


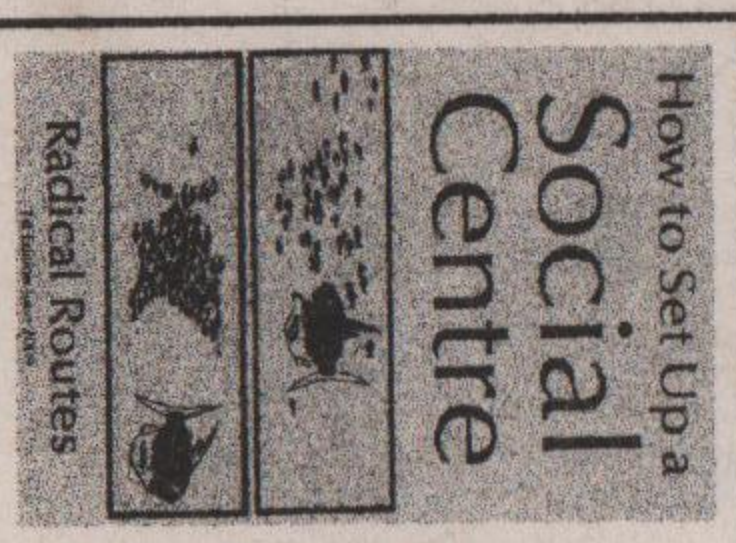





# Radical Rumours Winter 2010

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## Articles

### **Response to 'Don't Drop Out' (Rumours summer 09)**

I was glad that there was an article on education in the last Radical Rumours. I too have been thinking for a while about the radicalism of home education, albeit from a different perspective to the writers Beth and anonymous. Most importantly in terms of Radical Routes and our social change commitments, I was wondering about that interesting phenomenon of a once outsider practice becoming mainstream, much as organic vegetable gardening has become, and whether we just celebrate such social changes as the liberation of education or whether success is a spur to more action. Some years ago after a Radical Routes Summer gathering we took the RR model of running a visioning session back to East Sussex, hired a youth hostel, sent the word out for a gathering to work out how to organise ourselves better. That seed from Radical Routes led to the formation of a network of strong home ed groups across our county.

However home education as we know it, child led, libertarian, is on the brink of disappearing precisely because the ordinary folk in the street have taken control of their lives. The government commissioned a review of home education this year by a Mr Badman, initially because they suspected that the pedagogic practice was a screen for forced marriage and child abuse. This was so ludicrous that the forced marriage bit had to dropped, however the recommendations will become law early next year if there is legislative time before the announcement of the general election. When this occurs we shall have to apply on a yearly basis for permission to home educate, will have to present a year's plan of learning and have our children inspected.

Over ten years ago some parents connected to Radical Routes organised a Radical Home Education Camp in Cornwall. I've been thinking back to that time and the need to define radical home education as something different from non-radical home ed. Even ten years ago the distinction was being made about principles of learning and child rearing that were different from a model that did desks and timetables at home, those that wanted to do corporal punishment and perhaps those that were not "radical" in other areas of their lives. However there are probably at least tenfold more home educating families now and the span of class, ideology, wealth is very much broader. Don't presume that it is just the hippies and middle class affluents that you read about in the Guardian supplements that do home education or "home schooling", those are just the ones that expose their lives to the media.

You only have to go to the international annual home ed camp of a couple of thousand to find that the poor, the traditional working class, the non-formally educated, the family in the street are discovering that they don't have to send their children to school and they are not. These are people whose children are least likely to come out top at school, and they find out from acquaintances that there are other ways of guiding their children towards adulthood, and it's legal! This is the DIY taking control that Radical Routes has been advocating. It is happening faster and faster through the trickle of information on personal grapevines rather than any more formal campaigning or information services. Interestingly there is a quiet resonance with 19th century riots and demonstrations by working-class parents outside schools when compulsory schooling first took away their children. Those urban industrialised workers were well aware that the purpose of the school boards was to socially separate the generations,

to instill ruling class values into the malleable children.

Our local home ed group had a meeting with our MP last week. He is a very home grown Hastings man. What he talked about was how home educated children are delightful and lovely but we can't have everyone doing it can we, not the jobs and the poor and the disadvantaged and the weird. He failed to realise that was us. He couldn't digest that our town is top of the deprivation leagues and that the "deprived" parents were choosing to reject schooling. It is precisely because the poor and disadvantaged are forming their own structures that the government is so worried. Doctoral research by Leslie Barson on the impact of home based learning on parents has shown that once parents take the decision to question schooling there is a cascade effect in their lives leading to radical questioning of a whole range of accepted models in areas such as employment, healthcare, communities, housing. What is seen by the government to be education is still very much a class thing driven by economic planning. What is being battled over at the moment is who is in control of the learning process, is it the child, the parent or the government?

The upcoming legislation has much more to do with ID and data bases than with pedagogic concerns. It is linked to the state's intent to get all children onto the new data base, ContactPoint, and at the moment children who have never been to school are unlikely to be on this. It also seems possible that the drive to contain and control non-school learning may be part of the harmonisation of domestic laws across Europe. Britain has the most liberal laws on education outside school and gives the responsibility for education to the parents, this responsibility is about to be shifted away from the parent towards the state. In many other countries in Europe home education is

illegal and school is the only form of education permissible.

Emily Johnson, Walden Pond

## ***Working Group Reports***

### **The legal basis to evict someone from a housing cooperative: Radical Routes Legal Working Group**

Evicting someone is an unpleasant situation, but it is one that a number of Radical Routes coops have faced over the years. Until recently there has been a question over whether it was possible to do so using legal means. In October 2009 a Court of Appeal ruling in the case of Mexfield Housing Cooperative vs Berrisford finally clarified the situation.

From the ruling there are two points of interest to Radical Routes co-ops:

- 1) The co-op was fully mutual, and not a registered social landlord or social housing association.
  - 2) The primary rules stated that only members can be tenants, and only tenants and prospective tenants can be members.
- Together, these two points mean that our tenancies are classed as common law. Thus they can be terminated by serving a four week notice to quit. Key to the ruling is that this type of housing co-operative does not fall into the category of a registered social landlord; likewise that the law around shorthold or assured tenancies did not apply.
- The judge held that the circumstances surrounding the housing co-op's decision to terminate Ms Berrisford's tenancy were immaterial (in this case it had been for rent

arrears, even though they were subsequently paid back). Radical Routes model rules contain clauses which incorporate both the above points. Thus the implication is that in the future it will be easier to evict a member should this become necessary. That is, if a housing cooperative using the Radical Routes Fully Mutual Model Rules wishes to remove a disruptive member then they simply need to invoke the rules, regardless of legal threats from the individual or the Council. This judgement will also affect a wider range of housing cooperatives and associations, but how far it applies depends on their rules. A copy of the judgement can be found at

[www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Ch/2009/2392.html](http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Ch/2009/2392.html)

Of course it is far better to avoid letting things get this far if at all possible. That is why the legal group believes that a guide to dealing with problem members should be created, drawing in experience from CSG, Legal, etc. If you are interested in helping put this together please email [Bek@brokenplastic.org.uk](mailto:Bek@brokenplastic.org.uk)

## **Workers' Co-op Reports**

### **Catalyst Collective**

Hello from catalyst. Probably the most interesting stuff that's happened to us this quarter is contained in the article from Common Ground, the co-operative that Bek and Hayley are both members of.

