

Vegan Prisoners Support Group

NEWS-April 2009

15 YEARS OF VPSG

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Prisoner Letter - Dean Cain *Birthday - 11 October*



Hello everyone, well it's been almost 4 months in HMP Lincoln and at last life is

starting to get a bit more interesting. After waiting 3 months I've finally started English lessons, which if you have received a letter from me you will know I desperately need. It's a huge relief to finally get some decent time out of my cell. Thanks to the VPSG's hard work I'm now eating more food than I'm

throwing away, and now that the new canteen list is up and running I am actually putting on weight. I have been going to the gym a fair bit which I'm starting to enjoy. I look really funny in my little vest and shorts, a bit like the guy from the Mr Muscle adverts. Hopefully that will change over the next few months.

I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to write to me or visit. It means the world to me. No matter how down I'm feeling a letter or visit can lift my spirits. I'm sorry to those I haven't replied to, I'm not ignoring you and I will reply very soon. I would like to mention my mum, she's been an amazing

support and I couldn't wish for a better mum.

I've been spending most of my time reading but way too much time staring at the idiot box. I'm trying to get a single cell so I don't have to put up with Coronation Street and Big Brother!. I'm missing my girlfriend so much it's crazy. I write to her every day, but it's hard when you know you can't get a reply. At least she knows how much I love her. Anyway enough mush, I hope everyone is well, lots of love, Dean

Prisoner Letter - Luke Steele *Birthday - 16 October*



Dear VPSG Supporters

First of all I'd like to say a big 'Thank you' to everybody who's written

letters and cards of support, and sorry to anyone I have not replied to as there is so much post. The VPSG have been doing a brilliant job helping me to get vegan food, toiletries and general support, plus the vegan food products they have sent to the kitchens for us. It's good to see familiar items which is great to say the least.

Life in here is not too bad and emotionally, although split from family and friends, I've been coping well, staying positive and taking the idea of prison as yet another life experience and gain-

ing what I can from it. The education lessons are quite interesting, I attend most days and am doing a course in 'Creative Crafts' such as art and design, plus getting my ICT skills tip-top with a Clait Plus. The library has endless interesting books to dig into, at the moment Huxley's 'Brave New World' is my choice and is proving a brilliant novel.

I've also applied for a job in the kitchen as vegan chef (donning the checked uniform!) but I'm yet to hear if I've made the grade, but equally am looking forward to getting my hands on the new VPSG Prison Cookbook, chocolate cake galore!

It's great to receive your letters, thanks again to everyone for their help and support.

All the best

Love Luke xxx

New Prisoner - Nicole Vosper

Birthday - 15 February



Hello All, I've had my first few days here at HMP Bronze-field and am

settling in great. I should hopefully soon be getting a job and am doing loads of reading and exercise to keep myself busy! Its been wonderful seeing everyone and the food is better than I expected....I can even order chocolate Wizzers on my canteen! Thanks for all your support. Nicole
Update: Nicole has now got a job in the gym.

VPSG

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Editorial - 15 years of VPSG!

Founder - Jo-Ann



It's now been 15 years this April since VPSG was first established – our aims were and still are - to highlight concerns and

make recommendations to try to ensure equal opportunities for strict ethical vegans detained within prison or in a police cell.

Below are some of the achievements we have made since we were established in 1994:

- Our Guidelines on the Care of Vegans were installed in every prison in 1996
- Vegan prison issue toiletries now available in all prisons
- Catering Information Pack first installed in all prisons in 2004 and updated and re-issued jointly with The Vegan Society in 2007
- Prison News Sheets are now produced twice a year to all Catering Managers now jointly with The Vegan Society
- Caseworkers allocated to each strict ethical vegan prisoner to assist them during their sentence
- Helpline available to prisoners 7 days a week
- Emergency Arrest Line available 7 days a week

However, due to the increase in the growing number of prisoners we recently needed to decide how the VPSG team were going to cope with the additional volume of work and also find the time to complete projects already started in order to achieve our overall goal - which is to ensure whichever prison a prisoner arrives at they will have facilities in place for them to be able to properly provide for a strict ethical vegan.

