

ATC CONTACTS

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The views expressed by individuals on the Green Page do not necessarily represent the views of the ATC.

RECYCLING WORKSHOP

Last week a party of twenty three 7-8 year olds from Salter Lee School, Shildon visited the ATC to take part in a plastics recycling workshop and a tour of the site.

Children brought in their plastic to be recycled, having already sorted and cleaned it in school. At the ATC, they were able to design and finish their own personalised fridge magnets. The children loved the trip and their teacher was equally enthusiastic.

"The children really enjoyed their visit and have taken home so many positive facts about recycling." Mary Smith, Class 3's Teacher told us afterwards. "We had a brilliant time and we learnt that things we throw

away can be so useful and re-used to make other things" explained Luke Halliday, a Class 3 pupil. The visit and workshop were closely tied in with National Curriculum and can be tailored to fit ongoing projects at school.



Children from Salterlee School show off their designs and recycled plastic fridge magnets (on the pole at the back)



A Sideways Look

John Morrison

THERE USED TO BE A TRADITION among certain tribes of American indians to lay on elaborate feasts, known as potlatches. The idea was to give lavish gifts to the assembled guests - and even for the host to destroy some of his own possessions - to prove what a big-shot he was. It was an early, pioneering example of conspicuous consumption, like setting fire to five pound notes: impressive, if pointless.

We seem to have appropriated the potlatch. We've given it a twenty-first century twist - plus a change of name - and extended it to the point of absurdity. Now it's known as Christmas. Ah, Christmas: first the giving of presents, then the exchanging of receipts, finally - yet all too soon - the arrival of the credit card bills. If we could judge the

success of the holiday by the amount of money we throw at it, then Christmas would be merry indeed.

People load surreal amounts of booze into their hatchbacks, while insisting: "Christmas? We only do it for the kids." With only a few days to go before Christmas, we search frantically for presents. It's a grim quest: to fill the void where Christmas spirit ought to be with as much festive rubbish as our shopping bags can hold.

It was while waiting at a supermarket checkout that I thumbed through one of the store's Christmas magazines. There were the usual articles. How to make a table decorations from fir cones, holly leaves and glitter. How to stop dad attacking the cream sherry. How to stop the kids attacking each other.

How to cook turkey and all the trimmings, without suffering a nervous collapse. And, surprise, surprise, all the necessities for a hassle-free Christmas could be bought from that very store.

Hidden amongst page after page of Christmas recipes was a tiny footnote. It read: "Make an early New Year's resolution to be kinder to the planet: sort your rubbish into separate bags." I looked in vain for signs of irony, suggesting that this might have been merely a festive chuckle. But no: the advice appeared to be serious.

So let me get this straight. We are encouraged to spend money we haven't got on things we don't need, in a manner that makes the average potlatch of old seem parsimonious and penny-pinching by comparison. And after this orgy of rampant consumerism, we can give ourselves a pat on the back for sorting the detritus into different piles. That makes about as much sense as washing down a huge meal with a can of diet cola.

Yes, Christmas only begins to make sense once we take a detached, clinical approach and regard the festivities as a strain of mass neurosis. Not long to go now; let's hope we get through the holiday with most of our marbles intact.



This month's nomination for Green Room 101 comes from council worker, Roger Carson.

Once there were none. Now they are everywhere. The first known sightings of them were in episodes of Kojak in the 70s. Stavros and the aforementioned detective would stand around them discussing the current case.

How did we survive before they arrived on our planet? If they had a brain floating in the top of them they would probably have appeared as that week's villain on Dr Who. In

Hot under the collar about water coolers

environmental terms they really are one of the bad guys. Offices everywhere now have them.

Essentially these are a small fridge with a load of plastic cups by the side so their crime is several fold: unnecessary plastic production, unnecessary rubbish production, unnecessary electricity consumption and unnecessary petrol consumption in the constant delivery of more water and more plastic cups.

Offices have access to drinking water (not yet with added fluoride). It is provided on tap. If we are unhappy about tap water we could get a water filter or purchase bottled water ourselves and put it in the office fridge. There is of course the question of cost. We all have to pay water rates even

if we use rainwater off the roof. So offices are paying additional money for a product they get anyway through the wall. **The water cooler is a global warmer.**

- If you would like to submit a nomination for Green Room 101, please send your contribution (preferably by e-mail or on disc or otherwise by fax / post) to the ATC. It has to have a vaguely 'green' theme and be no more than about 300 words.
- We now have a facility for commenting on the nominations for Green Room 101 on our website. Just go to www.alternativetechnology.org.uk and have your say.

