

a radical newsletter in the struggle for peace and social justice

[About DV](#) [Archives](#) [Donate](#) [Contact Us](#) [Submissions](#) [Books](#) [Links](#)

## Badgers at Dawn

by Lesley Docksey / October 23rd, 2014

### Browse by Topic

"Aid" (13)



*Wanted: Phantom of  
/dev/null*

No Alternative but to Sioux...  
Adam Engel / 07/30/2014

subject to yeah  
Adam Engel / 07/01/2014

My Life and Times  
Adam Engel / 06/28/2014



*School Yard Fights*

*While people are fighting to protect the badgers from the UK government's infamous culls, they are also working to protect the badgers from bovine TB by vaccinating them. The season for vaccinating badgers against bovine TB has finished for this year, and for those people wanting to help protect badgers from disease, it is time to think about volunteering for next year's vaccinating. What does this involve?*

All is quiet in the wood. Light is slowly seeping through the leaves but it will be some time yet before sunrise. Barely enough light to see when I have to duck to avoid a branch, or where to place my feet among the fallen trees and undergrowth. The others move ahead, voices hushed as they search among the trees. I pause and listen to the silence of an old wood broken by a wood pigeon waking up. Moments later there is a soft 'caw' from a crow. Soon the trees will be full of chatter but right now each single murmured call only deepens the silence of the wood waking to a new day.

I was here a few days before, in the early evening, watching cage-traps being baited, part of the process of badger vaccination. There was enough light then to appreciate the trees, new, old and the fallen dead, to stop and touch, take out my camera to capture the vine-like stems of Travellers' Joy climbing up the trunks of the beech, sycamore, oak and ash; enough light to see the sett, the excavated soil, the entrances with their well-trodden earth, and the badger runs through the grass, out of the wood to another sett, beside a small lake hiding among more trees.

This must be one of the best rewards for all the hard work that goes into vaccinating badgers – being able to visit parts of the countryside that would be off-limits to Joe Public, and believe me, it is hard work. But vaccinating badgers against bovine TB has two benefits. Vaccinated and disease-free badgers are no threat to cattle and in return, cattle cannot infect the badgers.

Vaccination can only be done at the invitation of the landowners. And

Go Tell it on the Mountain —  
To Chop up for Yuppie  
Skiing, or NOT!

Paul Kirk / 10/21/2014

## Latest Articles

Badgers at Dawn

Lesley Docksey / 10/23/2014

What Submarine in Sweden?

Jan Oberg / 10/22/2014

Britain's Real Promise to  
Israel

Ramzy Baroud / 10/22/2014

America: Lost With No Moral  
Compass

Philip A. Faruggio / 10/21/2014

Go Tell it on the Mountain —  
To Chop up for Yuppie  
Skiing, or NOT!

Paul Kirk / 10/21/2014

What's So New About Cuba's  
Medical Internationalism?

Mateo Pimentel / 10/21/2014

Indiana Sex Slayings  
Highlight Society's  
"Throwaway Women"

Martha Rosenberg / 10/21/2014

GOP: Be Afraid

James Hoover / 10/21/2014

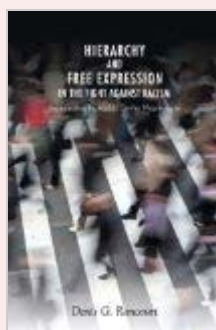
Dysfunctional Hagiography:  
Australia and the Passing of  
Gough Whitlam

Binoy Kampmark / 10/21/2014

"My Father was Killed by a  
Computer", says 7 Year Old  
Afghan Child

Dr. Hakim / 10/20/2014

## Recommended Reading



Hierarchy and Free  
Expression in the Fight  
Against Racism  
Denis Rancourt

confidentiality is an absolute must. Many farmers actually like their badgers but, while they want to protect them, they are still wary of the often nasty (and violent) backlash from those who blame badgers for all their ills. Now that [Defra](#) is visibly backing badger vaccination it may become easier for them to go public – in time.

### So what has to be done before a badger can be vaccinated?

First catch your badger. In preparation, surveying each sett and its surroundings must be done, noting where the badgers' runs are, where best to place the cage-traps. Each place is then baited with a handful of peanuts – a badger favourite – to encourage them to visit the sites where the cages will be.