Although we have come a long way we still have some distance to go.

Outstanding Concerns - Prison Shop Issue

We continue to highlight our concerns on equal opportunities for vegans in Prison Shops, *first brought to the attention of the Prison Service in early 1996*, as we feel that vegans are still not adequately catered for in all Prison Shops. The reason being only a selection of items can be chosen from the full listing and the choice is up to each individual prison. In reality this means if there were only two vegans at a particular prison they could decide not to list any vegan items whatsoever – therefore we need to increase our efforts to ensure that vegan prisoners are able to obtain their requirements through specialist mail order companies.

Many readers will remember we sought their help to try to resolve this issue some years ago by writing to their MPs. However, although after many meetings and correspondence some of our recommendations have recently been accepted, our efforts to resolve this issue to ensure 'like for like' often takes a back seat while we are kept busy with other work that comes into the VPSG office.

For supporters less familiar with what function the Prison Shop plays in prisoners' lives, it is where prisoners can purchase their weekly goods – if there are any vegan products to buy that is! Although on a positive note some of our recommendations have recently been installed under the DHL/Booker contract recently lost by Aramark.

Changes to our website www.vpsg.org

In order to create this much needed time to tackle the prison shop project and the additional prisoner work, as from the 1st April we will no longer be listing prisoners on our website as it duplicates information already available on other websites.

WWW.VPSG.ORG will still list our Emergency Arrest Line Mob: 07984 733 008 and updates on our progress.

Without the VPSG teams' assistance it would be an almost impossible task to keep up with all the work that comes into the office. Both Audrey and Greta help out with prisoner problems, as well as conducting research on the prison shop issue. Karen continues to deal with the Arrest Line, Lidia and Clare handle the design, technical layouts of documents, leaflets and booklets and Hella analyses the Diet Sheet Records sent in by prisoners. BUT of course without you – the supporters – VPSG would not still be here and hope that you will continue to support our work for vegan prisoners throughout 2009.

Jo-Ann

Sponsored Cycle ride for VPSG



On Sunday 28th June 2009 I will be cycling 10 laps around Brockwell Park, Herne Hill in South London, SE24 and will cover approx. 15 miles. Brockwell Park is picturesque, but quite hilly location. I have chosen this day as four years to the day my mother died.

Audrey Lane had been vegan for 15 years and had subscribed to the ALFSG and Arkangel Magazine as well as attending protests, notably a sit down outside Boots Headquarters. She sadly contracted dementia and died peacefully at 79 and although I lost her several years before she died but her spirit lives on.

Robin Lane

Sponsorship forms are enclosed, so please support

Prisoner Letter -

Dan Wadham

Birthday - 3 February



Hey Everyone!

Wow, thanks for your letters – I'm struggling to

keep up with them all! I'm having a right laugh in here, I've met some great people and lots of vegans! I get to the gym at least 3 times a week which has an impressive weights studio, football pitch, tennis courts and sports hall. I'm starting an iMedia course in Web Design and Animation and in October I'll begin an OU degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics. When I'm not studying or exercising I'm usually either bouncing around my nice big cell (with en-suite) to Anchor or Ritual, playing chess, reading, drawing or chowing down some luscious vegan nosh. If I get really bored I can always watch the digital TV which has a ludicrous 30 channels! The food though really is amazing – tonight I had bean and vegetable curry brimming with 4 different types of beans, naan bread, and rhubarb and apple crumble with custard for pudding. Yum!

On a Monday night there is a Yoga class in the chapel and every other night is spent playing pool or having a game of poker. Despite all this luxury though not everyone finds it easy and one young guy took his own life here a couple of weeks ago – he had one month left to do! Since then I've decided to join the Samaritans Listeners scheme which gives prisoners a chance to chat to someone on their level about their problems. There are some

frustrating aspects of prison, but most people could do it standing on their head – the fear of prison is much, much worse than the real thing.

