



VPSG

WORKING FOR

**ANIMAL RIGHTS PRISONERS
OF CONSCIENCE**

Read inside:

How I was visited by Robocop
by KEITH MANN

latest from
BARRY HORNE
GEOFF SHEPPARD
GILLY PEACHEY

PLUS Comments on their experience of Prison by ex-prisoners

Newsletter Summer/Autumn 1998 (50p)

VPSG Update 1998

Another year has slipped by and the work still goes on...

I would like to apologise for anyone that hasn't received a reply to their letter, but we have been short handed here these past few months, *more computer skilled volunteers are needed if they are out there, just give us a call.* **Good news though, VPSG are moving** and will have its first real office shortly, instead of working from a corner of a cramped room. Sylvia, a very special friend, is swapping her cottage for mine would you believe it! Amazing and it is hoped that things will run more smoothly once the move is made.

Although we can see the changes that are finally taking place within the Prison System, there are still some prisons that fight change every inch of the way. For example our records show that it appears that every time Keith is informed by an officer that he will be downgraded from B to C something seems to crop up and he is moved suddenly. The Prison Service seem to be running out of excuses.....We are seeking a fuller explanation from the Area Manager at the Home Office as we feel that the explanation we had from Long Lartin gives an insufficient explanation.

Another prison fighting the change is Full Sutton - no vitamin pills for Barry - he doesn't need them! Strange the doctor there refuses to have further correspondence with us on the subject I wish I had space to print his last letter it isn't even

grammatically correct. How does he know that Barry doesn't need any supplements - he hasn't even seen Barry since he arrived or done any tests!! The mind boggles. We are at the moment taking this matter up with the Area Manager also.

Sometimes when I get a chance to reflect on the beginning of the VPSG and how it has grown it amazes me, and all because of all the number of people who support the prisoners. Regular supporters will remember it was initially only started to care for Angie Hamp and Keith Mann, but few know the decision to expand was taken initially *because Greg Avery was hungry* and had heard about the changes we were attempting to make.

The decision obviously has never been regretted and at the moment we are trying to help a vegan prisoner in America. It reminds us of the old days before the Home Office Guidelines were in place and no starting point to refer to. We will persevere though. We were a short while ago informed that a similar support group like ourselves is trying to start in the USA and we wish them luck. The Authorities in the States do not at this point recognise any diet except one relying solely on 'animal protein'. So our prisoners, as tough as they have it, apparently are fairing much better than our friends in the States.

Thanks to our Supporters

My thanks, again, to Mr & Mrs. Sheppard and Lin Y. who have regularly supported us almost from the start. Also

thanks to Sylvia and Peter from Switzerland who have been most generous to us - much appreciated. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the anonymous supporter who supports us over the year by way of our p.o.box, we wish we could write and thank you more personally but hope you read this newsletter to receive our thanks.

Thanks also, of course, to all the supporters who send their hard earned donations, without them we would have to rely even more heavily upon our fund-raisers **John Pounder and Mel. G.** Not only do they work extremely hard to provide the shortfall between the donations and the running costs, but in order for more time to be spent on the VPSG work the animals that we share the premises with are provided for by them also (22 of them, including a crippled chicken, three very untidy rats and a grumpy rabbit called Lesley who tries to eat me every time I open her cage. But in spite of their habits all still much loved and cared for). **Thanks John and Mel I couldn't do it without your support!!**

Of course, last but not least thanks **Patricia** who comes by almost every single week to give me a day off from washing all those carrots and cleaning all those cages so thoroughly.

Without all your support I would not be able to continue my work to try to help our prisoners of conscience.

Jo-Ann

NEWS FROM KEITH MANN
H.M.P. PARKHURST

You might still believe the sap about the prison service being committed to rehabilitating its charges and treating them - us - with dignity, humanity and fairness. Well here follows a brief look at a brief spell the wrong side of liberty. It isn't quite the life of your average battery hen but something isn't right.

Things were going quite well generally before they chucked me out of Full Sutton on some well dubious charge of plotting a mutiny and took away all privileges. It took some time for me to make up lost ground again, but I did and once again it was clear I was making good of my time and a negative experience. I was again working as gym orderly, and proving a point about the vegan diet and fitness, and with the special needs group that comes to the jail to hang out in the gym. I was enhanced and so viewed as a model prisoner, and was getting a weekly visit from my girlfriend - the nearest thing to rehabilitation I've so far experienced - and we both enjoyed the time greatly. WAS being the operative word.

