



The
Vegan Society's
**RESEARCH
DAY** 2024

*Vegan Pasts,
Presents and
Futures*

DATE Wednesday 4 September 2024

VENUE The Vegan Society's 2024 Research Day will be hosted at the University of Manchester's Oddfellows Hall, a short walk from Manchester Oxford Road station.

WHAT TO EXPECT Our Research Day is a celebration of vegan research and offers a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge and to network.

In honour of this year being the 80th anniversary of The Vegan Society, the theme of this conference is 'Vegan Pasts, Presents and Futures'. You can expect to hear from those working to preserve the history of veganism and animal rights activism, learn about the current issues facing veganism today and gain insights into emerging topics of interest.

This conference is organised with members of the Research Advisory Committee and Researcher Network in mind and will also be attended by The Vegan Society (TVS) staff, so you will have an opportunity to learn about us as an organisation, and the importance of research across professional practice. For the first time, this year we will also be welcoming TVS volunteers who help make our work possible.

There will be plenty of opportunities throughout the event to chat to your fellow attendees over refreshments: the event will be fully catered, with morning and afternoon refreshments and a buffet lunch – all vegan, of course!

PROGRAMME

9.30am–10am Registration and refreshments

Doors open at 9.30am with the conference starting at 10.00am. Tea and coffee will be served on arrival.

10am–10.05am Welcome *Dr Lorna Fenwick McLaren, Research and Impact Manager, TVS*

10.05am–10.25am Theory and practice: why research is essential to The Vegan Society and what we're trying to achieve *Claire Ogley, Head of Campaigns, Policy and Research, TVS*

10.30am–11.00am Vegan versus Plant-based? A sentiment analysis of consumer responses to brand labels *Dr Jack Waverley PhD (RAC) (University of Manchester)*

How should brands and other animal-affecting organisations present themselves, their products, and their cause to maximise the benefits for animals? Specifically, do they use the term “vegan” or “plant-based” and how do consumers respond to these two terms? This presentation provides an update to our ongoing project on “vegan versus plant-based”, incorporating brand interviews (what do managers think?) with sentiment analysis of social media posts (how do consumers feel?).

11.05am–11.20am Creeds of Kinship: Towards a More-than-Human History of Veg(etari)anism *Daniel Breeze (RN) (Loughborough University, doctoral candidate)*

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

11.25am–11.40am Beyond Meat and Memes: Mapping the vegan activist discourse on Tik Tok and Instagram *Dr Chris Till PhD (RAC) (Leeds Beckett University)*

This project will explore the use of image and video based social media in promoting veganism and “plant[1]based” lifestyles. Instagram and TikTok are two of the most widely used and influential social media platforms today and are distinctive in their almost exclusive focus on image and video. This research will “map” out the discourses which are used to justify and promote a vegan lifestyle and analyse how discursive strategies intersect with the technical affordances of the platforms in the promotion of pro-vegan messages. The findings will help to explain how this increasingly influential lifestyle and movement is encouraged through the mobilisation of discourse and the affordances of social media technologies. The analysis offered will help to better understand the impact of image and video based social media on the formation of lifestyles and movements and more broadly how media influence functions in contemporary society.

11.45am–12.15pm Ideas and ambitions for a vegan criminology *Dr Melanie Flynn PhD (RAC) (University of Huddersfield), Kay Peggs PhD (RAC) (Kingston University) and Matthew Cole PhD (RAC)*

After exploring the concept of vegan criminology independently, in this paper Flynn, Cole and Peggs come together to draw on the limited scholarship in this area, as well as contributions made to a British Society of Criminology conference workshop, to consider the appetite for a vegan criminology. They also discuss what part it could play in a re-imagined criminology capable of responding to contemporary social challenges and the substantial harm that is caused to nonhuman animals.

12.15–1.30pm Finger buffet lunch

1.35pm–2.10pm Plant-Powered Practice: Vegan advocacy in healthcare *Dr Shireen Kassam PhD (RAC) (King's College Hospital)*

This presentation will delve into the unique position of health professionals as key changemakers in the vegan movement. Despite facing industry biases and conventional health narratives, Shireen will explore effective strategies that break through barriers, turning health practitioners into powerful proponents of plant-based and vegan living. This will include highlighting opportunities within easy reach by sharing inspiring examples of vegan advocacy reshaping clinical practice, improving patient outcomes and aligning with holistic health goals. Shireen will discuss how to leverage the One Health approach and sustainability goals whilst utilising evidence-based language that resonates within the medical community. Shireen will highlight international learning, share universal insights and put this into the UK context. The vision is to create a global movement towards more compassionate and sustainable healthcare delivery that embeds vegan principles.