Thanks again to you all and to the VPSG angels.

Lots of love
Dan xxx

Prisoner Letter - Gavin Medd - Hall

Birthday - 20 March



Hi all,

Not having had the luxury of a private education

to prepare me for prison I've adapted pretty well I think! It is just like starting a new school or job, not knowing where to go or what to do, but after a few days it's as if one has been in for years! (Very much like a job in that respect.)

All is well here at Coldingley, there is a new gym which is as good as the one I used to pay £45 a month for! An added bonus is that it is not next door to my local so I actually get to lose weight now!

I must say a big thank you to the VPSG and to other vegan prisoners for all the hard work in resolving all the issues at Winchester prior to my arrival there and for their ongoing help in sorting out access to hygiene and nutritional items here at HMP Coldingley until the prison shop is sorted out.

I've just started some education this week, honing my writing skills, so Martina Cole better

watch out, after all I've got all the material in here!

Cheers, Gavin

Prisoner Letter - Sarah Whitehead

Birthday - 12 February



Hi everyone

Everything is cool in Bronze-field! I can't believe how

quickly time flies by in prison. I really must get down to some studying or something! I was hoping to be released on tag around now - but there seems to be a problem and no decision yet.

Things have been pretty hectic in the last few months for Natasha and I as we were the only Listeners (Samaritans) for 450 inmates, but now that Heather and others have finished their training it's much easier. I'm still working in the gym every day and loving it. It's being painted pink and white at the moment so it will be like working out inside a stick of rock – I think the pink is meant to be calming??!

Thanks to the hard work by VPSG our food is great and we get lots of extras on the canteen. Thank you to everyone who writes to me. I really appreciate how kind you are and it's such a joy hearing all the animal stories. My usual massive thanks to the angels looking after my own animals. I know I always say it, but I can't stress enough how important it is to know your animals are safe and happy – it's all that matters and prison really is a doddle!

With lots of love to all of you.

Sarah xxx

Prisoner Letter - Heather Nicholson *Birthday - 30 January*



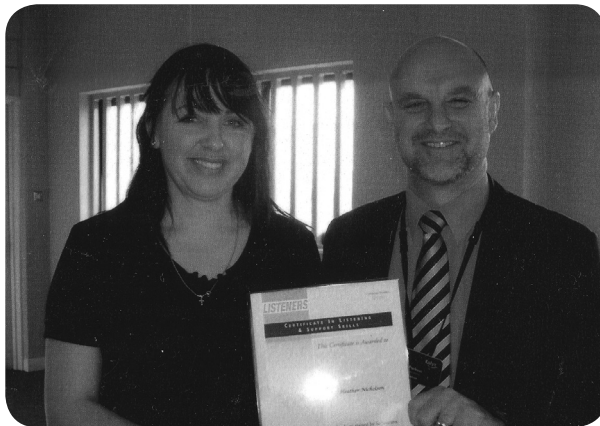
Hi Everyone

Well it looks like I am going to need your support for a little while longer.

Until November 2012 to be precise! I have been completely overwhelmed by the love and support people have shown me. I am behind at the moment with replying to my mail by about 300 letters. I always write back to everyone and love doing so, but I apologise if it takes a little while. I have been in prison now for almost 2 years and I still get really excited when the mail arrives. I really appreciate all of the kind donations you have sent as they pay for my vegan toiletries, food extras from the prison shop, telephone credits and I send money home to pay for the upkeep of our four dogs. I feel quite emotional writing this because I know I am writing to the people who have

made such a huge difference to my life in prison.

My fantastic parents have been truly amazing and have dealt with the media circus brilliantly – I am so proud of them and love them very much.