My parole was refused for a number of odd reasons which I've written to the Parole Board for clarification on so I've some hope of satisfying them for my next review early next year. Currently they object to releasing me because my actions were well planned and premeditated; because I've failed to understand the effect of my actions on human victims; because I've not expressed remorse or regret; because I've remained a high security risk; and because my passion for animal welfare is as strong as ever....yep, it's a problem to the Parole Board that I continue to feel that violence towards defenceless creatures is wrong. Naughty boy. Perhaps I should take a couple of young starlings along to my next interview and do something nasty to them before vowing my allegiance to vivisectors everywhere - see if that pleases them.

The Campaign Against Keith's Visits began mid March when my lass, Kate, was left rather distressed after being 'searched' by one of those cold, insensitive types who you know actually enjoy upsetting people because they have the power to do so with impunity. This thing went further than is necessary and her actions were acknowledged and apologised for by all and sundry, including two governors, one of whom assured me that in future said offender wouldn't make herself available to search Kate, so as to avoid further conflict. He explained her behaviour as being due to the fact "she

doesn't understand modern clothing" - she's forty something and I gather knickers, stockings and skirts never enter their world of corsets, bloomers and girdles. Forty somethings. Actually it sounds like crap to me and I have to wonder how she got the job.

Anyway, he lied. Just four weeks later the deal when Kate arrived was that either she agree to have this character explore her some more or she doesn't get in. The situation was clearly well planned and premeditated and it was made clear that none of the others available to do the deed would be doing so - the leader was actually quite aggressive in his insistence of this. At first she refused to be searched by this person and offered herself to anyone else, but that wasn't good enough and she was escorted from the jail. After some soul-searching she swallowed her pride and returned and offered herself to her assailant with a passing comment that what the hell, "I've been fondled by worse". With this they turfed her out again and sent her on a lonely three hour journey home. And if that wasn't enough punishment for "losing her cool" they went on to ban her for life from returning to Long Lartin!

So that's my visits gone. People keep asking me how I keep my cool under such provocation, I tell them it's because I'm vegan. It's crap but it might make someone think some more about the potential benefits of the diet! Fact is I'm well versed and smart enough to be able to see what they're trying to do so I laugh at them and use it to my benefit. Right now it's in the hands of my solicitors.

Flustered that I didn't flip they tried again a few weeks later and sacked me from the gym saying my work wasn't up to scratch. The real reason of course would be awkward for them to admit to. The screw that sacked me runs the gym and had complained about the number of visits I used to have (5 a month) regularly, he once hinted I'd have to choose between gym orderly and visits. I've appealed against being sacked but it hasn't been heard because the chap hasn't been in work since he did the deed as he twisted his knee soon after and has taken two months off.

I applied for an outside job meanwhile but was rejected for security reasons. Apparently because of disturbances I was involved in at Full Sutton. I wasn't involved in disturbances at Full Sutton and a governor here stated he was "unconvinced" by those allegations in my parole dossier. As it happens it's the same governor who assured me there would be no more harassment of my girlfriend and who was transferred to another jail a couple of weeks ago. I appealed against this decision

and was told that security information once on my file will stay there until I get out. I've appealed against that too.

Because they sacked me they demoted me to standard again! That means I lose one of my VO's each month and can only now spend £10 a week on phone cards and munchies. Guess what! I appealed. Progress on that and everything else is pending.

Some of these kind of problems are sorted out with the help of VPSG, for some, solicitors are necessary, unfortunately most I've had dealings with over the last few years have been worse than hopeless.

Since October '91 the police have held my all and everything in their property stores, only May of this year did they agree to release some of it, including my car. The deterioration of it over the years was always going to be a point of contention and the subject of court proceedings, but it seems to me there's little to argue about now. They scrapped it! And in a failed attempt at being funny they handed the keys back - tee hee. As I understand the law if you take something which belongs to someone else and permanently deprive them of it you're a thief. This is with a legal bod who will, I hope, pursue the thief to the full extent of the law.

It isn't a crazy world, it's just that there are too many people who have lost the plot in positions of power. They love to make us go away or drive us mad in order to survive and that isn't going to happen. Quack Quack..

Keith Mann

**STRENGTH THRU ADVERSITY
THATS THE TICKET**

Latest Update From Keith

Just before 9.00pm on Wednesday 24th July as I was about to settle down for the evening my cell door was flung open and before my eyes stood Robocop and his mates, head to toe in riot gear, shields erect, intent on messing up my day. I was ordered out of the cell and into the throng of shields where, in only a pair of shorts,

I was searched (!). then I had to walk behind one of these featureless people at his pace (it would look to an outsider like I was being marched to my own funeral) with the others in close all around. You'd have to see this shit to believe it!

The segregation unit was our destination. Why? is a question that doesn't have an answer. And there I spent the night playing Trivial Pursuit out of the window with some of the longer term residents.

