



# RESEARCH DAY 2024

## Vegan Pasts, Presents and Futures





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## Introduction

At The Vegan Society, we pride ourselves on being an evidence-based charity, grounding our decision-making in robust research. Part of this work includes collaborating with individuals who are actively involved in furthering vegan-related knowledge through high-quality research. From a strategic perspective, we aim to show that The Vegan Society is:

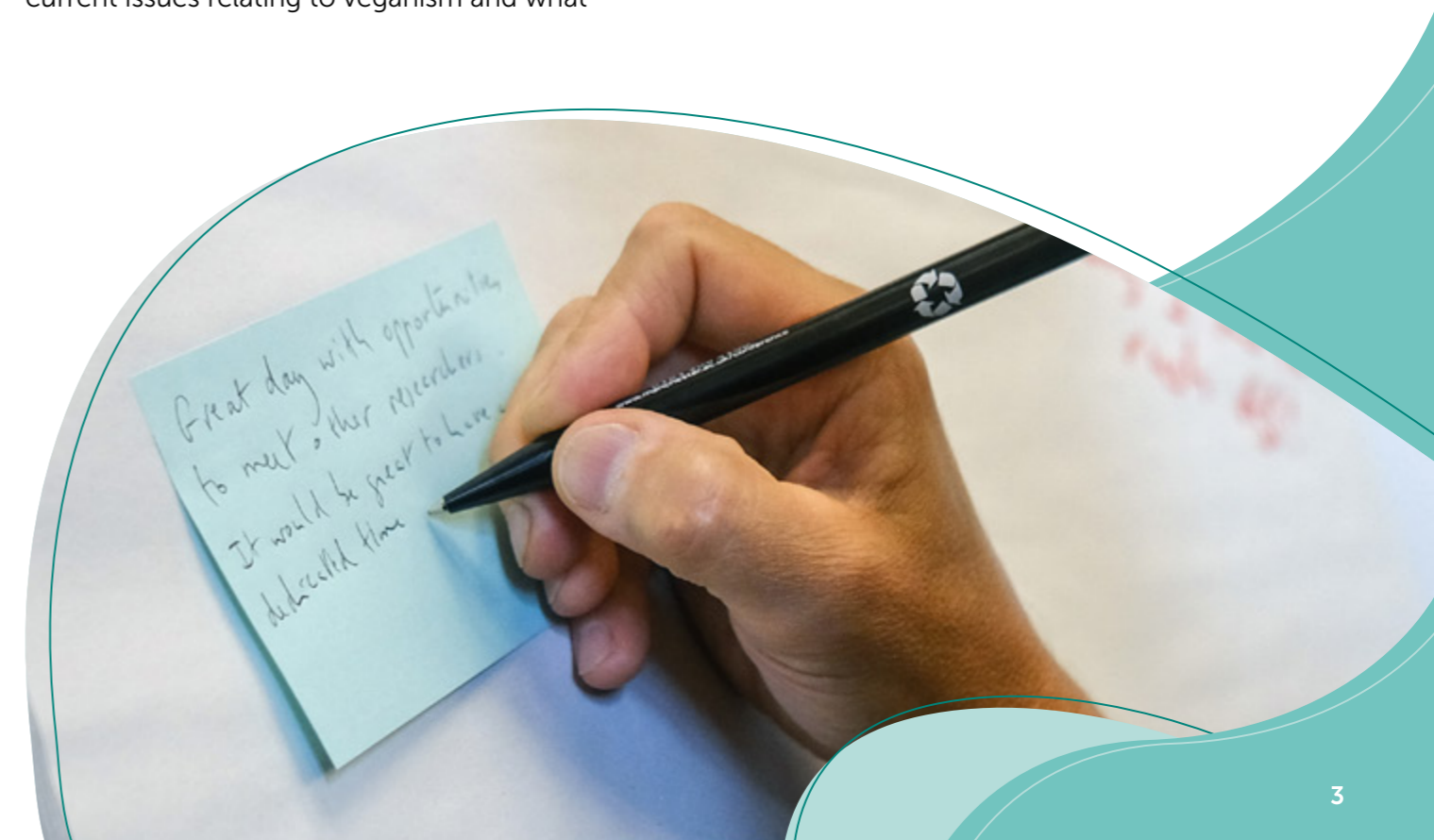
- 4.1 ... recognised as an effective and innovative player in the global vegan movement;
- 4.2 ... acknowledged as a key resource for vegan societies and initiatives, providing resources and developing high-quality information.

