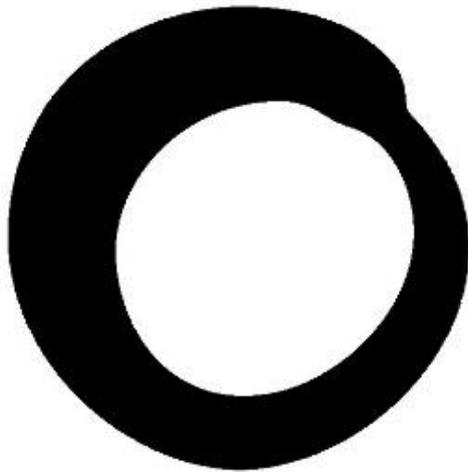


**Birmingham Friends of the Earth  
and the Warehouse  
Then and Now**

**PROJECTS**

**Researched and Compiled  
by Dave Clare**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

## **Thanks**

To all past and present BFoE volunteers and workers who have contributed to this project.  
To the Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham.  
This project was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## **Contact details**

### **Birmingham FoE**

If you'd like to get involved with or keep up-to-date with BFoE's current activities, please get in touch.

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### **BFoE Heritage project**

Please contact us if you have any amendments to this booklet or want to get more involved in the heritage project – it will continue beyond the life of the HLF funding. In particular, we're looking for memories and/or memorabilia from the 1970s-1990s.

Email: [heritage@birminghamfoe.org.uk](mailto:heritage@birminghamfoe.org.uk)

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Twitter: [@BFoEHeritage40](https://twitter.com/BFoEHeritage40)

## Introduction

The first Friends of the Earth group in Birmingham operated from private houses in the early 1970s. By the late seventies they ran a paper recycling project that rapidly outgrew a house in Passey Rd, Sparkhill. In 1977 the group took the momentous decision that, in addition to campaigning for a better world, they would demonstrate in practical ways a better way of living. A derelict building in Allison St., known as The Warehouse, was acquired as a base for this and for many more work projects and campaigns. The building itself soon was seen as a model to demonstrate what could be done with a more efficient use of an older building. All those in the building worked together to demonstrate that a more cooperative way of organising could be successful.

Birmingham Friends of the Earth (BFoE) has now been at the Warehouse for 40 years and as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund Project celebrating this achievement a group of volunteers have spent time in the Library of Birmingham going through the archived material of BFoE. This largely covers the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's. The archive mostly consists of newsletters from this period, but there are also photographs and minutes. Topics for research were allocated to each individual researcher covering: Campaigns, Projects, Admin & Governance, and Education & Publications.

The results of that work is shown in a series of pamphlets, of which this is one. Together they constitute a record of the early years of BFoE and the Warehouse. We are however aware that the archives don't record everything. If you see any omissions or errors, please let us know and we can amend. We see these as 'living' documents.

*Information taken from BFoE Newsletters:  
May 1976 – January 1983, July 1983-October 1988.  
Also from Meeting Minutes 1982 and 1983 – denoted by 'M'.  
Also from verbal accounts – denoted by 'V'*

## 1. Overview of BFoE Projects

In the 1970s and 80s, Birmingham FoE, along with many other FoE local groups, spent its energy on practical projects, intended to demonstrate what was desirable and possible.

Many of the BFoE projects later became independent organisations, businesses, cooperatives, etc.

Friends of the Earth has always led the way in showing what should be done; and many projects were precursors for Local and National Government policies and schemes which we now take for granted – for example Kerbside collections, Cycle Routes and facilities, and large cycle events.

## 2. Food related projects, including shop and café

Early Days were focussed on informing about organic and wholefoods (1976-84). This included a Food Day and Exhibition (September 1976).

In those days, few people even knew about wholefoods. Perhaps the publication which illustrates this best was the leaflet in 1977 which was intended to show residents of Kings Heath where they could buy wholemeal bread!

Some specific groups were set up, for example *Nutrition Group* (December 1976); *Food Group* (Early 1977?). Also the *Wholefood School of Nutrition* (fully set up February 1979); which later produced 'Wholefood', a bi-monthly magazine. It also did training of teachers in wholefoods.

Local Wholefood shops clubbed together to buy wholefoods in bulk, and store them at the Warehouse (became Muesli Base from 1978-1984). Some food came via canal boat.

A shop opened – *Bag End* (1983) – which became *One Earth Shop* in 1984, and a cafe - *Amazon* - opened in November 1988.

### Detailed notes

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| May76 Mention of Food Day Festival 5 June   |
| June76 Food Fest postponed till 25 Sept. Food Day & Exhibition progressing.   |
| Sept76 Food Day & banquet planning, and helpers needed etc.   |
| Oct76 After Food Day, what now? Leaflet distribution.   |
| Dec76 Nutrition group meeting - will be giving info, displays of food preparation e.g. bread-making, recipe leaflets.                               |
| Mar77 Nutrition Group working hard – recipe leaflets, where to get wholemeal bread in King's Heath. Going to do food at a local pub every Saturday. |
| Apr77 Food group produced High Roughage Diet recipe book, 5p.   |