Early the following morning I was given a tracksuit to wear, cuffed to myself and a person with keys, shoved in a taxi with three of them and sent off to Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight. Upon arrival I was again confined to the seg. where I spent the next five days before being allowed into a 'normal location'. Almost one month later I'm in a double cell on a 23 hour bang up and my property remains in Long Lartin.

Apparently, though I've yet to receive written confirmation, I'm punished because their efforts to punish - for whatever reason - by attacking and banning my partner were an embarrassment and a failure, which the Governor at Long Lartin wants to forget. Of course, this isn't the appropriate way to solve the problem, to say the least. But that's the way things are in the school of reasoning and rehabilitation.

It's all to make me a better, more caring and thoughtful member of society I'm sure, and right enough when I'm back in it I shall endeavor to help the weak and to fight injustice and cruelty at every opportunity. See, prison works.

Keith Mann

Birthdays On Record

Barbara Trenholm	Jan 15 th
Darren Cole	March 15 th
Barry Horne	March 17 th
Gilly Peachey	May 13 th
Keith Mann	May 20 th
Geoff Sheppard	May 26 th
Rod Coronado	July 3 rd
Justin Wright	August 21 st
Dan Poustie	December 24 th

BARRY HORNE
HMP FULL SUTTON

Dear All

Hi there, greetings from HMP FULL SUTTON !!

Jo-Ann tells me that I've been keeping myself to myself far too long, and its time I wrote to let everyone know what's happening with me now. I always respond to letters when threatened in this way, so I've dragged myself away from the exciting prospect of watching TV (not Eastenders again !), and here goes :

Late January 1998, and I finally got my hoped for move out of Bristol jail. Didn't mind where I went really, just wanted away from that place ! And so I ended up in Full Sutton, the only jail in the system that makes Bristol seem nice by comparison ! Ah well I asked for it. Been here for 6 months now, and its the most action packed 6 months I can remember. This is the sort of place that is usually described in newspapers as "troubled" ! I wouldn't argue with that, there's trouble here all the time ! Two "highlights" in those 6 months have been - a riot on my wing, and the finding of some live handgun bullets on one of the wings. The riot was "on and off" all Sunday, blowing into full scale life in the evening and lasting for several hours of action packed battles with the riot squad, and lots of damage done. The finding of the bullets saw the whole prison locked down for 4 days, the riot squad on standby, and all the prison torn apart in the search for guns, etc., etc. Took almost 2 weeks for a return to normal after that one. Basically, its a bit wild here, don't whatever you do , book your holidays for this place !

So, you're probably thinking, is Baz enjoying life much, considering the jail he's in ? Actually, yeah I am ! I learnt long ago that, when you've got a big sentence to do, that you just have to adapt, keep smiling, and get on with it. And that's what I do. I'm working as a cleaner here, nice steady job which sees me out and about all day around the wing. Not too hard, just how I like it. I'm also doing part time education, one morning a week on a computer course. The sort of education that's always going to be useful in the future. Hoping to do other courses in education in the future, but for now that will do me fine. On a more personal note, having a little problem getting vegan vitamin pills i.e. the prison says "no way" ! We shall see. There's a certain amount of discrimination against vegans here, as there is in all jails, but we progress and educate as we go. Be nice to one day go to a jail where they don't think you're some sort of alien when you tell them you're a vegan ! One day it will come.

Enough about me though, what of other things, what about the ongoing battles for animal justice and freedom ? All animal abuse fills me with horror, makes me angry, and continually reinforces my determination to never ever compromise my beliefs (as if I ever

could!). I still believe though, as I always have, that the torture and violence of all the vivisection labs is one of the major "front lines" in our fight for all the animals. It may turn out to be the most important battle we will ever fight. I tend to believe that it is so. When vivisection falls, as it will, I am convinced that the shock to all areas of animal abuse will be greater than we can imagine, and the vivisection industry in this country is weaker now than it has ever been. We are, I believe, on the verge of a major breakthrough that can see the beginning of the end for all animal torture in Britain. So it makes it all the more galling to witness New Labour's repeated betrayals of the animals since the election. Those betrayals have been in all areas of animal abuse, not just vivisection, and still they go on even now. Not content with breaking their promises of the election, and conveniently forgetting all the lies they told us to win our votes, they even now think up new lies to tell us - and new ways to betray the animals. Make no mistake, New Labour have no intention of helping the animals, they never did have and they never will have. But like all the weak-willed governments, they crave approval - we must deny them that. The lies they tell us now must not be believed, and we must make it plain to them that we see them as the liars that they are. By our actions we must show them that we will not be fobbed off by their promises of "Jam Tomorrow" ! We want it now

and we can get it. Because, my friends, like all weak-willed governments, New Labour can be forced to do what we know is right. Let's not forget what we have achieved so far, in the last 18 months we have progressed to such an extent that it leaves me feeling in awe of our movement. And all this, all that we have achieved, has come about through our own activities - in spite of the opposition, the forces and judiciary of the state, the government and all. Just think what we can achieve in the future !