On 4 September 2024, we therefore held an event - Research Day - which aimed to bring together members of our research community to celebrate the work being done to advance vegan research. The event, held at Oddfellows Hall, Manchester University, was dedicated to showcasing vegan research through a programme of presentations from a range of academic disciplines. The theme for the day was *Vegan Pasts, Presents and Futures*, honouring The Vegan Society's 80th Anniversary, and saw speakers discuss the history of our movement, current issues relating to veganism and what

the future may hold for us all. The event was attended in-person by members of our Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and Researcher Network (RN), our community volunteers and staff from The Vegan Society. A further 184 people registered for our livestream, which widened the reach of our event and allowed those unable to attend in-person to participate.

We heard ten wide-ranging talks on the day, with speakers covering topics including nutrition; history; animal ethics; culture and the climate crisis. The day began with an opening address from Dr Lorna Fenwick McLaren, the Research and Impact Manager at The Vegan Society, followed by a presentation to our research community from Claire Ogley, Head of Campaigns, Policy and Research.

In this special commemorative report, we have invited our Research Day speakers to contribute an overview of their presentations. Collectively, these contributions demonstrate the breadth of knowledge within our research community and stands as a testament to all the work being done in many different academic disciplines to advocate for non-human animals, the planet and each other.







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**I am proud that my institution, the University of Manchester, has been supporting The Vegan Society's Research Day for the last two years. Each event has been packed with varied and interesting talks but, for me, what is refreshing is the event's emphasis on effective altruism.**

Plant Based

Brand interviews, social media sentiment analysis, and beyond...

## Vegan versus Plant-based? A sentiment analysis of consumer responses to brand labels

*Dr Jack Waverley (RAC) (University of Manchester)*

I am proud that my institution, the University of Manchester, has been supporting The Vegan Society's Research Day for the last two years. Each event has been packed with varied and interesting talks but, for me, what is refreshing is the event's emphasis on effective altruism. From historians and psychologists to dietitians and consumer researchers (like me), the central question was: how can this research help us to more effectively help others? We know that our choices could help many more lives and reshape our one world – but how?

My talk this year focused on my ongoing research project, in association with The Vegan Society, exploring the seemingly simple question of brand labelling. Why do brands use the terms 'vegan' or 'plant-based' on their products? How do they make these decisions? I say 'seemingly simple' because our research shows that answers to this question are diverse, nuanced and shifting.

Building on The Vegan Society's consumer survey, our methodology was a two-stage process. Firstly, I conducted interviews with brand owners and managers. I identified three main approaches: choosing vegan or plant-based; vegan and plant-based; or neither vegan nor plant-base. I noted that all three approaches were based primarily on assumptions and impressions. Brands were keen to use academic research, market data and other rigorous sources in order to make commercial decisions and drive cultural change. However, in public discussions

around terms like 'vegan' and 'plant-based' the research was limited, often quickly outdated and inconclusive.

Our second stage was to conduct a netnography – a digitally driven analysis drawing together newspaper articles, social media posts and other sources – to understand the cultural climate in which these brands were making their decisions. This helped to explain not only where many of their assumptions and impressions were coming from, but also how the public discourse tended to overlook the silent majority of consumers who do not necessarily post online or make their views known to journalists. I found four main patterns: educating; entertaining; equating; and embodying. This reaffirmed what the brands had been telling us: more rigorous, critical and evidence-based research is needed to help brands, consumers and other market actors in making informed choices.

This year is The Vegan Society's 80th anniversary, so Research Day felt especially important at this juncture. After 80 years, much has been achieved but, there is so much more to accomplish. Over the next 20 years, and in the run up to a centenary of evidence-based research, policy recommendations and educational resources, we can continue to empower millions to make informed choices that benefit their health, the environment, and all animals - including humans! Let's continue.

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## Creeds of Kinship: Towards a More-than-Human History of Veg(etari)anism

*Daniel Breeze (RN) (Loughborough University, doctoral candidate)*

In my presentation, I explained how my research expands the narrative of veg-history, shedding light on the often overlooked influence of animals on key figures within the Victorian movement: Henry Salt, Anna Kingsford and Edward Carpenter. By intertwining animal history with veg-history, I explored the encounters these individuals had with animals, illuminating how these interactions shaped not only their emotional landscapes but, also their intellectual evolution regarding questions of human-non-human relations. Adopting a phenomenological approach, I argued that our existence is entangled with that of other beings and that these encounters can affect changes in both our thoughts and our feelings. Moving from childhoods to periods of revelation and reflection before periods of writing and campaigning, I demonstrated how I have uncovered the multispecies prosopography that highlights how animals were companion-agents throughout these stages in the development of veg(etari)an thought and veg(etari)an ways of being in the world.

Towards the end of my presentation, I offered tentative thoughts about what we, in the present and future, can learn from my historical subjects. Juxtaposing between a naturalistic, mystical basis and a political, ethical basis, I

argued for the latter over the former. Offering these exploratory thoughts, I suggested that an appeal to veg(etari)anism as somehow natural is what has historically connected the diet to specious and potentially dangerous alternative health ideas. Hence, a veg(etari)anism based upon a political and ethical commitment to animals, rather than a mystical bond, might give a surer footing.