#### *Social Change things:*

Bek hosted a regional EF gathering, and has been planning the Peace camp winter gathering, and doing some anti-open cast actions.

#### *Work commitments:*

Bek's written (along with others) some info on the

mexfield ruling, for the legal working group, and has done a very very small amount of rootstock stuff.

#### *What we've done:*

We've been improving our web-site (well Rachel has!) We've not done too many registrations, we've done a few sets of accounts, and the ongoing RR contract. We've also been doing lots of finance admin work for the 4 co-ops we are involved with! (Greengrow workers co-op, Common Ground Land co-op, Catalyst workers co-op and Beautiful Hide Housing co-op)

### **Footprint**

Footprint is once again kicking off the new year by recruiting and by the time we see you we should have started training someone up. Cath is hoping to go down to two days as she might be getting funded for a few hours of Residents Network development work for a few months. Andy is hoping to go down to two days a week to give Lupine more time. Claire is probably going to be travelling overland across the sahara to hang out with her sister in a Ghanaian rainforest for two months at the end of February and Szymon's getting a bit stretched with his college course and loads of other stuff. Only Dan is still up for the usual 3 days a week, but he's also got Thread Me and loads of other projects on the go. So we're hoping to find someone who can come in a lot more than all of us!

The other problem we'd like to sort out is how cramped it is in the office having so many members. One possible solution is home-working for all the layout and web side of things. We'll have to see how it goes.

Financially we're doing really well and are teetering on the VAT registration threshold of £68K turnover - maybe next

year we'll have to register. But basically, we've got enough in the bank to stand the 6-month financial shock of a trainee worker.

#### *For RR*

Andy has done loads of work on the RR and Rootstock websites, making them slicker and better designed and adding info about the Trading Co-ops network. We've redone the Rootstock flier and mailout stuff and done the usual paperwork printing and mailing. Dan has been doing lots of extra Rootstock work. Cath has been doing minimal amounts of work on the housing co-op booklet and will try to do all the other publicity group stuff before February, honest.

#### *For the world*

Dan & Claire went to Copenhagen doing bike block and unwilling print distro respectively. Cath did the usual residents network/development trust stuff, with a bit of added involvement in setting up a Leeds-wide Community Organising body and setting up a computer recycling business to help out a local asylum-seeker (who now has indefinite leave to remain, yay!). We probably printed loads of stuff for cheap or free. Claire and Cath and Footprint will be suing the cops for their rubbish arrest in October. Most of us were involved in various swooping things (that's since the last rumours report we reckon). Szymon toured Europe, booming political polish punk at people.

#### *Skills/stuff we can offer:*

- standard computer packages: Joomla (web design and updating), Adobe programmes (Photoshop graphics manipulation, InDesign desk top publishing, Illustrator, Acrobat PDF stuff), Filezilla uploading software,
- multimedia computer packages: aftereffects, premiere,

encore, final cut, flash

- Preparing artwork for print (there are some tips on our website)
- Proof reading and copy editing
- speaking Polish
- relatively cheap recycled paper (£7/1000 A4 80gsm)
- mountain leader stuff
- screen printing
- researching companies and report-writing
- co-op movement connections and co-operative legal structures/governance.

#### *Skills/stuff we need:*

- setting up a virtual private network
- photocopier maintenance & repair
- tidying skills or a cleaner

Congratulations to Andy, Dan, Claire and Szyz for getting to work through arctic conditions - we haven't lost a single workday due to the snow/ice (yet), which is more than most Leeds projects can say. Hopefully they'll all manage to get home again and we'll see you in February.

## ***Housing Co-op Reports***

### ***Brambles***

Hello Rumours,

It may have seemed that the Brambles crew have all gone into hibernation but don't let our quiet exterior fool you. We have been busy as bees but lucky for us we're not suffering from colony collapse disorder although wireless maybe affecting our sense of direction.

We have had an amazing year in the garden. Amy-Jane won a City wide carrot growing competition (who cares

that there was only one other entry, i still won!-A-J), we grew stupendously sized squash. So, maybe next year we should have an R.R squash growing competition?

The vegetables and salad that we grew were great along with the apples and pears, but the real winners of the season had to be the berries and the soft fruit; we got gooseberry's, raspberry's, blackcurrants, plums (so many that we had to put braces on the tree to stop it breaking but found some great green plum liquor recipes!) cherries and the peach tree gave fruit for the first time in years. I hear you say 'All that fruit you must be packed with vitamins now' (I do honestly hear that!)

We did what any healthy minded Bramblers would do....BREWED! We have turned number 82s kitchen into a dedicated brewing kitchen where Ralph will spend many a happy afternoon in the warm glow of sampling brews before bottling. We have new shelves to store gleaming bottles. Now in both houses in nooks and crannys and cupboards you will find bottles of delicious wine or bubbling buckets of beers and wines at different stages of preparation.

We have finally been given our allotment (after being on the waiting list for ages), it was totally over grown; full of rubble and with a few wasps nests thrown in there to make extra fun! Now after lots of clearing, burning, sweating and swearing we have raised beds with things growing in them. There is still a lot of work to do before it lives up to our vision!

On Guy Fawkes night Oli created an alternative fireworks display with Sarah, where they projected images of fireworks on a huge screen with a sound scape of recorded voices for the explosions. It was a community event and Brambles catered for it with soup made from home grown veg and home made bread rolls, lots of

people were there and it was a great event.

Since we have fitted our swanky new burner, we have been chopping lots of wood to season, clearing the yards and have built some wood storage bays (I say bays but they are so great that they look like 'living space for wood!'). We have moved the gate between the two houses to extend the alley way so we now have a dedicated recycling area. When the abundance of frogs and tadpoles had finally left home (there were so many you had to be careful where you stepped) we did 'The Big Pond Dip' and found that our pond was brimming with life including some fresh water shrimp!