Mustn't go on any longer. Incidentally, on July 25 I'll have been in prison 2 years ! Wish me happy birthday !!!!! take good care now my friends, my thoughts and my love are with you all. Speak to you again soon.

For the cause

Barry

GILLIAN PEACHY
HMP WINCHESTER

Let me start by saying a big "thank you" to all who continue to give so much love and support, taking time out of busy lives for those of us in prison. Well appreciated and you all contribute to keeping a smile on the face with news and views from all over. After a pretty long stint at Hotel Cockroach this place certainly took some getting used to. While it's very overcrowded (what prison isn't these days) the comparatively laid back regime felt almost surreal ! Now I'm in a single, away from the worst effects of overcrowding, have my "headspace" and can escape the appalling stench of those poor corpses on plates (yeuk). The inevitable battle to try and obtain something resembling a vegan diet but I'm still better off than many of our prisoners. When I look at the garbage Barry's gone through and the diabolical treatment dished out to Keith (and his nearest "n" dearest) I've nothing to complain of (apart from being inside of course)!! I do hope you've all received the JKFM mail outs and you're jumping up and down on behalf of Keith & Kate. PLEASE don't let it rest.

While the vast amount of animal abuse that continues remains an obscenity it is great to see the commitment and energy out there determined to stop it. An energy that will call a halt to hellholes such as Bastard Brown's, Huntingdon Death Sciences, Wickham Labs et al. the purveyors of dead animal skins, the breeders, the blood junkies of the hunt, live exporters and all those other cretins who believe that animals are there for their use and abuse are finally realising that their days are numbered. I know that, lurking here in enforced inactivity, I am heartened to see the way that the fight to stop them continues and escalates.

LAST MINUTE ADDITION

ANNETTE TIBBLES

Was given three months for assaulting a policeman at Hillgrove, she is staying c/o HMP Eastwood Park, Falfield, Wooton Under Edge, Glos GL1 2JN (Her Prison No is ME3519)

To all of you who continue so effectively and imaginatively my respect and support. The only way to finally end the evils that the human race forces other species to endure is by saying in every way available "NO". We can and will end the abuse that has existed now for far too many years / centuries.

Keep on fighting - in whatever way your conscience dictates - in whatever way you are capable of doing. Stay Free !

We'll all be back - those we try to protect don't have that chance.

Love and Liberation Always
Gilly

**GEOFF SHEPPARD
HMP PARKHURST**

Dear Supporters

Many thanks for your interest and concern.

Over 3 years of this sentence done now, and (most likely) about 18 months left to do. If I got parole I'd be out in just four months time, but it's highly unlikely that I'll get parole.

So, life grinds on here, and I'm still working at refurbishing wheelchairs ! Next month (August) I'll have been doing them for two years. I suppose there's some use to it, since some of them are sent out to Bosnia and Laos, as part of a charity scheme.

As for the gym, I usually go twice a week, and mainly use the running machine, rowing machine and exercise bike - 10 minutes on each. I'm not a great enthusiast for the weights.

I'm just coming to the end of a course called "Reasoning and Rehabilitation", which was 35 sessions over a period of 3 months - so I'm sure I'll be alright now ! But, I must admit, I still feel a little surge of unreasonable enthusiasm whenever I hear of animal

liberation actions and demos occurring out there !

Keith has suddenly turned up here, having been "ghosted" from Long Lartin. He's on a different wing, but we've managed to have a few brief chats, and he seems as irrepressible as ever. All respect to him.

That's about it I think. Sorry, I'm not a great letter writer.

Let me just thank you all for all your letters and cards, which really are much appreciated, even though I'm often not able to reply. We're actually kept quite busy in these places, and it really is difficult to find the time to reply to all the mail.

Thank you for all your support, and for supporting the VPSG and ALFSG, who help us so much.

Bye for now, and take care.

Individuality, Solidarity and Animal

Geoff

GREGG AVERY (ex-prisoner)

For most of us the only time we think about prison is when we're on our way there. It must never be underestimated the power it has for a fax from the VPSG to be whirring off the prison fax machine many times whilst you're still trundling through the reception process. But herein lies part of the problem VPSG are not mind readers its up to all of us to keep them informed of who's in and who's out, who's moved *etc.* As soon as it happens. I've lost count of the time I've been told by

kitchen screws 'Oh yes we know all about vegans' (They always call us vegans) whilst telling you that cheese is for tea or 'you can't have any toiletries other than prison issue ones' i.e. animal fat soap *etc.*

But I can sympathise with them a bit 'cos they get hundreds of people saying they're vegans one week then eating meat stew the next. You can see them thinking 'yeah! yeah! I've heard that one before' This is one of the ways that the VPSG works at

its best for us because when the prison has been faxed and had Jo-Ann on the phone they know that we are different and yes we are in fact strict vegans. Of course we have to do a lot of work ourselves inside the prisons but believe me the VPSG on our side makes all the difference so if you want to help AR prisoners one of the best ways is to support VPSG.

