding us through the publication process – without whom this project would not have become a reality.

Above all, we must thank our friends (particularly Erica McPherson, Nigel Perfect and Deepali Joshi for their forgiveness in missing their respective weddings when the enormity of tasks got in the way) and families who have shown unswerving support and encouragement throughout the genesis of this book: Sonia McConville for always being there and helping at critical stages, and Caspar McConville and Victoria Wang for the uplifting visits; Kim Wiles for her endeavour, and Michael Marsh and Margaret McGee for providing timely doses of equanimity.