

POOR BUT HAPPY #3

A GUIDE TO LOW-BUDGET LIVING.

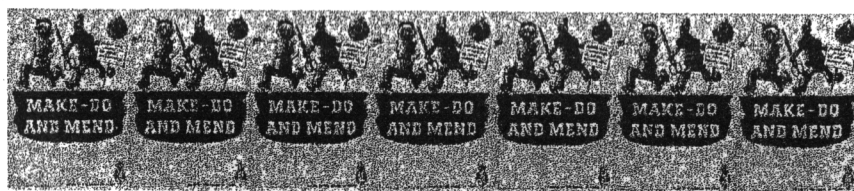


More thrifty tips for stingy gits.

End Marmite exasperation today! Experience the Freecycle speed-trials!!

Gasps at my shoe-mending frenzy!!! Enjoy a lock-in at the library!!!!

FREE-FREE-FREE-FREE-FREE-FREE-FREE-FREE-



Hello! frugalists and stinge-hounds everywhere. Me again, slowing down the economy one zine at a time. Before I start my run in panto playing Baron Hardup I thought I'd squeeze out another of these. From now the emphasis is going to be even more on diy and self-reliance, partly so the zine doesn't keep going out of date in a climate where lots of companies are raising prices or going tits up. Issue one's now out of print, but read it online at <http://zinemonger.blogspot.com>. This zine is copyleft- read what that means on the back cover. You can photocopy and distro this zine in its existing form as long as you give it away free. Please send me info and feedback at thriftnerd@yahoo.co.uk or 20 Rochdale Way, Deptford, London SE8 4LY, UK.

Take care. Stay cheap.

Ed (Dec 08)

Eddie Willson

Updates. *Within days of me recommending National Express Funfares, their price went up from £1 to £5.

*Eurobusexpress went bust within a week of me buying a ticket to Paris. But, if you pay for something by Visa debit card and the company doesn't deliver, then depending on your card issuer you could get your money back. Google 'visa chargeback' for details. Some of our comrades on bank call centres haven't been told about the scheme so ask them to wake up a supervisor.

*If you want to try the diy double-glazing idea from issue 1, I've improved my technique. Use the thinnest clear polythene dustsheet you can get, it's easier to work with. The double-sided tape with the paper backing works better than the foam-backed stuff. When putting the tape on the window frame, leave the backing paper on it until you're ready to put the polysheet in position.

Genius or lunatic? Since the UK smoking ban, sales from pub fag machines have plummeted. So, we buy all the redundant ciggy machines, print up novels the size of cigarette packets and sell them from the machines. We call the adapted machine the Paperbacconist. Anyway, just a thought.

The themed bit; waste not, want not. These waste saving ideas are extra to the ones in issue 1 that you can see at <http://zinemonger.blogspot.com>.

Power. In PBH1 I suggested setting your hot water thermostat to 60° C but now I've insulated the hot water tank really well I get away with having the hot water on for 20 minutes a day at 40° C. You can diy insulate your tank. Try using an old duvet or sleeping bag that's got too ranky to use and/or tie a big sheet of corrugated cardboard round the outside. Places like B and Q do tank jackets for about £8. Bathrooms always seem to be the coldest room. Cut old bubblewrap to the size of the window and tape it in place for insulation. You'll lose a bit of light but as the window's probably frosted it won't make much odds.

Water. Check if it's worth getting a water meter. Mine's saves me about £140 a year. If you run the hot tap until the hot water comes through, collect that initial cool water in one of those five litre water bottles. If you use it promptly it's fine to water plants, wash fruit and veg etc.

Food. Leftovers. There's good recipes for using food leftovers at www.lovefoodhatewaste.com but I'd rather not create leftovers in the first place. To help, I keep a note stuck to the fridge of a typical portion size for me of staples like pasta, rice, couscous, potatoes etc, so I know what to cook. * **Spreads.** It's cheap and easy to make your own spreads for sarnies but as they aren't full of preservatives they don't keep that long. To solve that, collect those cylindrical caps that come on top of aerosols and wash them thoroughly. When you make a batch of spread put small portions of it into the caps and freeze it. Take them out and defrost them individually when you want to make your packed lunches.

The bottom of the jar. It's frustrating trying to access the last scrapes of something good. Try these fixes. **Marmite;** use the last smudges to make stock or a hot drink. Pour boiling water into the jar and leave to stand for a bit. Pick it up with a tea-towel - that fucker'll be hot. **Mayonnaise;** Make potato salad. Chop the cooked potatoes small, pop them in the mayo jar, put on the lid and shake the jar until the potatoes are well coated. **Chocolate sauce.** The dregs of that stuff you put on ice cream can be turned into hot chocolate. Pour (soya) milk into the bottle, microwave for 1 minute, shake, pour and drink. Mmm.