Love Gregg

TONY HUMPHRIES

(Out on Conditional Bail at present - committed to Crown Court for Trial - awaiting date)

I heard that a VPSG newsletter was due out so have taken the opportunity to not only write to VPSG Supporters to thank them for helping me through a very difficult time, but also to briefly explain how Mel (Broughton) and I were treated *as vegans* on arrival at Woodhill.

Mel and I appeared in Northampton Court and, amongst other things, were accused of being members of the Animal Liberation Front and remanded to Woodhill Prison in Milton Keynes. On previous occasions we had telephoned VPSG to advise them of other people who had been convicted, letting them know where they had gone and other information on their sentences etc. When we were arrested someone also did the same for us.

I remember it was late Monday night before we arrived at the prison (somewhere neither of us had ever been before). On our arrival we were asked a series of questions like 'did we smoke' and 'what was our diet' - this was supposedly to establish at point of entry what your requirements were. We learned later that the authorities are more concerned that non-smokers do not get their smoke allowance so they can't use tobacco as a barter currency. We also learnt later that some people actually register as vegans just to get the vegan pack! This apparently was being done at Woodhill by several inmates just before last Christmas in order to get the yeast extract so that 'hooch' could be made quickly. That also explained why, when we did get the vegan packs the yeast extract had been removed! Anyway finally we were checked into our cells at approximately 10pm.

The following morning we were impressed to be told that we had been registered as vegans and that breakfast had been accommodated, melon and dry toast with beans - could not really complain. At midday, whilst locked in cells, the post arrived, incredibly 3 letters for each of us, one from a mutual friend, 1 from the A.L.F Supporters Group (containing a postal order for initial necessities) and the other one from the VPSG. The VPSG letter contained a copy of the fax they had sent to the Governor at Woodhill the previous day advising of our imminent arrival and confirming that we were vegans and of our requirements as vegans re our diet and lifestyle. It also contained a copy of the Home Office Guidelines and a letter explaining previous conversations with Woodhill, regarding previous vegan status. The Guidelines came in very useful - due to prison staff continuously changing shifts and always try to fob you off until their shift changes. So rather than to have to explain the Guidelines several times over the next few days, we were able to allow several staff members to read them themselves!

Basically, while the food supplied was vegan we knew, having already discussed this subject with the VPSG on behalf of other prisoners in the past, we could not complain, as they were genuinely trying! We still had not been issued with any toiletries. On Day 3 we received another letter from VPSG, this confirmed which of the existing prison toiletries their research showed were vegan - this included toothpaste, sachet shampoo, roll-on deodorant and liquid soap. We then obviously tried to contact the 'Wing Supervisor' to discuss this new information, when we saw him he produced a copy of the memo from the Prison Governor to himself, dated that same day, instructing him to make the items on the list we had received available to us - and he actually did, with the exception of the liquid soap which he ordered in and made available about 5 days later. This came accompanied with the Vegan pack (minus the yeast extract).

This meant, incredibly that within the space of 10 days we had been supplied with everything except shaving foam and margarine. We were then advised that following direct talks with VPSG Woodhill were ordering a vegan margarine 'Astra' for us.

I have since my release on bail spoken to the VPSG and they have told me that they are still fighting for the Prison Service to supply a suitable vegan bar soap and shaving foam following up on a decision from the Ombudsman sometime ago that this should be seriously considered.

This letter may sound a bit 'over the top' in saying what a good job VPSG did for us regarding the treatment of myself and Mel and we know every prison is different and every case different, but trying to imagine getting to the stage we did in such a short time, dealing with prison staff on the ground alone, with all the procedures and problems that are logistically involved as you can imagine is awesome.

I just have one request for Jo-Ann she should push for vegan pubs and if the authorities get any more paranoid maybe a VEGAN PRISON.

Yours for the Cause, Tony.

Note: At this time Tony's Codefendant Mel Broughton failed to turn up at Court and his whereabouts are unknown... ..