We have been insulating both houses and renovating attic rooms. We have been changing the use of spaces (ready for when we knock out the kitchen wall in number 80). We have been working on the meeting room with Tangle making the floor look amazing and Rocky sorting out the archives. Its going to be a tool storage/ bike workshop/ ballet studio/ yoga room/ craft area/ disco room! (err..okay, we haven't decided!) We have cleared the cellars and have been on big missions to sort and de-tat both houses.

The monthly bike workshop for asylum seekers has grown so big that we have had to find a bigger venue and run a mini bike workshop mid-month. Participants still come back to Brambles for food at the end of the day still.

In honour of our successful growing year our new years eve party was allotment themed with our bar being called the 'A-lot-munters Arms'. We had a great time and spent it with lots of people from other co-ops as well as our Sheffield buddies (to quote Nicola B "We totally heart you guys"). It lasted the inevitable three days and there were

such high-jinx that Brambles is straight edge for January! Except for Joanna who spent a wholesome new year in a cave on the Isle of Islay where she saw three golden eagles! She is still working hard with young adults with learning disabilities teaching them basket weaving and land management. Tangle is working at the South Yorkshire Energy Centre where they demonstrate renewable energy and sustainable building materials and techniques. They also provide advice, training and awareness-raising for lots of people from building professionals to individual householders and school parties. Rocky has just started not one but two jobs!! One at Heeley City Farm; an inner City farm that also has a peat free garden centre, recycling centre and vegetarian/organic café and the other, with Pedal Ready a Workers Co-Op that provides free cycling lessons for lots of different groups and individuals!

In true Brambles style we have taken full advantage of the snow and have been 'team sledge' with really creative multiple sledge acrobatics and pretty wild death slides! Surprisingly only Guy injured himself sledging on a road sign, but is well on the way to recovery now.

On a sad note, we will be saying goodbye to Amy-Jane, who has now been officially listed as the 8th wonder of the world. She wont be far away though so we are all planning on going round to watch her give birth to baby Dorkas!

Thats about all our news, Happy New Year to all.  
The Brambles Kidz x

## **Branches**

Alright all,  
While Branches has been recovering from the shame of missing the last RR gathering, we are trying to keep our heads above the snow and struggle on into a brave new decade. Best news from this bit of Bradford is the arrival of a new member, finally filling the house. Local lad Jed is the addition that has kept us warm through the winter, with his quality banter and curry skills. Branches has been trying to get its communal head together to write the long awaited leaflet on workers cooperatives for RR, but in the meantime, through the skills of Lloyd, we've encouraged the Treehouse café to apply for RR associate membership. Some of us look forward to meeting some of you in Nottingham, and we all (Jen, Duncan, Jed, Val, Lloyd) look forward to getting stuck in to more stuff like this: Working in the Northern Indymedia Collective, giving seminars to young people on cooperatives and socialism, organising PeaceJam which gets youth thinking about peace and social change, attempting to save the historic Odeon cinema in Bradford, writing radical theatre for the Raise Your Banners festival and the upcoming action at Aldermaston, organising a Leeds/Bradford Zapatista Solidarity Group, volunteering at Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds, getting stuck in to running the 1 in 12 Club and its library collective, getting soggy at the NATO Welcoming action in Edinburgh, becoming a trustee of the independent peace and activist library the Commonweal Collection, writing the legendary zine Claptrap, doing great things for the minds of young people through the Woodcraft Folk and finally clearing our cellar out to make music down there. Finding a permanent home for the co-op is still on our minds, but in the meantime we try to keep our solidarity with the animals and the humans and make cakes too.

### ***Common Ground (non-members)***

Common Ground is a land co-operative based in Ilketshall St Andrew, on the border between Norfolk and Suffolk, where we have just over 20 acres. It is not a member of radical routes, but has lots of links with RR.

We bought the land 5 years ago, and have been moving towards a land based co-op ever since! Since then, we've had a few changes of membership, and most of the people who are still involved have moved much closer to the land than they initially were. Since then we've planted 5 acres of woodland, have grafted and planted out over 100 apple trees, planted hedgerows, have put up a polytunnel and started selling salad leaves to a local cafe and a greengrocers (which we cycle in). We've also created a low input meadow area, and learnt how to drive a tractor.

We currently have 8 adult members, with 8 children between us, although we also have some people who are looking into membership with us.

The original vision was to get permission to move onto the land, and then build eco-housing, after several knock-backs, and lots of work, we are now in a fairly exciting phase of our development

We have reached the final stages of a grant for a community supported agriculture project, which will give us the funds to put infrastructure in that we need for agriculture on our land, as well as massively increasing the community engagement with our land and project. We are feeling very hopeful about this funding, and will hopefully have some news by the gathering. The project aims to bring 5 acres (plus the orchard) into cultivation for growing...

Hopefully by the time you read this, we will have put in another planning application for 2 households to move onto the land, which should mean that nearly everyone in the project is living in the village. - again, we will update you on this at the gathering!

Having been going for 5 years, we are looking to renegotiate our loanstock situation, as we are due to pay off the majority of our initial loans, so if anyone is interested in helping us out, please talk to Bek or Hayley at the gathering

### ***Enheduanna***

Enheduanna are continuing to enjoy the fact that they finally have a house, and are starting to make the house into a home. Despite a house warming party which involved the accidental removal of a door, we are making great progress. We've been painting, scraping, building, gardening; we are also a lot happier now we've done re-wiring and had central heating installed, we are warm and less likely to be electrocuted! Over the next couple of months we will be working on separating and redoing the bathroom, sanding floor boards and painting the remaining communal spaces. Our first major work weekend has provisionally been set as March 27th, any willing helpers will be well fed. 2010 will also see a food co-op being run from Enheduanna, we are excitedly awaiting our first order.

We are also pleased to announce that our house is finally full, Andrew has returned from South America to complete our household and teach us all about home brewing. Ken has continued to volunteer at Coventry Peace House's shelter, and took part in a campaign to highlight homelessness by sleeping rough. He has also invested in another new co-op looking to get their house. Fin is



continuing with finance group work, and has done a lot to get a Birmingham/Coventry No Borders group up and running. Both Fin and Chris have put a lot of work into setting up Birmingham Bike Foundry, a workers co-op aimed at providing cheap second hand bikes, bike repair, and training to local people. Chris has also been working hard at the Peace House's bike workshop and has enabled the start up of the food co-op; he has put an enormous effort into work on the house, and is looking forward to trying his hand at plumbing. Lauren is also continuing to volunteer at the shelter, and is persisting with her activism on campus, despite eagerly awaiting the end of her time as a student.

### **The Hive**

(Members - Clara, Rob, Jayne, Titch, SarahJane, Nick and Cathy)

The hive is now full to the brim! With eight members, a dog, a cat and loads of new activity.

The process of working out who would be our newest member/s, was incredibly long, interesting, exciting and frustrating. After many meetings, dinners and discussions. We collectively decided instead of having one new member to have three instead!