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| May77 Food group stall at Maypole May Week 8 May.  |
| Oct77 Midland Wholefood Shops decided to buy in bulk and store at Warehouse – full-time job.   |
| Wednesday 25 October 1978 Inaugural meeting of Catering Group.   |
| Jan78 Food Warehouse started now.  |
| Feb78 Food Warehouse – known as Muesli Base – continuing and distributing to local wholefood shops.  |
| Apr78 Food Warehouse now has 2 full-time workers Lorna and Ian.  |
| May78 Muesli Base (ex: Birmingham Wholefood Warehouse) now getting some food by canal boat (but ties up £2000 whilst in transit).  |
| Feb79 Food Coop 'Alive & Kicking'.   |
| Feb79 Wholefood School of Nutrition (WSN) set up fully (Lynn, Kate and Helen).   |
| Oct79 WSN catering for two conferences on 6 and 13 October.  |
| Sept80 Food Coop just about surviving.   |
| Sept80 WSN bi-monthly magazine 'Wholefood' growing. WSN teaching courses and training teachers in wholefoods.  |
| Feb 82 Muesli Base has 11k grant from County Council, but needs to move to bigger space.   |
| <b>M</b> July82 Muesli Base now want to stay!  |
| 1983? Shop possibly called 'Bag End' – see advert in couple of editions  |
| Muesli Base – ceased trading <i>March 1984</i> .   |
| 'One Earth Shop' opened 9 April 1984   |
| 1 Nov 88 – opening of (Amazon?) Café serving wholesome organic veg and vegan soups, hot dishes, salads and cakes.  |
| <b>Jun/July94 - April 94</b> marked 10 years of One Earth Shop (started by Ian Bailey, previously involved with first Muesli Base coop, then Bag End). Also Marion Hall, who was running Golden Apple Wholefood stall, in Rag Market, Preparing the food at the Warehouse; Sue Steadman; Ian and Woof for 6 years; volunteers from Bham Rathbone Society; from 1990 Tina Rickards/John Beddowes. |

### 3. Insulation and energy projects

The Home Insulation project was a major part of Birmingham Friends of the Earth's work in the 1970s and 80s; and which developed other bases, not just at the Warehouse. The projects covered many parts of Birmingham (Kingstanding, Small Heath, Selly Oak, Parry Barr, etc.), along with parts of Sandwell.

Apart from supervisors, there were many other employees, mostly employed through Manpower Services and Community Programme schemes. These were schemes which took unemployed people off the dole and gave them valuable work experience. There were also volunteers on some projects.

The workers were organised into teams, and these did insulation and draught-proofing work, and gave energy advice. Old and vulnerable people were targeted, and the homes were fitted with high quality materials.

Having been conscious of the possible dangers of workers' exposure to fibreglass insulation since 1978, in 1981 the teams started using cellulose, which was cheaper and healthier. It was also made from recycling old newspapers. For a time, this gave a rare example of 'Closing the Loop', because BFoE was selling waste newspaper to the firm which made and supplied the cellulose insulation!!

Whilst focussing on the older and poorer sections of society, many worrying circumstances came to light, leading often to referrals to Social Services. It is no exaggeration to say that lives were saved by the intervention of the Teams.

In the late 1980s, following some loss of grant-aided work, projects became commercial, and independent of BFoE – for example Energy Savers and Smethwick Energy Action. These firms did more private work, but also continued to bid for Government-aided schemes. Later still, larger firms gained advantage in bidding for Government work. This led to the demise of Energy Savers and many other similar small companies.

### Detailed notes

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| <i>May76</i> Hoping to set up separate Birmingham Energy Group to work on the whole energy field including insulation, AT, tariffs, bills etc.            |
| <i>June76</i> First meeting of Energy Group.  |
| <i>Oct76</i> Preparing plans for Insulation scheme.   |
| <i>Nov76</i> Hope to use Job Creation scheme to insulate homes.   |
| <i>Dec76</i> Applying to MSC for job creation grant for insulation; produced leaflet to distribute, giving info and how to apply for grant.               |
| <i>Jan77</i> Bulk-buy of insulation materials for sale.   |
| <i>Jan77</i> MSC/JCP appln ongoing.   |
| <i>Oct77</i> After Granada TV programme Sun 5.15pm, we are coordinating Midlands area to insulate homes, esp. old people, sick and handicapped.           |
| <i>Nov77</i> Have begun:<br>-Collecting carpets, rugs, curtains, gas heaters<br>-Selling roof insulation and tank jackets.<br>-Insulating people's homes. |
| <i>Jan78</i> Will be getting Birmingham Social Services money, to pay to expand Insulation Project.   |
| <i>Jan78</i> Due to insulate in Darlaston, Pelsall, Yardley, Ward End, Northfield, Perry Bar.   |
| <i>Feb78</i> HIP continuing. Clients passed on from DHSS.   |
| <i>Apr78</i> HIP continues; discovered that the fibres in the fibreglass may be carcinogenic.   |