The Vegan Society's 2024 Research Day was a wonderful opportunity for me to connect with other researchers whose work intersects with my own. The Research Day was remarkable for its multidisciplinary, and it was fascinating to hear from researchers approaching veganism from such a variety of backgrounds. I really appreciated the framing of vegan pasts, presents and futures, which allowed me to stretch my understanding of how my own research into the pre-history of veganism can speak to its present and future. As a researcher whose work blurs boundaries between academic research areas, I felt that everyone

I spoke to at Research Day truly got what my work is about – something that is not the case at all events! Indeed, to paraphrase my subject Anna Kingsford, when speaking at other events, 'I always feel that such of these as are not abstainers from flesh-food have unstable ground under their feet!'

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**This was my first time attending The Vegan Society's Research Day and it was an inspiring, enlightening and encouraging experience. It was interesting to hear about the work of great researchers in diverse fields drawn together by an interest in, and concern for, animals.**



## Beyond Meat and Memes: Mapping the vegan activist discourse on Tik Tok and Instagram

*Dr Chris Till (RAC) (Leeds Beckett University)*

At The Vegan Society's Research Day, I presented provisional findings from an ongoing project I am leading, with my research partners Dr Jessica Drakett and Dr Joseph Ibrahim, looking at vegan social media activism on Instagram and TikTok. This project, funded by the British Academy/ Leverhulme, is a multi-modal discourse analysis of image and video-based social media posts which promote veganism. We collected data during Veganuary 2024 by saving posts which used relevant hashtags such as #veganuary, #veganfortheanimals, #vegan2024 and others. Our main aim was to investigate how Instagram and TikTok are used to promote veganism through investigating the discourses, or 'ways of talking', about this topic.

Due to the character of these social media platforms we had to employ a method which would allow us to take account of not just text but image, video and audio so this became a multi-modal discourse analysis. When analysing the posts we looked at the kinds of words and phrases used in text accompanying the posts (and in voiceovers), the animals, people, objects and settings in the images, the composition of the images, the types of lighting used, what colours are prominent and what elements are most salient (e.g. in focus or in the foreground). We also considered what styles of music or other sounds were used.

We then considered what connotations all of these things might have, such as the associations often assumed with particular colours or locations and the terminology. These and other components of posts helped us to build a picture of what the broad message of the posts (when taken as a collection) might be. We wanted to know what assumptions or world-view are they presenting?

One of the key discourses we identified, and

the one we focused on in the presentation in Manchester, was the discourse that 'animals are subjects'. 'Subject' in this sense means someone who has individual experiences, feelings and who has some agency over their existence (e.g. as opposed to an 'object'). We found a number of different ways in which this discourse was articulated in posts, such as a painted image of a lamb holding a sign bearing the message, "Eat plants. Not me" and another featuring an image of some haricot beans above one of some calves with the text, "Eat beans – not beings".

Other posts were less direct but still featured a clear message. One video, posted to TikTok, featured footage of a cow lying in a field and 'purring' while being stroked by a woman and featuring text such as, "Cows form strong bonds, show affection, & enjoy play just like dogs do!" By presenting a cow as engaging in behaviour associated with traditional companion species, such as relationships with a human, this post seeks to challenge speciesism and discourage their slaughter and consumption by presenting them as a 'subject'.

This was my first time attending The Vegan Society's Research Day and it was an inspiring, enlightening and encouraging experience. It was interesting to hear about the work of great researchers in diverse fields drawn together by an interest in, and concern for, animals. It was also fascinating to hear about the great history of the society and how it grown and developed over 80 years. While reflecting on this history, it was sobering to see that some things have not changed as much as we would like (particularly some of the negative attitudes towards veganism). However, the work of The Vegan Society and its members seen at the Research Day (and all year round) is definitely a source of hope for the future.





**I always enjoy attending and presenting at the Vegan Society's Research Day. The focus of my research and writing is on non-human animal harm within criminology. Research Day gives me the opportunity to explore new and developing ideas with an audience who understand why this matters and are committed to trying to reduce animal suffering and exploitation. I am always inspired by the comments and questions, as well as the other presentations on diverse topics. I leave motivated to continue pushing myself to engage with this incredibly important work (and of course the food is great as well!)**

*- Melanie Flynn*

## Ideas and ambitions for a vegan criminology

*Dr Melanie Flynn (RAC) (University of Huddersfield), Dr Kay Peggs (RAC) (Kingston University) and Dr Matthew Cole (RAC)*

Inspired by a growing interest in non-human animals as victims, this presentation considered how criminology can be re-imagined from a vegan perspective.