To accommodate all of the new members, we were happy to sacrifice what was to become a living room. We saw the possibilities of a house with more lovely people around, more energy, more ideas, skills and action.

Our three new members are Andy, Cathy & Nick. They are all still settling in, it is great to have them here, it's very exciting.

Andy has moved into the old lounge in the basement

along with his dog Skit (who has the most expressive dog face I've ever seen). Andy is keen to bring in his varied DIY skills and enthusiasm and is eager to eventually start a DIY based workers Co-op and along with Rob, resurrect the bike workshop.

Cathy & Nick have moved off their canal boat at Sowerby Bridge to move in with us. Cathy was involved in the Hive from the very beginning and was present at the first meetings, before there was a house, but had never lived here! Nick and Cathy also helped to set up a housing co-op then called "Pod" which eventually developed into what's now Xanadu in Leeds. They bring with them the calm and friendly Cat, Mr Miaggi. And don't worry - Skit and Mr Miaggi have been getting on surprisingly well.

Activity at the house has focused largely on the moving in of new members but the great heating plan is now in motion for the start of a Wood Powered Central Heating system. We hope to get these quotes and apply for a rootstock loan, so we might have a warmer winter next year.

We have been looking into various heating systems, aiming to get the most efficient and sustainable one for us. Anyone with any advice, similar experience or enthusiasm for this project are welcome to get in touch!

The new members have given a burst of energy to the Hive and our first work day together went really well. Clearing loads of long-term unwanted, unidentified crap that had accumulated in many crevices.

Work has re-started on the shower (which is greatly needed with only one bath between the 8 of us).

With the aid of Andy's knowledge and help from friends, the shower will be plumbed in soon.

Clara has made us all very happy by bringing an amazing

wood burning stove to the kitchen.

The link between the Hive and the 1in12 social centre have grown stronger with our new members, with all being long-term actively involved at both the club and the communal allotment.

### **Mary Ann Johnson**

Well, at the end of the noughties and the dawn of 2010 we have finally things seen swinging our way. In the next couple of weeks we will finalise taking on the management of the house where all the rest of our co-op members live, except for Jane F and Helen. This is a completely new departure for MAJ and with Tony and Jane L leading the way has been a steep learning curve for all of us. Thanks to everyone who has given us advice, especially Walden Pond for some last minute reassurances.

Then, just in time for Christmas we heard that our application to Awards for All had been successful and we are to receive £10,000 towards the conversion of the loft in our MAJ-owned house into a community storage space and office. This is great news and thanks for this goes to Chris from Enheduanna for setting us off on the right trail. Furthermore, it looks as if we have finally been given planning permission for the conversion, after 18 months haggling with Haringey Council. Just a couple of minor hurdles, like party wall agreements, and we will be ready to start work in 6-8 weeks.

And, last but not least, at our first meeting of the new year we agreed our secondary rules, which are now up on the web.

### **Out-of-Town**

It snowed, then it snowed again, at HPA at least things pretty much stopped for taking over the golf course for sledging (ha!), hot booze, fires and scrabble. Ooters have managed to fit in a bit of RR CSG, kids and publicity work though. Also craggers, womens health, sail boat project, legal support, booky things, soup kitchen, community orchard (hopefully stealing a bit of the golf course back, ha! again), refugee support, food co-op, tree planting, cowley cooking, cleaning, books, library, walks, publicity and bar, that kind of thing, hopefully by the time you have read this a bit of chicken rescuing too, and the creation of two new officers - chicken welfare (or chicken nanny as sarah prefers to be called - we don't ask), and chicken protector beast - uniforms as yet to be agreed on. Speaking of officers, two of our newer members (andrew and martina) have taken over the secretary and treasurer positions and appear to be thriving on their steep learning curves, no escape for them now, world of co-ops has got them good. Sadly though we are losing ariadne and tammy - so there's soon to be rooms available both in rugby place and hollingbury park avenue.

At HPA the work continues, the attic is now more than half way to being a spare room; the garage has been cleared out (again) and has bike hooks to help cope with the renowned sneaky reproductive capacities of bicycles left in dark places; the kids windows actually shut; we have real lined curtains on actual poles; and are gradually removing all the dead trees and pollarding the others for firewood. If all goes to plan within the next three months we will have a grant for a new boiler and passive solar, and then good energy will pay us 'hot rocks' money to offset their gas extraction. Still need to do work on the

flat-roof which is reaching the end of it's life, rotten fascia and rotten kids windows which will need scaffolding to access, we have budgeted 10k for this work. With regard to the above hopefully finance group are putting in an emergency proposal that we extend the 10k loan we took out last year without an interest rate hike, on the grounds basically that RR needs the money and so does OOT, some background info follows:

In February 2009, OOT finally bought a property - originally on the market at 479k, we put an offer in, got a valuation and a provisional mortgage agreement at 405k. We then used the survey to argue the price down to 385k. This meant that an 80% mortgage of 308k from Ecology, combined with a 38.5k Radical Routes loan took us up to our 90% of purchase price maximum for 'mortgage type loans'. We then borrowed a further 10k from Radical Routes on an individual guarantee basis, with the proviso that it is to be replaced with loanstock this February or to go up to a 7% interest rate. We also had 36k capital and 23.5k initial loanstock investment. We have so far raised a further 8k loanstock to be invested February 2010.

However, not unusually the building works ended up being more extensive and more expensive then originally expected, involving re-wiring, insulating and major plumbing work as well as the pottery conversion - though the 25k spent so far will pay for itself in 2½ years as we have created a three bedroom unit in what was a previously unrentable space, we still have the afore mentioned external work to do. We feel it is possible for us to extend the loan at this point because we bought the house when the market was at it's bottom and this combined with the subsequent 25k of improvements, means that the property is now worth substantially more than 385k and as such this loan would not put us above

the 90% limit. Additionally a RR loan works better for us in terms of cashflow over the next few years then does more loanstock. The reason for this going out as an emergency proposal is that we only thought of it during the discussion in the finance meeting at the Brighton gathering about the current need for Radical Routes to have money invested rather than in the bank if it is to stand a chance of breaking even this year. Any questions or concerns about the loan extension request please feel free to contact us.

Thanks loads to Andy Neds for giving up his time to go through all our finance stuff, and especially for the updating and refining of our business plan, Sue

### **Plan B**

Plan B are at an exciting stage because we have collected the majority of our loanstock (but not all of it!! wink wink), plus we are in negotiation with Triodos for our mortgage (having found they're one of a small number of banks who actually know what a housing co-op is!) and we're expecting our Radical Routes loan in February (if all goes well). This means we are in a position to start looking at properties!

