inside the cages



animal liberation & imprisonment

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Dedicated to all those left behind.

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An Introduction...

This is a collection of writings written during my time in prison and after my release. The writings take different forms, and many of them have been previously published in animal liberation publications. Largely, they were written as responses to requests, either for letters for prisoner support magazines or as interview questions from interested parties. It was really only the lengthy article on probation that was written for my own sake. I have never been a great writer, but it was gaol that gave me both the time and platform to begin to express myself in such a way. It was the encouragement of those who I corresponded with that you ultimately have to blame for this collection. Please forgive the inevitable spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and nonsensical use of language – this is not the work of someone with an academic education, but someone with limited resources, a plethora of commitments but still an eagerness to express quite a unique and largely undocumented experience. Despite popular impressions of society's hostility to prisoners, upon my release I found a great deal of sympathy and curiosity about the plight and lives of political prisoners. I hope this zine, whilst not being able to relate the prison experience in its totality, offers a more level headed and realistic portrayal of life inside, away from the emotive clichés of the popular imagination.

The animal rights movement has always been one that favours taking action over talking. This is one of the main reasons why I first got involved, and I believe one of the movement's major strengths. However, at times, I think our movement is too uncritical and fails to understand, let alone embrace, the power of the written word as a tool for helping those individuals oppressed because of their species. It is hard to find a compromise, as too many social movements within this country exist in little more than pamphlet or meeting form, but I do think the movement would benefit sometimes from wider debate and critical thought around its actions, as long as taking action maintains priority. With all that has happened to the movement over the last decade, especially in terms of state repression, very little has been written about it, and what has been written often comes from the state and its mouthpieces in the press. One of the major motivators in getting this published was that I thought it was important that we should not allow the state alone to document our history. Our struggle for animal liberation is not represented by the stories in the newspapers or reports slung together by seedy bureaucrats; it is our responsibility to show that good people take appropriate action and there is an ethical rationale behind it.

In the long term, I think the movement needs to (re)build a wider culture of animal liberation. We are very good at taking to the streets, and taking risks to fight for non-humans, but not everyone can be on the frontline, nor is everyone convinced by street politics. Sometimes more subtle and wider reaching tactics are necessary. Perhaps we should look to how the women's liberation and gay liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s acted for inspiration? Their effect of language and art, amongst other things, had a revolutionary impact on the structures of society. Building a strong culture that can articulate and express itself would not be at expense of protest and action. It would in fact help provide the philosophical justification to explain action, and a confident and fertile environment to encourage it.

For a world without hierarchy. Free the animals, free the prisoners.

Lewis Pogson
South London
June 2013

***This letter, written whilst residing in HMP Lincoln, was first published in* Animal Rights Prisoner Support Magazine, Issue 3 April 2010.**

I am well and settling into the routine of my new life just fine. I have been using the time to rest, relax, exercise and educate myself. Thanks to the sterling work of the Vegan Prisoners' Support Group both the catering screws and fellow inmates here are extremely respectful and diligent in supplying me with a varied, healthy vegan diet. I use the financial support supplied by the ALFSG to purchase supplementary nuts, fruit and juice from the prison shop (canteen). I'm making good use of the gym and get the privilege of reading each and every day. One of the things I enjoy most about prison is receiving and replying to letters. I make the effort to answer them all.

As hard as it may be to believe, I am finding prison an extremely liberating environment. Whilst there is certainly nothing romantic about being a prisoner, it offers a rare insight that few see and even fewer appreciate. Like any animal, the condition I desire strongest is freedom, but I am, of the firm belief that a bit of hardship can be a great experience and the true test of an individual. I believe there are few reasons as noble as going to prison for that that of stopping the suffering and exploitation of other sentient beings. There is no shame in being a political prisoners, and there is no doubt about it, we are political prisoners; every aspect that leads us to prison is political, from our circumstances, our perceived 'crimes', the manipulation by the filth, the prosecutions, the court cases and, then often, the sentencing—it is all political.



Lincolnshire Echo Wednesday, November 25, 2009 5

Lamborghini targeted and 129 white rabbits stolen in raid

Animal rights activist denies farm damage

A MAN accused of being involved in a raid in which animal rights activists seized rabbits and caused thousands of pounds of damage has appeared in court.

Lewis Pogson, an animal rights campaigner, faces a string of charges in connection with the raid on a Lincolnshire farm linked to the well-known research company Huntingdon Life Sciences.

A court was told that equipment used in the raid was later found at his mother's house. A jury heard how intruders forced their way into a shed at a farm in Normanby by Spital, north of Lincoln, and stole 129 New Zealand White rabbits, which were bred specifically for the animal research industry.

Animal rights slogans were daubed on walls along with a warning: "Close down or we'll close you down".

Farmer Jeffrey Douglas woke the next morning to discover the tyres on his Lamborghini car had been slashed and paint stripper poured over the vehicle. Expandable foam was sprayed inside the exhaust and the damage cost £56,000 to repair.

A van, a quad bike and a ride-on lawnmower were also vandalised in the raid carried out in the early hours of January 7, 2008.

There are those who question the value of going to prison for your beliefs. I would say that the campaigning never stops. Inside the prison system there are approximately 85,000 people. It also shows to anyone prepared to listen how seriously and deeply we take our views for a better, kinder world. That is why the movement for animal advocacy (encompassing both right and liberation of animals) is as strong and dynamic as it is; no matter how many beatings, arrests, new laws or ridicule we face, we are still here and as society evolves we are slowly but surely being proved right.

As long as society preaches ideas of justice, liberty and decency while treating its most vulnerable with violence and exploitation then there will always be those prepared to do all that is reasonably necessary to challenge that great contradiction. Before I was sentenced the probation officer described my case as challenging. I take great pride in that. I sat in a room for three hours challenging the concepts and beliefs of an intelligent person who plays an important role in society. Likewise, I am proud of the way I behaved in court—I took the best defence any animal advocate can take; I refused to grass on anyone and told them that it was the right thing to do to take those animals. While it did not have the desired result, somehow it still feels like a victory.

As animal advocates we should constantly be evaluating and reflecting on the tactics and paths we choose to follow. Our job is to always do what is in the best interests of the animals, but it is important to remember that we must act with dignity. We have a great responsibility on our shoulders and from history we can learn that power can often lead to corruption. We must never descend to a level which is at odds with our compassionate, life respecting values. Because some actions are taken for the animals, this does not necessarily make them correct.

That said, we must not retreat into a political ghetto and become an ideological talking shop that so many western liberation movements have become. Action has always been the life blood of our movement and the day people refuse to take action because of possible consequences is the day we cease to exist. Do something worthwhile... stand up and be counted.

Originally published in **Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group Newsletter April 2010.** ***Written whilst held in HMP Stocken.***

The first three months of my imprisonment has flown by. I'd like to thank everybody that has written and shown their support, it is always very much appreciated. Pictures are also very welcome - especially pen and ink designs.

It makes me smile to receive letters each week in which the writers offer their commiseration and condolences, as if my life is over or has come to a temporary halt; to
be restored upon my release. When you are imprisoned life does not stop. In fact, it starts. It's just that the situation is an alien one. We continue living, we work, study, exercise, socialise, relax, practice our various faiths and define, once again our own individually. It is just that the parameters have changed. Of course the environment restricts a great number of freedoms, but
it could be argued that even in the outside world our greatest desires are restricted, no matter how subtly. In the restriction of the prison environment a new freedom can be found and I rank the joy of reading the correspondence I have received and the interesting and diverse mix of characters I have met highest in this comparison.

Prison life can be blissful. If you settle into your routine, take life at a slowish pace and learn how and when to fight and when to accept then you can appreciate the relaxed discipline and deprivation it offers. It is easy not to get too stressed and when you have little to worry about. Your washing is done, food is cooked and rent paid. You have plenty of time to think and reflect on ideas or immerse yourself in a thoughtful book or educational course. Having little to occupy yourself with or the modern distractions of outside living, it spurs you onto educating yourself and staying both mentally and physically fit.

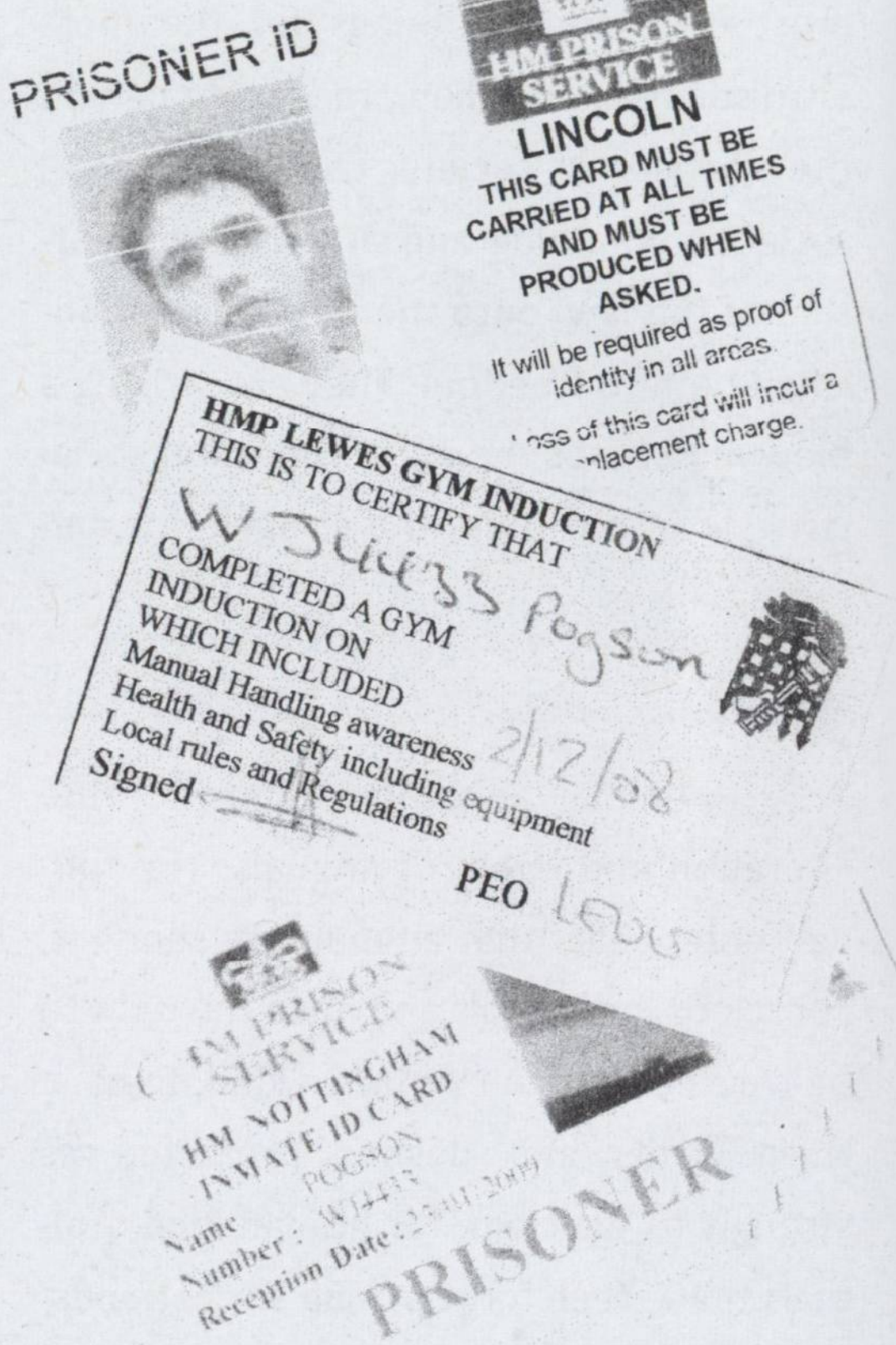
Prison is not without its challenges and I have encountered an almost overwhelming amount of sadness and sorrow throughout my short stay too. There is a lack of privacy, personal space and sometimes it can be hard to find adequate mental stimulation. With the prison population set to reach 100,000 in the next few years it seems a very sorry indictment of wider society.
Surely, there is something fundamentally flawed in a system that encourages good behaviour with video games, yet fails to

deliver all but 45 minutes of fresh air outside a day?