Veganism in academia may feature (a little) in many fields of study, for example: history; philosophy; anthropology; health and nutrition. However, it is most likely to be seen in critical animal studies. There is a long history of discourse on animal rights, but more recently there have been efforts to carve out an explicitly vegan space in particular disciplines, such as animals and war (Milburn and van Goozen, 2021), vegan geographies (e.g., Hodge et al., 2022) and vegan sociology (e.g., Wrenn, 2022).

Similarly, there are many areas within criminology where harm to non-human animals could be explored, including green criminology, corporate crime and violent crime. However, none of these conceptualise issues through a vegan lens and most marginalise non-human animals at best. There have been recent attempts to develop what Flynn refers to as vegan(ish) criminology. A 2024 edited collection by Hunnicutt, Mentor and Twine considers violence in the animal–industrial complex, the development of non-human animal victimology (Flynn & Hall, 2017; Flynn, 2024) and Peggs (2023) calls for *New directions please!* discussing the need to veganise green criminology. Alongside this, Cole has developed a number of resources to support teaching criminology that draw on veganism and species justice perspectives (links are provided below). However, the idea of vegan criminology remains underexplored.

Veganism is not just about focusing on diet and household provisions, but all forms of behaviour that result in animal consumption, exploitation or cruelty (harm). We therefore propose a number of

ideas for vegan criminology. It should consider:

- The effects of policies and practices, particularly among public sector and state organisations (e.g. law and criminalisation, responses to crime and victimisation);
- Responses to vegans and vegan activism (in relation to law, crime and harm);
- Corporate and state-sanctioned harm to non-human animals;
- Policies and practices that have indirect harmful effects on non-human animals.

In keeping with critical and green criminology, vegan criminology would adopt a social harm (not legalistic) perspective and institutional speciesism would be challenged. We also caution that intersectionality should be recognised, as many behaviours harmful to non-human animals also impact on other marginalised groups.

We highlighted that vegan criminology is for humans as well. For example, vegan beliefs and activism may be constructed as extremist and attract a police response. Vegans in the criminal justice system may struggle to uphold their beliefs, for example prisoners not having access to healthy vegan meals or employees having to use non-vegan equipment. Vegan criminology would also consider hate crime targeted at vegans and, more broadly, human (vegan) rights and marginalisation.

We concluded with a summary of issues that need to be addressed to move forward. We recognised some of the inherent difficulties of research in this field, which may rely on humans speaking 'for' non-human animals. There is also the risk of creating silos and facing resistance, which may reduce our ability to have a positive impact. We asked whether 'new' vegan theories of criminology need to be developed, or if we



can repurpose existing ones. We recognised the need to better articulate if there are differences between vegan criminology, anti-speciesist criminology and non-human animal victimology. We wondered whether vegan criminology should be a sub-discipline of its parent subject, a conceptual or analytical framework or simply a network of scholars, similar to the [International Association of Vegan Sociologists](#), where the aim is not to develop a new subject but to amplify

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Cole, M. (forthcoming). Crime, harm and nonhuman animals. In L. Copson, E. Dimou and S. Tombs. (Eds.) *Crime, Harm and the State*. Bristol University Press.

Flynn, M. (2024). Proposing a nonhuman animal victimology. In L. Levitt, D.B. Rosengard and J. Rubin. (Eds.) *Animals as Crime Victims*. Edward Elgar Publishing (pp113-130).

Flynn, M. & Hall, M. (2017). The case for a victimology of nonhuman animal harms. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 20(3): 299-318.

Hodge, P.B., Gregor, A., Springer, S., Veron, O. & White, R.J. (Eds.) (2022). *Vegan Geographies: Space beyond violence, ethics beyond speciesism*. Lantern Books.

### Resources (Matthew Cole)

'Veganism' Open Learn interactive course  
<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/veganism>

'Crime, harm and the state' Open Learn UG taster course:  
<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/society-politics-law/why-are-nonhuman-animals-victims-harm/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

### Open Learn free courses:

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/philosophy/the-distance-between-us>

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/health/vegans-why-they-inspire-fear-and-loathing-among-meat-eaters>

vegan voices within the existing discipline. As we work together to develop these ideas further, we continue to reflect on whether there is a moral imperative for vegans to advocate for non-human animals in all areas of their lives and how through our work we can seek to reduce the suffering of the billions of non-human animals subjected to both illegal and legal harm at the hands of humans.

Hunnicut, G., Twine, R. & Mentor, K. (Eds.) (2024). *Violence and Harm in the Animal Industrial Complex: Human-Animal Entanglements*. Routledge.

Milburn, J. & Van Goozen, S. (2021). Counting animals in war: First steps towards an inclusive just-war theory. *Social Theory and Practice*, 47(4): 657-85.

Peggs, K (2023) New directions please! Veganising green criminology. In E. Milne, P. Davies, J. Heydon, K. Peggs and T. Wyatt. (Eds.) *Gendering Green Criminology*. Bristol University Press.

