

Vegan Prisoners Support Group

NEWS-November 2008

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Prisoner Letter - Sarah Whitehead *Birthday - 12 February*



Hi everyone!
I'm lying on the bed in my cell, listening to Bon Jovi, eating vegan cookies and thinking "This is easy"! I miss my animals desperately of course, but knowing they are safe and happy makes being in prison just another interesting phase in my life!

Thanks to the wonderful VPSG the

food continues to be excellent and our new canteen list now includes vegan wine gums and Whizzers chocolate beans. All too tempting – thank goodness for being in the gym 5-6 hrs every day!

I am tending to the birds twice a day now while Heather is in court. It really is a testament to Heather's dedication that the lives of these birds have improved so much and particularly the survival of Moonlight. The ins and outs of that episode will make for an entertaining evening when we are all out!

Having the support of so many people outside prison is so important. Thank you to all of you who take the time and effort to write to me, I will never forget your kindness. Thank you most of all to the amazing angels who are looking after my animals – you are the best! To all of you working hard to make a difference, keep it up – I can't wait to be back out there doing my bit!

Lots of love
Sarah xxx
(HMP Bronzefield)

Prisoner Letter - Dan Amos *Birthday - 19 November*



Hello all,
After being in Exeter for nearly two months and Winchester for a month now, I've come to realise that the time has gone faster than I could ever have imagined. I can't remember who said it - or exactly what they said,

but it is certainly true that "in prison the minutes seem like hours, but the

months seem like days". When I was remanded in Winchester and ended up 150 miles away in Devon I was surprised to say the least! I've tried to rationalise quite how that happened but those of you who have had any experience of the prison system will know what I mean when I say that it frequently defies explanation! Needless to say I am happy to be back near my friends and family.

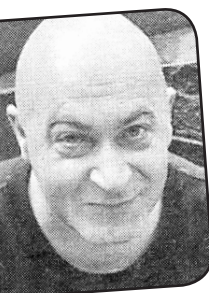
Being in Winchester with my friend and co-defendant Gregg means that there

is one less prison for the VPSG to deal with and I hope that makes things a little bit easier for them as they do a remarkable job liaising with the prison and ensuring that all our vegan needs are met.

I'd like to thank everyone who has written to me, it makes such a difference to be able to have an intelligent conversation, even if it is by mail. Keep them coming!

Dan
(HMP Winchester)

Prisoner Letter - Sean Kirtley *Birthday - 11 December*



Dear all,
Well I'm now in my 3rd prison on this sentence and doing ok. I'm back doing my I.T. clait plus course and am working towards getting a diploma, as well as this I'm boxing blankets in a workshop plus going to the gym doing chest, arms and rowing. Yes I've lost weight!

As always the VPSG are doing a great job making sure I get my monthly nutritional parcel, Veg1 multivitamins and this last month have helped to have it ok-ed by the prison for my wonderful partner to send in a pair of vegan trainers to me which I desperately needed (from Vegetarian Shoes).

The food here is really good, vegan pizza, pizza baguette, veggie wraps etc, tons of fruit, weekly vegan pack and a plethora of other vegan meals on

the menu and puddings! Apple crumble being my favourite!

The support is still amazing as ever from my partner, family, friends and strangers. I got 15 letters through the door a few Saturdays ago! I spend plenty of time replying too.

Thanks to everyone especially the VPSG for the continued wall of support.

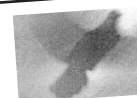
Love Sean
(HM Prison Stafford)

Prisoner Letter - John Smith *Birthday - 6 March*

Glad to come back on the VPSG list - I shall update you in the next newsletter. Needless to say VPSG have been of great help while I have been in prison and I wish to recognise this.....

John Smith
(HMP Lindholme)

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Prisoner Letter - Heather Nicholson *Birthday - 30 January*

Dear Friends,
Well the trial has started and I am feeling fine and stronger than ever. Everything they are talking about has nothing whatsoever to do with me and it is frustrating having to sit there and await my turn to speak. One thing is for sure, I will not be devastated if I am found guilty and I won't be celebrating if I am released because the only losers are the animals inside HLS. It's all quite tiring as I am woken up at 5 am every morning and taken to reception at 6 am for two pieces of wholemeal toast with Marmite and a cup of Rooibos tea (my own). Then I have to be strip searched of which I am the current record holder at 40 seconds. After that I sit in the next holding area with all kinds of "colourful" characters often exhibiting bizarre behaviour until the van arrives at around 7.15 am. It is then about an hour in an uncomfortable metal box to Winchester. As we arrive the photographers start snapping away through the windows of the van, but they are not looking for us. It makes you realise how Amy Winehouse etc must feel like at times though!
It is great to finally arrive at Winchester as all of the guards there are so lovely. They have taken such good care of me. They always ask how I am and we have a laugh together. Many months ago Audrey arranged with the security-firm Reliance for me to be fed with a proper vegan diet. As it is such