Drug abuse, self harm and poor human relationships are all prevalent. Mental health problems sadly all too common and it is often the case that those most in need of help are resigned to a 6' by 4' concrete box.

During the sentencing process I was told that prison was needed in order to break the connection I shared with my like minded friends, yet in prison it is impossible to escape the stigma of your alleged "crimes", to the extent that one instance, one day of living, is what defines you throughout your stay. Being a "convicted criminal" is the trait all prisoners share and this is by the far the most common topic of conversation. If it's not what crime a person has committed in the past, it's what they're planning to do upon release. During associations, in the gym, even throughout educational lessons people discuss, share and swap ideas on what they're planning in the future. Sadly prison is seen as an occupational hazard by far too many.

I find that having a deep belief in such a 'lost' cause gives me the strength to make prison a productive experience. Being part of, and supported by a wider social struggle makes it all the more worthwhile.



Originally written in June 2011, this article was supposed to be included as part of the liner notes to hardcore punk band* Hello Bastards' *eponymous album. It is scheduled for a 2013 release.

When you stand on your own two feet and fight on your own terms you are no longer a victim. Every night, all over the world, ordinary people are doing the most extraordinary things for the most altruistic reasons. They are leaving behind the shackles of society; conformity, fear, social conditioning and are stepping out-side of the law, onto the uncertain, unfinished path to freedom. They are striking a blow in perhaps the most important social struggle of our time; the struggle for animal advocacy.

Animal advocacy stands for the liberation and rights of animals. The fundamental belief that animals are sentient, conscious individuals and have the right to be treated as such by human kind; to have their wants and desires protected as strongly as we claim for human kind. Animals think, feel, forge strong social bonds, strive for their own freedom and for our own benefit as well as theirs, it is our duty to protect them, to put an end to the perpetual genocide and suffering that they face from human kind, and create a new world, based on equality, peace and freedom for all species, not just those that use a language we understand.

Everybody has their part to play in the struggle for animal advocacy, and every tactic and tool in our tool box has its own strength and weakness, but in my mind there is no more powerful manifestation of our strength than to take Non-violent direct action. Non-violent Direct action is at the heart of our movement and goes to the very core of our beliefs. If we believe that what happens in the slaughterhouses and laboratories, farms and shops is unjust then to strike directly and hit those properties; causing damage and liberating the imprisoned animals, is justified as those places have no legitimacy to exist. We fight on our terms, choosing our own methods. We refuse to listen to the influence of governments, police forces and big business – their only agenda is oppression and death. They are hypocrites, tyrants, liars; those that see the law as sacred yet life as a commodity, those that condemn law breakers whilst lionising Ghandi & Mandela, and those that talk about justice and fairness when they bathe in the blood of countless millions innocent lives. We follow nothing but our own consciences and hearts and we devastate those industries that create only misery and suffering for a filthy

profit. The fur trade, the circus trade, vivisection, hunting – we have hurt them all gravely and given the clear message that if you exploit animals then you will never sleep quietly again, because one night we will come and do our best to put you out of business. We are not a protest movement, we are not pointing out wrongs and asking for change; our movement is a resistance and our goal is to put an end to the suffering and exploitation of animals.

Non-violent direct action is liberation, for both the animals and for ourselves. Even when you have been caught and you're confined to a gaol cell there is a freedom of the mind. It's a hard thing to explain in writing, but really there is no greater reward then knowing that you have done the right thing, that other living beings now have their freedom and are experiencing daylight, fresh air and nature for the first time because of your sacrifice. Your life goes back to basics and you experience the most intense human feelings; no longer are you worried about the pressures of fashion, of social scenes or subcultures. You truly understand the nature of being a free individual. Casting off the shackles of so-called civilised life and striking where it matters gives a powerful feeling of strength that cannot be sensed anywhere else. Life is for living, and to make a mark, to do something important and worthwhile. Stand up and be counted. Don't be held a prisoner of fear, don't have others dictate the path of life for you – follow your instincts, empower yourself. There is no greater feeling in the world than to know that one night you have made a strike for freedom. It's easy to feel overwhelmed, to feel helpless and directionless in the face of overwhelming power, but through non-violent direct action you realise that these systems are not all powerful and that you can win against them. Time and time again we have proved that. It's easy to talk, but it's important to act.

The animals continue to suffer, as for as long as we tolerate this and refuse to act we condemn them to a brutal existence. You have the power to make a difference, act on it.

"The Animals have no one but us, we will not fail them." – Barry Horne

This interview was conducted with the Spanish language prisoner support zine* La Cizalla Ácrata. *It was translated into Spanish and distributed at a gathering in the Spanish State in the summer of 2011.

How much time did you spend in prison and why?

On the 7th January 2008 Animal Liberation Front volunteers raided an animal research breeders called Highgate Farm in Lincolnshire, a largely rural agricultural area in the midlands. 129 rabbits were liberated and approximately £75,000 worth of damage was caused to vehicles and equipment on the site.

On the 10th July 2008 I was arrested for this action while attending a police station on a different matter. I was held for a number of hours and interviewed before being released on bail. While this was happening the police were ransacking my home and an animal sanctuary I did volunteer work at. On the 3rd November 2008 I was arrested again and driven up to Lincolnshire police station, where I was interviewed for a second time before being charged with 8 offences; Criminal Damage (to vehicles, cages etc.), Burglary ('theft of rabbits'), blackmail ('an unwarranted demand with menaces', graffiti at the farm saying 'Close Down or we'll close you down.') and a charge 'Inference with contractual relationship as to harm to an animal research organisation.' The other 4 chargers were conspiracy charges relating to the same offences. I was then remanded to prison awaiting trial

On February 3rd 2009 I was released from prison on bail, with some strict conditions; that I surrendered my passport, I didn't enter Lincolnshire, £50,000 bail money was paid, that I reported daily to a local police station between 5pm and 7pm, and that I wore an electronic tag forcing me to be inside my house from 10pm to 7am. These conditions continued until my trial on 23rd November 2010, which last 7 days. I was found guilty of the 4 charges (the conspiracy charges had been dropped) and released again on bail. On January 18th 2010 I was sentenced to 3 years in prison. I was the only person ever charged in relation to the ALF raid.

On June 17th 2010 I was released from prison 'on standard license', again on tag. Licenses are contracts of "good behaviour" between the prisoner and the prison system which allow the prisoner to serve the remainder of his sentence under supervision in the community. These are issued to all prisoners serving over 1 year released from jail and have a number of conditions which state that you must attend appointments with a probation officer, invite him into your home, stay

every night at your home etc. Any breach of these conditions and you are sent back to prison.

About two weeks later I was told by my probation officer that "some very senior people are now involved in your case" and a number of extra license conditions were added, notably; not to go within 1 mile of Highgate Farm, not to contact anyone associated with Huntingdon Life Sciences, not to use the internet, not to have any contact or relationships with any individuals or organisations engaged in demonstrations or activity concerned with animal welfare or the rights of activity. I was never given any reason why this was now happening.

On the 27th August 2010 I was returned to prison for the alleged breaching of my license. I was held until the 1st of November and then released, again on license.

In total I spent just over 10 months in 4 different prisons, 3 months as a remand prisoner, 5 months as a convicted prisoner and 2 months as a license recall. My situation is a fairly unique case which is why I mention it in detail. Generally speaking, prisoners serve half their sentence in prison, and the other half 'on license' in the community. If they're serving under 4 years for non-violent or sexual offences they are eligible to be released up to 4 1/2 months early on Home Detention Curfew ('electronic tag curfew'). I should have served 18 months in prison and be released 25th October 2010, but because I'd served 3 months on remand, and then spent a year on curfew (everyday spent on curfew counts as ½ day served in prison) by the time I was sentenced I'd already done 9 months of my sentence! On top of that I was eligible for tag and so was released 4 1/2 months early! As I said, my situation is fairly unique, and I was extremely lucky, things could have been a lot worse, especially as the Police and Prosecution wanted me to receive a 6 year sentence and an order indefinitely banning me from any demonstrations against animal experimentation!

What's exactly your actual legal situation?

At the moment I am currently out of prison on license. Regularly I am forced to meet with a probation officer and abide by a number of conditions, the way in which the conditions are worded gives the probation officer the power to recall me back to prison if he considers me problematic in anyway. I am officially considered a "violent domestic extremist" and monitored under the MAPPA scheme (Multi-Agency Public Protection Assessment) which means once a month members of probation service, prison service, government and police get together and discuss my life. The state consider me a "medium risk of harm to the public" and a

"high risk of reoffending." Of course, I am not invited to these MAPPA meetings, and have never be told why my status is what it is - I've never used violence nor ever harmed the public.

In theory the probation service is meant to help ex-prisoners to live normal lives, stop them from reoffending and encourage them with work and/or education. In reality, the probation service is a purely repressive organisation that serves corporate interests, lives in fear of negative coverage from the right wing press, and has only one word in it's vocabulary; "no." They have tried to make living any sort of normal life as difficult as possible by repeatedly disrupting my education, stopping me working, threatening to imprison me if I do any activity relating to animals and generally trying to define me as some sort of highly dangerous individual in order to justify their existence. In return, I treat them with contempt they deserve and refuse as much as I can to comply with their programme. Every time I meet with them I make it a point to highlight the injustices inherent to their system and remind them that the time is counting down until I'll be back fighting for the animals again.

The one thing I've learnt from these people is that the system is not interested in compromise, it will not work with you or respect your rights and by capitulating to it you only encourage a stiffer, metaphorical, beating. My licence expires in April 2012 and then they can go to hell.

How was life with the other prisoners? Did they understand the reasons you were there or they considered it like a "naive" thing or something?

Prison is it's own little world. Just like on the outside people come in every type and form, so there are good people and there are arseholes. There are a lot of people who have had very hard lives, have come from bad childhoods, who have drink and drug addictions, poor educational standards, mental health problems, violent tempers and personality disorders. Mostly, they are poor people, people who have had tough, hard lives and have been treated like shit by the system, and as a result have little respect for the laws and customs that system expounds. The conditions prisoners are kept in undoubtedly influence them and effect their abilities to reason, to keep calm, keep positive, motivated, happy etc. With 2 years of release 70% of prisoners will be reconvicted of further crimes.

I was seen as very unique in prison, because I was vegan, and because of the nature of the offences I was convicted of. I was seen as odd, strange, but not in a bad way. I was known by prisoners I had never met, and some educational classes

turned into questions and answer sessions about the reasons why I was there. People were fascinated, either they were supportive or they just couldn't understand. I was very much seen as different to other prisoners, as not really a "proper criminal". Even though the animal rights movement in this country is under huge repression from the government and police and activists receive long sentences in politically motivated trials, this wasn't understood by a lot of prisoners and they couldn't understand why someone like me would end up in prison.