Wrenn, C. L. (2022). What is Vegan Sociology? On the Pulse Seminar Series, The Vegan Society, 26 April 2022 [online].

### YouTube Open Learn resources

'A closer look at veganism': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k65EJLPY1UM>

'Sanctuary Tales': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppzzi-YGD1E>

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/nature-environment/environmental-studies/killers-or-carers>

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/philosophy/why-isnt-doctor-who-vegan>

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## Plant-Powered Practice: Vegan Advocacy in Healthcare

*Dr Shireen Kassam (RAC) (King's College Hospital)*

On the 4 September 2024, I had the opportunity to speak at the Vegan Society's Research Day about promoting vegan advocacy within healthcare settings. As a haematologist, certified lifestyle medicine physician and founder of [Plant-Based Health Professionals UK](#), I believe that

healthcare professionals have a unique position to lead the shift toward plant-based diets, which can significantly improve patient outcomes, support sustainability and are kinder and more compassionate towards our fellow animals.

### Key Themes of My Presentation

#### 1. The Role of Health Professionals as Changemakers:

I emphasised the critical role that healthcare professionals can play in advancing the vegan movement. We face challenges like industry biases and conventional health narratives that paint veganism as restrictive or nutrient deficient. However, by addressing these misconceptions and communicating the benefits effectively, we can turn health practitioners into powerful advocates for plant-based diets and more sustainable living.

#### 2. Our Theory of Change:

To witness a transition to a plant-based food system, healthcare professionals need to accept and adopt plant-based diets themselves. Through my work with Plant-Based Health Professionals UK, I focus on providing education, advocacy and interventions within healthcare settings to normalise this way of eating. I envision a future where health professionals use their knowledge, credibility and influence to accelerate this transition, ultimately benefiting both people and the planet.

#### 3. The One Health Approach and Key Levers in Healthcare:

I introduced the concept of One Health, which considers the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health. There are several key drivers in healthcare that align with this approach, including: commitments to net-zero emissions; financial incentives; prevention of chronic conditions; promoting inclusion and diversity; and advocating for social justice. By supporting plant-based diets, we can address all these areas effectively.

#### 4. Health Benefits of Plant-Based Diets:

I outlined the established and emerging health benefits of plant-based diets, which are supported by strong evidence. These diets are associated with reduced risks of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers, among other conditions. However, I cautioned against overstating these benefits and emphasised the importance of using evidence-based advocacy.

**I believe that healthcare professionals have a unique position to lead the shift toward plant-based diets, which can significantly improve patient outcomes, support sustainability and are kinder and more compassionate towards our fellow animals.**



### 5. Barriers to Adoption Among Healthcare Professionals:

I shared the preliminary findings of a survey conducted among registered dietitians in the UK and Ireland, which revealed both positive attitudes and significant barriers to adopting plant-based diets in clinical practice. Many dietitians are concerned about malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and the perceived incompleteness of plant proteins. There is also a need for better education and support for those advocating these diets in their workplaces. I believe we must address these knowledge gaps and provide more comprehensive resources to healthcare professionals.

### 6. Climate and Ecological Benefits of Plant-Based Diets:

I connected plant-based nutrition to broader environmental and sustainability goals, arguing that the foods most harmful to human health are also the most damaging to the environment. Adopting plant-based diets can significantly reduce emissions, pollution and resource use, contributing to climate and ecological health.

### 7. Strategies for Normalising Plant-Based Meals in Healthcare:

I presented evidence for normalising plant-based meals as the default option in healthcare settings by using behavioural strategies that promote better choices. This includes offering culturally appropriate plant-based options and leveraging policy support to institutionalise these changes.

**8. Advocacy and Policy Work:** I discussed my involvement in various collaborations and policy efforts with non-vegan organisations to integrate plant-based nutrition into clinical guidelines and healthcare practices. Creating supportive environments for both patients and healthcare staff to choose plant-based options is crucial for achieving this goal.

### 9. Patient and Staff Attitudes Towards Change:

I presented survey results showing substantial support from patients and healthcare staff for removing red and processed meats from hospital menus. Many people recognize the importance of offering healthy, plant-based meals to promote overall health and sustainability. However, barriers remain with clear knowledge gaps and inaccurate beliefs around the nutrient sufficiency of a plant-based diet.

**10. Conclusion:** I concluded by stressing the moral imperative for healthcare professionals to promote plant-based nutrition for the benefit of both patients and the planet. I encourage my colleagues to embrace the scientific knowledge supporting a plant-based diet to create a more sustainable and health-focused food environment within healthcare.

It was a great privilege to be a part of the 80th anniversary Research Day. The Vegan Society has had a profound impact on my own life and the lives of countless others. Its tireless work advocating for a kinder world for all animals is inspirational. Through its continued research programme, The Vegan Society will ensure its position as a leading animal advocacy organisation for the next 80 years and beyond. I look forward to being part of this journey.



