Dear WVA Members,

On behalf of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, please find hereafter a short communication about the **Historical archives of original Veterinary Surgeons Act to be studied**.

Best regards,

Zeev Noga

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A collaborative doctoral award between RCVS Knowledge and the University of Kent will delve into the professional roots of veterinary medicine by examining archives relating to the first Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1881.

Analysing how and why the medical treatment of animals came to be professionalised, the project seeks to understand the reasons for and effects of the 1881 Act, which formally established the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ (RCVS) authority to distinguish between qualified and unqualified practitioners.

The doctorate will draw on the rich archival material maintained by RCVS Knowledge, the charity partner of the RCVS and custodian of its Historical Collections.

“The archives team are excited for this opportunity to work closely with an academic and draw out fascinating and valuable insights from veterinary history,” said Lorna Cahill, RCVS Knowledge’s Archivist.

“The unique primary sources we have spent the past five years cataloguing will undoubtedly provide an enhanced understanding of the circumstances surrounding the Act, and a deeper appreciation of its impact on us today.”

The PhD will be undertaken by veterinary nurse Jane Davidson, a prominent blogger and recent appointee to the VN Council.

Known to many through the online community #planetrvn, Jane said:

“I’m very excited to be undertaking this PhD with RCVS Knowledge and the University of Kent. It’s the opportunity of a lifetime to work with the newly catalogued archives.”

“I hope to be able to provide a window into our past and improve understanding of the nature of our original legislation.”

Neatly beginning in the same year as the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) celebrates 175 years since it was granted the foundational charter in 1844, the doctoral research will consider the following questions:

- How were the interests of the RCVS and its leading members involved in the drawing up and implementation of the 1881 Act?
- What was the background and status of the people who practised veterinary medicine at this time, and what was the nature of their practice?
• How deliberate was the process of professionalisation, and what was its significance to the RCVS? If it was seen as important, why?
• What was the experience of the RCVS following the implementation of the Act? Was the College committed to ensuring adherence to the Act?
• Did the Act lead to an improvement in the standard of veterinary education, and how did it change the role of the vet within society?

Charlotte Sleigh, Professor of Science Humanities at the University of Kent, said the PhD constitutes one of the first times this early period of the profession has been investigated:

“The history of veterinary medicine has been very little studied by professional historians and so I am very excited that Jane will be doing this original and important research.

“The stories that she uncovers about non-professional veterinary practitioners will have great relevance for the marketplace of animal medicine today, in both developed and developing countries.”

Follow Jane’s real-time updates from the PhD with the Twitter hashtag #PhDbytheSea

Whether you are a historian, researcher or a layperson, you can view the Digital Collections:
www.rcvsvethistory.org

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Notes for editors

RCVS Knowledge is the charity partner of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. RCVS Knowledge’s mission is ‘To advance the quality of veterinary care for the benefit of animals, the public, and society.’ The charity meets this mission, primarily, by championing the use of an evidence-based approach to veterinary medicine, inspiring a culture of continuous quality improvement in practice, and making our resources available to the profession and wider public. www.rcvsknowledge.org

RCVS Knowledge is the custodian of the Historical Collections of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Material from the archives and historical book collection is freely available to view on the Vet History Digital Collections website: www.rcvsvethistory.org

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