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| <i>Jun78</i> Five year grant from Urban Aid programme from September. Hoping for a large van.   |
| <i>July78</i> HIP has own room now, and phone no. 643 4141. Looking at 2 firms (Durham, Scotland) which make loft insulation from 'selected recycled newsprint'.  |
| <i>Aug78</i> Home Insulation Bill about to become law – will give big demand to programme.  |
| <i>Dec78</i> Insulation Project Team doing 25 lofts per week.   |
| <i>Mar79</i> Insulation project – 660 rolls fibreglass delivered after 6 week break. Big backlog, now working Saturdays too.  |
| <i>Jun79</i> Insulated about 400 houses last winter.  |
| <i>July79</i> 3/4 jobs available on Insulation and Energy Advice.   |
| <i>July 80</i> Three from Insulation Project went to London in June for meeting with DoE re: standards of insulation in new homes. Standards of insulation very low – why? Answer top secret! Useful meeting though, need to pressurise for higher standards. |
| <i>Sept80</i> Volunteers required for Insulation project (“Lagging old ladies”).  |
| <i>Oct 80</i> Our PSA (?public service announcement) goes out on ITV in week of 13 <sup>th</sup> October.   |
| <i>May 81</i> Insulation – changing from glass fibre to blown cellulose (cheaper, healthier, made from recycled newspapers).  |
| <i>Aug 81</i> MSC money confirmed to do loft insulation, draught-proofing and give energy advice in Woodstock Road, Moseley.  |
| <i>Oct 81</i> New project in Woodstock (Moseley) – joint BFoE and Woodstock Residents association.  |
| <i>Nov 81</i> Second community based MSC project – Kingstanding.  |
| <i>May/June 82</i> New project – Smethwick Energy Action (covering Abbey, Bristnall, Langley, St. Paul's, Smethwick, Soho & Victoria areas of Sandwell) funded by DoE to start in September, probably at Cape Hill Slipper Baths.                             |
| <i>Aug/Sept 82</i> Insulation Project in 'Guardian'.  |
| <i>Nov 82</i> 28 people employed on the 3 new projects (SEA?).  |
| <i>Nov 82</i> City-wide project has done 2500 jobs in 4½ years.   |
| <i>Nov 82</i> Spark Home Insulation – based in Farm Rd Sparkbrook, covers Sparkbrook, Sparkhill, Moseley and Balsall Heath.   |
| <i>Nov 82</i> SEA still based in WH, but should be in Cape Hill by Christmas.   |
| <i>Dec 82</i> Insulation and other WH projects to be affected by fundamental changes to funding (from Jan?83). Community Enterprise Programme (administered by MSC) to be replaced by Community Programme – less hours, only one-year contracts.              |
| <b>M</b> <i>July83</i> Smethwick Energy Action would like to become independent from BFoE.  |
| <b>M</b> <i>Oct83</i> MSC Insulation projects start in Erdington, Kingstanding and Hall Green, each employing 8 people.   |
| <b>M</b> <i>Nov83</i> 4 Community insulation projects now started in Bham .   |
| <b>M</b> <i>Nov83</i> HIP (City Wide) with 3 paid workers. Plan to reorganise into 3 teams, specialising in a) Finance, b) Insulation/Energy project development, c) Campaigning.   |

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| <i>?Jan 84</i> BFoE Home Insulation Project January 1984 employed 40 – for pensioners, disabled, single parent families. Seven Teams – 5 outside Warehouse at Erdington, Kingstanding, Selly Oak, Hall Green, Smethwick. (addresses given); also Volunteer Insulation Project and City Wide Team based at Warehouse. |
| <i>July/Aug 84</i> Looking for Home Insulation Project to become commercial.   |
| <i>Says Mar/Apr 85</i> that, unlike all other schemes round the country (funded by Local Authority or Manpower Services) does not receive any funding.   |
| <i>Mar/Apr 85</i> - 2 anecdotes – one an OAP on phone, other A Life Saved?   |
| <i>July/Aug 85</i> Birmingham Waste Co offers loan of tipper lorry.  |
| <i>Sept 86</i> HIP advertises two jobs – Energy Advice Coordinator £7098; MSC Projects Coordinator £7280.  |
| <i>Nov 87</i> New Energy Shop opened – free expert advice (5 staff), sales of draught-proofing materials, loft insulation; energy information library.   |
| <i>Jan/Feb 89</i> Loss of £24k Energy grant (B'ham Social Services) means the 10-year involvement in grant-aided energy work will cease. Continue with viable insulation work and retailing and wholesaling of materials.  |
| <i>Nov/Dec 89</i> – Start of business 'Energy Savers'.   |
| <i>Jan/Feb 90</i> Energy Savers £150 loft insulation for homes scheme (£15 for grant-aided work)   |

#### **4. Birmingham Environmental Education Project (BEEP) projects, including the Bus**

BEEP was (and still is) Birmingham FoE's registered Charity, which was set up to do environmental education work. This led to publications and films, etc. Perhaps the most notable venture was the purchase of an ex-WMPTE double-decker bus in 1984. It was used by BFoE, Pushbikes and the Urban Wildlife Group to travel around, giving out information leaflets, etc. at lots of venues. It was often used for the 'Insulation Road Show'.