So far we have noticed that large houses are fairly rare and very expensive in Manchester at the moment, despite the credit crunch. But on the plus side, there are many commercial properties going a lot cheaper, especially pubs and big old houses converted to flats. And we really like the idea of this! We have viewed a couple and think we have the capacity to use one of these large properties as a quirky Plan B household.

To keep our supporters in the loop we have set up a blog

at [www.planbco-op.blogspot.com/](http://www.planbco-op.blogspot.com/) and if you would like to receive a print newsletter with stories of our progress (and recent escapades!) then you can contact us on [planb@aktivix.org](mailto:planb@aktivix.org) or 07934 699 223.

On 17th March 2010 we are holding a fundraiser and outreach event in Fallowfield, Manchester. The weekly Reggae, Dancehall and Dub night 'Cool Runnings' has been set up to allow worthy local causes to take donations on the door and share information with everyone inside. We've already done a few for Mule and No Borders - this time, we'll be raising awareness of Radical Routes and Plan B and explaining the basics on how to set up a housing cooperative. The event begins at 8.30pm at The Corner next to Trof, M14 6NA. Maybe see some of your there? :)

### **Skylark**

Skylark Housing Co-op is looking to expand. We are a currently unhoused co-op of 5 who have found a great house in Beccles, Suffolk, but need more members to make it viable. It has 8/9 bedrooms, masses of communal space, and a half acre garden. We would build an extra room in the garden to make 10 bedrooms in total. We are looking for 5 people who are interested in living communally as part of our co-op with the understanding that membership is contingent on us getting the house.

We welcome expressions of interest from all, including families. Expressing your interest means we will send you more information about us, and an application form. Contact [info@skylarkhousingcoop.org.uk](mailto:info@skylarkhousingcoop.org.uk)

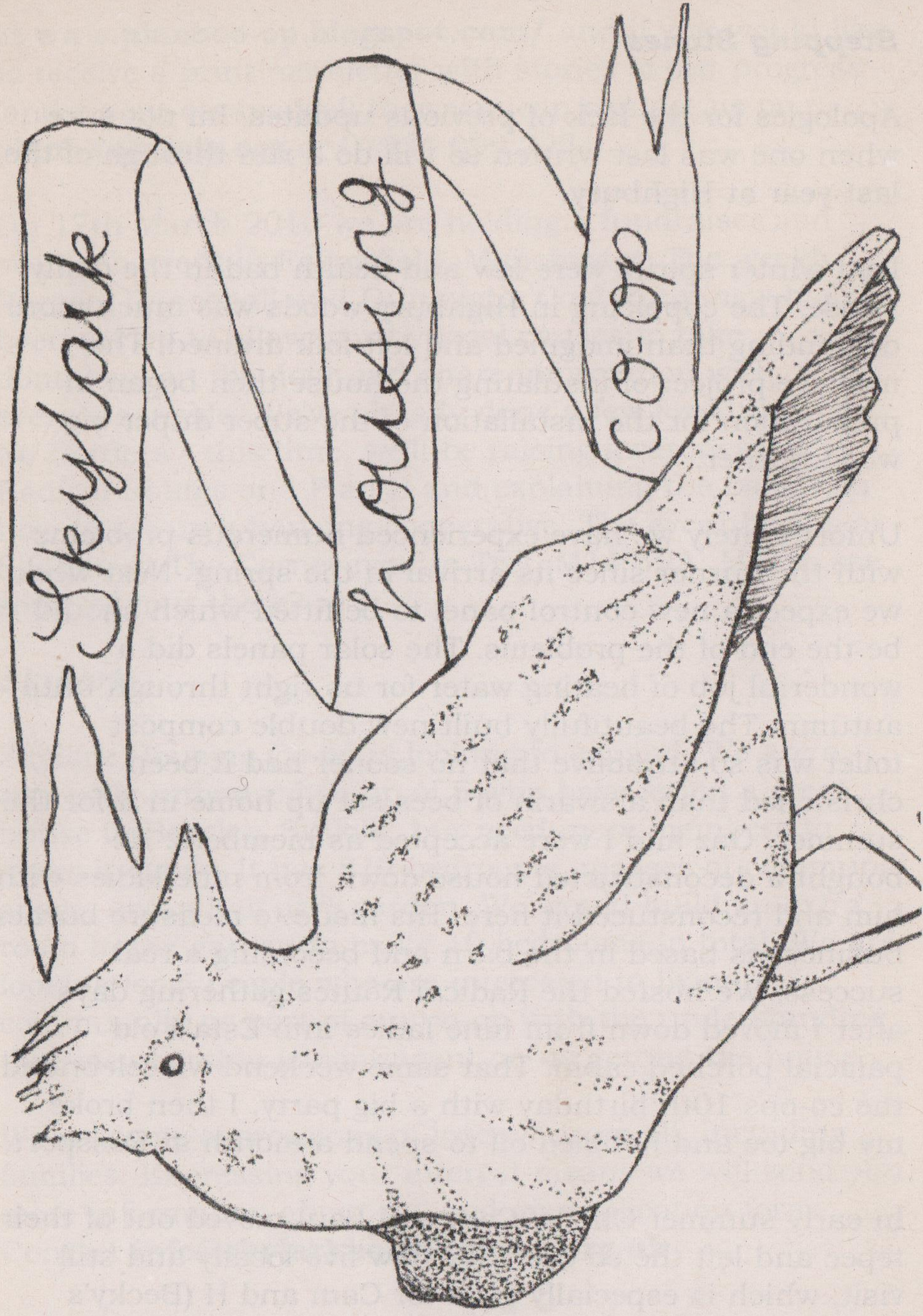
### **Stepping Stones**

Apologies for the lack of previous updates. Im not sure when one was last written so will do a run through of the last year at Highbury.

Last winter spirits were low and health bad in the chilly house. The coppicing in Highbury woods was much more demanding than imagined and left folk drained. The massive project of insulating the house then began in preparation for the installation of the super duper big wood burner.

Unfortunately we have experienced numerous problems with the burner since its arrival in the spring. Next week we expect a new control panel to be fitted which should be the end of the problems. The solar panels did a wonderful job of heating water for us right through until autumn. The beautifully built new double compost toilet was so attractive that no sooner had it been christened than a swarm of bees set up home in it for the summer. Gaz and I were accepted as members. He bought a deconstructed house down from nine ladies with him and reconstucted it here. His made to measure burner business is based in the barn and becoming a real success. We hosted the Radical Routes gathering days after i moved down from nine ladies into Esta's old palacial porched cabin. That same weekend we celebrated the co-ops 10th birthday with a big party. I then broke my big toe and hobbled off to spend a month at Rosspport.