2.15pm–2.40pm Men and Masculinities in the UK Vegan Activist Movement: A Site for Transformation? *Cameron Dunnnett (RN) (Edge Hill University, doctoral candidate)*

Present constructions of masculinity in the Global North make it less likely that boys and men will demonstrate care for the more-than-human. Traditionally, this has led to men performing gender in ways that are anti-ecological, with various tangible and wide-ranging impacts. Included within this is a reluctance to engage in vegan activism/advocacy and rejecting or even ridiculing veganism (Greenebaum and Dexter, 2018). These anti-ecological gendered performances often intersect with sexism (including overt displays of misogyny) as well as racism, classism, and ableism (Adams, 2015). The aim of my thesis is to build on the work of Kadri Aavik (2021, 2023) who found evidence of masculine transformation among vegan men in Northern Europe. My research project similarly considers whether men who participate in vegan activism in the UK offer a potential future pathway towards more 'ecological' (egalitarian/caring) masculinities (Hultman and Pule, 2021). It will then take this further by adopting an intersectional feminist lens to explore the gendered dynamics of vegan activist groups, considering how their values/approaches shape men's attitudes towards gender and other intersectional justice issues. It is this later point that I propose to focus on within this conference presentation. This will be done by introducing the initial results from my narrative interviews with women, and nonbinary/genderqueer individuals within the UK movement. This incorporation of the discourses of individuals of diverse genders will hopefully add nuance to our understanding of vegan masculinities that may be omitted in the discourses of vegan men, that have dominated the current literature within the field. By doing so, the aim is to contribute to the envisioning of a truly inclusive and intersectional vegan future.

2.45pm–3.10pm The Donald Watson Archive Project *Matthew Cole PhD (RAC), Dr Kate Stewart and Melda Kelemcisoy (RN) (The Open University)*

This presentation will provide an overview and update about the Donald Watson Archive Project, which has been underway since 2018, funded by the Culture and Animals Foundation and the Open University. The Project is focused on digitising, transcribing and cataloguing the personal papers of Donald Watson (1910-2005), famous as a co-founder of The Vegan Society and a key figure in the history of the modern vegan movement. The Project has been made possible by the generosity of Donald Watson's son-in-law, who has kindly shared the many letters, diaries and other personal documents that Don (as he was known in the family) kept over his long life, with the Project team. The documents include fascinating insights into Don's thoughts about non-human animals, veganism and his role in a movement that he once described as 'the greatest Cause on Earth' (see Cole, 2014). This presentation will update colleagues on the progress of the Project, the milestones we've achieved (such as publicising Don's account of where he and his wife Dorothy coined the word 'vegan') and future plans to share the Archive with other researchers.

3.10pm–3.40pm Refreshments

3.45pm–4.10pm How meat scientists are fighting for the status quo *Dr Richard Twine PhD (RAC) (Edge Hill University)*

This paper outlines a critique of the 2023 Dublin Declaration (Twine, 2025) – a concerted attempt by meat scientists to push back against calls for the reduction of animal source food (ASF) consumption. The Declaration (see also Leroy and Ederer, 2023) is situated within my work on the animal-industrial complex (Twine 2012; 2013; 2024) and understood within broader attempts to maintain the status quo and shape policy in favour of the ASF industries. Important questions around the uses of 'scientific knowledge' are raised by the declaration and attempts by industry to exploit the veneer of scientific knowledge claims. The paper also considers what an alternative Dublin Declaration would look like, centred on values of ecological public health and the transcendence of anthropocentric dogma. Relatedly, how can a vegan imaginary best position itself moving forward?

4.15pm–4.50pm The Open Door (Keynote) *Kim Stallwood (RAC) (Independent)*

The BBC produced a series of innovative community-based TV programmes called "Open Door". It empowered charities and organisations to produce a half-hour programme to showcase their work. One episode that was broadcast twice in early 1976 was produced by The Vegan Society. It generated more than 9,000 enquiries leading to about 1,000 new members. I was one of them. My presentation will focus on almost fifty years of personal commitment as a vegan and professional involvement in various leadership positions with animal rights organisations, primarily in the UK and the USA. This includes as an elected member of The Vegan Society's National Council for two years starting in 1982 and as chair from 1983 to 1984. I will reflect upon how The Vegan Society opened the door for me nearly fifty years ago but for many people today veganism is not understood as an opportunity to live that effectively addresses many of society's challenges.

4.50–5.00pm Closing comments and thank you *(Dr Lorna Fenwick McLaren)*

Additional Information

The Venue Oddfellows Hall, Grosvenor St, Manchester, M1 7HF

Getting there Oddfellows Hall is a 10-minute walk from Manchester Piccadilly train station or Manchester Oxford Road station. There is a chargeable car park on campus for delegates. Contact Alex at Research@vegansociety.com with any questions.