##### **Detailed notes**

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| <b>V</b> 1982 Video made (Steve Harman)  |
| <b>M</b> <i>Jan 83</i> BEEP project extension agreed. Applying for MSC funding. 1 supervisor for 6-7 people.                               |
| <b>M</b> <i>July/Aug 83</i> BEEP bus – plan to put in applying for buy and convert a bus – multi-use exhibition/workshop. Applied 23Aug83. |
| <b>M</b> <i>Aug/Sep 83</i> BEEP recruiting 6 people. WM Arts gave money for film showing.  |
| <b>M</b> <i>Oct 83</i> BEEP appointed 6 staff.   |
| <b>M</b> <i>Nov 83</i> BEEP pollution project has started with 6 workers.  |
| <b>M</b> <i>Nov 83</i> Bus – imminent Urban Aid approval for money.  |
| <b>M</b> <i>Dec 83</i> Hope to get bus in Feb. Still need funding for wages (£4000).   |
| <i>March 84</i> Bus bought (ex WMPTE) – for BFoE, Pushbikes and Urban Wildlife Group.  |

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| May/June 84 – centre spread in newsletter about the bus.  |
| Nov/Dec85 BEEP bus on road soon – 'Insulation Road Show'; dates in November at Balsall Heath Church Centre and Highgate Baptist Church Centre.                  |
| Sept 86 Advert for BEEP Bus Project Coordinator £6734.  |
| [Also possibly connected to BEEP – Driver/Handyman or Woman £6253; Part-time Graphics Artist, Actor/Teacher, 2 Education Workers – all at £2828 20hrs per week] |

## 5. Recycling

Birmingham FoE led the way in the collection of goods for recycling. In the early days, paper, cans and foil were collected, as well as being at the Warehouse; later also furniture and carpets (1977-80). Also, for a while in 1980, a pilot plastics recycling scheme was tried, selling the separated plastics to a firm in Evesham.

Over time, various vehicles were purchased or loaned, for collections. However, large fluctuations in the price paid by the merchants created big problems; resulting in job and vehicle losses and gains.

At its height (1985-6), the collections covered about 40,000 households and 21 areas of Birmingham. Soon after that, Birmingham Council started some door-to-door collections.

### Detailed notes

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| May 76 Negotiating with Council for short term lease on garage in Dudley Rd for commercial recycling depot.   |
| June 76 Collections planned soon for paper, cans & foil.  |
| Aug 76 Collections continue, trying to get old fire station as depot.   |
| Oct 76 Some paper collections, hoping to get scheme going with Council.   |
| Nov 76 Putting in tender for Dudley Road Garage as recycling/collection centre. Has showroom for possible use as office, info centre, meeting space.  |
| Dec 76 Still hoping for Old Fire Station, but offered premises in Ward End. Corporate Identity soon.  |
| Jan 77+ Been offered 6000ft Warehouse – need some “Whiz-kid organiser” to set up.   |
| Mar 77 Decided to accept offer of Warehouse. Planning all the work necessary – cleaning, plumbing, wiring, painting, etc. Priority is to clear ground floor for paper collections. Warehouse OK for recycling, but felt not for BFoE centre and campaign. So move to Settlement still on. |
| May 77 Begin collecting paper, card, aluminium, tin cans, metal bottle tops; not glass.   |
| May-Jun 77 Recycling Centre poster – Collecting as above plus furniture and carpets.  |
| July77 Bought van 1973 30cwt Bedford CF diesel (£700 on road).  |

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| <i>Nov77</i> Now collecting wine bottles for re-use.   |
| <i>Jan 78</i> Have about 2 tons/week of paper and card in to the Warehouse, but slump in market so stockpiling.  |
| <i>Aug 78</i> Collections pay for the van + a bit more; but not any wages.   |
| <i>Nov 78</i> problems with economics of recycling by BFoE; stopped taking in cans due to price.   |
| <i>Dec 78</i> stopped collections of waste material.   |
| <i>Jan 79</i> Stopped collecting waste paper. Still accept at Warehouse. Also collection centres at Moseley, Harborne, Cotteridge, Edgbaston, Solihull, Sutton Coldfield, Bearwood.                                    |
| <i>Apr79</i> Paper now up to £10 per tonne.  |
| <i>May/June80</i> Collecting paper (newspaper etc.), card, tins, bottle tops, aluminium. Also furniture and carpets can be brought to the Warehouse.   |
| <i>July 80</i> Getting £28 per ton cardboard, £25 newspaper, £22 mixed.  |
| <i>Oct 80</i> Starting pilot plastics recycling 1 <sup>st</sup> October. Bring plastics to WH. Will be selling to firm in Evesham.   |
| <i>April 81</i> No more mixed paper can be taken, merchants not accepting. Our plastics collecting stopped, mainly due to separation problems.   |
| <i>June 81</i> Selling newspapers to firm which supplies us with Cellulose Fibre loft insulation.  |
| <b>M</b> No v83 Jane visited recycling scheme in Brighton.   |
| <i>Jan/Feb85</i> Collecting from 50 estate agents (old Property News).   |
| <i>Nov/Dec 85</i> established monthly door-to-door waste paper collections, covering 21 areas of city, and in city centre shops. 6 paid staff, 7.5tonne tipper lorry, can and 2 small balers. Collecting 4 tonnes/day. |
| <i>Nov/Dec 85</i> Richard Moulson preparing pilot project for BCC in one area, with BCC looking to roll it out later.  |
| <i>Jan/Feb 86</i> Monthly collections from 40,000 households (paper and aluminium). Price drop £35 to £27 per tonne newspapers/Magazines; £36 to £15 per tonne thick card; mixed £5.                                   |
| <i>March 1986</i> - Collected paper, card, foil etc. monthly, also brought in to Warehouse. - waste paper price still falling  |
| <i>January 1987</i> stop collections, but still accept at Warehouse.   |
| <i>Jan/Feb 90</i> Stop accepting newspapers/magazines for recycling due to oversupply (mills using subsidised North American waste paper). Still recycling office white/computer paper.                                |

## 6. Recycled Paper Sales

It's no good collecting and recycling materials, if there are no outlets for selling the resultant recycled goods.