a long trial it is obvious to everyone that I must be fed properly. Thanks to VPSG's advice and Reliance's understanding and sympathy so far I have had watercress, raw carrots, humous, Ryvita, Bombay potatoes, rice and chilli, vegetable and tomato stew, Granose vegetable soup, pasties and samosas. I know it sounds a bit dramatic, but the guards there are so supportive and kind that they have, in a small way, helped to restore my faith in human nature (okay calm down Heather, give me a bag of watercress and I go completely over the top!).
The big news on the Bronzefield front is the new canteen list which is much improved thanks again to the hard work of Jo-Ann and the VPSG team. The vegan items are available to everyone now which is great. There are a lot of healthy items and best of all Plamil chocolate-orange spread that we just eat straight out of the jar with a spoon! There is still no vegan make-up on there though and that was a big disappointment.
My birds are still a great source of contentment and happiness for me. Thank goodness Sarah is here to care for them while I am in court. The aviary is now filled with pots of living herbs, grass, dandelions, chickweed and a giant sunflower. It's like a jungle in there and the birds love it. The sunflower is like a tree to them and they love to perch and play in it. On September 5th a cockatiel chick called

Moonlight accidentally hatched and had to be rescued by me when he was just one week old. He was still blind, freezing cold and his head was bleeding. I hand-reared him for 24-hours until I managed to get him handed out by the kind officers to my great friend Pat Laird who rushed him to Wildlife Aid to get him an incubator and special food. It was touch and go but thanks to Pat's wonderful care (and her able assistant Sarah Gisborne) Moonlight has made it and is now a beautiful, happy, cheeky, flying bird. It's wonderful and all thanks to Pat, Sarah and Wildlife Aid (Leatherhead). That little bird put everything in perspective for me. When I wasn't sure if he would live or die I couldn't have cared less about the trial.
I feel utterly privileged to be connected to all of you wonderful people and be warned because when I get out I want to come and see all of you who have supported me through this and give you a huge hug.
Lots of love and thanks,
Heather xxxxxx
(HMP Bronzefield)



Prisoner Letter - Don Currie *Birthday - 13 April*

Dear All,
It's hard to believe but I've been in prison close to 3 yrs. As time goes on it gets harder to write as one day tends to be much the same as the next. As far as food and toiletries go, things have never been so good (since being in prison). I'm able to order from Honesty Cosmetics, Ethical Wares and the Vegan Society. I'm also trying to get Veganicity supplements added to the Facilities List. It does lift my spirits to

support the vegan companies. I hand-wash all my clothes using Bio-D powder. I actually find it quite therapeutic. I also use Bio-D washing-up liquid and soon I will have the toilet cleaner. I know this may seem a little sad but being surrounded by vegan products makes my cell feel like home. The vegan nutritional parcel from VPSG is definitely one of the highlights of the month. I love all the healthy nuts, seeds and dried fruits.

I mix them all together and chuck them on my cereal. A big thanks to the VPSG and its supporters and to everyone for everything. Love Don x
(HMP Parkhurst)



Sponsored Walk in Aid of VPSG

Thanks to all those supporters who sponsored Sonia Hayward and myself to raise funds for VPSG. It was a really hot day but off we set with water bottles and Roger and Hella to make sure we made it to the end. As 10,000

steps is the daily recommended amount of exercise we thought it would be easy – but we didn't take into consideration that Sonia never goes anywhere without her car and I sit for hours at the p.c. in the VPSG office so my legs don't get much exercise either. Anyhow hot and exhausted we eventually arrived at our destination ready to have something to eat cooked by Hella

and afterwards we all tucked into vegan Danish pastries delivered to our door by Rachel's cakes Enfield. We raised in total £1,758.50p which will ensure that nutritional parcels can be sent to those prisoners who are permitted them for quite a while. Thanks again not sure if I want to walk 10,000 steps ever again in the same day though!