But generally speaking, I got a lot of respect from other prisoners. When I just moved onto one wing, there was a really big, tough looking prisoner who was obviously quite "important." He was looking at me and I felt really conscious. He came over and said "are you the one who's in for... er...animal rights?" My voice went really squeaky when I said yes. His response was "fair play mate, someone's got to stand up for the animals."

I made some really good friends in prison, and met some good people. Some I still keep in contact with today. Some commented on how, when they get out, they want to do the same thing. One friend of mine said, "you see, when I get out, we'll go and rescue some animals, but we're get something better than rabbits, what about a gorilla?" It was largely the older prisoners or the ones serving longer sentences that offered their respect and support. Some of the younger ones really couldn't understand it all, but sadly, their lives revolve around drugs, money, robberies, cars etc. I would remind them that they give up their freedom for money, and that's not something I understand! But even those that could not really understand me could still respect the fact that I maintained my principles, never bowed my head or expressed regret.

Did you do something inside prison? I mean, did you work, study...?

When I was on remand, I couldn't do that much apart from read because I kept getting moved from prison to prison, but when I was convicted I said to myself that I will make the most of things. These bastards may have locked me up, but I still have my own freedom and they can't stop me from living an interesting life. The first two months I spent in HMP Lincoln which is called a 'Category B Local Prison'. This holds mostly small time offenders; drug addicts, shoplifters, people serving short sentences, locals who go to prison each year etc. The facilities were pretty basic in this prison. I could go to the gym 3 times a week, and went to basic education classes each morning. Apart from this I was in my cell all day. At the weekend, me and my cell mate, would spend 22 hours a day in

our cell together.

The last three months of my sentence were served in a 'Category C Training Prison.' called HMP Stocken. It was a totally different experience - like going from pre-school to college. Here there were murderers coming to the end of their sentences, armed robbers, drug traffickers; serious criminals, people serving long sentences. I had my own cell though and the facilities were better. I would spend my days studying basic qualifications and skills like computers, maths, English, finances, and then in the evening I could go to the gym. When I was in my cell, over lunch time, and at night, I would spend my time reading, answering letters, listening to music and watching television.

People ask me "how did you find prison?" Of course, there was a lot of negatives and I see prison and the way criminals are treated as a real sad indictment of our supposed civilised society, but it's important to look on the bright side of life. In five months, I read 38 books, got ten or so different qualifications (though have never received the certificates!), went to the gym 6 or so times a week and made many new friends, both in prison and through the letters I received.

Does exist the isolation cells or punishment cells there in the UK. How are they?

There are, but I didn't experience any. I was a model prisoner. I believe it's important to fight and challenged the system, but you have to do it in a way that is effective for you. I have the deepest possible respect for those political prisoners that find themselves in conflict with the system but for me, to cause disruption and destruction would be counter productive. I fought the system by keeping myself fit, eating healthily, exercising, keeping myself educated through reading and classes and maintaining my political principles.

As a result, I was released early from prison as a strong, motivated person looking forward and with many ideas about furthering the cause. I see that as putting two fingers up to the system.

Of course, there were things I would never have done, such as working in the prison workshops, which could have brought me into conflict but I was lucky to not be put in that situation.

There is so much written in the press about animal rights activists being 'terrorists', 'fanatical' or 'extreme' so I wanted to challenged that perception through example; we are decent, caring, intelligent people that care passionately about the suffering of others. I was polite

and respectful and as a result gained respect from not only other prisoners but also the prison officers and civilian staff. Of course, when they think you're no trouble it makes breaking the rules, like brewing alcohol, or getting them to do work for you much easier!

In answer to your question there are special prisons for sex offenders, seriously violent criminals and murderers. Each prison has a wing of punishment cells, where if you break the rules, you might spend a week or so. Basically, you're just banged up in a cell all day with no TV, radio, except for one hours exercise. For less serious 'offences' you might not be able to buy anything from the prison shop for a week, or have the TV taken out of your cell. But I never experienced any of this. I've read a little about prisons in the Spanish State, about the FIES system and the way political prisoners are treated and I can say thankfully that my experience of English prisons is incomparable.

Did you see many situations of abuse inside prison? Did you suffer some of them?

Prison by definition is abuse; that you have little to do each day, your surroundings being so bleak and mundane, lacking anything natural such as grass or trees, the fact you might go weeks without any fresh air, the lack of straight answers or truthful information, prisoners that need help left to their own devices to get on with it, young lads lying their all day on the beds off their faces on drugs, high levels of self harm and suicide - this is all abuse, this is all violence, but of course, it is institutionalised state endorsed abuse so it goes largely ignored.

Largely the abuse I saw was between prisoners. Small fights were weekly occurrences, people were getting caught with home made knives, one lad on our wing was cut up with glass. There's a real culture of selling and trading items; anything useful, food, drugs, tobacco etc. There is also a big problem with drugs in prison and the two issues go hand in hand, so a prisoner who might have borrowed some tobacco or drugs off another prisoner is forced to pay back twice the amount, and that I would say is where most of the problems arise. One situation involved a young drug addict who robbed some tobacco of an elderly prisoner. He was attacked and then locked in his cell for a few days for his own protection, whilst he was in his cell people were threatening him and throwing piss underneath his door.

If you go looking for trouble, you can find it, but if you keep yourself to yourself then you're pretty much left alone. I had no significant issues.

In prisons there is a scheme called "Individual Enhanced Privilege" scheme which encourages "good" behaviour with menial perks like being able to spend more money in the prison shop, or wear your own clothes. If you're "bad" they might take your television away or stop you from mixing with other prisoners. Sadly, this is an effective form of "divide and rule" and keeps prisoner looking out for only themselves, stopping any sort of popular resistance. When I did see prisoners challenge the screws they were just pinned down by about 10 screws and taken straight off the wing.

I've probably made prison seem bad, but it's not really - you see worse on a night out in the bad part of a city. I've just had some friends go to prison for a relatively small sentence and have advised them as they've prepared for it. I told them that it will be good for them - for a time they can concentrate on exercise and education, stay away from bad habits like drinking and smoking, and come out with an even greater hunger to fight injustice. When the cell door slams on the first night you realise this is the only thing that the state can do to you and for the first time in your life you experience an incredible sense of strength like no other.

I know this is something it's been said lots of time, but I think is always important to hear it from people who have spent time in prison, how important is for a prisoner the support of the people from outside?

The support you receive as a prisoner means so much and is one of the best things about doing time. Prison is designed to mentally subdue your spirit, to take away that idea of choice, and to receive word from the outside world helps counteract that. If you're into minority interests like punk, veganism or anarchism it can be hard to find people to have good conversations with or who share your interests. Sometimes you can get really bored with all the talk of drugs or crime or violence, so when a letter comes from the outside world talking about anything that's going on in the author's life it really captivates your mind and takes you out of the prison environment. It's important for prisoners to know that life goes on outside and that there's still people carrying on the fight. When you're isolated away from your people and community and you receive letters from across the world, from people from different countries, cultures, background that share a similar moral path with you it makes you remember that you're not on your own, that you are part of a bigger, important social struggle.

I think a lot of people are reluctant to write to prisoners because they either have problems thinking of things to write or because they don't want to sound like they're having a great time while you're in prison. But they should write, they should tell prisoners about their favourite films, their favourite books, what they work as, what they study, what they're doing in their lives as this reminds prisoners that there's more to life than the system. And they must never feel sad that someone is in prison, they should feel proud. A prisoner does not want to know that you're upset - they want to know that the struggle goes on and the movement isn't beaten.

Of course, it's a benefit to the prisoner, but I think a lot of people who write get a benefit out of receiving letters back and talking to someone living a different life. Lastly, there is a serious lack of straight answers within the prison system so be able to write to a friend and say "can you look this piece of law up for me?" was a great help.

What's exactly the work of groups like ARPS or VPSG? Does the prison system "agree" with it or they cause trouble when receiving vegan goods or support from these groups?

ARPS publishes a newsletter and encourages prisoners to express themselves and for people to support them. It's a very good newsletter. I could receive the magazine, and write for it no problems, but I think other prisoners might have had problems.

The VPSG works "within the system" to provide adequate vegan diets to prisoner, and does an incredible job. I found the prison system is one of the most informed "public service" (hospitals, schools etc.) when it comes to veganism. The prison system is very keen to be seen as respecting "diversity" and not discriminating against people because of their faith, race or cultural background - Kosher food, Halal food, Buddhist prayer meetings etc. are all provided - so when the VPSG phone up the prisons and say "we've got a recipe book, and nutritional guidelines and can help you" the prisons usually jump at the offer because they're doing their work for them! The VPSG is very clever, it doesn't talk about "animal rights" or "political prisoners," it talks in the language the prison system understands: "minority interests," "diversity," "discrimination."

For a long time they could send food parcels into prisoners, but that's been stopped now. But they have worked with the prison system to get vegan products into the prison shops and now send money so that prisoners can buy these items. It's not perfect, but it's a great start.

In the letter you wrote to me you talked about how important had been some punk bands to becoming what you are now, something I really feel in a similar way in my case. Do you think people tend to infravalorate the punk movement and its potential?

I'm not sure what 'infravalorate' means. Punk is my life - I have learnt more from any record than I have any book. I see punk music as a type of folk music - a way of people expressing the stories of their lives. The music can inform and educate, but also the attitude can inspire and influence. It is our soundtrack to our lives, our theme tune to radical action, and the wider DIY scene with it's international connections and ability to organise benefits, social centers etc, is proof that we can do things on our own terms.

But I do think it's easy to get caught in this scene to think that because you sing a radical song or post a message facebook or are straight edge or something you are effecting change. Of course, these things are important but it's more important to engage with the wider world, go out onto the streets and take action.

Did you have some problems with your vegan (or vegetarian) diet into prison?

Not really - nothing to complain about. Despite the poor quality of the actual food, it was varied and balanced and I got all the nutrients I need. A few bad meals, the occasional plate of lettuce for dinner, and a week of eating a vegetable pie for every meal - 14 pies in total.

Have they put you some kind of restriction now that you are out? I mean, can you get involved in campaigns or work with animal rights groups?

I guess I answered this with questions 1 and 2.

I asked to Dan Wadham what would be the first song he would listen when he was out, and he told that it would be "Boot down the door", of OI POLLOI. What was the first song you listened when you were freed?

Dan has very good taste in music. A friend from Germany sent me a CD-R, but they don't allow CD-Rs inside, so I got it on the day of release. As we drove away from the prison I put it on and it played "We Don't Need The Army" by Slime.

***An article written to correspond with finishing of my license period. First published in* Animal Rights Prisoner Support Newsletter Number 8, August 2012.**

July 2008 saw my arrest for the liberation of over 120 imprisoned individuals and roughly £75,000 worth of damage caused to Highgate Farm, a vivisection laboratory breeder in Lincolnshire. Whilst many think of conviction and imprisonment as the result of capture in such actions, increasingly the state is using deprivation, both pre-trial and post-imprisonment as a weapon against political activists. Although I was finally released from prison in November 2010, it was not until April 2012 that my sentence finished. After my release from prison, I was forced to serve the remainder of the sentence 'on license, under supervision in the community' – in other words, I was on probation.