So Birmingham FoE was selling recycled paper as early as 1976. The acquisition of the Warehouse in 1977 enabled larger storage than was possible in Lyn Roberts' front room!

BFoE initially sold recycled paper, envelopes, toilet rolls and envelope re-use labels. By 1978 recycled paper sales were an important source of revenue. There was a mixture of retail and wholesale, the smaller quantities at various times for sale in the One Earth Shop, BFoE Reception, and for a short while in a separate shop 'The Stationery Cupboard'.

A cooperative 'Recycled Paper Supplies' was set up, and by 1989 turnover was £10,000 per month. In 1991, this merged with a larger cooperative 'Paperback', which continued their branch at the Warehouse until 1995.

### Detailed notes

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| <i>June 76</i> Recycled paper – lists various items for sale; e.g. duplicating paper £1.10 per ream, Loo rolls 400 sheets 10p.    |
| <i>Aug 76</i> Price list on back of newsletter – paper, toilet rolls, pads, envelopes, re-use labels.                             |
| <i>Oct 76</i> Paper sales good, so Lyn(?) now employed from income.   |
| <i>May 77</i> Commissioned 100 boxes of 100% recycled toilet rolls (72 per box); need to sell by 1 May (11p each, £7.79 per box). |
| <i>Feb 78</i> Recycled paper sales are an important source of revenue.  |
| <i>Mar 86</i> Extensive 8-page price-list produced.   |
| <i>March 1988</i> deliveries one day per week, by van to Birmingham, Leamington Spa, Stratford, Wolverhampton, Nottingham         |
| <i>Nov/Dec 88</i> BFoE considering making RPS a Coop  |
| <i>Jan/Feb 89</i> Still progressing RPS to Coop   |
| <i>July/Aug 89</i> Turnover now £10-12K per month (£3-4k last year)   |
| <i>June/July 91</i> RPS workers coop merges with similar coop Paperback, will trade as Paperback (Midlands) Ltd.                  |
| <i>Aug/Sept 93</i> BFoE takes over 'Stationery Cupboard' area.  |
| <i>Dec 93/Jan 94</i> Paperback moves out.   |

## 7.0 Cycling

Transport has always been an important element in Friends of the Earth's campaigning. It was natural that Birmingham FoE set up a 'Bicycles Group' in its early days. Pushbikes owes its origin to the development of this group. It soon (1979) became an autonomous group.

Similar to BFoE, it had a 'practical' side (installing cycle racks, having a DIY bike workshop, and some shoppers cycle parking in the Warehouse); as well as campaigning for improved cycle facilities more widely. It organised regular cycle rides; the largest of which was the Great Midlands Bike Ride, started in 1981 and running for many years. Nowadays, the campaigning and local social rides continue; the larger events now take place sponsored by

Councils and commercial organisations. Pushbikes has gone from strength to strength, being a well-respected organisation by Council Officers and the like. There is still a long way to go to make Birmingham cycle-friendly, however.

### Detailed notes

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| <i>Thursday 21 September 1978</i> Inaugural meeting of the Bicycles Group.                              |
| <i>Oct78</i> Second meeting of Bicycles Group.  |
| <i>14 August 1979</i> Pushbikes inaugural meeting. <i>19 Aug79</i> Fun ride and picnic.                 |
| Regular monthly meetings from then on, on second Tuesday each month.                                    |
| Sunday after each meeting - Regular monthly rides.  |
| <i>Sept 79</i> To install 10 cycle racks during September in Warehouse for anyone to use.               |
| <i>Oct 79</i> First Pushbikes campaign success – Birmingham City Council launched Pothole Report Cards. |
| <i>May 80</i> Pushbikes ride – train/cycle via Worcester.   |
| <i>May 80</i> Pushbikes Public meeting had 100 people.  |
| <i>July 80</i> Pothole report cards introduced.   |
| <i>Nov 80</i> Setting up cycle repair workshop for free use.  |
| <i>6 June 1981</i> First Great Midlands Bike Ride   |
| <i>Mar/Apr 82</i> Pushbikes now has DIY bike workshop open every Sat 10-1.                              |
| <i>May/June 82</i> GMBR 6 June.   |
| <i>Oct 82</i> New cycle group for women – 'Spokeswomen'.  |
| <b>M</b> <i>Nov 83</i> Railpath project – working on '~Safe Routes to School' for time being.           |
| <i>Jan/Feb 86</i> – advert for Wheel Right workshops, and group meetings in Moseley.                    |
| <i>May 1987</i> - Wheel Right – cycle repairs – advert  |
| <i>July 1988</i> - Booklet (Cycling in Birmingham) 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition                              |

## 8.0 Trees, gardening and wildlife

Birmingham FoE had many keen gardeners, who were also keen to improve the green spaces around the City, and have more of them.

To this end, various schemes were taken on, by volunteers and paid workers. Initially a 'Gardening Group' was set up, later also supporting the Urban Wildlife Group and the 'Greensite' project, amongst others.

Plots were obtained at Moor Lane Leisure Gardens, the Arts Lab in Newtown, in Moseley, some churchyards, and a city farm. There was emphasis both on growing for food, and creating tree nurseries.

Work was also done in both Primary and Secondary Schools, for example in Tile Cross and Druids Heath.