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## Men and Masculinities in the UK Vegan Activist Movement: A Site for Transformation?

*Cameron Dunnett (RN) (Edge Hill University, doctoral candidate)*

Within a patriarchal society, a particular configuration of masculinity becomes accepted as legitimate, presenting itself as the way for men to think and live. This configuration of masculinity becomes normalised within political, social and cultural institutions. Within Western societies, such as the United Kingdom, the consumption of meat, as well as a lack of care for the more-than-human, remains central to this configuration (what academics have defined as 'hegemonic masculinity'). As a result, on average men eat significantly greater quantities of meat than women, are less likely to be vegan, and make up a minority of the activists involved in the animal advocacy movement. In recent years there has been growing academic interest in attempting to understand what motivates vegan men and the types of masculinity they subscribe to (and how these may differ from the hegemony). My research attempts to contribute to this field by asking: how are masculinities performed by individuals within the UK vegan activist movement?

To answer this question, I am in the process of conducting a series of in-depth interviews with vegan activists in the UK who identify as men. These interviews place an emphasis on storytelling, including getting participants to narrate their journeys to veganism and activism, their experiences within the movement, and the impact of their activism on their lives more broadly. My presentation focused on detailing some of the initial findings from these interviews.

I chose to first start by telling a story from my interview with a participant I named Tom. This story highlighted how, as a teenager, Tom was influenced by social media and set on a path towards far-right radicalisation. In his own words he was, 'just so close-minded'. However, through following campaigns around animal rights, his social media feed began to change. This led to a significant change in his outlook, including a willingness to learn about the experiences of others and engage in other social justice issues. In addition, several

participants felt their veganism helped develop their empathy and compassion to other humans and distanced themselves from traditionally masculine pursuits such as economic accumulation, workplace achievement, and elite consumption. These narratives thus demonstrate the potential for vegan activism to be transformative in the lives of young men.

I further outlined how the narratives of a minority of my participants didn't amount to a challenge to patriarchal/hegemonic articulations of masculinity, aligning with previous research that has found evidence of sexism being entrenched in the global animal activist movement. These men failed to critically reflect on their position of privilege, not seeing the need to distinguish between 'toxic masculinity' and simply a 'toxic person', for example. A couple of participants also defined their motivation for activism as linked to a desire to 'protect the weak and vulnerable'. I argued that the discourse that 'good' men need to protect the weak and vulnerable (i.e. women and children) from the physical or sexual violence of other 'bad' men is an instrument of patriarchy, ensuring the subordinated status of women within the household and society. Abstracting this argument to non-human animals thus only serves to reinforce a patriarchal gender hierarchy.

Thinking about the future of the vegan movement, I concluded that there are opportunities for animal activists to build bridges with gender equality and anti-violence organisations, utilising evidence of veganism as a pathway to anti-patriarchal masculine transformation. I also suggested animal advocates should be aware of and reflect on how certain discourses may reinforce unequal gender relations, both within society and activist spaces. Overall, the Vegan Society's Research Day provided a fantastic opportunity for me as a young researcher to present to a large and varied audience and was also valuable in terms of strengthening the connections between vegan academics and advocates.





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**This project has focused on the digitisation, transcription and cataloguing of the personal papers of Donald Watson (1910–2005), celebrated as a co-founder of The Vegan Society and a prominent figure in the history of the modern vegan movement.**

## The Donald Watson Archive Project

*Dr Matthew Cole (RAC), Dr Kate Stewart and Melda Kelemcisoy (RN)  
(The Open University)*

Dr. Matthew Cole and Melda Kelemcisoy's presentation provided an in-depth overview and update on the Donald Watson Archive Project, initiated in 2018 and funded by the Culture and Animals Foundation and the Open University. This project has focused on the digitisation, transcription and cataloguing of the personal papers of Donald Watson (1910–2005), celebrated as a co-founder of The Vegan Society and a prominent figure in the history of the modern vegan movement. The project was made possible by the generosity of Donald Watson's son-in-law, who has granted access to a significant collection of letters, diaries and other personal documents meticulously preserved by Watson throughout his life.

The initial stage of the digitisation process was completed by Iris Craane, with subsequent work carried forward by Melda Kelemcisoy,

Dr. Cole's PhD student at the Open University. These documents reveal invaluable insights into Watson's reflections on non-human animals, veganism and his influential role in a movement he once described as 'the greatest Cause on Earth' (Cole, 2014). The presentation provided colleagues with an update on the project's progress, notable achievements (including the public release of Watson's account of coining the term 'vegan' with his wife Dorothy, contributions to conference discussions and an interactive Open Learn course on veganism), and future plans for the archive's accessibility. Additionally, a new PhD collaboration with The Vegan Society, focusing on the history of veganism in the UK, was announced as a continuation of this pioneering work.