Officially, probation is meant to manage ex-prisoners and help them reintegrate back into society, under the assuages of 'protecting the public'. However my experience, throughout prison and probation, has taught me that there is miniscule rehabilitation, and what exists, is negated by the system that contains it. Probation follows the role of the prison – it is designed to isolate and dehumanise the individual, marginalising them from society and perpetuating the cycle of imprisonment and 'reoffending' that exists in England today. The main aspect of probation is regular appointments with a proclaimed 'officer.' It is difficult to summarize the entire probation period, as unlike police interviews, no record of accountability is made, but I think it is important to explain my experiences, so that people are informed as to what is being done in their name, and those that may find themselves undergoing such an experience have some idea of what to expect.

Throughout my time in prison I had virtually no contact with probation. On arrival at each prison I would be asked about the nature of my imprisonment and that was it – not one single official ever approached me to ask why I did what I did. The most memorable interaction I can remember was shortly after I had arrived in a new prison and was asked what the burglary conviction related to – when I explained that it was the liberation of over a hundred rabbits the lady couldn't help but crack up into a fit of hysterics, only to excuse herself before shortly returning and apologising. However, because of the peculiarity of my case, my story was of deep interest to other prisoners – on a daily basis I would be questioned by intrigued individuals, and on a number of occasions whole education classes became dominated by debates that started with the question 'you're the animal activist, aren't you?' There were a lot of informative and sometimes humorous exchanges – from the gentleman who assumed they were 'Rampant Rabbits' to the one who told me that when he got out he

was going to liberate some animals, 'but something good, like a gorilla.' Like the other prisoners, the system defined me by the events that had lead me to prison, so naturally after nearly four years of being treated only in this manner, the fact that in the past I have taken a stand for decent treatment for non-humans, has become deeply engrained and an important focus of my life. Now I am able to do so, it is second nature to return to the only thing I know; one of the greatest causes the world has seen: the fight for the rights of those living, thinking, feeling individuals that suffer the most abusive injustice purely because they do not walk on two legs nor speak a language humanity recognises.

The first time i was ever officially informed that after prison I would be under further obligation was the morning of my release. I was told to return to South London and meet with a probation officer by a certain time otherwise I'd be coming back. As I had very little previous experience with probation I approached it with an open mind and a willingness to engage. Not only is it important to treat the unfamliar with respect, but a great deal can be learnt through dialogue. However, the deep hostility towards probation that a lot of prisoners I lived with had taught me to be cautious. To give an example, during an induction period inside (when a new arrival is introduced to the particular institution) a lady from an outside group that deals with prisoners' complaints mentioned that she could speak to probation on behalf of the prisoners. The response from a room of thirty or forty was largely boos and jeers. Regardless, I held that as I had never really spoken to probation before, I should reserve judgment.

The person I met was to become the main officer I saw through my license period, but by no means was he the only person involved. Although on the surface he was a perfectly pleasant man without malice and enthusiastic and friendly; he lacked both the knowledge of my case and the wider context it exists in, as well as the intelligence to be able to satisfactorily converse with me. If I am honest, by the end, I considered him lazy and incompetent. I remember at my first appointment I mentioned that I might want to do some work at a greyhound rescue; his response was to ask me what a greyhound was. How was I meant to have meaningful conversations about such important subjects as speciesism and carnism with someone who lacked even a child's knowledge of animals? Soon two key concerns of probation were made clear:; firstly that they were very worried about negative press coverage and this would affect the way they handled their cases, and secondly they were very worried about newly released prisoners 'reoffending'. This attitude not only endorsed the idea that prison as a deterrent does not work, but helped lessen its impact. This latter concern was confusing as anybody that knows me would tell you that my priorities upon release were drinking beer and listening to punk rock, not breaking the law!

The further obligation of prob-

abtion did not stop with mere appointments – like most other released prisoners I was also given a license – a set of conditions that affect travel, work and life in general that you are forced to comply with under threat of reimprisonment. The first condition on any license is the vague 'be well behaved...' That behaviour is not defined anywhere and is left to the discretion of the probation officers themselves. I was informed they 'only need suspicion' that these conditions are breached to implement reimprisonment. Effectively it is internment. With this threat ever present, building a relationship built on trust and respect proves difficult. My license was initially 'standard', meaning it was the basic one that every licensee receives, but approximately two weeks later as the probation officer's demeanor changed, so did my license. According to him, the prison system hadn't properly prepared my release and forgot a few things: I was now a MAPPA case considered 'a high risk of reoffending' and a 'medium risk of serious harm to the public.' Never was I given an explanation as to why the system had suddenly decided to consider me like this, but the impression that I got, validated by the probabtion officer's acknowledgement that there were "senior" people involved, was that up until then I had been treated as an ordinary prisoner. It seemed the police and perhaps Home Office bureaucrats had forgotten all about me and now they were making up for lost time. This new and drastic change meant that whatever work and plans I had made whilst inside to reintegrate back into society, upon my release had to be at least post-poned, if not scrapped all together. My licence was to change four times in the immediate months. It seemed they were unsure what they were doing and how exactly to manage me.

MAPPA stands for Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and is for those considered the most dangerous in the criminal justice system. There are three levels; one for highly violent individuals, one for sexual offenders, and the ambiguous 'other' category. As I quite literally wouldn't harm a fly, I became the latter, as I'm sure a great many other political activists have, or will experience. The Multi-Agency aspect involves a whole alphabet soup of shadowy and secretive organisations including prison agencies, probation, government officials and various branches of the police. Once a month they meet to conspire and plot the life of an individual who is not even entitled to attend these meetings. The ex-prisoners and their reintegration back into society is not directed by the prison staff or low-level probation officers who they have regular dealings with and have built up some sort of relationship, but by faceless bureaucrats who have little understanding of the situation, a political agenda to eradicate any sort of dissent regardless of legality, and an inability to fully understand the impact of their actions. Along with this MAPPA status came further license conditions – to keep me away from Highgate Farm, but they also stopped me possessing a mobile phone or using the internet. It is beyond me how someone trying to reintegrate back into a

society like ours is meant to do so without the use of these things. The justification was that it would stop me looking at 'extremist' websites. As I do not know what 'extremism' is, I asked for some examples but probabtion couldn't or wouldn't tell me. It left me puzzled and wondering what other aspects of culture are they going to try and suppress? Music, literature, art? Perhaps soon we will see an English Ai Weiwei.

The biggest aspect of my license was the fact that I was to 'notify [the probabtion] officer prior to any contact or relationship with individuals or organisations engaged in demonstrations or activity concerned with Animal Welfare or the Rights of Animals, unless otherwise instructed by your supervising officer.' It was an incredibly far reaching and fanatical license condition which the probation officer did not understand and could not explain. He was unable even to define what constituted animal welfare and 'rights of animals', though he maintained that it was perfectly clear. Generally, when challenged on issues of such matters he had two default responses; one was to shrug his shoulders and smile in an empathetic manner, the other was to say that he "understood this was all very hard and thought it was a good cause that I fought for, and that I just needed to keep my head down and then when it was all over I could go back to what I was doing." This condition would make it difficult for me to contact potentially hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people given the English reputation as a 'nation of animal lovers.' Effectively, it was designed to stop me doing any activity involving non-humans, but the language it was written in disguised this. For in the eyes of the law it says that all that is needed is the approval from probation, not acknowledging that probation only has the responses: 'no' and 'ask again in a couple of months' time.'

The justification for this MAPPA status was the seriousness of the nature of my conviction, yet all other animal rights prisoners released in recent years are suffering similar experiences. It has little to do with what you've actually done - more so the reason why you've done it. It is wholly political. I was described as 'manipulative' yet had 'shortfalls [in] making the right decisions and lack[ing] of assertiveness.' Not only was this incredibly insulting and disempowering to someone meant to reestablish himself within society, but it lacked any evidence or explanation. Of course, now with such a history on my record, the next time the authorities need to use me to make an example of the animal rights movement, no doubt I will be described as some sort of 'ring-leader' and finding someone from probation prepared to come to court and counter these claims will be impossible.

After two months of release, I was picked up by the police and returned to prison totally out of the blue. Two weeks later I found out it was because I had attended a small, peaceful picket of the Harrods fur shop. Apparently, this meant I was 're-establishing links with animal rights extremists' and holding a placard meant I was 'an

active participant...as opposed to merely attending.' Whilst the two months spent in prison on recall is an article in itself, it did teach me some valuable lessons. Firstly, that probation were quick to condemn yet slow to reason. It shattered any credibility in the authorities' claims that they 'protect the right to peacefully demonstrate' and finally, it was a clear illustration that I would not be allowed to live any sort of law abiding normal life. For regardless of how I acted, I would be persecuted for my beliefs.

On rerelease I had the big wheel at the cracker factory come to see me; a Senior Probation Officer from the Central Extremist Unit was needed to do what the usual one wasn't capable of. From the outset he was aggressive and hostile and it was clear that he wanted to dominate the proceedings. I was told that I was a 'violent extremist' and that these license conditions were purposely ambiguous 'to stop me working around them' which directly contradicted his colleague's claim. When I asked for some written clarification about the matter he got extremely defensive and bellowed 'I'm not going to sit here and write everything I say down.' Within probation there is a remarkable lack of recorded information but then evidence does lead to accountability. The conversation then moved onto a series of questions about myself in an effort 'to get to know me.' What sort of person judges someone before they have even spoken with them? He tried to provoke me, to push my buttons, but an introduction like that brought an end to any serious attempts at dialogue on my part. I pointed out the absurdity of these license conditions, explaining that they would stop me from even putting a can of food in a rescue center donation bin. With a smile on his face he agreed that they did, as if some sort of victory had been achieved. The pathetic nature of his character continued to come across in the 2 or 3 following appointments I had with him. After it dawned on him that he would not be able to goad me into some sort of reaction he tried a different approach: trying to act in stern, paternal manner explaining to me the realities of life. The usual bollocks of "I know where you're coming from – my auntie's milkman's nephew's ex-girlfriend's brother is a vegetarian and I once stroked a dog." My refusal to engage lead to him advising me that 'I should decide what I wanted to be doing' but I explained that I did not see the probation period as being about my wants, to which he agreed. This type of empty rhetoric ran through probation and the different officers I saw. It quickly became apparent that they would say whatever sounded good at the time and routinely contradict or change their positions. He made all sorts of promises that were never fulfilled: the offer of a mobile phone, an activist legal advice manual and victim impact statements, but I knew as soon as he mentioned them, they were lies. It is strange sitting in a room being lied to, as in public life it is uncommon. Universally, it is almost impossible to find a culture that

respects such dishonest behaviour. What concerned me though was not being able to distinguish whether they were purposely lying or whether it had become compulsive behaviour. This meant that assurances such as ' if I comply' and do 'well' on my license period over time, the conditions would diminish, could not be taken seriously – they had no intention of doing that, the license conditions were designed to keep me away from doing any work that helped non-human animals – they were using it as a further punishment after they failed to convince the judge to serve an ASBO. The senior extremist probation officer took it very personally when I refused to shake his hand, and later went on at length about his past life as if it was of interest to anyone but himself. Once, bizarrely, he inquired whether I was going to write a book and if so, I wasn't to mention his name. If meeting someone a handful of times is a great enough influence on your life that you record it in your biography then just think the effect of living with hundreds of other prisoners, day in, day out, has. Anyway, if I were to write a book, I'd probably get done for incitement.