In early summer Chelle, Cam and Paul moved out of their tepee and left the co-op. They now live locally and still visit, which is especially good for Cam and H (Becky's son) who are great friends. Transformation took place as the jungle of overgrowth farm got cleared. (Though plenty



The last few months we have continued our search for housing. Other than that, most of us spent time at the amazing Mainhill solidarity camp (an anti open cast site in Scotland) prepping for possible eviction and being very cold. One of us has gone off to Palestine. One of us is setting up a popular education collective.

more still to do!) The soft fruit garden provided masses of lush berries after its discovery amongst said overgrowth. It has since been tidied and pruned. Positive progress has also taken place in the vegetable garden and the land around the house and dwellings. Megan moved out and up to Belper to study and Mel (another ex nine lady) moved into her caravan.

Throughout summer and autumn the sheep suffered assorted ailments. We now have a third horse living here who is in a much better condition for her new home (and the love and attention of Rachel). Due to bad weather the apple and pear harvest was disappointing. Jane and Ellie the dog left to move to the gorgeous Gower coast and are enjoying life in a sea side chalet community. Mel was made an official member after months of residence and hard work. Samhain was the end of our work week and which we celebrated with a big party.

This winter has seen new windows fitted downstairs in the house and Al's wind turbine up and running and a new home made hot tub at the edge of the orchard. In true mid winter style the glitter spread from my space to the rest of the house. (Glitter is for life not just for christmas). We celebrated winter solstice with another big party, in the lovely warm house and were blessed with solstice snow.

This prolonged period of the spangly white stuff has kept our visiting friends snowed in here for the past fortnight and we have had much fun on our snowy slopes.

Our spring water pump froze at new year and has not yet defrosted. So, just like the old days we are reliant on water butts filled down in the village and are washing in snow.

We have started coppicing in the woods. If anyone has

experience of pruning apple and pear trees we would be glad of the help in our orchard. We are having a work and visitor week from Weds. 24th Feb-Weds. 3rd March.

Our attic conversion (my new indoor home) is nearly complete but needs a velux window fitting. We recently paid lots of money to a local window fitter who did a somewhat shonky job in downstairs in the house. Most of the existing velux windows in the house (fitted by enthusiastic past members) leak.



So, we are looking for anyone who has experience of successfully fitting velux windows (that don't leak!) that would be able to come and fit ours. We can pay for work undertaken.

Please get in touch by email or phone 01600 713942  
Julie, Highbury Farm x

### **Talamh**

Following heavy snow and continuous super sub zero temperatures we've all been on the piste. Talamh ski centre was busy with skiing, snowboarding, sledging, and anything-big-enough-to-sit-on'ing. (Every year this is how we lose assorted baking trays and catering lids.)

The wood shed roof collapsed, the front Yew tree was flattened, and the burns were silenced when they froze

over. Mel's conservatory roof sagged under the weight of snow to block the doorway, and the polytunnel was dark under its covering of snow. The water pipes froze and the washing machine didn't work for weeks. Everything, including vehicles, froze into the ground.

But still we kept warm with the communal fire burning, and we were able to provide some respite for the frozen residents of Mainshill, the local anti-coal opencast site.



We still have masses of apples left so here's Mel's suggestion for a delicious warming vegan sugar-free cake:-

### Apple Fruit Cake

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3 cups cooked apples (or other fruit pulp or mashed bananas)

1 cup (=0.5 pint) sunflower oil

3 cups dried fruit

2 cups walnuts

1 lb plain flour

2 tsp mixed spice

2 tsp bicarb of soda

1 level tsp salt

Whisk the oil into the apples until it is all mixed in. Stir in the fruit and nuts. Measure the flour into a separate bowl and stir in the spice, soda and salt. Line a large roasting tin with greaseproof paper and oil it. Put oven on

at 350F/180C.

Sift half the flour mixture into the fruit and stir in. Sift in the other half and stir again, adding a little soya milk if it seems a bit dry.

Tip into the lined tin and spread out smoothly.

Bake for approx 1 hr 10 mins and test with knife to check it's done in the middle. Cool in the tin.

### Walden Pond

In addition to some significant works in one of our properties in the last three months (completed stage one of new boiler and solar water heating installation at Gensing Road, plus wood stove) members of Walden Pond have:

> stood trial for an anti-war action at Britain's military nerve centre in Northwood earlier in the year (all three were found guilty), and continued to pursue a High Court case regarding the torture of Afghans detained by British forces and passed on to third parties

> taken part in a Bike Bloc art/activism/climate change project in Bristol, as well as the Climate Camp in Trafalgar Square (where they provided bike powered soundsystem and cinema) and a local vigil in Hastings during the Copenhagen climate summit

> co-ordinated the re-printing of the Morning Star's poetry book, and been interviewed on Radio 4 about name-readings and anti-war activism

> participated in Hastings Against War (including maintaining the HAW web-site:

**[www.hastingsagainstwar.org](http://www.hastingsagainstwar.org)**) and worked on a Palestinian town-twinning project



> continued to engage in background reading and study relevant to anti-war and environmental work (including participation in the local radical reading group) and helped organise the Peace News Winter Gathering:

**peacenewsgathering.org**

> given talks in Brighton and London and staffed a stall at the Raise Your Banners radical music festival and continued to edit and write for Peace

News ([www.peaceneews.info](http://www.peaceneews.info)) and to work on an art project about oil

## **Social Centre Reports**

### **Cowley Club**

Since there are so many people involved with the Cowley Club social centre and so many things going on, this report can only be a partial one from my own perspective.

Almost eight years since the building was purchased, I would say as a whole the project goes from strength to strength. There are problems which would be familiar to any grassroots project. Money is of course tight especially since a few things have broken lately, like the boiler in the flat above the club and a bar fridge.

A recent theft didn't help much and also, somebody wrote a letter to the council alleging all sorts of misconduct (like smoking inside the building!), which led to a visit from the authorities and allowed us to disprove the accusations, although we also got pulled up on a few minor Health and Safety issues (now remedied). It is sometimes hard to keep within the legal framework but also worthwhile, since the longevity of the Cowley as compared to local squatted social centres shows just one aspect of what a massive service it performs for the activist and alternative scene in Brighton.

Another perennial problem is getting enough people involved and volunteering, but generally things seem to keep working, thanks to a large number of motivated and energetic people. The club serves different functions for different people, and certainly has a lot of things going on. Every week there is the Migrant English Project (MEP) and Welfare Rights Advice. MEP is a space for migrants to learn English and the cafe is always bustling on Mondays.

