

LOWESTOFT MEN'S SHED

The Men's Shed project is based within 'The Hut', initially built to dry and mend fishing nets in the 1920's. It formed from members mainly from a local theatre group together with other interested individuals, after hearing of the existence and objectives of Men's Sheds. Seeing a need locally for this type of organisation, husbands and friends got together in September 2016 and set about renovating the ageing Hut.

The large area used for storage was fitted with boarding and a new roof put in place to create a fully equipped wood workshop, followed in the coming months and years with the creation of an allotment, front garden area, unused rooms were used to create storage and work areas. In 2021 the renovation of the main hall was completed which now allows greater use of this area for social activities; board games, pool table and darts. It is also used by other local community groups at various times, including a 'knit and natter' group, Canasta club, rehearsal space for two local theatre groups and a table tennis team who play in the local league. Currently, a new kitchen area has been created allowing more seating in the canteen social space. Most of the work has been completed by the members.

We meet three mornings a week with tea and coffee at 9am followed by mid-morning drink and hot snack (usually a bacon or sausage roll). Members pay a monthly fee towards use of equipment and refreshments and can participate in both personal and group projects, gardening or just sit and chat over more tea. Ongoing running costs are covered from donations from various areas and also from donations received for work projects carried out for individuals (we only invoice cost of completing the work and suggest a donation).

Our aims and objectives are to promote the preservation and protection of men's good health, for public benefit, in particular, but not limited for those who are retired, unemployed or have health problems, through the provision of facilities to help improve mental and physical wellbeing of men. This will be achieved through the creation of an environment for hobbies, recreational and or other leisure time occupations, including practical interests, skills sharing, the learning of new skills, and helping with other community based projects.

Some very strong friendships have been achieved over that period and more importantly, we have all become friends and happily talk to each other about our lives, personal circumstances, problems and successes. Advice on how to improve one's lot has been given freely and when needed a shoulder to cry on. We believe that this coming together of men, meeting and chatting over a cup of tea, working on common projects has made a significant impact on their lives.

Our current membership is 63 (40 per cent are not born in the area). Most of these are 60+, but we do not have any age restrictions, except you must be over 18 years of age, due to our success we now have a waiting list for membership. We undertake various projects which are largely carpentry-based, and our success lies through our trusted standing within the local and extended community. Project requests come from a variety of sources including The Suffolk Wildlife Trust, local Community Groups, Schools, Local and Regional Council Services and annually assisting with projects for the 1st Light Festival.

Our work within the local community covers many areas. refurbishment of signs and noticeboards, building planters plus various bird/hedgehog boxes for the local council, sensory boards and other small projects for local schools, bird/hedgehog boxes for Suffolk Wildlife Trust, making props for theatre groups. We carry out a number of projects for The First Light Festival, mobiles and other items for the South Pier pavilion and built the large table which is positioned on the beach for the festival each year – built to be dismantled, we assemble each summer and remove each year.

We have an active Facebook page where we post photographs of our various projects and activities.