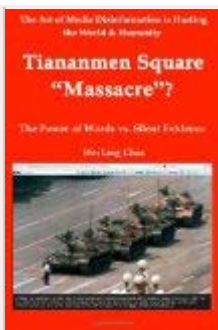
Dorset Badger Vaccination Project (Photo Credit)

Then the hard work begins. The cages are large and heavy. They have to be, to cope with animals that are stoutly built and strong. The cages cannot just be placed on the ground. Their bases must be dug in to prevent a captured badger overturning them. Digging them in may be fairly easy in some locations but badgers do prefer woods, banks and hedgerows, places with lots of roots and difficult digging for the team. Each sett will have 5 or more cages dotted around the badgers' territory.

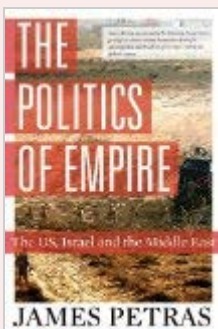
In place, every cage is left open with some peanuts at the far end, covered with a large flat stone. Rodents and foxes won't move the stone. Badgers will. Early each evening the team will freshly bait all the cages. Over several nights badgers learn to enter the cage, push aside the stone and eat the peanuts.

Then the cage becomes the trap. The stone is wired to the catch that keeps the door to the cage open. The badger goes in, pushes aside the stone, the

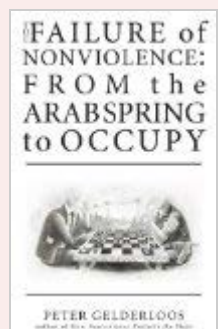




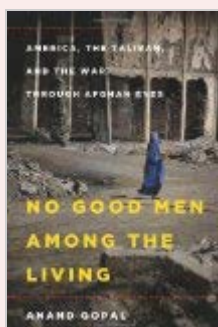
Tiananmen Square  
"Massacre"? The Power of  
Words vs. Silent Evidence  
Wei Ling Chua



The Politics of Empire: The  
US, Israel and the Middle  
East  
James Petras



The Failure of Nonviolence:  
From the Arab Spring to  
Occupy  
Peter Gelderloos



No Good Men Among the  
Living: America, the Taliban,  
and the War Through Afghan  
Eyes  
Anand Gopal

catch is released and the door comes down, trapping the badger. Ah well, at least it can eat peanuts while it waits for dawn and vaccination.

## Vaccinating the badger

All vaccination has to be done by trained and licensed vaccinators, but helpers are still needed, which means people happy to get up very early so that the badgers can be released before full daylight. Put simply, each trapped badger is vaccinated, has some hair cut off its back and that area sprayed with coloured paint. As the trapping continues for several nights, this identifies the badgers that have already been done, a necessary thing as I discovered on the first occasion I hoped to witness a vaccination. All the caught badgers had already been vaccinated, and trapped themselves again for the sake of more peanuts.

Badgers are individual in their reactions. Some are angry or frightened at being trapped, and will spend the night trying to dig themselves out, resulting in more earth inside the cage than out, and a very dirty badger.

Others pull grass and other plants into the cage, make a bed and go to sleep – and have to be woken up for their vaccination. Some are very feisty and do their best to avoid the needle. And some are very laid back indeed.

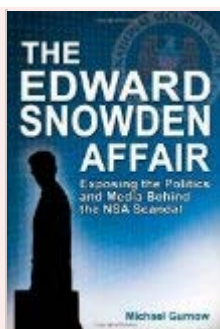
Some badgers have to be encouraged to leave the cage they've spent the night in, and I was told of one that was so fast asleep it was vaccinated, hair cut, paint-sprayed and the cage opened, and still it slept. A certain amount of prodding was needed to wake it up and make it leave the cage and scuttle back to the sett.

And the hard work doesn't stop there. The cages have to be taken away, cleaned and disinfected before being replaced and re-baited. The cages are big, and much heavier at one end than the other. This makes them awkward to carry and the heavy-duty wire they're made of can cut into your hands. Small hands need heavy gloves to protect the fingers!