A team of volunteers was used for 'maintaining, improving and diversifying the gardens of pensioners'.

In 1980, a larger project 'Greensite' was set up. As well as having volunteers, it worked in a similar way to the Home Insulation Project, in that it gained money from Manpower Services to take job-seekers and pay them while they gained work experience. It had many sites around Birmingham, including Edgbaston, Weoley Castle, Kings Norton, Cotteridge and Nechells. In 1981, it had 31 paid workers on 6 urban sites.

One very interesting garden scheme was the Monyhull Project.

Monyhull Hospital was a large building in Kings Norton, built in 1909 to house what were then termed Mentally Handicapped. It originally had farms, craft shops and gardens, but these were sold off and subsequently built on in 1960.

The loss of farms meant that the population of Monyhuill became increasingly detached from the countryside and the stimulation of the natural environment.

BFoE linked up with the residents and staff, and started by creating a pond and a chicken and rabbit run in 1983.

*We would be grateful for more information about this project.*

**Detailed notes**

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| <i>Mar77</i> Gardening – Dig-in at land by Arts Lab, Tower Street, Newtown. Sun 6 Mar 1977 should become an allotment.                         |
| <i>Jun78</i> Gardening Group popular – Tuesdays.   |
| <i>Aug78</i> Gardening Group now has a small plot at Moor Lane Leisure Gardens.  |
| <i>Oct 78</i> Wildlife Group priorities are 2 projects – involvement with Urban Wildlife Nature reserve in Wolverhampton and the Tree Nursery. |
| <i>Nov 78</i> Preparing site for tree nursery.   |
| <i>Nov 78</i> Gardening Group has almost cleared the allotment.  |
| <i>Dec 78</i> Gardening Group has cleared site and planted: rye for manuring, broad beans, early peas and tick beans.                          |
| <i>Apr 79</i> Tree Nursery Project moved from temporary home to 2 sites – Secondary school, Tile Cross and Primary school, Druids Heath.       |
| <i>Oct 79</i> New venture called ' <i>Plant</i> ' – to “Conserve and encourage nature in our city”.  |
| <i>Oct 79</i> New site for tree nursery in Moseley. Dig-in planned for Sunday 14 October.  |
| <i>July 80</i> Greensite Project – MSC Okd S.T.E.P. Project. Manager now Stuart Murray, ex York City Council. Van and tools bought.            |
| <i>Sept 80</i> Volunteers required for:<br>- Saving young trees from threatened sites (e.g. new housing) and replanting in                     |

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| schools.<br>- Maintaining, improving and diversifying gardens of pensioners.   |
| Oct 80 STEP scheme at Aston Churchyard and Holy Trinity City Farm and old people's gardens.  |
| Nov 80 Urban Farm had 14 tons clay to line pond; also wetland, veg areas created.  |
| Dec 80/Jan?Feb? 81 Greensites – Aston & Small Heath major projects continue. Also vol projects at Nature Centre, Edgbaston Nature Reserve, Weoley Castle, Kings Norton Churchyard, Woodside Road Selly Oak, Cotteridge Churchyard, Tree Nursery, Nechells Churchyard, Frankley Estate (R Rea), City Farm Small Heath.                                |
| V 1980s Work on an Ecological Park in Hobmoor Road, Bordesley Green (which is still there!)<br>V 1980s Had use of 2 old 'Black Marias' (ex police vehicles)<br>V 1980s Having acquired a site for inner city wildlife area, Chris Baines wrote to RSPB for their support. Their response was that they were only interested in areas outside cities. |
| April 81 Greensites – also Handsworth Day Centre for Under 5s.   |
| Sept 81 Greensite 2 approved - over 20 workers including Nechells Churchyard, Vincent Drive Edgbaston, Brunswick Road, Balsall Heath.  |
| Oct 81 Greensite now has 31 workers on 6 urban sites (MSC CEP scheme).   |
| M Cannon Hill – 3 allotments, lease until 31 Dec 82  |
| M Nov 83 Monyhull – land being drained, dig-in for pond soon, getting to know residents. Land Rover bought. Open Day for 28 Jan 84.  |
| M Nov 83 Monyhull progressing well, Dig-in great success.  |
| Aug/Sept 94 New project – Uplands allotments, Handsworth, and setting up of Bham Organic Gardeners Group   |

## 9.0 The Warehouse

We have included the warehouse itself in the Projects booklet as projects don't come much bigger than taking on an old, decrepit, 6000 sq. ft. warehouse! But the early practical projects (Recycled paper sales, Paper collections and Insulation) needed storage and a base from which to work; so something was better than nothing.

From its acquisition on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1977, the Warehouse soon became home for a variety of projects. In pretty awful condition, it needed A LOT OF WORK. Many 'willing' hands spent whole weekends on major refurbishment. After office and meeting space was created, it soon also became the base for meetings and campaigning.

In the early years, cooperative working was the daily norm – with 'volunteers' taking turns in making lunches for the project workers, acting as a receptionist, doing the banking, etc.

Over the next few years, the projects came and went, extended and adapted. This depended mainly on government funding initiatives.

The projects, as well as sales of recycled paper, provided income, which kept the building going. In 1986, the chance came to purchase the Warehouse. Funds were raised, including a grant from West Midlands County Council; loans and gifts from supporters.

Owning and managing a building was onerous and time consuming; and at times a very contentious issue for a so-called 'campaign group'. However, it continued to provide a useful base for meeting, campaigning, networking and sharing with other like-minded groups.