Prisoner Letter - Mel Broughton *Birthday - 5 July*

Hello everyone,
Not too much has changed for me since I last wrote. I'm still a Cat A prisoner and I'm still on a unit, which, if I was an estate agent, I'd describe as "bijou" and intimate. It also comes complete with its own in-house 'monitoring' scheme.
Since I last put pen to paper for the VPSG there has been an improvement in the provision of a vegan diet here at Woodhill. I'm realistic enough to know that being in a minority of one in a place like this means difficulties are always likely. However, thanks to the VPSG and some helpful officers at this end being in a minority is now a bit less difficult.
This week I read a review about the release of the 'Animals Film' on dvd. It's been twenty-five years since this

ground-breaking exposé of animal exploitation was first screened on Channel 4. Sat here in my security cocoon I wonder what the chances are of such a film being shown on national t.v. now! The late Alan Brien, in his review of the 'Animals Film' for the Sunday Times, wrote twenty-five years ago "I do not know when I have come out of a screening so moved by the power of the cinema as a medium to transform the entire sensibility of an audience.". Tonight on Channel 4 we have the latest in reality t.v.: kill it, cook it, skin it, wear it and then experiment on it!! And then once you've been suitably moved you can go to a Peta-recommended KFC.
Thankfully, the news that filters from those who know better is much more affirming. A London vegan festival

busier than ever and more young people flexing their voices on behalf of the voiceless. The next 'Animals Film' is in the making.
I just want to finish by thanking everyone for their amazing support. My environment here is closed and claustrophobic but your support and determination makes the horizon of possibility unlimited.

Thank you.
Mel
(HMP Woodhill)



Prisoner Letter - Kerry Whitburn *Birthday - 18 April*

Hi all. I hope you are all well and positive in mind, body and spirit. Well, just passed the halfway point (on September 30th) – three years served, three left to go. Not much changes from one day, week or month to any other, but it does enable a change of context when you have less left to serve than already served. At least NOW I have an idea of how time can seem to pass slowly or quickly depending on the season or forthcoming 'event'. For example, the Summer months always appear to pass quicker than, say, the Winter months. Though that may be due to the fact that Winter IS now much longer than our Summer! Also, the month before the halfway point was reached seemed to drag, whereas now I'm passed it I'm back to 'real time'. I can TRULY say that this is the first time in my life I've actually WISHED time away. Well, apart from when I was a child and I wished the days away before finishing a long and boring school term!
My good friend John (Smith) was recently transferred to a Category C prison, so at the present I'm missing my 'coffee confidant' on the neighbouring wing. Yes, we lost count of the many times I'd 'pop over' to see John to spend an hour or two debating and discussing vegan menus in prisons or the availability of vegan chocolate on canteen forms. ALL important issues, I'm sure you'll all agree.
Talking of food I was slightly concerned about WHAT the vegan meals would entail, after John had transferred! However, I was pleasantly surprised

as the vegan meals have remained superb. I'm not aware of who replaced John in the prison kitchens. I believe it IS someone who worked with John for a few days, sort of 'John's student'. Either way, he IS a vegan and has simply picked up where John left off. I must say that THIS prison has it exactly right where the care of vegans is concerned. As I've said, the food is excellent and the potential problems of provision of toiletries is eliminated by allowing us to order DIRECTLY from Honesty Cosmetics. All of this is possible due to the input of V.P.S.G. and the help and very valued support of them should NEVER be overlooked. Without them we WOULD be struggling! Before I finish I MUST say a MASSIVE thank you to EVERYONE who's written to me. You are ALL appreciated, and I AM SO SORRY to ANYONE I've not replied to during the last few months. Sadly, my gorgeous dog Karma left this world at the beginning of August. She was one of my BEST friends and I felt so guilty and sad that I couldn't say "GOODBYE". As I hope you can all imagine and appreciate this sad event devastated me and shook my emotional, psychological and spiritual foundations. Since 1998 until my arrest in 2005, Karma had been nearly everywhere with me and had done almost everything with me. She even came to work with me when I worked night duties and had frequented MANY demonstrations with me at Newchurch. I STILL become tearful when I talk and think about her, so I'm going to leave the subject, but I AM sincerely and truly

sorry to ANYONE I didn't reply to, but I lost focus on letters for a while as I couldn't face writing about Karma so many times. I hope you all understand and I hope you continue writing to me, as I DO appreciate you ALL and I am extremely grateful for your support. FINALLY (you lucky people!) I can truly say that the situation of being in prison has vastly improved since my beautiful soulmate, Jo', was released. To be able to speak with her EVERY night and enjoy visits with her can ONLY lift my spirits. This term in prison would've been so much more difficult (even with the amazing support from others) without such love and support I receive from Jo'. It also helps MASSIVELY knowing I will eventually be released to spend the rest of my life with her. So, in general life isn't TOO bad in such circumstances. Yes, I miss Jo' immensely, as I miss my amazing friends and my life I lived and enjoyed. But at least I'm not suffering. As are other beings of this world, and I won't be incarcerated forever. Unlike other beings of this world!
Take care, you lot, and again...
"THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING!"
BIG HUGS AND MUCH LOVE –
KERRY xxx
(HMP Lowdham Grange)