It has been wonderful being here with Natasha and Sarah, but that will all be coming to an end soon. Natasha is being “shipped out” (as they say in here) some time around the end of March and I will hopefully be going to HMP Eastwood Park in August. For some made up reason that I can't even be both-

ered to repeat here we have been told that we are not allowed to be in the same prison anymore. That's no problem for us as we are all strong and independent people. I have now qualified as a Listener and enjoy this voluntary role very much. I work with a great team of women and I am sure that we make a real difference to many women's lives in here and that's a good feeling. We had a presentation ceremony on 21st February which was lovely. Here is the photo of me receiving my certificate. Don't I look pleased with myself ha ha!

The food here is much the same as it has been for the last two years. The VPSG nutritional packs are very important for keeping us healthy. I sprout the mung beans and sunflower seeds that are sent in by VPSG as I think they are important for staying healthy. I can never thank the VPSG enough for all they do for us.

Continued on back page...

Prisoner Letter - Sean Kirtley *Birthday - 11 Dec*

Dear supporters



Well I've been at HMP Stafford now for almost seven months, it actually feels a lot less than that, time really does fly by here. I'm currently working in the laundry which I enjoy and coming back to some really nice vegan meals at lunch and tea, my favourites being the gorgeous baguette pizza with salad, the “chef's special” which is a huge plate full of vegan sausages, samosa and a veggie burger with chips and

beans, and bean hotpot which is full of kidney beans, haricot beans, chick peas and green beans, this all helps to keep me healthy!

Many, many thanks to the VPSG who have been providing our kitchens with healthy vegan essentials each month for issue too; such as nuts, seeds, dried fruits and some dairy-free chocolate until prison shops start listing them. I can only send love back in return, hope it's felt! As always it's thank you to everyone that supports vegan prisoners, my beautiful partner, mother, children, grandchildren and army of friends.

Sean

London Vegan Festival

Sunday 6th September 2009,
11am - 8pm, Kensington Town Hall,
Hornton Street, London W8



VPSG would like to thank Robin Lane for his continued support in paying for the VPSG to have a stall at the London Vegan Festival.

Our volunteers look forward to seeing you on our stall.

The London Vegan Festival is organised by CALF. They can be contacted by email: robandal55@googlemail.com or Tel: 020 86709585

Prisoner Letter - Jonny Ablewhite

Birthday - 27 January



My Dear Vegan
Friends

I made it!
HMP Low-
dham is far
behind me
(well, about
30 miles due
south) and now

it's all about "Ran-to-the-by!"
Incidentally, this prison used to be
called "Bedleg City" because of the
frequent ambushing-hordes of con-
victs swooping on the innocent, wield-
ing hardwood furnishings! Now it's a
safe cat C jail and I am finally passing
smoothly through the bowels of the
prison system! One more 'cat' to do
and I'll be reunited with my sorely
missed literal cat "Edwina"!

The Ranby existence, for the last 6
weeks since my arrival, has sadly
but largely been about purposeless
lock-up. Occasionally interrupted by
bi-weekly gym sessions, life-saving
visits and sojourns to the library. I've
typically endured hours of my cell-
mate's tedious music and constantly
dream of a return to a single cell and
serenity! I can bear this of course
but the single cell luxuries of HMP
Lowdham are long gone. So I'm basi-
cally waiting for something to happen,
for my Masters to restart, for a guitar
to appear or any activity to tear me
away from 8 hours a day of Ministry
of Sound!

My future is bright – in a month or
less I'll be in a single cell and perhaps
by the end of the year I'll be in a D cat
waiting to leave the prison confines
for my first few hours out in 4 years!
Y'all keep everything crossed! These
years have been a profound and
intense experience I can tell you.

My closing thoughts and thank yous
are with the VPSG, for organising
and helping maintain my vegan diet
and ensuring access to some familiar
vegan products. Sorting out some of
the problems encountered on vegan
issues during my imprisonment prob-
ably would have been impossible
without their help.