There was never any structure or plan to the probation appointments. Every time I attended I was walking into a room unsure of what would be addressed. The reasons behind my imprisonment were barely touched upon – mentioned perhaps only once or twice. It seemed as if they did not want to discuss it. For the initial appointments there was a great deal of interest in my views on the recent student demonstrations at Millbank Towers. It seemed as if any sort of anti-governmental demonstration was of importance. As I have never been on a violent demonstration, have no interest in attending one, had little knowledge of the student fees cause and was not a student, I didn't understand the relevance. The prosecution of my case focused on the idea that the action at Highgate Farm was not a protest, but a serious attempt at disrupting a 'lawful business.' Now probation were acting in a revisionist manner trying to make out that I had some sort of issues with protests. Largely we had informal conversations about current affairs. Whilst I can understand my reaction to certain events and problems can give an insight into patterns of thinking that are important for probation officers to understand, the relaxed nature of these conversations seemed as if the probation officer was just trying to kill some time. On one occasion he spent forty minutes telling me about some American crime thriller novel he had read on holiday, only to repeat the conversation a month or so later, having forgotten he had told me all about it previously. He had some bizarre assertions when it came to the law; such as dog licenses being a legal requirement and there being no clause of self-defense within English law. Even though I knew both of these claims were erroneous, I found It strange that the individual tasked with making me respect the law had an incorrect understanding of it. What else did he tell me that was just plain wrong? As for

rehabilitation, I believe this consisted of one appointment with a private contractor involved in education whose, (whilst positive about my personal plans), main advice was to 'google courses,' and two group meetings with another private company; one to write a CV, which ain't much use if you've got nothing to put on it, and another one about interview techniques. The consensus from the ex-prisoners in the room, on the knowledge that failure to declare a record once asked is a criminal offence, was that they wouldn't admit to their records. The probation officer also advised me to mislead the Jobcentre about my circumstances so that I could claim benefits. On numerous occasions I would turn up to probation appointments, only to be there for a number of minutes whilst the next appointment was scheduled. Once, during winter I turned up only to be told that a memo had come through from head office telling probation officers not to keep people too long as the heating hadn't been turned on yet! To anyone who has experienced prison and its systematic heating schedule, this is a joke. However, every appointment would start in a similar manner, with the probation officer asking me if I was okay and if there were "any problems." I would use this opportunity to explain that the only problems I had in my life were being caused by probation itself.

It seemed to me that they were trying to do everything within their power to make my life as difficult as possible. To stop me from working, studying or doing voluntary work. Separating me from my family, friends and my culture. Dismissing the things that were most important in my life. It was about taking away all avenues of choice yet holding me up as solely responsible for every decision that I would make. It dawned on me one day – I didn't have a mobile phone, I couldn't socialise or publicly express my views, and any work I did for the animals had to be done clandestinely – that probation were turning me into some sort of fucking 'sleeper cell'! On top of that there is an uncertainty about life that the threat of reimprisonment inspires. For example, a newsagent once challenged a twenty quid note I handed him on the suspicion that it was a fake – if he had called the authorities, without any due process or guilt being established, I could had been reimprisoned. It is this wider abuse of ex-prisoners, coupled with the experience of prison, that in my opinion encourages the high levels of reoffending we have in this country. However, once I got my head round living like this, I would appreciate the irony of it all – it became a period of politicalisation; being careful, watching what you're doing, focusing all the time on animal rights issues, permanently prepared for arrest – it is the perfect discipline, no doubt, for those engaging in direct action.

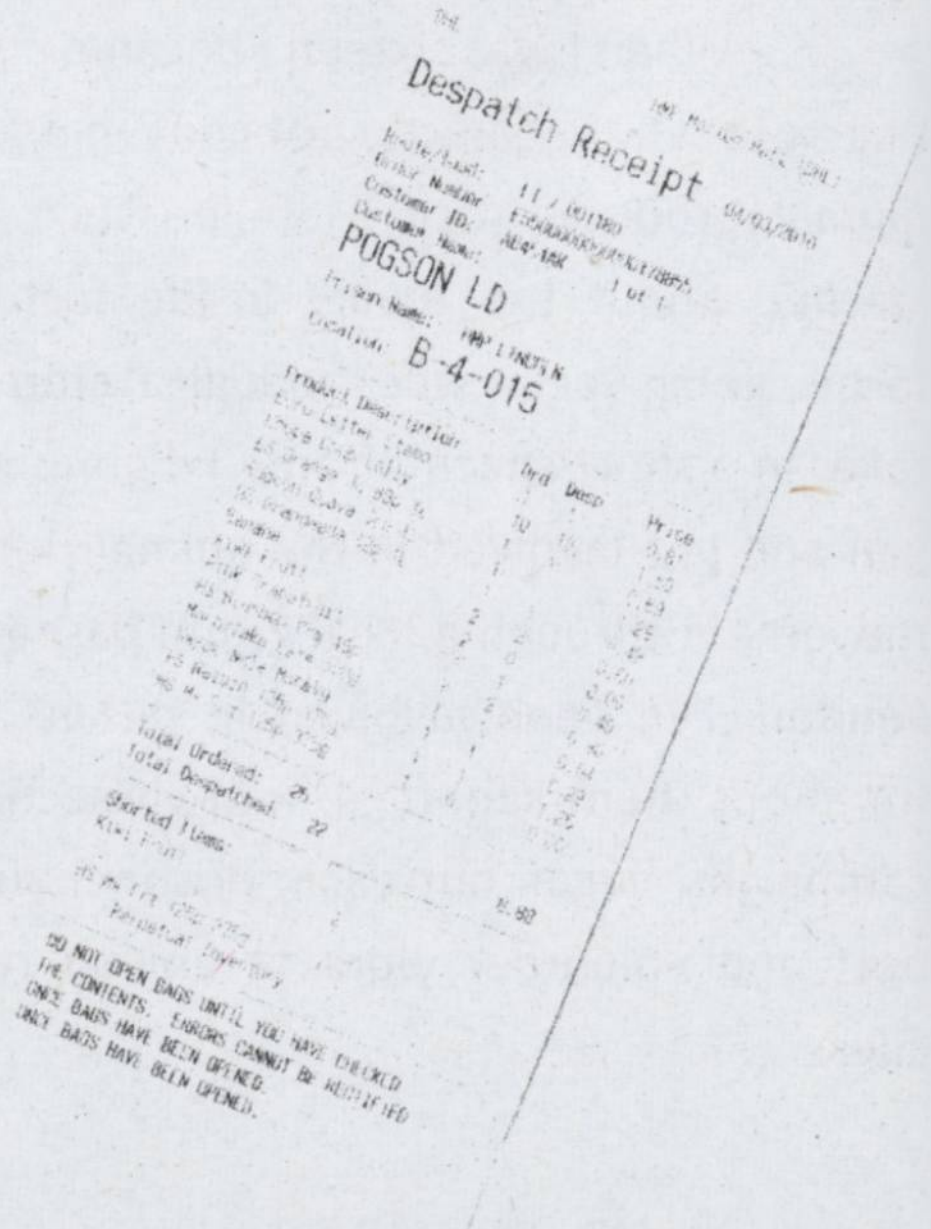
I would regularly explain to the probation officer that there was a great deal of onus on him; he only had a limited time and that he should use it productively: to engage, to explore ideas and find some mutual ground where we could both under-

stand and learn. He was under the impression that me sitting in a room for ten minutes every now and then and threatening me with imprisonment for anything the authorities took a dislike to was going to have some sort of drastic effect on my political beliefs. But I had seen this problem many times before; that the punishment of the convicted is often done by people who have little understanding of what they're doing. They judge others by their own standards and whilst they lack backbones and integrity, their opposition has an incredible strength fortified by the righteousness of their cause. In my life, I have the pleasure to say that I have met some of the most decent, caring and thoughtful people imaginable and have experienced true acts of giving and selflessness. People that have scarified great chunks of their lives to help others without reward or even acknowledgement. Compared to this, the altruistic claim of 'protecting the public' made by lazy and disinterested probation officers is plainly insulting. The very nature of my conviction, the SOCPA 145 charge that affords heightened legal protection for those involved with vivisection, made a clear distinction between the abusers and the general public. In fact, you would be hard pushed to find even a sizeable minority of the public that was aware of, let alone supported, the fact that animal liberationists are receiving long and disproportionate sentences for non -violent acts of compassion.

The logic of probation argues that license conditions along with their work are needed to stop people reoffending. If ex-prisoners complete their license period without incident, it is down to the work and influence of the probation officer. Yet, if they offend, that work and influence is forgotten about and the responsibility falls on the ex-prisoner. Therefore, the only independent decision an ex-prisoner can make is to offend. It was a conscious thought in my mind to do some provocative law breaking purely in protest of their work, but in situations like this, the bigger picture needs viewing. For me, probation was biased from the onset– their role was to serve the police and other nefarious organisations and implement whatever they wished, under the cover of the 'rehabilitation' and 'public protection' that probation claim to represent. Probation has little concern about the lives of the people it manages. It has neat little labels and classifications, and individuals are described and explained, including flaws in their characters, by people that have never even met them. It has no interest in listening or addressing the needs and concerns of the people under its management, just as along as they keep their head's down and tread the well worn path of “I've learnt my lesson and won't do it again” then probation are happy, despite the fact that the UK has some of the highest prison numbers and reoffending rates in Europe. Any criticism or questioning of the system however can be explained away by mudslinging; “well, of course they're causing trouble, they're an extremist after all.” The use of such a term is designed to cloud the issue and distort any debate. This label does not come with

conviction and evaporates upon the completion of a sentence, but exists independently, related to political belief. After all, you pitch a tent outside St. Paul's and you're considered a 'terrorist' these days. As I will always be considered and described as an extremist ,there is little incentive for me to change my ways. However, the only place 'extremism' exists is in the minds of these sad little people whose lives revolve around fearing any story of different culture or grass roots opposition. They know that if they were to attempt to answer the question of why reasonable, decent and intelligent people are prepared to break the law like others who were lionised by eternity, they would find themselves looking in the mirror, and at the injustice and inequality they perpetuate.

As they have failed in breaking the spirits of animal liberation prisoners, their repression will escalate. Sadly, they seem intent on making an example out of political prisoners, so we must be prepared to become examples as prisoners. It is not a prospect I relish, but history shows that struggles within the prison environment have wide reaching effects on the outside world. I would encourage people not to co-operate with the probation service. No-one should wish to be a matyr and act in a manner that risks further punishment but a balance can be found. Stick to your conditions, but refuse to engage during appointments. Without question, in the last few years our movement for a kinder, better world based on respect for all life has taken some blows from those that care for little else than dirty money, but we should never let the force of their blows distort the strength of our movement. It is important in times like these that we refuse to be subdued, that we think critically, and redouble our efforts to stop the appalling tyranny and violence that is waged against all life. It is part of any struggle to suffer casualties – in a country like ours where peaceful protestors are killed or imprisoned ,imprisonment is something that many activists should be prepared to face. It is nothing to fear, and a good prior-knowledge of life behind bars can help someone have a useful and productive experience. I have no prouder boast than to say that I stand shoulder to shoulder with some of the most courageous people in society and fight with them for a gentler world, where all life, regardless of species, race, sex or persuasion has the potential to live the free life they desire.



***This interview, written in September 2012, is to be published in a forthcoming edition of the Swedish* DBF SG newsletter.**

How did you become involved in animal rights? What was your wake-up call?