ANDREW CAINES

(Released earlier this year)

On the 9th January I was sentenced with 8 others to HMP Woodhill, a modern jail at Milton Keynes. As advised I'd contacted the VPSG to tell Jo-Ann that I was likely to be sent down and my partner (who was at Court) contacted her immediately she knew where I was going. The prison were then faxed by VPSG prior to my arrival, this meant that by the time I got to the prison they had a vegan stir fry waiting for me which I remember being quite tasty. Also due to the VPSG's previous work with the Home Office, i.e the Guidelines they'd produced, everything went smoothly from there on in - with only one or two hiccups in the early days e.g being given vegetable croquettes with cheese. Once you are in prison it is vital that you are assertive and if you get something inappropriate you say so - otherwise you will just keep getting it. The same goes for toiletries, clothing and work - take every opportunity to ask for a vegan alternative - you may not get it for a few days, but you will in the end. A good example of this was our toiletries, Jo-Ann had told us that certain prison issue items were o.k, but they don't always have them. In the end the prison actually went out and bought us toiletries and we all enjoyed being clean again after a few grimy days!

In our case being nine of us made it a lot easier, because when necessary we could go one after another and made the same point until it was less hassle for them to sort it out than put up with our moaning, and if that didn't work a quick call to the VPSG soon sorted it out.

When I was sent to the Dana (a prison in Shrewsbury) for another trial now over (a conditional discharge for aggravated trespass - not bad!) I was moved so quickly I didn't have a chance to contact the VPSG. However, despite this I found that all I had to do was to register as a vegan and very few problems followed, in fact as the only vegan I received excellent food (a matter of pride to the kitchen staff) including some vegan cake! I think this proves how effective the VPSG's behind the scenes work with the Home Office has been - with no warning the prison was already aware that I had a right to vegan food and a good idea of what it is - they even had a few cartons of soya milk in the fridge - just in case.

I know that my experience will not be the same as everyone's - but I've been at one of the most modern and one of the oldest prisons, one in the South and one in the North and been one of a big group of vegans and one on my own and still I've had relatively few problems. I don't think anything can be a better tribute to the work of the VPSG - so thanks to Jo-Ann, the VPSG fund-raising crew and all the people who have made donations to keep it going. Prison can be quite intimidating at first and having someone on the outside to help with all the hassles of getting your vegan stuff sorted makes things a lot easier.

Not really anything to do with the VPSG, but here are a few tips for anyone coming to prison:

1. If you smoke take plenty of sealed tobacco, rizzlas, safety matches and/or clipper lighter
2. Take toiletries
3. Stamps, paper, pens and envelopes
4. AM/FM radio with batteries and probably most important plenty of good books.

Different prisons have different rules and you may not get everything in, but you get some - oh I forgot, take some cash as much as you can £50 if possible to enable you to buy things like phone cards. If you know someone going to prison - remember the first few days are the hardest - so as soon as you know send a letter - even if it's just a quick note, I can't overstate how much a letter from a friend or supporter cheers you up.

One last thing people often don't know what to write or are afraid of saying the wrong thing, don't worry! Make it personal (a bit about the dogs etc you live with), write about things you are interested in or doing and overall, if you can make it up beat and funny even better still! Also include a stamp(s) or sae - again not all prisons allow this, but prisoner's money is severely limited so even one stamp helps out a lot.

Well enough of my insane ramblings, prison isn't so bad and with the support of VPSG, ALFSG new and old friends my time was easy and as Edith Piaf said 'I have no regrets' except she sang it in French - of course!

Cheers - love and liberation and respect

IF COMPASSION IS A CRIME, THEN LET THE WHOLE WORLD BE FULL OF SUCH CRIMINALS

DAVE CHARLES
(Ex-prisoner)

Thanks a lot for all the help and support, the overall experience wasn't as bad as I was expecting, the main problem being the sheer boredom of being locked up in your cell for hours.

I remember on arriving at Woodhill, after going through the reception process we were given our first meal. It turned out to be a vegan stir fry which was ok. As the days passed the food turned out to be pretty good and the kitchens seemed to have made an effort. Soya milk arrived after about five days. The toiletry situation didn't really take off so we went without a wash for five days. Apparently some member of staff was sent out to town to buy something suitable, so we finally received some shampoo, shower gel and deodorant going by the name of Simple. On release from prison we found out this wasn't vegan after all. So the toiletry situation isn't taken very seriously by the authorities is it?

After spending a week at Woodhill three of us were taken to H.M. Morton Hall. On arrival we were taken to the canteen where we received our first meal. Pretty poor it turned out, boiled potatoes carrots and cabbage. We were told by the officer in charge of the kitchens that we would have to see the doctor the following day to inform the prison we were vegan. Following the meeting with the doctor the food began to improve each day, but we never received Soya milk or fruit. We also failed to receive the vegan food parcels we had first heard about while at Woodhill. Still no progress was made on the toiletry situation, whether this would have improved if we were to have

stayed any longer is anyone's guess.

After my brief experience with life as a vegan prisoner the overall impression was that the authorities have a lot to do to bring life inside up to the standards laid down in the Home Office Guidelines.