So, my dear vegan friends, for all
your support "I Thank You!"
Vegan Love and Blessings

March Update: I now have the
BIGGEST single cell I've had since
beginning this prison journey. It is,
in fact, a 'room'. I've a full en-suite
shower, more shelf and cupboard
space than ever and more impor-
tantly peace!! My MA has started
again, my guitar is in the post and my
D-Cat papers are being processed
– so I should be there this year!! It's
all good!! Thanks again to the VPSG
and to you all for your letters!
Jonny

Prisoner Letter - Mel Broughton

Birthday - 5 July



Hello Everyone

Well here we
are again
and for
me the big
difference
from the last
time I wrote is
my change of
tus from remand

sta-
prisoner to convicted prisoner. In
terms of my vegan diet here at Woo-
dhill it is best described as 'patchy'.
Improvements have been made and
mistakes still occur sometimes. There
are people here who genuinely try
and help and some that don't.
Being a category A prisoner does
mean a greater level of isolation from
the rest of the prison. Although this
has its drawbacks it can also work for
you when trying to deal with problems
like your diet. For me the question of
the ethical status of a vegan diet is
every bit as important as the nutritional
content. I feel that's especially im-
portant when you live in a very closed
community that is almost exclusively
peopled by meat-eaters. To this end
you really can begin to appreciate
the value of the work the VPSG do.
Often dealing with a system that is
so rigid it almost works against itself
the achievements of the VPSG are
even more remarkable. I have every
reason to be grateful for the diligence
and hard work the VPSG have put in
on my behalf.

On a personal level I am absolutely
fine and in good spirits. I'm attending
a computer class and have made an
application to do an Open University
course. I do a huge amount of read-
ing and use the C.V. gym most days
to keep fit.

Being in a closed environment like
this it would be relatively easy to feel
a sense of hopelessness. But the
opposite is true. Last night I watched
a programme about the Orang-u-tan
rescue centre in Borneo. The thing I
will never forget about the programme
is the young, orphaned Orang-u-tan
that had witnessed her mother being
killed before she was put into a tiny
cage to suffer further torment. At the
rescue centre where she now awaits
the possibility of release back to the
wild she displays mental and physi-
cal scars of her brush with humans.
What was so remarkable about her
was her spirit, a spirit that refuses to
be crushed. For that little scrap of life
hopelessness is not an option, I can't
think of a better life lesson than that.
Thank you to everyone who has
written, your letters really do make a
difference.

Mel

Prisoner Letter - John Smith

Birthday - 6 March

Well 3½ years down the road, fourth
prison establishment in my sentence,
many different jobs from coat hanger
recycler, peer partner, vegan chef
and gym orderly as well as too many
courses to mention. One thing has
stayed a constant – the support and
assistance of all those at the VPSG.
So many times they have bridged
that gap that exists between vegan
inmate and prison. Many prisons
have previous contact with the VPSG
so challenges revolving around food,
toiletries, cleaning products, even
vegan footwear for work as vegan
chef are never insurmountable. Not
that these challenges are always
easily resolved, they take effort, per-
sistence, patience and all the social
skills required to deal with a non-
standardized prison service. Thank
you VPSG.

Secondly and by no means any less
important is the support and contact
with the outside world I receive from
those who write to me. Be it a card
with 'thinking of you' to an anec-
dote of the time when Spot knocked
them into the river whilst chasing a
wild stick. They all make me smile.
Thank you all.
All the best.

John Smith

Prisoner Letter - Kerry Whitburn

Birthday - 18 April



Hello good readers of the VPSG newsletter – how are you all? , I hope life is full of positive and inspirational energy and

dedication, keeping your mind, body and soul free and kind for the good of the world and its inhabitants. Well, here I am again in another issue of the VPSG news. So what am I able to tell you that is different to the last time you read my ramblings – hmmm, let me think..... oh yeah, I made a wonderful and comforting purchase of two brand new pairs of boots from none other than Ethical Wares. I felt like a child celebrating the first birthday I was old enough to remember (although I'm now NEARLY old enough to forget THAT very same birthday) when I collected my 'gift to myself' from reception. But amongst all the self serving glee and irritating smugness (irritating to myself I mean) I did have a sobering thought, a subtle, subconscious nudge to remind me just HOW it was actually possible to be able to purchase such luxury items.