Ever since childhood I have been a vegetarian for ethical reasons. It was always a simple moral issue for me – that I did not see it as right to deprive a non-human animal of their life for the sake of a luxury diet, and that as the dominant species we had no right to do so. There was never any 'wake up call' or 'eureka moment' – I guess I have always been conscious to the fact that non-humans are also sentient individuals with their own desires. Having been brought up to respect people regardless of their race or sexuality I've always struggled to understand why this consideration should not cross species barriers.

When I was sixteen I became curious as to why vegans do not consume any animal products such as milk. Once I'd learned about the reality inside factory farms, going vegan was the logical step to take. In a short space of time I'd gone vegan and got involved in the animal rights movement through a local group based in London. I've been involved in pickets of fur shops, hunt sabotage, anti-vivisection campaigns, vegan outreach, prisoner support and volunteer work at animal rescues.

The beginning of my involvement in the animal rights movement coincided with the first anniversary of the death of Barry Horne, an animal liberationist who died on hunger strike whilst inside prison. It was a very emotional time, and the respect that exists for him coupled with the way he was treated by the state had a powerful impact on me. I was never a great reader and this was at a time when internet access wasn't so common, but punk rock gave me a big education. Some records by bands like Conflict, Riot/Clone, Mob 47, Aus-Rotten and Propagandhi will always have a special place in my heart because not only did they teach me about the ways humanity exploits it's fellow creatures but that also there was a culture of people prepared to fight against this slavery.

Tell us about the action you was convicted for?

In January 2008 the Animal Liberation Front targeted Highgate Farm, a breeder of small animals for the vivisection industry, that supplies Huntingdon Life Sciences and Bantin & Kingman amongst others. 129 rabbits were liberated and approximately £75,000 pounds worth of economic sabotage was caused, as well as video footage released showing

the abusive conditions these dear little souls were kept in.

I was the only person ever charged in relation to this action and was convicted of burglary (the 129 rabbits), criminal damage (the £75,000 worth of damage to vehicles and equipment), blackmail (graffiti advising the business to close down) and SOCPA 145 (a specialist law that makes any action aimed at affecting any business connected with vivisection an offence.)

I received a three year prison sentence and £700 found in my house was confiscated under the 'Proceeds of Crime Act' which allows the state to seize money or property when they believe a profit has been made. Their argument was that the rabbits were worth something like £14,000. They were wrong about that – those rabbits are priceless! Out of those three years I spent a year under house arrest, about 11 months in prison and roughly eighteen months on 'licence' (parole). No rabbits were ever recovered and the last I heard is that they're still out there doing what rabbits do in suitable, loving environments.

How did you cope with the time in prison?

My story is slightly complicated and confusing, even more so than is usual with British law. I went to prison three times – firstly three months, then five and then a further two. I was in five different gaols, seven different times! This made settling in or progressing through the prison system problematic, but I approached prison in a productive state of mind, prepared to make the most of my time.

Before hand, I had spoken to some former political prisoners to learn about what prison was like and had also read about prisons, both in this country and abroad. Not only did this teach me skills and knowledge that would come in handy, but also reading about, for example, the Gulags in Russia, the H-Blocks in Ireland and the FIES units in the Spanish state helped me put my situation into context. If people could not only survive, but come out with their heads held high after serving years in brutal institutions like these, then I had nothing to complain about with serving a relatively short time in English gaols.

Probably the most oppressive aspect of English gaols is the lack of stimulation; whether that's the bland, generic decoration, the lack of access of fresh air and nature (like grass and trees) or boredom induced by having very little to do. Therefore it is very important to keep your mind busy, not only to keep you in good spirits but also to maintain your individual character and not see it getting eroded by the criminal culture that is shared by many prisoners. I did this by reading as much as possible – 38 books in

five months! I explored the library and stepped outside of my usual, narrow focus – never in a million years would I have thought that I would read Lermontov, Nabokov or Solzhenitsyn! I did some short educational courses, that although basic kept the cogs in my mind turning and also spent as much time as possible in the gym. Not only is exercise great for your mental well-being but you wouldn't believe how weak you get spending a few months sitting on your arse in a cell all day!

Having been out of gaol for nearly two years now, when I look back on my time I feel a strange sense of nostalgia. Whilst I never wanted to go to prison and it was never my choice, I can't see it as a negative experience. Of course, there were tough times and some unpleasantries – and I see the prison system as a barrier to any sort of decent or civilised society – but it was my life. I learnt a lot, both about the world and about myself, met some good people and have hopefully got the best out of it.

Do you think it is important to have support groups for prisoners?

Support Groups as formal organisations are important, as not only can they publicize the plight of those who find themselves behind bars, but can also help with any issues prisoners may have whilst inside, and also help to raise funds. Money is always important – especially pre and post prison. After arrest the activist may have lost his computer or mobile phone and need a replacement, they may have legal fees to pay or expensive travel costs with attending legal appointments. After release, perhaps it's difficult for the activist to find somewhere to live or work as they're dealing with the transition from prison to wider society.

On an individual level, prisoner support is very important – for both the well being of the prisoner and the integrity of the movement. Those that make the sacrifice and find themselves imprisoned should never be forgotten. They are still part of the movement, and still have an active role to play. With a lot of free time on their hands, political prisoners will probably spend a great deal of it thinking and theorising about the reasons and issues that lead them to gaol. They will also learn a great deal about the system that utilises such a weapon. This knowledge is extremely useful to those that fight for the animals on the outside.

I think for people who have never experienced gaol it is hard to understand how important it is to receive mail. Generally interests and conversations inside are dominated by the themes of violence, drugs and crime so to receive correspondence from the outside world that breaks this tedium and brings something new and stimulating is very refreshing. Also, to

hear that there are people still active, trying to improve the standing of non-humans in society reinforces the belief that what the prisoner did was not in vain. But letter writing and prisoner support is not a one-way street – often when I replied to letters people were genuinely pleased and excited to have some hand written and personal letter come through their post box alongside the usual bills and junk mail. I understand that some people find it hard to write to political prisoners and do not know what to say but just try to spark up a conversation over shared interests. Generally a prisoner will be reading books, watching a lot of television and perhaps exercising down the gym. I loved it when people use to write to me talking about hardcore punk, as the only music that was ever played on the wing was electronic dance music!

Lastly, it is important to remember that the prison experience does not automatically finish when someone is released. Sometimes, the transition back into wider society can be difficult and consideration should be given because of this. Also, please remember the families of political prisoners as they too are serving their own sentence.

What would you tell to people in the movement that fears prison?

It is not fair of me to talk about going to prison in Sweden as I am ignorant of the Swedish prison system and the role it plays in society. All my comments are based on my experiences in England.

People have every right to fear prison – it is the unknown and is represented as a bad place in an effort to discourage as many people as possible from breaking the law. Serving time is a big experience and one that should not be undertaken lightly. I think it is impossible to experience prison and not have it effect you – both on your life and on your character. However, when that door slams and you find yourself in a cell for the first time, you realise that it is far from the nightmare it is portrayed as. Of course, there are some that care for little else than dirty money and hate that gloat when a political activist is gaoled, but they fail to realise that it is not the closing of a book, but merely the ending of a chapter. When that door shuts you are still alive, breathing, and conscious – you still have a life to lead, and this can be lead on the prison wings. It's the start of a new life and new experiences – maybe outside of your comfort zone or what you would experience in the outside world, but this strengthens you as a person and a gives you a richer, more diverse understanding of the world. Even the deprivation that

you suffer can be a positive experience as you learn to appreciate things a lot more. Your wits get heightened, and your confidence grows. When you are released from prison, and look forward to going home and helping the animals once again, you are a representation of why the animal rights movement is unstoppable.

At a young age, a few years away from home in these conditions can be a scary and a daunting prospect but as you get older you can look back without regret on your time inside. If you are a young person, without dependants or great responsibilities then what is to worry about? What else are you going to be doing? Eating cup-cakes, going to gigs, enjoying yourself or sleeping soundly on a prison mattress safe in the knowledge that you did the right thing, that others won't suffer and die and that those that exploit and murder in the name of profit got taught that what they do is unacceptable?

Sadly, there is a lot of experience of prison within the animal rights movement, and as we become more coherent and effective with our demands, it is likely that more and more of us will share this experience. With what has happened to our friends in Austria, to the twelve in the Spanish State, and with Sean Kirtly and the Sequani defendants here in England it is clear that even peaceful and law abiding activists face the threat of imprisonment. The people responsible for these gaolings do not attack us because the law gets broken and they have a sacred belief in the sanctity of law over life – they attack us because we oppose their domination and exploitation, and regardless of whether it's illegal or legal action we take, it scares them deeply. If we are effective through legal means then they alter or manipulate the law to stop us. It's criminalisation and its designed to make us scared. Don't let them control you with fear – follow your hearts and dreams: 'If you want freedom, take the first step – liberate the animals!'

How do you see the future of the animal rights movement? Both in the UK and international?

I am really inspired by the current internationalism of the movement. I know that there is a proud history of activism in Sweden, but it is very exciting to see a dramatic growth in the movement in places like France, Ireland and the Spanish State. Recently, I've become aware of people fighting for the animals in Turkey and this is great news as the country can be seen as the gateway between the West and the East. I'm sure there are many good people out there in Central and South East Asia, South America and elsewhere who whilst coming from extremely different cultural backgrounds share the same ideas, compassion and empathy that we have for all life. Whilst it is down to the people in their own countries to decide what is the best path of action to

take, it should be clear that we stand side by side with them, offer our help and solidarity, and share their desire for a better, kinder world.

It is hard for me to talk about the movement in the UK at the moment – being on licence kept me out of the loop of news and information and we, along with many other grass root movements, have suffered violent and fanatical state repression. However, this has created somewhat of a critical and strategic phase – where people are thinking deeply about the movement and the best possible direction to take. Personally, I think education is very important. A movement doesn't just go forward, it needs building and we need the skills to be able to do this. As any campaign group needs graphic designers to create leaflets and animal sanctuaries need mechanics to maintain vehicles, we need lawyers who can use the law to fight for non-humans and defend repressed activists, sociologists who understand people and the society we live in, who can then work with marketing executives to promote our ideas in the most effective way. Sometimes it is appealing to try and distance yourself from mainstream society and live outside it's norms, but the struggle for animal rights is not about fighting society, but engaging with it. That said, it is very important not to be assimilated into a system we oppose and get influenced by those in the media or in government who have little concern for non-humans and even less for social change. We must always maintain our principles, keep our movement grounded in the grass roots, embrace non-violent direct action, oppose fascism, and be guided equally by our hearts and our minds.

Is there any issues the AR movement should give more attention than others according to you?

