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# Tech\_2 (A report from Bristol)

BySaul Albert

In an 8-day gathering, enthusiasts of independent networking discovered how far it's possible to take Open Source.

[IMAGE]

The organisers of tech\_2 couldn't have chosen a more suitable venue than Windmill Hill City farm. What better cover than screaming children and cute little bunnies for a gathering of politically motivated techno-dissidents.

The "Rubbish to Router" workshop on the first day showed how to set up a no-cost mini network using a thrown away low end PC to share a dialup Internet connection. I had actually lost two weeks of my life, and nearly my sanity trying to do this at my studio (successfully in the end) a few weeks prior to tech\_2, so I was surprised to be so out of my depth and actually left the workshop no longer understanding what I had done.

Although most of the technical workshops were similarly baffling to me (despite my aspiring nerdiness) the social scene was humming. Just like arty ponces crack open the champers to oil the social cogs at private views, the tech\_2 participants cracked open computers and hob-nobbed over the spilled innards of burnt out, dusty 486s while trying to re-animate them with Linux.

It was refreshing that the DIY ethos (or even better Do It Together as one tech\_2 participant put it) extended to all areas of the event. The extra-curricular activities were generously open to everyone so in the evenings the computers were abandoned while we were introduced to open source orienteering or DIT climbing, extending the free software metaphor to physical activities. (see [www.cubecinema.com/faq](http://www.cubecinema.com/faq) or [www.irational.org/climbing](http://www.irational.org/climbing)).

[IMAGE] At an event espousing Open Source software and the wider cultural application of its strategies I had expected another re-branding of the vague political abstractions of so-called "community arts", the kind of event where education and arts admin professionals are paid to sit in conference halls, wear name badges and agree with each other. However at tech\_2 the carefully collected participants often seemed at opposite ends of the political spectrum, from bigoted American cryptography zealots to low-tech Bristol art punks and socially responsible independent media producers from around the world. The format of tech\_2 was successful because it borrowed techniques from the Open Source movement such as such as peer tuition, self-directed involvement and a light organisational touch. People just turned up and were thrown in the deep end, invited to join in and bring whatever they could to the event.

Tech\_2 is going to Leeds from the 10th - 14th September 2001

[www.soutspace.org/tech\\_2](http://www.soutspace.org/tech_2)

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