Free stuff. Here's some free alternatives to stuff you'd otherwise buy. **Washing up scourers.** Use the mesh bags that onions and oranges come in. Old toothbrushes are good too. **Washing up cloths.** Cut up knackered old sheets. This and the above can be cleaned by soaking in a solution of 1tsp of vinegar to 1 pint of water, then put in the normal wash. **Freezer bags.** It's a good idea to do a big cook once or twice a month and freeze the results. Instead of freezer bags I freeze individual portions in empty 500g margarine tubs. They probably aren't microwave-safe so I defrost the food during the day and transfer it to a dish to microwave.

Notes for the Cut-price bon viveur. Sorry yet again for the usual London bias, but that won't change until you lot send in suggestions. *The much missed londonfreelist has got a successor now which is better in some ways; <http://freelondonlistings.co.uk> - lots of free stuff to go out to. * In store gigs usually feel a bit wrong to me but the free gigs at Pure Groove in Farringdon (www.puregroove.co.uk) and Rough Trade (www.roughtrade.com) in Whitechapel are consistently good. *Travelling abroad, guide books aren't much use for finding interesting gigs to go to. Instead, try www.last.fm and click on 'events' for up to date listings.

Reuse, reuse, reuse. Tetrapak key pouch. To make a pouch to keep your keys in you'll need one flat rectangular 1lt tetrapak and a key ring (ideally one of the D lock shaped ones). Carefully rinse and flatten the carton. From the corner nearest the spout cut a square about 4" by 4". Snap the lid off the spout. Fit the key ring, (with all your keys attached) through the spout hole. Trim the tetrapak corner so it's just big enough for the keys to tuck neatly inside. To keep the keys in place, gently poke a small hole near the inner corner and thread an elastic band through to snap around the outside of the pouch.

The Arbitrary Challenge The challenge was to see how quickly it'd be possible to furnish a flat for free using my local Freecycle network (www.freecycle.org). As I've got all the furniture I need this was a bit of a theoretical exercise, and in practice the items I saw listed may well have got snapped up by somebody else. But the results still showed what a great system Freecycle is. I started with a wish list of a bed, sofa, table, dining chairs and wardrobe. In under three days I had a choice of a pine bed or futon, a choice of two three-seater sofas. Also on offer were three different mattresses, one telephone, a telly, one armchair, a cork notice-board, two CD racks. Just when I was starting to despair about the prospects of bagging a wardrobe, the tat fairies delivered. During the night, somebody fly-tipped a perfectly good wardrobe by the bins at the end of my estate. Okay, it wasn't on Freecycle, but hey, my rules, I makes 'em, I breaks 'em.

Some particular place to go. I went Interrailing recently. My fave city was Warsaw. Cheap too! I stayed at Tamka hostel (www.tamkahostel.pl); clean, central and about £8 a night inc free breakfast, internet, tea and coffee. A lot of Warsaw's history is pretty chastening -85% of the city was destroyed by the Nazis- but it cost you an arm and a leg to have your heart broken in the city's museums. Pawiak Prison museum (free) is on the site of a jail where Jewish prisoners were held and recounts their bravery in the face of oppression. The Museum of the Warsaw Uprising (£1) is overwhelming but essential. Less grimly the Eryk Lipinski Cartoon museum is good (free Sats) and the Fotoplastikon (free) is a freaky collection of old 3D photos. Elba 2 (www.elba.bzzz.net) is a well run squatted social centre running gigs, food not bombs meal etc. Find out more at www.warsawtour.pl

Money well spent. There's less and less that I need, but I've still picked up a few bargains since last time. Side plate 10p, two dinner plates 20p each all from the Well charity shop Deptford. Four knives and forks for 5p each at Devon Air Ambulance Trust shop in Honiton. In Kirkgate market I bought 11 self-inking decorative print rollers for making your own stationery for £2 total, vs a full price of £33. The woman running the stall was closing that day because of her dodgy legs; one person's bargain's another person's bad luck.

Household hints. Reclaim the soap! Those annoying bits of soap left over at the end of a bar can be made into a new bar of soap. Take 3 or 4 ounces of leftover soap bits. Doesn't matter if they're all different colours - in fact that can make the end result look quite good. Grate or chop them into little pieces. Put them in a microwaveable dish with five tablespoons of water. Make sure the dish is a big one- this stuff really froths up. Heat on full power for two minutes. Stir well. Heat for another minute. Stir and pour into some kind of container that can act as a mould. The clear plastic blister packs that small electrical goods come in are ideal for this. Leave to set..

Harumph! It pisses me off that people's justified concerns about the environment are used more and more often by businesses as a means to turn a few extra quid profit. There's a shop that I probably shouldn't identify, in a trendy bit of London that sells food and other household stuff loose or without packaging. It'd be a sound idea if the prices weren't so fucking daft. Organic lentils, loose, were £3 a kilo. The normal price is about £1.70 a kilo. Five kg of lentils comes in a plastic bag 12" by 18". So at those trendy prices you'd be paying £7 extra to keep one 12" by 18" plastic bag out of the waste stream. Small wonder a lot of people think green issues are just for the well off.