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**This work contributes to the growing literature exposing the influence of the meat industry on science and its representation in public discourse. It also contributes to critical work on the field of 'meat science' and the animal production sciences.**

## How Meat Scientists are Fighting for the Status Quo

Dr Richard Twine (RAC) (Edge Hill University)

My presentation covered two pieces of my recently published research (Twine 2024; Krattenmacher et al. 2024) which have critiqued the 2023 Dublin Declaration (DD) – a concerted attempt by meat scientists to push back against calls for the reduction of animal source food (ASF) consumption – signed by over 1000 meat-related scientists from around the world. The analysis of the DD can be situated within my work on exposing the animal-industrial complex (Twine 2012; 2024), understood within broader attempts by interested actors to maintain the status quo and shape policy in favour of the ASF industries and away from climate action. Important questions around the uses of scientific knowledge are raised by the DD and attempts by industry to exploit the veneer of scientific prestige. The analysis revealed that the DD is scientifically problematic, particularly in its neglect of issues such as meat overconsumption in high-income countries and the dominance of industrial animal production, thereby downplaying associated risks and harms.

I identified that the signatories of the DD were more likely to come from wealthy countries, countries known for their high meat consumption and high meat exports. In spite of the DD making claims around human health, the signatory list included a paucity of nutritional expertise. The small number of nutritionists who had signed were found to have made previous controversial claims. Central figures involved in instigating the DD were found to have had a track record in obfuscating change, such as involvement in the online campaign against the EAT-Lancet report's recommendations for ASF reduction.

DD's authors essentially suggest that societies should simply rely on technological progress to

fix any 'challenges' associated with the sector, a suggestion that aligns with their private interests. Several academically questionable practices were identified, including denial of credentials to dissenting actors, omission of significant conflicts of interest and excessive self-citation, all while purporting to provide a scientific and balanced overview. Relatedly, a web of relations were exposed between the DD instigators and the meat industry, and the journal *Animal Frontiers* and the animal production science associations behind it, which published a special issue edited by the DD's authors.

This work contributes to the growing literature exposing the influence of the meat industry on science and its representation in public discourse. It also contributes to critical work on the field of 'meat science' and the animal production sciences. Because these sciences service the meat and dairy industries and because such scientists often have high degrees of occupational mobility with, and funding from, these industries – they are especially ill-suited to give objective advice on issues of human health, ecological degradation and animal harm. My presentation ended by considering what an alternative Dublin Declaration would look like, centred on values of ecological public health and the transcendence of anthropocentric dogma, whilst also considering an argument for the defunding of the meat sciences.

I hugely enjoyed the other presentations at the research day. It provided a very fitting way to mark the 80th anniversary of The Vegan Society, both looking back and forward at the prospects for progressive change.

### Further reading/citations

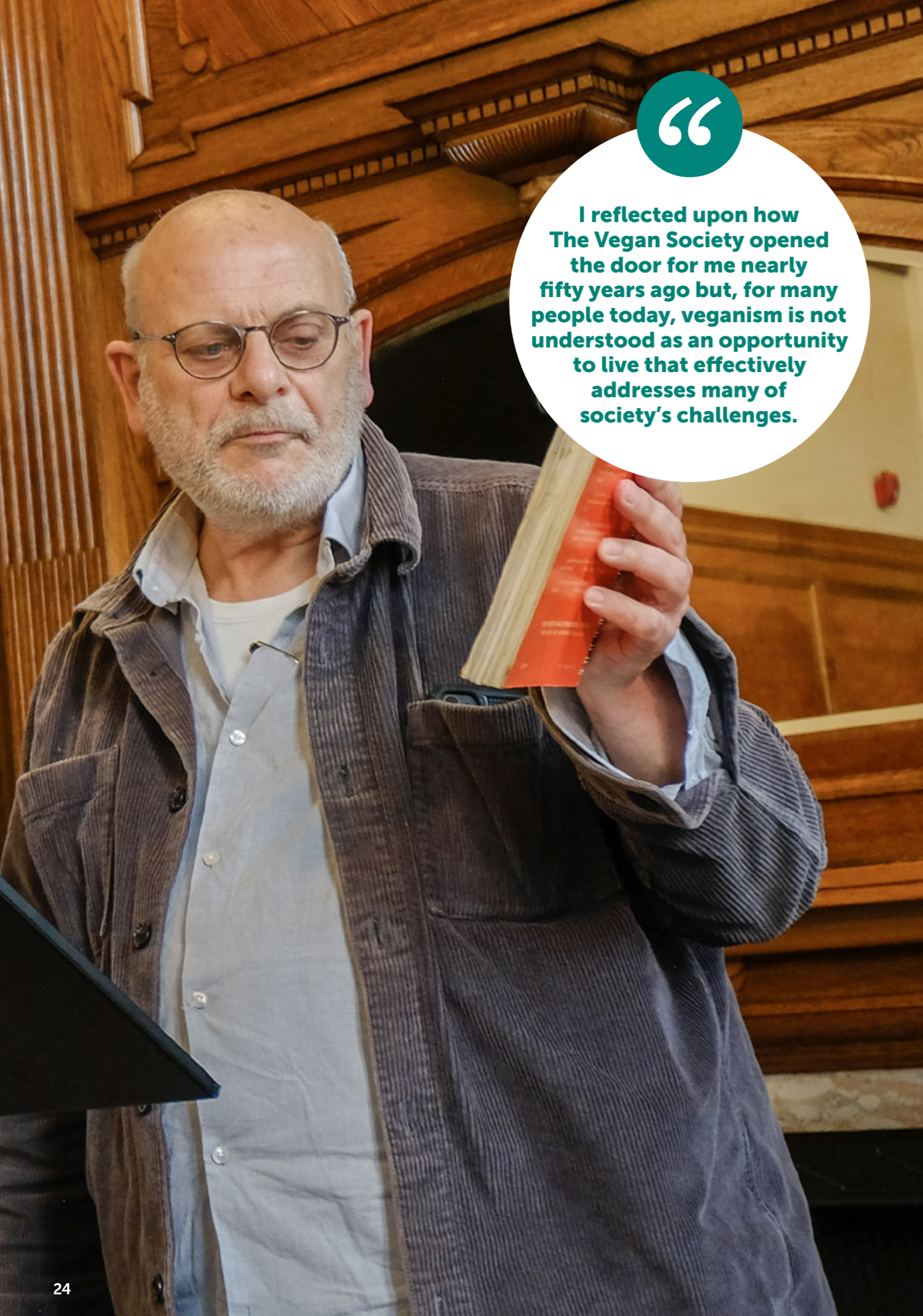
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**I reflected upon how The Vegan Society opened the door for me nearly fifty years ago but, for many people today, veganism is not understood as an opportunity to live that effectively addresses many of society's challenges.**