Now, defining the boots as 'luxury items' is NOT an audacious attempt at advertising on behalf of Ethical Wares before I begin a contractual war between 'Veggie Shoes' and 'Ethical Wares'. Though how I was able to afford TWO pairs of boots at once you may be wondering!!! OH!! No, only joking! But the boots I purchased were items that without the input of the VPSG it would have been impossible to even know were still available while being away from the reality of 'my world'. Because of the continued dedication for tireless educating of the prison service and softening of, then breaking down concrete ministerial policies, the VPSG did not need to contact the prison and endure a long and painful process of gaining permission for me to purchase such footwear. No, I was simply able to complete a general

application suggesting an outside supplier be used for the purpose of vegan footwear due to my concerns regarding the ever present and over use of other creatures' skin! My written request was, I must add, remarkably more subtle than the brutal practice of fur filching, or leather looting! Anyway, I digress... where was I? Oh yes, my request. Well, it DID take a while, but I was eventually given permission to place an order with Ethical Wares and my order was quickly processed. I have one pair of said boots on RIGHT NOW, as I write this letter!

My experience of prison has had one less hassle... that of being able to purchase ALL vegan items, such as toiletries and clothes, as well as knowing I don't have to continue a battle for a true and nutritional VEGAN diet – and is only possible due to TWO reasons - the support and dedication of the volunteers at VPSG AND also the support that many of you give TO them. Without your support and any donations that any of you make then the VPSG would not exist as, even with the volunteers, NOTHING could be achieved without resources. Where would the likes of me be, than, whilst in prison...? Not a pleasant thought from THIS side of the wall, believe me! Anyway, I just wanted to share that with you all!

Everything is fine with me here, and I still maintain a positive attitude. I may be in prison but I AM lucky. I have a beautiful lifelong partner in Jo, and some amazing and wonderful friends. Basically, I have a brilliant life to go out to with my health and my sanity still intact.

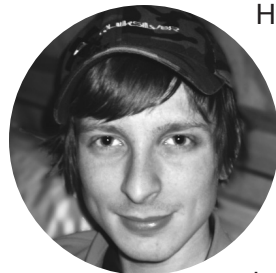
Before I end, I MUST say a massive and heartfelt 'THANK YOU' to everyone who has written to me. You are ALL truly appreciated and I DO apologise to anyone who has waited ages for a reply (or who may STILL be awaiting one)! It's just that after being in prison for three and a half years now, I don't always have too much to tell you all. I hope you all understand?

Sending you all hope and love for a life full of compassion and light.

KERRY xxxxxx

Prisoner Letter - Dan Amos

Birthday - 19 November



Hello everyone,
Not much has changed at HMP Winchester since my last letter, though unfortunately [for

me] Gregg has left to take up residence at HMP Coldingley. I would be lying if I said that I wasn't more than slightly relieved that my constant thrashing in our games of cards has come to an end!

I have been allocated to a Category C prison and now I'm just waiting to be transferred. I've been waiting 6 weeks now and I'm told that they are waiting for a space to become available. Though I suspect that the fact that I'm a Listener and there are only three of us for 500 inmates might be the real reason that I am still here!

I am still working in the library though Gregg's replacement is of a somewhat different character and I now find myself the only one out of the three of us who is not in for 'murder' – how many of you can say that about your work colleagues?

Thank you to everyone who has written to me, your letters have been brilliant and for VPSG's assistance in sorting out the usual hiccups with my diet.

Dan

Please support our work

£2 a month would help ensure we are able to continue working for equal opportunities for vegan prisoners. See enclosed standing order form.

Prisoner Letter - Natasha Avery *Birthday - 28 December*



Hi Everybody

Happy 15th birthday VPSG! VPSG have been in existence for 15 years this April and have

made a huge difference to vegan prisoners in that time. It is only when you get to prison that you realise how VPSG volunteers work so tirelessly to ensure that we get all the things we take for granted when we are free - like vegan toiletries, food and soya milk and it really hits home how vital their support is.