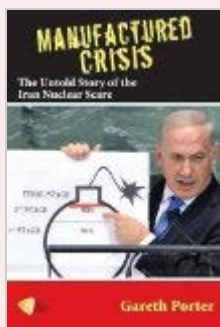
## Training to be a vaccinator

Having said all that, there is now an army of people all across England who are volunteering to do the work and even to put up their own money in order to train as a vaccinator. The training course lasts for 4 days (this will possibly be extended to 5) and is run by the Animal Health & Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) in Gloucestershire. The full cost is £750. If one is a member of a recognised group, Defra funds half the fee. The vaccinator's licence from Natural England costs £350 a year but once again Defra will pay half if the candidate is part of a group.

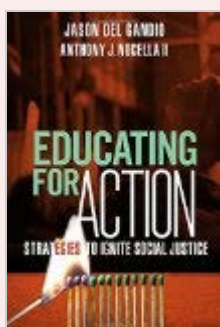
It's not cheap, training to protect badgers, but someone who had done the course said, "The course is excellent and everyone in our group enjoyed it. I believe the proposed extra day is to add a bit more badger ecology."



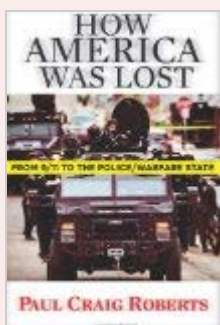
The Edward Snowden Affair:  
Exposing the Politics and  
Media Behind the NSA  
Scandal  
Michael Gurnow



Manufactured Crisis: The  
Untold Story of the Iran  
Nuclear Scare  
Gareth Porter



Educating for Action:  
Strategies to Ignite Social  
Justice  
Jason Del Gandio and Anthony  
J. Nocella II



How America Was Lost:  
From 9/11 to the  
Police/Warfare State  
Paul Craig Roberts

But people trying to book up for next year's training are worried. One of Dorset's vaccinators said, "As far as we know, the training course for vaccinators that we have all been doing for the last two years has been cancelled. The last course finished at the end of September. No one can book in for next year. We think there may be a replacement, but we haven't heard."

"So the only training courses are held by the AHVLA, the course has been cancelled, no one can book up to be trained, Defra is now backing vaccination and no replacement course is in place?" This was Puzzled from Dorset asking for clarification.

"Yes, you're right. They're backing it and they've cancelled the courses. I don't understand why. Maybe they're going to introduce a better one..."

The AHVLA spokesman said, "It is right to say that the course has been cancelled but that will be replaced by Defra as part of the [Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme](#). It is intended to support larger scale vaccination."

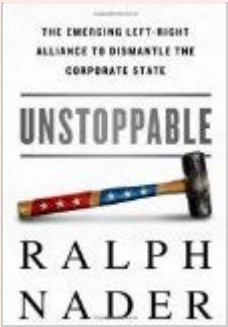
Was there any possibility that there would be regional centres for training? "At the moment I don't think that has been discussed." He appreciated that volunteer vaccinators put up quite a bit of their own money to pay for training; being able to travel to a centre perhaps within their own county would greatly reduce the costs of travel and accommodation.

"Defra will be announcing the new scheme later this year, possibly in November, and I imagine details like that will be included, particularly as the Edge vaccination will be covering much larger areas."

Whether the actual training will be enhanced is not yet known. Nor did the AHVLA spokesman seem to know. Like everyone else, he was waiting on Defra. What is clear is that, while Defra are happy to help fund the training of more vaccinators, they will now only do it for those working in the 'edge' areas – Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire and parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire, East Sussex, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.

People living anywhere else and wanting to help protect their badgers from this awful disease had better start fundraising! And they will. The badger culls have helped people to discover just how important their wildlife is to them.

*Lesley is a lover of animals, campaigns and writes on war/peace, climate change and the environment. She is the former editor of Abolish War. [Read other articles by Lesley.](#)*



Unstoppable: The Emerging  
Left-Right Alliance to  
Dismantle the Corporate  
State  
Ralph Nader

[More books »](#)

The DV Poetry Page

This article was posted on Thursday, October 23rd, 2014 at 1:06am and is filed under [Life/Animal Rights](#), [United Kingdom](#).

[Tweet](#) 0

[Email](#) 0

[ShareThis](#) 1