A lock in at the library. Nobody needs to buy books – that's what libraries are for. Here's a couple of books you might want to put in a request for at your local one. If a book's under about £15 and not wildly obscure there's a fair chance they'll buy it in. Your chances are even better at the start of the financial year (April/ May).

***The Long Tail-Chris Anderson.** Technically this is a business book, except it's not shit. Anderson argues that despite trends to greater centralisation of power, the Internet and the rise of digital culture allows for more niche creative expression and a blurring of the divide between consumers and creators. He says, 'It's when the tools of production are transparent that we are inspired to create.' Though his focus isn't on the DIY scene, this book left me really optimistic about the future of low-budget culture.

***Another Dinner Is Possible-Isy and Mike.** There's about 171 million cookbooks in the UK and 61 million of them have never been opened. This is written and designed (spiral bound) to be used. Vegan throughout, this one avoids the two pitfalls I often find in veggie cookbooks; it's not poncey food porn, but nor is it a basic 'survival cooking' guide aimed at people leaving home for the first time. There's enough clearly written recipes to keep you cooking for a year, with nothing to scare off the under-confident, as well as lots of well-researched info on food issues. *If you want to read my reviews of DIY creative produce, check out my blog <http://madebypeople.blogspot.com>.*

Something I learned today.

My new-found skill for this ish is fixing shoes when they get knackered. Most of this applies to shoes like Doctor Marten's but you can adapt most of this to trainers too.

Shoe care. § It's best to have at least a couple pairs of shoes and wear them in rotation so your sweat gets a chance to dry out and doesn't rot the insides. If they get smelly, bicarb of soda sprinkled inside and left for 24 hours should absorb most smells. § If new shoes chafe at the heel, rub some petroleum jelly into the leather where it chafes and put the shoes in an airing cupboard for 2-3 days to soften. § Here's the do as I say, not as I do bit. Your shoes will keep good for longer if you polish them. They're far less likely to split after getting wet for a start. If, like me, you can rarely be arsed you might find your tin of polish has gone hard. Put the sealed tin in boiling water for 2 minutes, then mix in a bit of turps.

Repairs. The sole. The sole on my D.Ms split. It would have cost £13 to have them fixed at the shoe menders – and this was when I was in Bradford on holiday – you can get a haircut for £3 in Bradford! I bought a pair of Soltrack stick-on soles at Wilkinsons and did it myself. The soles are one size which you cut down to fit and cost £2.50 a pair including glue. Follow the instructions on the pack closely, especially the bit about positioning the sole right first time because that glue sticks like shit to a blanket. If there's no Wilkinsons near you, they sell mail order too (www.wilkinsonplus.com) or try eBay where I've seen the same soles for £2.50 inc postage. Alternatively, get hold of a discarded one of those black rubber doormats with the narrow ridges and cut it to shape. Jars of shoe glue are on eBay for a fiver inc postage, or evostick impact will do the trick. *(The doormat rubber is better and so is it wears down less.)*
Leather. If the leather splits your options are limited. You can do a makeshift repair using the little rubber patches you get in bike puncture repair kits. Cut the patch to size and glue over the split using shoe glue or evostick.

Heels. Judging by the way my heels wear down lopsided you'd think I was too bow-legged to stop a pig in a narrow alley. Best answer is to act at the early stages of your heels wearing down. You can get rubber stick on heel tips, again sold by Wilkinsons and made by Soltrack, which fit onto the worn area. They're about ¼ inch thick, wedge-shaped and cost £1.50 including glue. If your heels are worn down more than ¼" you could experiment with gluing one heel wedge on top of another to build up to the correct thickness. You can also get complete replacement flat heels on eBay for about £2.50 per pair inc postage, but I haven't tried these. Presumably you'd have to saw off the existing heels, unless you'd worn down the old ones completely evenly. Fuck knows how that'd happen, unless you spent a lot of time doing the Twist.

Finders keepers. Deptford's flytipping central. Since pbh2 I've bagged the following: a briefcase, a fishing stool, bureau type desk, a blanket, a sausage dog draught excluder, big lined curtains, a stacking veg rack, a coffee table, a watering can, a shoe rack, a wicker shopping trolley, a suitcase, a wicker laundry basket. Score!



Links. www.instructables.com Full of how-to guides for make do and mend projects. Hours of fun.

www.junkk.com Lots of ideas for reusing packaging.

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk> Learn stuff for free at this Open University site.

www.oculture.com Big list of free language learning podcasts.

<http://zinemonger.blogspot.com> Read Poor But Happy #1 and another of my zines Publish and Be Published.

<http://wemakezines.ning.com/> Brilliant community site for makers and readers of zines.

www.photocopyheart.proboards79.com Another smaller site for zinesters. Well worth a visit.



Another Eddie Willson vanity project, from Timewaster International.



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CHRISTMAS MERRY
HAPPY HOLIDAYS