

Finding more than you would expect in a shed!



Earlier this year the vision of John and Eddie began to take shape, a “Men’s Shed” serving the communities of the Hoo Peninsula.

A Men’s Shed, for those who are unfamiliar with the movement, is an eclectic group of small workshops, run as a community collective, where men (although not exclusively!), particularly those isolated or struggling with health issues, both physical and mental, can go to find conversation and healthy distraction. Judging by the other projects we’ve seen, they are a fantastic resource for a community where people can meet up and find “community” over a restoration project, sharing skills and



knowledge, or by making something for their home or for a friend; or indeed something to sell on Ebay to help fund the project into the future. The opportunity to meeting others, enabling new relationships and conversations, and mutual support within the community, are what the Men's Shed projects are all about.

For us at Lower Stoke, it all began over a coffee at the Wednesday Community Drop-In at the Methodist Church (one of the locations of the Peninsula Methodist Church). This led to a conversation with another local charity that ran a Men's Shed project on the Medway City Industrial Estate called The Octopus Foundation. They were extremely helpful and encouraged us to hold some taster sessions with their support. Over a dozen local men (of a certain age!) came to those taster sessions and John received several other messages of interest, this confirmed that there was a wider appetite to have a Men's Shed locally. Several months later we have a working project, still some details to iron out and some changes to the building needed going forward, but each Tuesday morning there is the buzz of a workshop humming away with both machinery and conversation

at the heart of the community. A healthy sign that the Men's Shed is working well is the fact the kettle never goes cold! The project has moved forward very quickly, and I must thank John and Eddie who got things off the ground, and Terry, Mike and Ian, who have been instrumental in getting the workshop up and running. There have also been numerous donations of tools, machinery, wood, and materials, with some of the donations being extremely generous, that have enabled the Shed to function. And for all of those donations and people's time, we want to say a huge thank you!

Of course, within the vibrant mix of people and conversation there have been opportunities to talk about issues of faith, and we pray that the fact this project is hosted by the local Methodist Church will continue to spark healthy questions. We continue to hope that all those involved will find more than they expected over a cup of tea and the intricacies of making wooden toy Spitfires!

If you'd like to be involved or visit the project please contact either John Stunell or Bart Woodhouse.