This is a very hard question to answer. When you look at an activity like hunt sabotage and the amount of time and resources that go into it to protect a relatively small amount of wild-life sometimes you start to question whether it is the most productive use of your time. But I think it is important to challenge all forms of oppression, and not just the most destructive. Not only does this express one of our core ethics – that all animals have value as individuals – but the diversity of the movement is our strength. Diversity is important for two reasons: It makes it difficult for our opponents to get a grip on us, as when they effect one of our campaigns our message is still spread via a different medium, and secondly it allows as many people to get involved in a way that is comfortable for them. Everybody has a part to play in our movement and can help the animals – whether that is the young militant who can engage in non-violent direct action, or the elderly per-

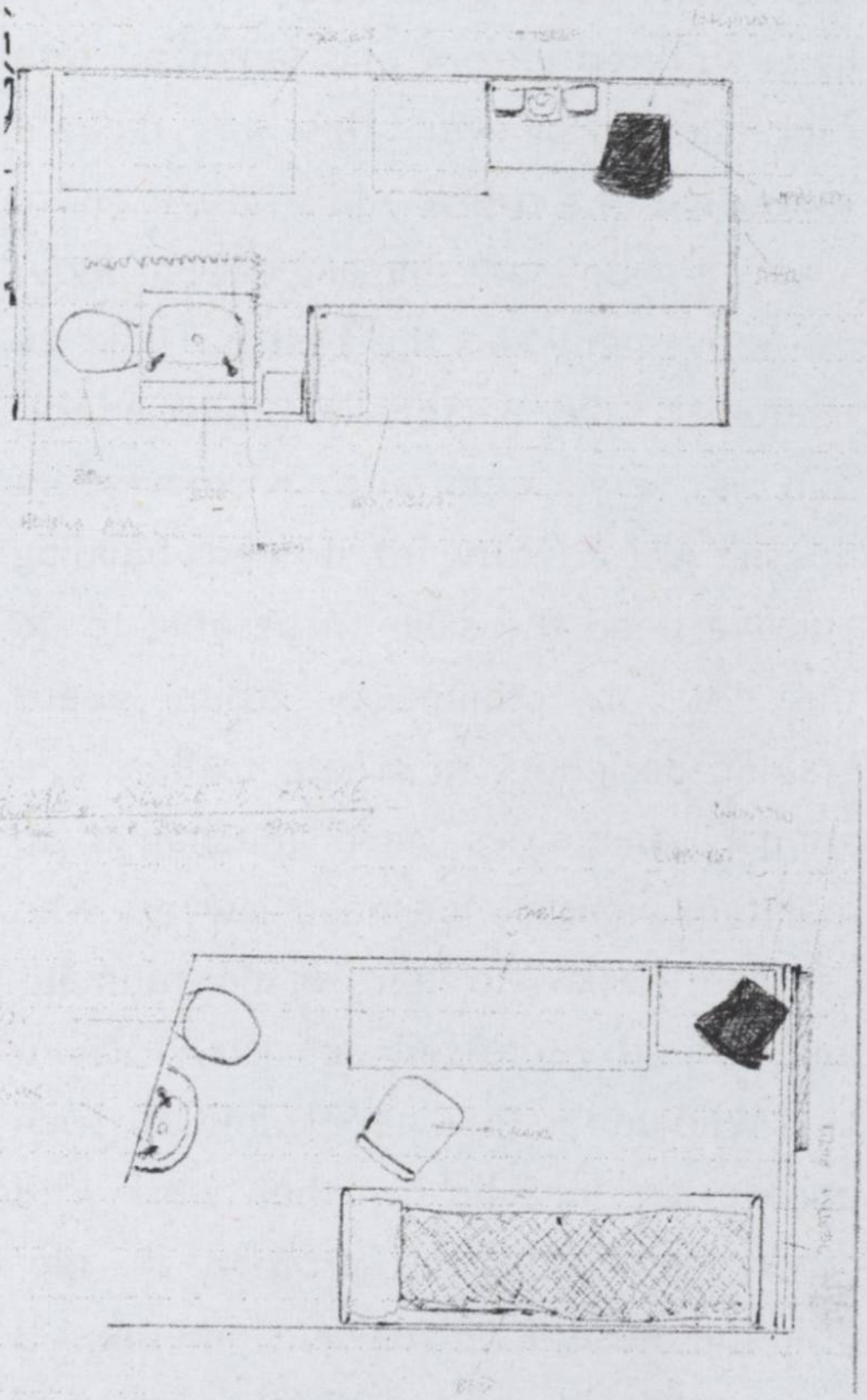
son who can look after sick animals, the full time worker who can only commit themselves to financially supporting campaigns, or the unemployed person who has little money but lots of time to produce newsletters etc.

Every aspect of our movement has great value. Look at animal sanctuaries for example. Whilst they might not actively combat the tyrannical mass murder that society inflicts on the voiceless, they are important educational resources as not only do they show the individual and intelligent nature of non-humans but also are a practical example of how all species can live together in peace and harmony.

Whilst at this stage of the struggle veganism is inherently central to our movement I think it is important to realise it is not the be all and end all. Going vegan is a very effective way of curtailing animal abuse, and vegan outreach is positive and productive. However, what do we want? A culture of vegan consumers or a culture of animal liberationists?

Something else you want to add or say to the readers of the Swedish ALF SG newsletter?

I'd like to say a massive 'thank you' for all the love and support I have received over the years from good people in Sweden. I cannot express in writing how much it has meant to me, and I know that I have life-long friends in the country now. Keep up the good fight, as for many years you have been an inspiration in the struggle for animal liberation. 'Seger Till DBF'



Another article written in September 2012. This one was meant to be published in the* Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group Newsletter May 2013 *but for some reason that never happened.

Prison is a society within a society, a world within a world, a system within a system. It has it's own rules, cultures and values – and whilst there is always the precipitate of influence from the outside world, the reality is that life moves to the heart beat of the prison. Inside, most of the civil jobs are done by prisoners – the cleaning of wings, the removal of waste, the cooking of food, the serving of meals, the maintenance of the gym – for a fraction of the national minimum wage. Interaction with the hierarchy; the great and good that manage people from managing their own affairs, takes place through either informal chats on the wing landings with the screws, or through the application system – where long and detailed requests and queries are written down and posted, only to receive, a few days or weeks later, a one line, or sometimes one word reply. The bureaucracy of the system, and it's intention to never waver or adjust itself for the greater good, only for and at the convenience of the screws, is probably one of the biggest frustrations about being banged up.

As the numbers on the calendar rise, so too does the prison population, and finding some reason or pattern about those that end up there proves difficult. The tabloid view that prisons is the exclusive reserve of killers, rapists and the highly dangerous is fallacious. It is not just the bad, but also the sad and the mad; the emotionally vulnerable, the mentally ill, those with the terrible affliction of addiction and those that are continuing the social exclusion they have suffered all their lives. There are a great number of young people, who see petty crime and anti-social behaviour as acts of resistance to a society that has never valued them. As their peers on the outside graduate from school and undertake rituals that lead to adulthood, these prisoners get schooled in crime first hand from the system that perpetuates it. Whilst the Criminal Justice System simplifies parties into 'victims' & 'offenders' as if they're two mutually exclusive categories, in prison you find many who have crimes committed against them, both by individuals, and by the system. I knew young man who was no stranger to prison. He was cocky and confident on the wing, yet when the cell door closed would collapse into panic attacks – half induced by anxiety, half the withdrawal symptoms of alcohol. He was on remand for petty offences linked to theft and booze and told me that on average he would spend three or four

months a year in prison and half-joked that he considered it as rehab, as it afforded him a break from the drink. As I got to know him I learnt that when he was a child his father hand been killed – stabbed through the heart in a pub fight – and I could see that his adult life has been shaped by this. The drinking, the fighting, the thieving was his anger at the system and his inability to cope with a world where events like that happen. Nowadays I follow his life on the internet through local paper reports about his latest court appearance am I to believe that justice is being done? That the world is a better place because he's doing his annual bang up? Society failed this man once, and now it fails him time and time again by forcing him to live 'round the yard and the stinking cell, from wall to wall and back again.' He may be punished for his anti-social deeds, but what impact does that have on someone who has perhaps experienced one of the greatest punishments; to have a parent violently taken away from you at childhood?

The prime concern to the Prison hierarchy is the singular act that leads the individual to it's attention. All other concerns are sidelined because their priority is to disrupt that individual's life – with imprisonment not only do they loose their freedom, but maybe their homes, jobs, and family too. Shifted around from gaol to gaol, up and the down the country, with only the tedium of basic labour or underfunded education to break the boredom of their environment, and then released to hostel or to the streets with a fortnight's dole money and the struggle to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into a different, outside world on their own. You can talk about crime and justice, but perhaps one of the deepest crimes is to have young people, lying on their beds all day, off their heads of drugs, watching television believing that their lives mean nothing and have no value because it is profitable to the filth, prosecutors, prison hierarchy and probation officers who keep them there.

Some, often with little knowledge and even less experience would question, "what is the alternative?" And it's easy to answer. Imprisonment might be the hardest option of punishment, but the high reoffending rates prove it is not the most effective. What difference does a bit of hardness make to an individual whose entire life has been a hard one? It merely reinforces the idea that they have no place in this society. Give these people someone in their lives that is not only prepared to work with them but also cares about them. Not snide filth or lazy probation officers but genuine, sincere, decent people capable of being inspirational role models. People with an interest in seeing

people succeed, not deferential to bureaucracy, clueless of life, or sensitive to any flippant remark. I've seen it myself with some who've have shared similar circumstances to my own – over a period of months they've gone from relishing the bad boy image and getting their jollies recounting stories of muggings they carried off to sticking their heads in the books, gaining places at university and working twice as hard as anyone else to achieve a success that society tries to withhold from them.

It is hard to describe life in prison, as it is hard to describe life in any environment. Sometimes I would receive letters from kind and sympathetic people on the outside that would start 'I feel so sorry for you in there' as if I was in some state of perpetual misery. That was far from the truth. Despite the best attempts of the system to keep you in your place, when you are serving a sentence inside you are still living, and with that comes the ups and downs, the good and the bad and the highs and lows of life. As I look back, I feel a strange nostalgia for the experience and the camaraderie that exists between the judged. No doubt a great number of ex-prisoners share this feeling and perhaps that is why so many return. Even though I was stuck in one place I felt it was important to keep moving and made the best use of the gym, education and reading to improve both my physical and mental health. I ran on the treadmill for forty five minutes, sometimes on a daily basis. I read something like thirty eight books in five months and would walk round the yard listening to people's life stories; from the dodgy South London blaggers to those that had fled ethnic violence in Kurdistan. You can learn a lot about the world from inside four walls. There is a strange contradiction in imprisoning political activists as a deterrent to their activities. Placing people who are motivated by injustice and abuse and live to challenge it in an environment where it thrives will only heighten their resolve. The seriousness with which they are treated only clarifies how serious their cause is. Then again prison is a strange contradiction in itself: people are imprisoned for breaking the law, in an environment where the law is routinely broken against them by the system that is meant to uphold it.

Prison reveals the multi-tiered nature of crime and justice. People, excluding those on remand, wrongfully convicted or who have considered pleading guilty a better option than gambling on a fair trial are imprisoned for breaking the law, yet inside the law is routinely broken – not just by those that deal in illicit drugs but by the system itself; with their sanitation problems, razor wire and anti-democratic voting restrictions amongst

others. Injustice is used to counter injustice. But then for us who have stood on the streets or in the hunting fields and have been on the receiving end of unsolved crime after crime it is no surprise.

When the Animal Liberation Front raided Highgate Farm, a breeder of small non-humans for the vivisection industry in rural Lincolnshire it again exposed this multi-tiered nature of justice. The footage they released showed row after row of barren cages crammed with four, five, sometimes six dear sweet rabbits. Kept under an artificial light and feed processed pellets they are deprived of space, sunlight, fresh air, food and water. They stood on wire floors – not even solid, let alone grass and mud. If this was pet animals in a domestic setting than the RSPCA would prosecute, yet the law accommodates abuse when it is done in the interest of big business. Whilst the police and Home Office went into fervid frenzy spunking small fortunes of tax payers money in an effort to catch those who exposed this horror, they purposely ignored the abuse and suffering that was being afflicted on sentient beings.