Many of the projects developed into separate businesses or groups. Examples of this are Recycled Paper Supplies, Pushbikes and Energy Savers. These then paid rent for the space they occupied. Later this became more formalised, so that the rent paid for the building's upkeep. From 1990 onwards, someone has been employed to manage the building, its tenants, and the day-to-day running.

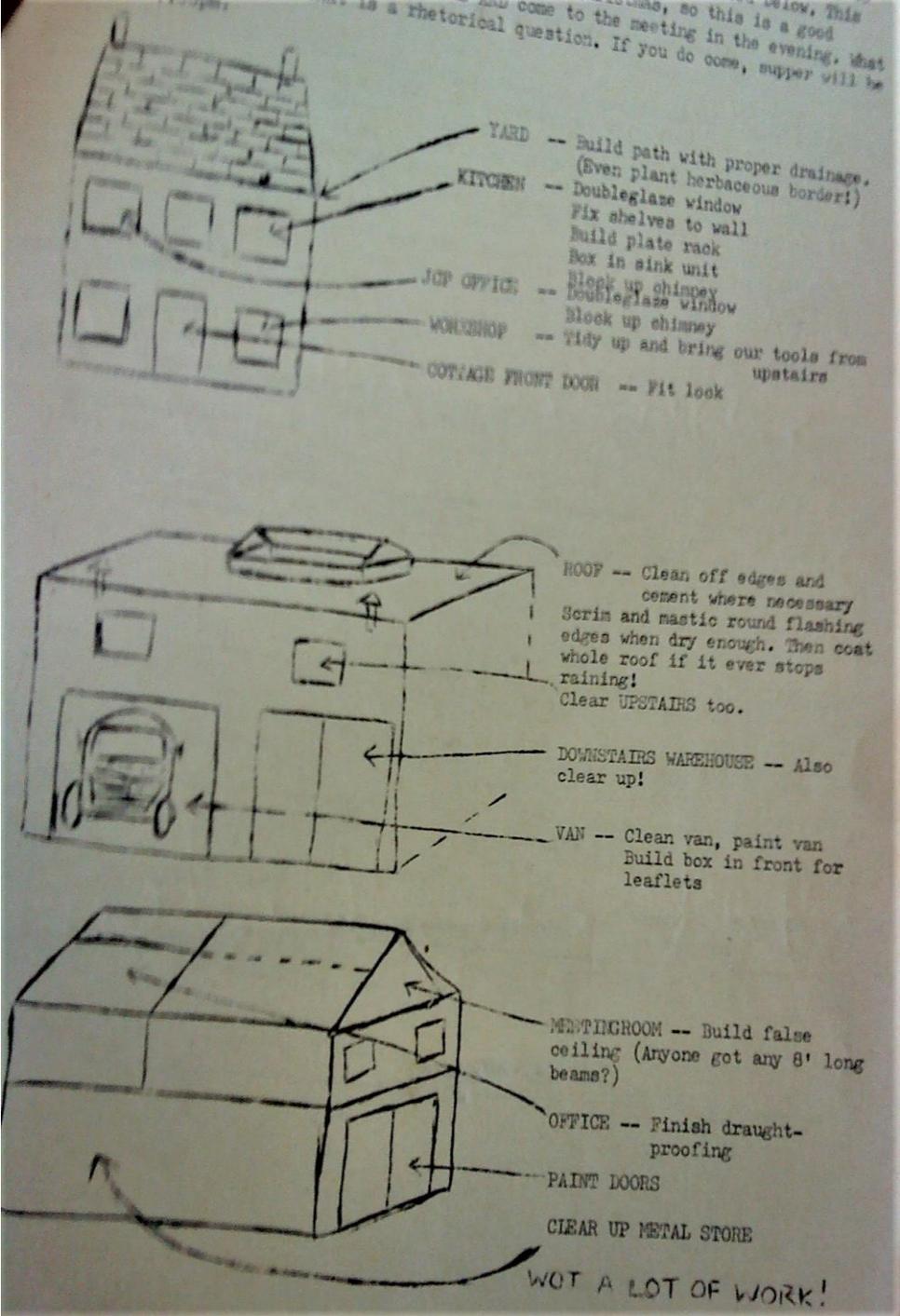
### Detailed notes

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| <i>Jan 77</i> Good news – hope to move BFoE office into Arts Lab at Birmingham Settlement on 1 <sup>st</sup> April.   |
| <i>Jan 77+</i> Imminent move to Arts Lab is almost definite.  |
| <i>Jan 77+</i> Been offered 6000ft Warehouse – need some “Whiz-kid organiser” to set up. [NB. Item under 'Recycling']   |
| <i>Ma r77</i> Decided to accept offer of Warehouse. Planning all the work necessary – cleaning, plumbing, wiring, painting, etc. Priority is to clear ground floor for paper collections. Warehouse OK for recycling, but felt not for BFoE centre and campaign. So move to Settlement still on. [NB. Item under 'Recycling'] |
| <i>Apr 77</i> Move in.  |
| <i>May 77</i> From 1 May, someone will be full-time at Warehouse. Organisation of decorating, insurance, lease, constitution, rota. Setting up recycling collections. Workdays Sundays. Building called 'Friends of the Earth Recycling Centre'.  |
| <i>July 77</i> Working weekend and Warehouse Warming Party 16/17 July – people from all over country coming!  |
| <i>Aug 77</i> Jumble Sale 13Aug.  |
| <i>Aug 77</i> Report of Working w/e – successful with Morris Dancers, Bassoon Quartet – Sept 3/4 next one.  |
| <i>Sept 77</i> Next jumble sale 8 October.  |
| <i>Oct 77</i> Opening Warehouse on Saturdays.   |
| <i>Oct 77</i> Successful appln for Job Creation Project – Environmental Information.  |
| <i>Oct 77</i> Roof repairs starting, cost £438.   |
| <i>Oct 77</i> Working Sun 16 Oct to prepare room for JCP project.   |
| <i>Nov 77</i> Daytime work and Warehouse practicalities have meant neglecting campaigns (mainly evenings).  |