I remember when Heather and I arrived at Eastwood Park unexpectedly after a court hearing in Birmingham and on our first morning a guard came to our rooms as soon as we were unlocked saying that their head of kitchens wanted to speak to us. When we got to the kitchens the women told us that Jo-Ann had been on the phone to her at 7am that morning to ensure that we were properly looked after! That for me sums up her dedication and shows me how much she cares. I continue to find life in prison as enjoyable as ever. Sarah and I went to boarding school and the experience is not dissimilar, although the women are rather different it has to be said! Of course, I miss Gregg and

the dogs every second of every day and long to be with them, but having the time to read the newspaper and all the books I have wanted to read for years, watch television and listen to classical music which I love are a real treat after years of campaigning. If anyone is feeling generous and would like to order me second-hand books from Amazon, please get in touch. I still work in the gym as a gym orderly which I love. Regular running, cycling, weights and circuits all make me feel healthy, relaxed and strong. My time at Bronzefield is coming to an end as I am moving to another prison when my listener hold runs out at the end of March. Sarah, Heather and I have all been trained by the Samaritans and work voluntarily here in the prison as listeners providing caring support and a sympathetic ear to those who are struggling with prison life. It has been wonderful to be with Heather and Sarah all this time. Sarah and I work together in the gym as orderlies and have a very similar sense of humour - we seem to spend all our time laughing, even at the most inappropriate moments! It will be good to move on too and I am looking forward to the next episode in my prison adventure. It feels very much like another step closer to freedom and to being back with Gregg again. We were both sentenced to nine years, so will serve half of that in jail and the

other half on license, so our release date is about 2nd November 2011. I am looking forward to the party and Gregg's dancing already! Thanks to the VPSG's hard work and the Bronzefield canteen staff's willingness to help in any way they can, we have an excellent canteen list here with a good selection of vegan toiletries and food items to choose from, like Faith in Nature lavender shower gel, chocolate whizzers, chocolate soya drinks, Organica chocolate, Biona fruit gums, miso soup, rice crackers, seaweed and a really good variety of dried fruit. I am stocking up at the moment so I have supplies if the next prison I go to is not so vegan friendly initially. As vegan prisoners many of us write to each other and compare notes about prison life, what the food is like at all our respective jails and all sorts of things. I have so much respect for all the prisoners who face prison with humour and courage, my husband Gregg more so than anybody. I get so much strength from the deep love we have for each other and getting his letters are definitely the highlight of every day. I think we are all agreed that VPSG has made of a world of difference for all of us prisoners, so happy 15th birthday VPSG and a huge thank you to all the volunteers for all your hard work and support. Lots of love, Natasha xxx

Prisoner Letter - Gregg Avery *Birthday - 5 December*



Hey! Different venue, same old jokes! Here we are now at HMP Coldingley, which is a category C prison (lower security). After

s i x weeks we've settled in nicely and hit the ground running. We've already had multi meetings with the kitchens, which have been very productive - I think we are the first genuine vegans they have ever had here and they are keen to use as an education.

Most prisons are moving over to a

new prison shop supplier - DHL/Booker. Over the past year the VPSG have held several meetings with Booker and the prison service. The fruits of their labour are shown on our new canteen sheet with lots of vegan toiletries plus goods like vegan muesli, Plamil chocolate and garlic pitta bread - I think the Daily Telegraph journalist have had a seizure at this point! This is progress that makes a real difference to our daily lives. We also hope to push for more products in the near future.

So, with Coldingley being a Cat C prison we are allowed to wear our own clothes. Great! So I asked an ex-prisoner to get me some shorts for the gym. He's been inside so he'll know

what to get I thought. Imagine my alarm when I was told he had bought me ladies lycra shorts! Bloody hell! Did he think I was Barbara Windsor in 'Carry on Coldingley'? Can't you just imagine me bounding into the gym in them shouting "Hello boys!" Ha, ha! Needless to say they were quickly changed and the said C+ prisoner has been relegated to the subs bench.