Local groups such as Climate Camp, No Borders, Animal Action and Greenpeace have regular meetings in the club and there are lots of one-off events which lately have included a puppet show, a Shakespeare play, the notorious Cowley pub quiz, a Colombian Solidarity talk and the film 'Brazil'. We are open in the day as a cafe, library and bookshop, in the night as a bar and venue. All the food and drinks sold are vegan. Lately we have had gigs and clubnights most Fridays and Saturdays. Slutdisko is a regular queer disco night which is always packed out. Most Sundays there is a vegan roast which raises money for whichever group cooks and Thursday night there is an evening meal.

In 2010 there will be a new series of bookshop talks - in



January we will be hosting Clive Bloom, Stephen Shukaitis and John Zerzan.

The Club also extends its tentacles beyond the London Road building. The Cowley Club Amblers meet regularly for both kid-friendly and non-kid-friendly walks. In December they did a full moon night walk from Lewes to Brighton. The Cowley communal allotment up in Hollingdean has seen quite a lot of activity, including a visit from the Migrant English Project which we hope to repeat in Spring.

We enjoyed hosting the last Radical Routes Gathering in November and got a lot of positive feedback, so thanks for that.

If you ever happen to be in Brighton, do pass by! Our website is <http://cowleyclub.org.uk/>

Edward

## **Late Reports**

### **Dragonfly**

Since last Radical Rumours, we have gained another new addition to the house who has already been to the last RR gathering in Brighton. His name is Sam and he is currently finishing off the first part of his architecture course. He is hoping to use this knowledge to work in eco-architecture to help make sustainable affordable housing. This means we are now a full happy household.

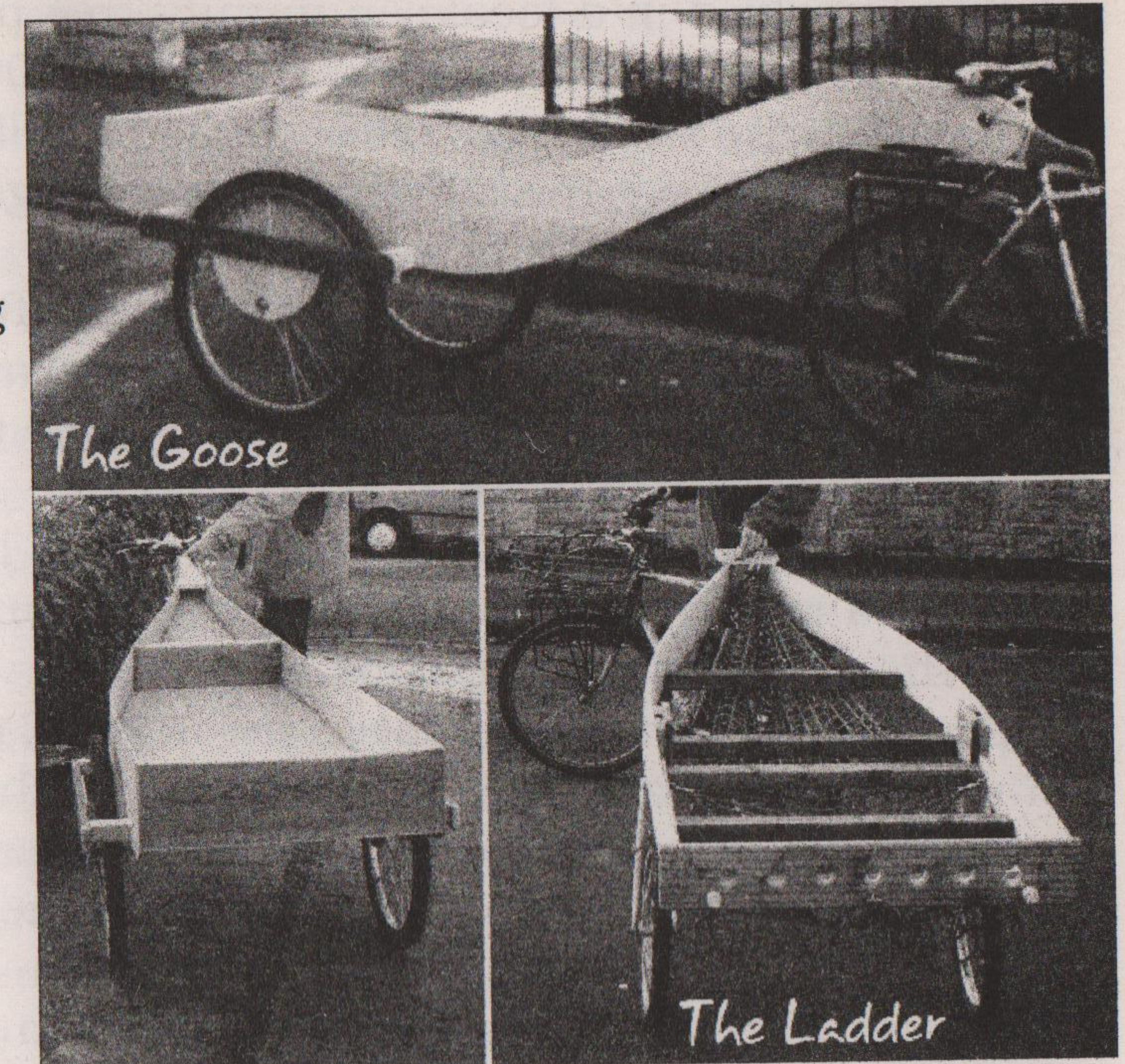
Stig got really into low-cost wooden bike trailers - see photo - trying to develop a simple plan that is cheap and easy to make, in the spirit of 'appropriate technology'.

Margo experienced the intensity of the Copenhagen climate talks: protesting, filming interviews and building solidarity and links with thousands of other climate activists.

For the Rootstock newsletter, Clare has written an article about the first 10 years of Dragonfly. She worked with Rootstock to get an article into Green World - the Green Party magazine.

Kath is organising a RR mediation training session in March.

Three of us are working with others in RR on the early planning for an alternative housing conference in London later this year. That's all for now!  
Dragonfly xx



### **Neds**

Happy new year from all at Neds. Our new year starts with change as George is moving out and we are all sad to see him go, but wish him well in his new place. The timing has been good tho as two founder members of Neds Kate and Nick are looking for somewhere to live short term and are moving in, we are looking forward to having them. This means tho that we have a space which may be available in six months time if anyone is interested.

After a lull on the work in our lounge people have been steaming ahead and its really starting to take shape. I think the pointing on the fire place looks particularly nice!

Some peeps from Neds went to Copenhagen and all came back safe and sound.

Other Nedletts have been tree planting in Hebdenbridge and are involved in a local community tree planting project were money has been raised for a 100 fruit trees for anyone who would like one. Nedletts will plant them and offer people e.g the elderly help pruning and advice re. looking after them.

Four people were involved in a court case after an open cast mine campaign and were found guilty along with others and given a restraining order!!! Nice to see the laws of the land being put to good use?