Anyhow thanks again and keep up the good work!

VPSG Comment

As you can see Dave's experience shows the VPSG has to continually work to try to improve the care of vegan prisoners of conscience. Although the guidelines are in place in all prisons they have to be continually reminded they are there and WHY! For the past year we have been chasing the Prison Service to stock vegan toiletries at their main supply depot, thanks to the start Keith made with the Ombudsman we are finally getting there, Nottingham Toothpaste, standard issue is vegan not tested on animals, so is Hotel Comps Liquid Soap and the roll on deodorant by Chillwood. We are still working on a suitable bar soap and shaving cream! The final decision has been complicated with a departmental move of our contact so unfortunately new contacts have to be approached and new relationships developed.

It all unfortunately takes much time and energy involving numerous faxes and telephone calls all at peak rate. Although the Home Office Guidelines, we fought so hard to get in place, do not always work to start with - at least we have them as a starting point to refer to and eventually most prisoners with much effort finally get there. Imagine what it must have been like for prisoners before any such guideline was there!

However as it has to be appreciated, every time a prisoner comes into the system and each time a prisoner moves our work starts again until things are eventually sorted out. Improvements have to be fought for every inch of the way, most times the prisoners do not even know how much time and effort goes on behind the scenes as things seem to move so slowly for them. One thing is quite apparent, the Prison Service are fully aware that to not recognise the vegan lifestyle would be discrimination and that is not a route we feel they really would like to go down!

THANKS FROM SWEDEN

I write this letter to say: THANK YOU for the support the "Vegan Prisoners Support Group" gave me while I was in custody here in Sweden.

My name is Henrik Seger and I was one of the three who got caught on a fur farm in Sweden this year.

I'm the youngest, I'm 16 years old, and have been a AR/vegan for 3 years.

OK, thank you for the support dear Jo-Ann Brown and the rest of you at VPSG!

I'm now released until my trial. Thanks so much again for the support.

Henrik Seger
(The Wild Minks)

VPSG Comment

Dealing with Sweden I soon discovered their system is much stricter than ours. Although the Governor of Henrik's prison agreed to take my call it did cause some confusion there initially that an English Pressure Group knew they were holding vegan prisoners of conscience. Initially they would not confirm they were holding the Swedish prisoners we were trying to assist. They said it would undermine their security!!

However after our long conversation things started to ease and he asked me to put my concerns in writing and he would reply by fax., which he did quite promptly.

VPSG offer their services all around the world where needed but it is hoped that VPSG or similar groups will start springing up around the world to deal with problems of any vegan prisoner of conscience more locally in the future.

A BIG THANKS to Lesley who stepped in to help me put this newsletter together at the last minute - any proofing mistakes see Lesley phew!!

DAN POUSTIE
HMP BULLINGDON

Dear VPSG

Thanks very much for your speedy response and support at the news of my move into new luxury accommodation ! I was sentenced to 15 months which means I will serve 7 ½ so I will be out causing trouble (only joking) on the 12th March 1999. I was arrested for my part on a raid on Park Farm. This disgusting place breeds all sorts of animals from monkeys, rabbits and dogs for vivisection at Oxford University if anyone does not know already. We came for the dogs 18 beautiful beagles were loaded into the van of which I was the driver, a short distance from Park Farm the van was stopped by the police having been alerted to us by Park Farm security. Luckily, for some reason, the police car pulled alongside to "have a word" that gave me a chance to

head off into the night, unload everyone who was in the van and two of the beagles. I set off again still with the hope of getting away but was soon picked up by a number of police cars. I drove on until I found a safe place to stop as I new some of the dogs would be in bags and did not want to endanger them. It was a sickening decision to make knowing they would be returned to Park Farm and finally a slow and painful death. It will always haunt me.

The only comfort is knowing two beagles are out there alive and happy and in loving homes. I was arrested and charged with aggravated burglary and ABH due to the manager of Park Farm alleging being assaulted. I pleaded not guilty to this charge being only the driver and finally they accepted a straight burglary

charge to which I pleaded guilty and after appearing in front of a judge, who had obviously made up his mind, so even though my barrister gave a brilliant summing up, he gave me 15 months.

I am happy & well and the VPSG is helping to sort out all my vegan fodder. Thanks to everyone who has supported me through this. Whatever you are doing out there take care.