This move brings me a lot closer to my beautiful, brilliant, wise Natasha. Over 1400 letters to each other also means old father time is bringing us ever closer to being back together where we belong. She is my total inspiration and I miss her so much.

Continued on back page...

Gregg's letter continued from page 7...

My fitness is going from strength to strength and my next target is 5 miles in under 35 minutes which I should achieve in the next few weeks. Do keep up Amos boy! The gym here has been refurbished at a cost of £100,000 and is fantastic.

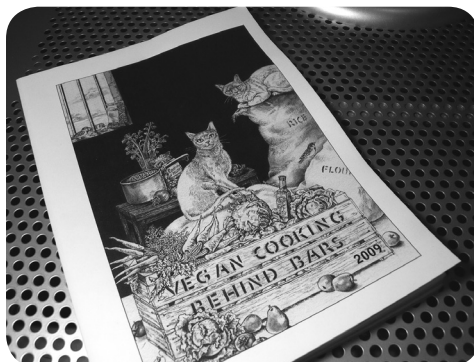
A huge thank you to everyone who has sent me blank cards to sent to Natasha over the past few months. Please, please, please keep them coming.

For all of you who write and support us, you will never know how much it means.

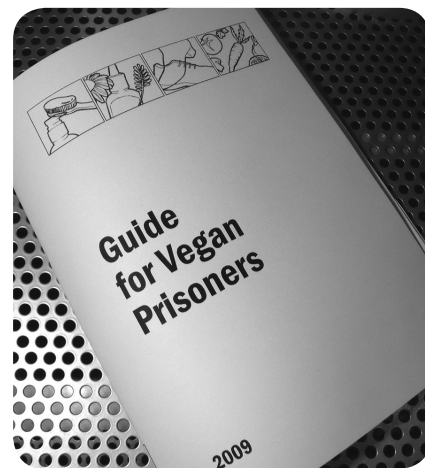
Thank You.
Gregg

VPSG – 'Cooking Behind Bars' recipe book

We have almost completed the prison cookbook, 'Cooking Behind Bars' and hope to have it ready for despatch to all prison by June. Many thanks to Danuta who designed the artwork and Clare, Lidia and Hella for compiling and testing the recipes.



NEW - VPSG's guide for Vegan prisoners



The Guide for Vegan Prisoners is now also available for downloading from www.vpsg.org for anyone facing prison.

Compiled by Clare and Lidia.

Heather's letter continued from page 4...

The budgies and cockatiels have all gone to sanctuaries now and I am so relieved. It would have broken my heart to leave them behind. So Rosie, Jim, Ronnie, Louise, Bruce, Billy, Alfie, Sidney, Angie, Buttercup, Lee, George, Gilbert, Sunshine and Moonlight are all safe and extremely well looked after now for the rest of their lives. Moonlight is the little cockatiel chick that I rescued at one week old and we didn't think she'd live. Well as you can see from the photo she is thriving. Pat tells me she is a very bold little bird and loves to swoop down on people, dive into the washing up water and help herself to Pat's morning coffee and muesli! She and Sunshine are great friends. Sunshine was born at Bronzefield and spent most of his early life riding around on my shoulder, back or head. He would also kiss my face, twirl my earrings, groom my hair and drop his head forward so I could rub his neck which he loved. He would even groom my eyelashes which I am told is a sign of great trust. I miss him very much and can't wait to see him and Moonlight again.

I have now changed my job to work in the gardens. I love being outside all day in the fresh air. I am starting to study diplomas in animal care and Natasha and I do poetry classes, life stories and Shakespeare. We have a 'poetry and biscuits' evening tonight (don't tell the Daily Mail they'll have a fit!). Can't beat it but I will go easy on the biscuits as I am on a fitness drive to lose a stone. Natasha is a great help because when she sees me sidling towards the bread she always says "No Heather, no bread, come on now step away". I am so grateful to her.

I am making the best of things, but I never forget that my life is out there saving animals' lives.

Lots of love - Heather xxx