BEYOND THE VALLEY . . .

13% of rural households do not own a car, but 50% have two or more. In urban areas the figures are 22% and 29% respectively. With the increase in the number of people driving to shopping centres and subsequent loss of village post offices, what then for the one in eight of rural homes without cars?

Transports of Delight

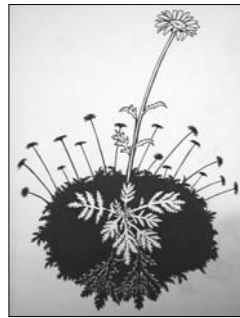
The answer must be to improve and extend public and community transport systems. Ideally, the result will be so good as to attract people out of their cars. Over recent years many local authorities in rural areas have been experimenting with some novel approaches.

In Kirby Stephen, Cumbria the **PlusBus** runs Monday to Saturday, linking 11 villages to the town centre and the station. Fares are charged on a per-mile basis with a minimum of 10p. 29% of the people using the service say they would otherwise have used their cars, showing that good bus links can displace car use.

In Wiltshire's Pewsey Vale, the **Wigglybus** runs on three vaguely defined routes through small villages. You simply ring up to request a pick-up and are dropped off on request. The result is taxi-like convenience and the prices are £1.20 per journey or less if you become a member. Again 20% of the users have chosen to leave their cars at home.

There is funding for similar schemes in this area. Anyone interested should contact the ATC.

I SPY: HANDY PLANTS



Dyers Chamomile

Dyers or Ox-eye Chamomile (Anthemis tinctoria 'Sauce Hollandaise')

This chrysanthemum-like herbaceous perennial has thrived in the Little theatre garden this year. Putting on a huge amount of growth in its first year and a constant show of flowers. Being early to flower in June & still going strong throughout October, producing a prolific array of daisy blooms. It likes a free-draining sunny location and is chiefly grown in the east of England and can be grown quite readily from seed. We have planted in the garden for its dye use as well as its looks, and also its ability to be covered in ladybirds and hoverflies all season long. The blooms are used to produce a good bright yellow dye. We've collected and dried some this year to experiment with in the darker months.

THOUGHT ABOUT VOLUNTEERING?

New years resolutions are always predictable, so how about this as a fresh suggestion? Why not get involved with your local Alternative Technology Centre? The Hebden Bridge A.T.C. was originally set up with volunteer support and always values new people getting involved.

There are so many different activities to help with including Shop work, Gardening, Administration, Construction of demonstration models, outreach/education work and drinking tea! We also welcome help for one

off events like the Big Green Weekend and Riverside Festival.

You can offer as much time as you want but as a rule most volunteers work for at least half a day a week.

So if your looking for that fresh new year opportunity come and join us. The Centre has a volunteer link worker, Fred Worsley who can be contacted throughout the week on 842121 or email: info@alternativetechnology.org.uk.



Saturday 16th-Sunday 17th Feb 2002

THANK YOU to all the people who have replied to our Big Green Weekend III enquiry. The overall response has been phenomenal and it promises to be yet another (if not better) major regional extravaganza!

The rough sketch of events so far includes an evening of raucous entertainment at our Valentine's Ball on Friday 15th February, a wind and solar generator van to power DJ workshops and a massive display of straw bale building techniques with video and information stall.

We also have hedge laying, tree planting, willow weaving and wood turning workshops as well as kids' percussion workshops, cafes, guided walks of the local area, tours of the

ATC's famous 'energy room' and, of course, numerous bookstalls, information stalls and a local produce market. There will be tours of some of the local canal barges where you will be able to see wind and solar generators and solar water heating being used effectively . . . and have the chance of having a solar powered hair cut!

There is still time to get involved if you want to be. If you have an idea for a stall or a workshop or anything else, just get in touch with the ATC on 842121. And if you're not going to be an active participant in the event make sure you've marked the 16th and 17th of February 2002 in your diaries and come along.