

“Not another one with cotter-pins! Rich, can you pass me the hammer?”

In the ever-changing landscape that is post-quake Christchurch, the inconspicuous skeleton of a shed is emerging amongst piles of rubble and brand new buildings.

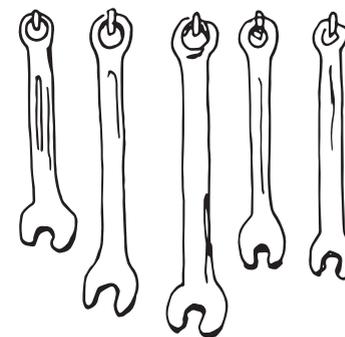
Three and a half years since Christchurch’s devastating earthquake, the city is still in re-build mode, new road diversions are announced daily and cars are far from the most efficient form of transport (as in most cities). Christchurch is a city in transition and the lowly bicycle is enjoying something of a renaissance. As a result there are a lot more bikes, a lot more people riding bikes and a lot of people who aren’t sure what to do when their bike goes wrong.

Which is why RAD Bikes came into being. RAD stands for Recycle A Dunger – ‘dunger’ being New Zealand slang for a beaten-up old bike.

The brainchild of Rich Sewell, the oddly-shaped shed was designed by his brother and sister-in-law Nic and

Jess and built by a rabble of less-than-skilled volunteers fuelled by a combination of sausages and coleslaw. RAD Bikes is a mobile community bike shed and tool library. Moving from one rubble-strewn quake-site to the next, it allows those who know what they’re doing to work on their bikes at will, and those who need a little encouragement to get as much assistance as they need. For those who run RAD it’s a place where we can build whatever we want from whatever recycled bits we find in the shed. We accept all donations: whether it’s a few coins from your pocket or a 1950s Raleigh that’s been gathering rust in your garden, there’s potential in anything.

We want people to want to fix and build bikes. Too often bikes are thrown away, replaced rather than repaired, left abandoned and wheel-less in some long-forgotten bike rack. We want to make it easy and unintimidating. We don’t just fix and service bikes for people but get them involved, whether it’s just cleaning the chain or having a go at changing their bottom bracket. At RAD people can choose how much they want to do and how much to donate.



We’re not out to make a profit and everything we get goes to buying bits and bobs to keep the shed running.

Speaking of running, the shed is powered by solar panels. The biggest benefit of this (that I can see) is the consistent flow of 70s soul and funk seeping out of the loosely attached speakers; Earth Wind and Fire’s *Boogie Wonderland* markedly increases one’s bike maintenance abilities. This discovery led to the inaugural bike-light-disco, as part of the city’s Festival of Transitional Architecture (FESTA). Lit solely by bike lights, the aim was to promote bike safety... and dancing.

RAD is run by a core group of volunteers, who try to open the shed as much as their full-time jobs allow to help, advise and fix people’s bikes. Only two are professional bike mechanics, the rest are a rag-tag group of architects, an engineer, a nurse, a doctor and a soon-to-be bar owner. We love bikes – but mostly we enjoy hanging out while tinkering with the greatest form of transport on the planet.

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