Love Dan

*New design T-shirts now available.
Barbed Wire with motif(white
wording on either black or grey T-
shirt) £10 includes p&p*

List of known prisoners as at 1st August, 1998

Darren Cole (XD2301) HMP Elmley, Church Road, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent ME12 4AX

Remanded in custody charged with making hoax bomb calls to Dover Dock sto try to prevent the live transportation of sheep and accused of causing criminal damage to a meat packaging firm in West Bromwich

Kevin Hickey (AP7904) HMP Spring Hill Grendon Underwood Aylesbury, Bucks HP180TJ

*(Sentenced to 12 month for handling a cat during a raid at Hillgrove Farm)
(Kevin will be released end of August this year)*

Barry Horne (VC2141) HMP Full Sutton, Nr. Stamford Bridge, York YO4 1PS

(Sentenced to 18 years for arson at several premises on the Isle of Wight, with a concurrent 14 year sentence for attempted arson in Bristol. Barry admitted the Bristol incidents, but is appealing conviction for the Isle of Wight attacks)

KeithMann (EE3588) HMP Parkhurst Newport Isle of Wight PO30 5NX

(Serving 11 years for criminal damage, attempted incitement, attempted arson, possession of explosive materials and escaping from custody)

Dan Poustie (BV5621) H.M.P. Bullingdon Patrick Haugh Road, Arncott, Nr. Bicester Oxon OX60PZ

(Serving 15 months charged with burglary relating to a raid on Park Farm Suppliers of animals to Oxford University. After a police chase he was caught with 18 beagles. It is reported that 2 other beagles made it to freedom)

Gillian Peachey (RL3415) HMPWinchester

Romsey Road,SO22 5DF

(Sentenced to 5 years for conspiracy to commit arson, with an additional 21 months for a previous suspended sentence)

Geoff Sheppard (MD1030) HMP Parkhurst Newport Isle Of Wight PO30 5NX

(Serving 7 years for possession of a shotgun and possession of materials for making incendiary devices)

Barbera Trenholm (RL1292) HMP Bullwood Hall High Road. Hockley Essex SS5 4TE

(Sentenced to 10 years for conspiracy to commit arson at the White Hart pub)

Justin Wright (CE3046) HM YOI Portland Dorset DT5 1DL

(Sentenced to 5 years for arson at the White Hart pub and also maintains his innocence)

Prisoners Abroad

Frank Allen CDC#K89699-2 Gym, bed69, P.O.Box 441, Chino, CA 91708, USA

(Jailed for attempted arson attack of a highschool slaughterhouse in South California. Frank has now been sentenced following a pre-sentence report to 12 months prison)

Rod Coronado #03895000, FCI Unit SW, 8901 South Wilmot, Tucson, AZ 85706, USA.

(Sentenced to a total of 57 months for aiding and abetting arson and handling stolen goods. Also for damaging US Government property, a display offensive to native Americans (Rod is a member of the Yacqui nation)

Clinton Colby Ellerman c/o Salt Lake County Jail 450 S. 300 E. Salt Lake City, Uta 84111-3207 USA

(Sentenced for \$300,000 arson damage caused to Tandy Leather store and for freeing thousands of mink)

Douglas Joshua Ellerman c/o Salt Lake County Jail 450 S. 300 E. Salt Lake City, Uta 84111-3207 USA

Turned himself in on June 29th after a spell on the run. Josh is due to be sentenced in the next few months.

Jacob Kennison , #06329-081 Yuma Unit 37900 N. 45th Ave, Dept.1700 Phoenix, AZ 85027-700, USA

(Jacob was released recently and promptly arrested again. He is on remand accused of burglary charges connected to the release of minks)

Vegan Prisoners Support Group
P.O. Box 194, ENFIELD, Middlesex EN1 3HD
(0181) 292-8325
(24hr Emergency Arrest/Helpline & Fax)

How you can help the prisoners

- send prisoners - stamps, stationery, postal orders, books, magazines.
- Prisoners like to hear what news there is from the outside and they might like to have a visit. Why not write and ask them if they would appreciate a visit or are they short of something.

How you can help keep VPSG afloat

- Organise a fund raising event (call the Help line between 6-8pm for more information)
- Donations (cheques or postal orders welcome - made payable to VPSG)
- Unused stamps (1st or 2nd class - each time we write to a prisoner we enclose an sae for their reply)

VPSG need to attract regular support to continue their work so we are appealing for supporters to make a donation to our bank account each month, **however small**. Only with regular funds can we keep going.

If you are able to support us regularly by paying and would like to pay by standing order, please fill in the form below and send it to VPSG (**not to your bank**).

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the VPSG Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor. Responsibility cannot be taken for the accuracy of statements made by contributors or the verification of material sent to VPSG for inclusion in the Newsletter.



Standing Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

To The Manager, Name of Bank _____

Branch _____

Address _____

Sort Code _____ - _____ - _____ Account Number _____

Please pay on the _____ 19 _____, and on the _____ day of every month until further notice,

The sum of £ _____ for the credit of VEGAN PRISONERS SUPPORTERS GROUP.

Signed _____ Date _____