People are continuing to support the Mains hill campaign. We have a new burner in Andys room how exciting and cosy, the first of many we hope.

Peeps from Neds have also been involved in making a compost toilet at a local school and are in the process of working on another at a different school. If anyone would like to help and skill share they are welcome to get involved.

Our work commitment is Andy and Hannah working hard on the finance group, and neds is hosting the next radical routes gathering in a few weeks.

Other social change involves regular anti fur campaigning, hunt sabbing, and demos at high gate rabbit farm (animal breeder for HLS)

### **Pangaia**

Pangaia is fine still getting the rent in. We have been

snowed in for 3-4 weeks so that's been great. Growing Heart had a successful public community meeting to try to move forward with Forestry Steward Certified woods.

### **Rhizome**

A quietish quarter for Rhizome with rhythms being settled into and headspace being cleared. The house hunt has brought some success and we're zeroing in on a house in Forest Fields, an old H.P factory as it goes, so any hope of not forever being in Ned's shadow has gone to pot. Nonetheless we adore the house -even with all the improvements it needs- and Kate, Ben and Penny have been working with Andy from the finance group on a business plan. We've also picked ourselves up some new perspective members who are all involved in a variety of exciting projects around Nottinham. As a collective we've continued to put on regular fundraisers and Sunday brunches at the Sumac to varying levels of success. As individuals we've been up to the usual hotpotch of things. The most unlikely of these is Dom discovering environmental activism (almost as unlikely as his joining of the Kids group), much to his chagrin and has visited Shipperly and Mainshill with plans to head off to Rosspport when cannon fodder is needed there again (he still harbours a strong resentment to all things green and countryside). Whilst he's been at that, Penny, Kate, Ben and Tom have kickstarted Food Not Bombs in Nottingham with free meals at the crocus cafe and as part of the support team for the Anti-Fascists when the E.D.L came to Nottingham.

The Crocus continues to be at the forefront of Emma's mind as she maintains her place on the board there, even as she engages with the setting up and establishment of other community run cafes around Nottingham, along

with working towards setting up a community arts and activism space next door to the crocus in the Lenton area. Under the theme of continuation Calais Migrant Solidarity and No Borders have stayed in the forefront of many Rhizomers minds with visits to the border and fundraisers going in tandem with the case work done by Penny, Kate and Dom. Penny continues to be heavily involved in Refugee Forum and has helped initiate an English Conversation group on thursday nights. Andrew keeps on anti-trucking preaching the testaments of cycling wise, alongside his long term and much valued work behind the scenes at the Sumac. He, along with Kate will be the Rhizomers relied upon as our first house is renovated. Tom flies about town like a hungry gazelle forever searching out projects with which to lend a helping hand, which includes maintaining strong affinity with J.B spray squat and joining the bar collective at the sumac. Ben, now the only current student left in Rhizome has been left with the painful task of radicalizing the students of Nottingham, as part of this he and Dom put on "Resistance 101" Nottingham Free School's first event at the University of Nottingham, where they pitched up some tents and a gazebo for a week and held a series of workshops ranging from Class War to Radical Ecology, it was a relative success and managed to get a wide range of Nottingham focus to attend. The Free School continues to be a long term project of Rhizomers, and will be putting on various other events over the coming months, and hopefully working closely with the Sumac Skillshare collective of which Dom has recently become a part. Other campus related activism of which Ben has been initiating is the Stop Sodexo campaign, Anti-Militarism on campus and other Nottingham Student Peace Movement events. Whilst Kate intends to join Ben back on campus in September she's currently becoming involved in V3, a workers co-op training people around

the country to build wind turbines. She's also joined the loanstock group, and has been helping out, along with the rest of Rhizome with accomodation for the next Radical Routes gathering. For which Dom has put together the agenda.

With the possibility of a house in the next few months Rhizome life is looking fairly exciting, and new projects just starting up include the Nottingham Anarchist Black Cross, Nottingham Trauma support group, a Welfare Reform Solidarity group as well as a Full Circle campaign attempting to strengthen ties between various issues and develop direction action strategies that are multi-issue rather than single issue. Everyone is very excited at the possibilities of using the co-op as a both a housing solution and launch pad for successful and effective radical activism.

### **Wild Peak**

Well, we've got good news and bad news from darkest Derbyshire.



Our membership is expanding rapidly, and you may get to meet our newest member at the Nottingham gathering, though she won't be joining any working groups for a while. Mae was born on November 16th and is doing very well, changing Kath and Mike's lives totally and looking less like ET by the day. Kate and Nick are also expecting to produce a new co-op member in April.

Things are going less well on the house front - in short, the new soil we wanted to use to replace the contaminated soil in the garden of the house we are still trying to buy has turned out to be contaminated as well. So we're looking for other soil, but this will set our timescale back (again). An alternative plan involves washing the existing soil in a universal solvent - whisky has been recommended. All donations gratefully received. Vodka may do at a pinch but won't get rid of all the nasties.

*Work commitment* - Spencer is RR secretary, Indra is on gatherings group.

*Social change work* - Indra and Rebecca went to COP 15 in Copenhagen, Indra working with the street medics and Rebecca generally making trouble. Kate and Nick are still being Wild Things teaching small children how to do terrible deeds in the woods safely. Mike and Kath are a bit busy for any of that sort of thing right now.

### **List of Remorse**

No submissions from: Sumac Centre, Coventry Peace House, Equinox, Nautia, Random Camel, Nutclough, Uncarved Stone

### **Events**

**Mediation Training** Saturday 6th March 11-5pm, Oxford

The training will be facilitated by Cheryl Turner, who is a trained mediator. No previous experience is necessary to participate, but if you already have facilitation skills or some previous experience of dealing with conflict that will be helpful. The workshop is free to participants.

Please note this is only a one day course, so don't expect to go away from it and be able to set up as a professional mediator. Rather see it as a step towards developing the skills and confidence to resolve or avoid conflict in your own coop and to support other coops.

If there is enough interest we can organise a further training to build on these skills.

Places on the course are very limited, so please book in advance.

If you need accommodation we should be able to provide that either at Dragonfly or elsewhere in Oxford. If you need childcare please let us know.

To book a place or for further information call Kathryn on 01865 770 833 or 07796 430 141 or email **kathryn@seedsforchange.org.uk**

### **Winter Gathering**

20th-21st February 2010  
Sumac Centre, Nottingham

### **Spring Gathering**

22nd-23rd May  
Talamh, Lanarkshire

### **Next Rumours Deadline**

Sunday 11th April

Contributions to **rumours@riseup.net**

Don't put your text in the body of the email!

I like....doc...odt...rtf...jpg...tiff

Thanks, Gem x Random Camel 01473 684 449