Prisoner Letter - Natasha Avery *Birthday - 28 December*

Hi everybody. 18 months in now. Amazing how the time flies. I have to say that I am so pleased I am tripping off to the gym every day rather than getting carted off to Winchester Crown Court. Not my idea of fun! I do a lot of running & cycling & weights too & feel really fit. Me, Gregg & Dan have pleaded guilty to conspiracy to blackmail. It's a long story, but taking everything into account, we know we have made the right decision. Here at Bronzefield we've got a raw vegan doing all our food now in the kitchen which means the meals are really good at the moment. She does lots of sprouted seeds & pulses, delicious! This together with the monthly nutritional parcels means we are eating

very healthily. Sarah remains unconvinced by both Heather and myself banging on to her about the benefits of eating properly, & views anything healthy with suspicion! Sarah & I have been trained by The Samaritans to be listeners in the prison, helping people in distress. It's wonderful when you can make a difference. The highlight though since the last newsletter by a million miles is mine & Gregg's first interprison visit in 18 months. I'm still floating about with a big smile on my face being overly nice to people a week later! He looked fantastic, & so fit & strong. The visit was complete & utter heaven, a perfect two hours I will remember forever. We love

each other so much, & all our calls & letters (I'm on number 1043!) & now hopefully regular visits too, mean we do jail, as always, standing on our heads. Thanks to everyone who supports us – you know who you are & you are brilliant. 'Laters' as they say here! Love Natasha xxx
(HMP Bronzefield)
PS Is there anyone in Gloucester who can help? Is there anyone who is able to bring my elderly mother to visit me every couple of months – they would need to be reliable and a good driver of course because she is precious to me.



Prisoner Letter - Gregg Avery *Birthday - 5 December*

Yes folks it's time for another story from Gregg. Well, 18 months in and I'm now working in the prison library with Dan (Amos) which is great, we have a laugh and oh to have an intelligent conversation about world events again. We are both due to sit down with the kitchen dept and devise a new 3 week vegan menu. They have never met genuine vegans before and are keen to learn from us which is refreshing. Jo-Ann is also in constant contact with them to offer advice, answer questions and constructive criticism where needed. It is difficult to explain just how

and the VPSG are experts in making sure that us vegans are at the top of the agenda. With the experience of dealing with many hundreds of prisoners and scores of different prisons this expertise is put into practice on a daily basis. That is why 10 out of 10 vegans prefer the VPSG. I'm really well, strong and fitter than ever and just about to dip under 7 minute miles when doing distance running.

my other jacket. What followed was 2 hours of heaven and only Natasha could make a day inside into one of the best days of my life. I floated back to Winchester and the bubble was only briefly burst by one of the screws falling asleep on my shoulder. Since that visit I've been on a cloud and the memory of Natasha walking towards me will stay with me forever.



invaluable the VPSG is unless you've been inside. The prison system is one huge bureaucracy

A couple of weeks ago I had an interprison visit with my beautiful wife Natasha. We sped off up the M3 in a taxi with a prison officer either side of me in the back. I would have given a royal wave out of the window, but this was somewhat hampered by the fact that I was handcuffed to an officer. It turned out I was the only one who knew the way to Bronzefield, bloody hell! I might as well have driven myself there. Especially when we got to Bronzefield and the meter was on £110! I explained I'd left my wallet in

Well kids another instalment of Gregg's prison tales is nearly over, but before I go, people often ask if I need anything? I need only one thing and that is greetings cards so I can write in them and send them to Natasha, blank inside with any picture on the front are best. As few or as many as you can send me would be brilliant, just post them into me. Thanks to everyone for your support, you will never know how much it means. Lots of love Gregg xx
(HMP Winchester)

Prisoner Letter - Jonny Ablewhite *Birthday - 27 January*

Dear VPSG supporters, Just a quick note (how unlike me!) to thank the VPSG for their continued support and assistance. A calm and equanimous life in jail would not be possible without them. Life in Lowdham goes on (and on) I finally received my cat C (woohoo!) and plan to leave in the New Year. My Masters exams are now over for the year so I can relax and concentrate on the next VEGANDIA album "Political Animals". The first CD "Angel Face, how could you?" is now available

FREE if you email your postal address to vegandia@hotmail.co.uk ENJOY! The tour starts as soon as it feasibly can! (- and when I've got a band together!). Again, massive adoration to the VPSG for making prison life bearable. Brightest Vegan Blessings, Jonny Ablewhite (HMP Lowdham Grange)



Storage facilities are needed by prisoners on the VPSG listing for furniture, household stuff etc South of England would be great but can travel. If you can help, please contact Natasha direct: Natasha Avery NR8987 (HMP Bronzefield)

VPSG has to announce that sadly both John and Bessie Overell passed away within a short time of each other - they had both been supporters of VPSG for many years.