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| <i>Dec 77 Dec 10<sup>th</sup> Eco Craft Fair.</i>  |
| <i>Jan 78 Workday 11Jan [* See chart of work with diagrams]</i>  |
| <i>Jan 78 Craft Fair very successful. Some crafts left over, so we are starting with a stall in the Rag Market, probably every Friday.</i>   |
| <i>Mar78 BFoE Sweatshop (the '4<sup>th</sup> project of BFoE') – making useful articles from old materials, clothes etc. which people bring in.</i>  |
| <i>Mar78 Working w/e/Anniversary Party planned – including to reclaim the last part of the building – the ground floor in the cottage.</i>   |
| <i>Mar78 Tenure of Allison Street vague -we have an arrangement with the Gay Centre next door, which has an arrangement with the actual tenant. Lease expires in September 1979.</i>   |
| <i>Apr78 Hoping to start Repair Shop; repairing household mechanical and electrical tools, e.g. kettles, vacuum cleaners.</i>  |
| <i>Apr78 Birthday celebration 15/16<sup>th</sup>.</i>  |
| <i>May78 New Project 'Ragwork (was BFoE Sweatshop last time). Now making sacking bags, oven gloves, tea-cosies.</i>  |
| <i>May78 Ragwork – three people doing this – logo on goods Patched butterfly. BFoE banner produced.</i>  |
| <i>May78 Working day 30April.</i>  |
| <i>Nov 80 Greenhouse set up on roof of Warehouse.</i>  |
| <i>May 81 Break-in and fire at Warehouse. Office needs rebuilding – 3 months.</i>  |
| <b>M</b> <i>Jan 82 WH to decide whether projects leave WH when become separate – OR to put money into renovating building/make offices, etc.</i>   |
| <b>**May/Jun 82 Double page spread of 5 years at Warehouse.**</b> See separate publication   |
| <i>May/Jun 82 Sun 4 July to be Street Party.</i>   |
| <i>Dec 82 Urban Wildlife Group moving out of Warehouse, time come to assert own identity.</i>  |
| <i>Dec 82 Insulation and other WH projects to be affected by fundamental changes to funding (from Jan?83). Community Enterprise Programme (administered by MSC) to be replaced by Community Programme – less hours, only one-year contracts.</i>                     |
| <b>M</b> <i>Jan 83 Major discussion about CP &amp; projects. Suggestion of setting up managing agency and servicing team to 'sponsor' insulation &amp; other projects. [City Wide project, Sparkbrook &amp; Smethwick, Kingstanding, BEEP, Pushbikes, Recycling]</i> |
| <i>Jan/Feb 89 Changes in Warehouse – moving of One Earth Shop, creation of retail recycled paper shop, set up of Amazon Cafe and Digbeth Pottery (in the previous Bike Workshop)</i>   |
| <i>July/August 89 Appeal for help with building work, e.g. plumbing, electricity, carpentry to cut down on costs in Warehouse.</i>   |
| <i>July/Aug 89 Great Paint-in - new BFoE extension painted by volunteers and paint paid for by fundraising.</i>  |
| <i>Sept/Oct 89 New meeting room now operating</i>  |

Working Weekends at the Warehouse – e.g. 10-11 November 1979, 31 February-3 March 1980, 26-27 March 1988.

**Warehouse Working Day 11<sup>th</sup> January 1978**



## **10.0\_Other miscellaneous activities**

### **Badges**

*Oct/Nov93* Thanks to Lesley Wroot for 5 years' work on Badges (contract to supply and post out National FoE badge orders).

### **FoE Bearwood**

Set up Saturday 8 November 1986

### **Handsworth & Black Country FoE**

Set up August 1987

### **FoE Smethwick**

Newsletter dated September 1986 – but NOT later

### **Fundraising**

Started £2 per month appeal to fund paid worker, when MSC funding finished and LA grant gone. (start of Golden Supporter scheme).

**Walks** in the 1980s – organised by Ian Bailey, generally every two weeks or monthly.

### **Green Trade Fair**

Saturday 23 April 1988

Sep/Oct89 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Bham Green Trade Fair Sat 14<sup>th</sup> October at Carrs Lane.

### **Stalls**

*July77* Stalls at fetes etc.: 2 July Selly Oak; 9 July Acocks Green; 24 July Victoria Park.

*Jun78* Stalls at Moseley, Leamington Peace Festival, Hall Green, Saltley, Leamington Health Festival, Sandwell.

*June/July 92* Vernon appeals for help – items to sell, looking after stalls, moving things to events (Fetes, fayres).