This is why the Animal Liberation Front exists; to take non-violent direct action, to liberate animals from these concentration camps and to expose the true nature of the exploitation that goes on behind the razor wire, locked doors and blood money. It shuns the turgid "professional activist" culture of making a lot of noise and celebrating the defeat of arrest, and ignores the secret databases, injunctions, anti-terror laws and plethoras of other weapons used against peaceful campaigners, instead preferring the anonymity of the shadows only ever emerging to act on its own terms and make decisive strikes against the exploitation and murder of our fellow animals. Non-violent direct action is central to our movement, and without it we loose not only a powerful tool in the struggle for liberation, but also the strength of our argument. Non-violent direct action not only challenges this tyrannical idea that the vast majority of sentient individuals are commodities, mere property, but also the legitimacy of the vivisection laboratory, the slaughterhouse, the factory farm and the other institutions of torture and murder to exist. Whilst breaking the law must be given the utmost consideration it should be remembered that laws are not sacred, but that life is.

A previously unpublished article detailing my experiences with the police after release from gaol. This article was written in March 2013.

One evening as I was about to eat dinner, there was the ubiquitous heavy knock of the police on my door. I had been out of gaol for about two and half months, and despite the provocations of the probation agency I was doing well for myself. Three coppers were standing there; two males in requisite ill-fitting cheap suits and a youngish female officer. One of the males, the elder, was heavily overweight, with a roundish belly fuelled most probably by alcohol. It wasn't the first time in my life that I'd had unwanted visitors, but this time they boastfully announced they were from the Counter-Terrorist Command. Usually the police make an effort to either hide or draw attention away from features that individually identify themselves, but this time they wanted me to know exactly who they were. I was struck with mixed feelings of absurdity. On one hand you have to laugh at the ridiculous nature of it all, fucking Counter-Terrorist police for me? For a person who wishes no harm on anyone, regardless of species, who literally wouldn't hurt a fly. Was Al-Qaeda having a day off or something? And then that gutting realisation of how far this country is sliding towards the totalitarian right. No, they didn't make a mistake – for ideological reasons the police equate political activism with terrorism. They compare animal advocates with people that fly planes into buildings and blow up soldiers, they build databases and maintain files on people purely for expressing their political views, they consider possessing literature a dangerous criminal offence and they imprison people for peacefully demonstrating, if they haven't killed them first. The filth informed me I was "unlawfully at large" – first I'd heard about it, I was watching Coronation Street! Although they had brought all the paper work relating to this issue with them, they refused to explain to me what was happening. All they would say is that I was being recalled to prison.

From my previous experiences in prison I knew a little about the recall system and how widely abused it is by the police and probation. Generally, when you are released half way through your prison sentence you are forced to engage with probation. There is a licence of numerous conditions which make living any sort of normal, law abiding life extremely difficult and if for any reason probation feels like it, they can recall you to prison. They argue all someone needs to do is to abide by their licence but the first condition on any licence is the catch all term to "be well behaved". As it would require a dictionary bigger than the phone book to give an adequate definition of this it effectively allows re-imprisonment for any reason. Turn up late to your probation appointment and they can re-imprison you,

make a mistake on a form and they can re-imprison you. Maybe that bent copper you once made an official compliant about might ring them up and tell them they have intelligence on you – you'll be back in prison. When this law was first established it was intended to be used against the most serious offenders when their was a clear evidence that they were going to commit crime – now any deviance from a licence, no matter how slight or unintentional is considered ample justification to imprison someone.

I knew there was little point complaining, as the filth aren't there to reason, and besides if you're accused of breaking your licence there is no due process or judicial judgement. You're taken back to prison and then its up to you to make various submissions to the parole board. The police wouldn't allow me the time to pack any essentials and lacked even have the decency to allow me to say goodbye to my family. Although, when I told my family to phone my solicitor they were overly keen to arrange one for me. One they no doubt play golf with on a Sunday morning.

As soon as I was put in the police car the abuse started. The driver, who had waited in the car started to stare at me through the review mirror. "Don't sulk. My five year old son sulks like that." He snarled. For sure the kid probably shares my opinion of the police. I make it a habit to stay totally silent in the company of police. They are not your friends, their jobs is to elicit as much information out of you. They will try to engage you in conversation, in debate. They like to talk. Why waste your time and energy engaging them in a process they enjoy? They are not interested in your point of view or establishing something meaningful. Their way of thinking is limited, narrow-minded and nothing productive will come out of the experience. And if you start talking, then they can start claiming you said certain things months later in evidence statements. Besides, nothing irritates a copper worse than ignoring them. They hold highly self-important views of themselves and take it extremely personally when someone is not interested in what they have to say.

I was sandwiched in the back of the car and very quickly I found the female copper staring intently at the side of my head. I dare say she was trying to intimidate me. Throughout the journey to HMP Brixton she was the most vocal and aggressive, almost seeming to work herself up into a frenzy, and then continuing to get frustrated when I would not react. It wasn't the first time I'd experienced aggressive female police, it seems a common trait. Perhaps its something to do with working in such a male dominated environment imbued with machismo. Unfortunately, much of the memories of this interaction has been lost to pleasanter experiences, but I do remember her coming out with the old yarn that that

her sister was into animal rights, but "there was nothing there really" and "she could never properly explain it." The one on the other side started talking about how he'd been to the cinema to see the film the Baader-Meinhof Complex, and then referenced a whole slew of internationalist or left wing causes. Apparently they were "all different, but all the same" and that people like me "didn't really believe in anything, apart from believing in something." It was seemingly inane, thoughtless babble but it was designed to get me to start talking about my political views.

The two officers in the back then started to goad each other into making me react, the male one began to take the few items I had off me, whilst the female one cried "he obviously don't mind, as he would say something!" At one point they told me that I "couldn't win" and needed to stop being "taken advantage by others" whilst the driver interrupted by saying "it doesn't matter what you think as the majority of people support us." As I had absolutely no understanding of what was going on or what I was supposed to have done this made no sense to me, though I did appreciate the irony of it all: the forces of law and order, those that keep society nice and peaceful and maintain our safety were taking little old easily-influenced me to live with drug traffickers, armed robbers and the odd fundamentalist Islamist. There is a level of fanaticism that runs throughout the police, prison and probation services - their focus is some individual event in a person's life, and around this they build a whole character for the person. The have no concept of a person having multiple interests or feelings which might influence highly diverse and critical views, nor do they seem to have any concept of time, and the effects of its passing. For them, your whole life, and every decision and act you make is directly related to the reason why you have crossed their path in the first place, and thus it is suspicious.

Then there was a surreal moment, when the fat one in the front announced over the top of the din of the other three that I should "listen carefully as he was only going to say this once." The oldest trick in the book was being played – the 'good cop, bad cop' routine. The good cop is quite happy to sit there and listen as his colleagues try to humiliate people, but they will always try and come across in a polite but authoritative manner, trying to engender sympathy as if they are the sole standard bearer of the right path to choose. If you start talking to them, the 'bad cop' will mysteriously silence themselves. He announced that as we were near the prison, it was my last chance to stop and pick up a phone card so that I could phone my family to let them know where I would be. He said that if I didn't do this my family wouldn't be informed, yet I found out later the police told them anyway. It was a bizarre request anyway, as prison payphones use a pin-code system and haven't required cards in years. Either

he was ignorant of this or he was just trying to start a conversation. As we were going through the gates of the prison, the female cop took her last chance to be abusive – rather loudly, with extra emphasis, she said "this place is a fucking shit hole." For added effect, just in case I didn't hear her the first time, she repeated it. I wasn't that bothered, I knew it was out of my control and that it would be my home for the near future. I just wondered why someone with such disgust would do a job that utilises such places.

Whilst I was able to ignore the pathetic and childish manner of the police, their behaviour when analysed is actually quite frightening. What sort of person spends their time systematically abusing people they have never even met before? I can understand, though not agree, if they were seriously hostile and aggressive towards someone like a child-abuser but I find it extremely hard to understand why they have such hatred towards people who fundamentally don't want to see the weak and vulnerable get abused. But then I remind myself that its not just animal rights advocates they hate; they hate everybody, as in their mind no one shares the superiority that the police have. I was sensible enough not to let them provoke me, but think of the impact interactions like this have on say, a young Muslim or Irish lad, who already possesses a sense of dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. All these community focused 'de-radicalisation' initiatives are being undermined by the very people charged with stopping 'terrorist' outrages. Their actions, instead of countering so-called 'extremism' might actually encourage it! But then, that's the point: If 'terrorism' didn't exist, either materially or ideology then they would be out of a job. They construct threats to keep themselves in employment. And what effect does this behaviour have on themselves? Can they turn their hostility on and off like a light switch? After a day of spewing vitriol and dehumanising people do they go home and play happy families? Now I understand why that one has such a beer belly.

They ended our encounter by leading me into the prison reception. They made some brief comments and left me with the prison screws. As soon as they left, one of the screws asked me if I was okay. This was like a starting gun and all the words that I'd been suppressing throughout my journey came shooting out – every other word was an expletive as I ranted about what a horrible bunch of bastards the police are. Then I caught my self on; here I was surrounded by another bunch of potential bastards, and I started to cool myself: "I'm don't mean to slag off your mates..." I said before one of the screws stopped me. "They're no friends of ours" he said.

ALF Supporters Group

PO BOX 1107, Northampton, NN7 9BT

www.alfsg.org.uk

Anarchist Black Cross (Brighton)

PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ

www.brightonabc.org.uk

Animal Rights Prisoner Support

www.arprisoners.org

La Cizalla Ácrata

www.lacizallaacrata.nuevaradio.org

Open Book Project

Room 6, 7 Dixon Road, Lewisham, South London, SE14 6NL

www.gold.ac.uk/outreach/open-book

Schnews

c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG

www.schnews.org.uk

Vegan Prisoners Supporters Group

BM 2107, London, WC1N 3XX

www.vpsg.org

"I really enjoyed your article – I read it while I was having a good shit!"

- Seán Cregan (anti-fascist & former political prisoner)

A collection of letters, interviews and articles, some previously published, detailing a young activist's two and a half year journey within the prison system. These writings not only explain the motivations of an animal liberationist and reflect his experience of prison, but address issues prisoners face on release from gaol; namely those of probation and licence conditions.

"...identified by the National Co-ordinator of Domestic Extremism as an Animal Rights Extremist and he is viewed as high profile due to his notoriety... [he] has been assessed as medium risk of harm to the public and high risk of re-offending. The seriousness of the offences he committed and the impact of his actions on business, local community, domestic and international media as well as political interest make this case a MAPPA Cat 3 managed at level 2."

– Report for Review of Re-Release by the Public Protection Casework Section / Parole Board

"...he has a lively curiosity about the world and ways in which it can be interpreted. He always listens and entertains different explanations and willingly and openly evaluates those ideas... independent minded, rigorous in his analysis and unflinching in the demands he makes of himself... a very principled and honest young man..."

- Higher Education teacher

"...an impressionable person in a group bent on behaving in an irresponsible manner... [with] a distorted view of the place of pressure groups in society..."

- Humphrey Agbukor, Probation Officer

"...his shortfalls are making the right decisions... and lack of insight into the consequences of his actions ...he has not been able to assert himself to avoid being drawn into problems..."

- Momodu Mansary, Probation Officer