## The Open Door (Keynote)

*Kim Stallwood (RAC) (Independent)*

The BBC produced a series of innovative community-based TV programmes called Open Door. It empowered charities and organisations to produce a half-hour programme to showcase their work. One episode that was broadcast twice in early 1976 was produced by The Vegan Society. It generated more than 9000 enquiries leading to about 1000 new members. I was one of them. My presentation focused on almost 50 years of personal commitment as a vegan and professional involvement in various leadership positions with animal rights organisations, primarily in the UK and the USA. This included as an elected member of The Vegan Society's National Council for two years starting in 1982 and as chair from 1983 to 1984. I reflected upon how The Vegan Society opened the door for me nearly fifty years ago but, for many people today, veganism is not understood as an opportunity to live that effectively addresses many of society's challenges. I made the following conclusions:

- Our relationship with information is fundamentally different and will continue to change.
- The Vegan Society no longer has a monopoly on information.
- We need to assert The Vegan Society as the authoritative voice on veganism – the globally respected authority.
- The Vegan Society should become the 'one-stop shop'/the 'go-to' place for all things vegan.
- We need to understand change is individual, institutional and societal.
- The audience is vegans, aspiring vegans and the general public.
- Remember: the more things change, the more they stay the same.





## Impact

Research Day was an excellent opportunity for experts in veganism from diverse areas and perspectives to summarise the present situation and look forward to the future. As part of our

continuous efforts to capture the impact of our work, we conducted some post-event research to understand how effective the day had been in meeting our aims. Our findings include:

80%

of attendees said it was highly likely that they would recommend The Vegan Society's research events

84%

of attendees rated the event as 'excellent'

95%

of attendees thought the event stimulated new discussions and thinking

95%

of attendees thought the event helped to raise the profile of The Vegan Society

100%

of attendees thought the event provided high-quality information and resources about veganism

## Conclusion

We would like to thank all of our Research Day speakers for their contributions to this report and for their ongoing support for our work. If you are involved in research and academia, and would like to collaborate with us to further our mission and vision, please do get in touch with

your ideas at [research@vegansociety.com](mailto:research@vegansociety.com) - we'd love to hear from you!

Recordings of Research Day presentations can be found on our website at [vegansociety.com/research](http://vegansociety.com/research)

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all our Research Day speakers for their contributions to this report. Thank you to Anna Cook for proofreading this publication.

“

Really appreciate the fact that it was in-person and online; I think that was a real strong point.

“

A great day with opportunities to meet other researchers.

“

Absolutely mind-expanding. The interdisciplinary approach really works.

“

Fascinating presentations – so much scope, very inspiring!

“

Thank you and congratulations to everyone involved, it was a great day. It's also great to see the growing use of research by and for The Vegan Society. I think it helps us to feel integrated as one movement.





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