

And so the years roll on. On a day like this we think of those men who were with us, some from the very beginning, but who have passed on and as we look around us we are conscious that some amongst us struggle with health issues and hope that they find some solace in being in the company of other Shedders fairly regularly. One of our aims is to make it as easy as possible for any like-minded men to come together in a safe and secure environment to set up, run and maintain a Men's Shed. Here you can find meaning, purpose, friendship and belonging. In this way it is hoped that you can improve your health and wellbeing through activities, talks and access to health information and resources.

Maybe the Community Garden was a bit slower getting up and going this year but despite the wet summer months there was at one time a steady supply of strawberries and now there seems to be a good crop of onions. Some Maris Piper potatoes also made an appearance but quickly disappeared. We were able to add the wooden hut and some more tools. We are now working through the Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme which will see further development of this garden. The smaller polytunnel behind the shed is not to be out done and did its usual job of providing quite a crop of tomatoes. Last week we had our second barbeque of the year. Maybe the Secret Garden was not used as often this year but then the weather only came good last week. There was a variety of vegetables grown and they have all been used up now.

One interesting visit in September last year was from the Community Medication Safety Workshop. They were doing a NI wide survey into how older people organised their medications. To encourage participation, they gave all who took part a £10 note. The County Down Community Network are regularly in contact (Clare) and they invited us to take part in an exchange with other sheds. We visited Newtownhamilton, Derramore and Portaferry while they came to us in November. They also invited us to send 3 members to join them on their 25 year old birthday celebration. Not to be outdone in October 10 men organised their own trip to Wexford. They did this by train and visited the Wexford Town Shed on the second day. The CDRN have now organised an exchange with sheds in Donegal and Leitrim. Four members were drawn out of the hat for that overnight stay. In turn we will host a group from there in December and attend a conference in the Carrickdale Hotel the next day. Newry Catering College is one of our favourite eateries and we were there for Christmas lunch and then again in March for the evening dinner. Other places we visited for lunch included the Carrick Café, Meelmore Lodge near the Trassey Track and on the 15th December the Kilmorey Arms for the Christmas Dinner. And when talking about food let us not us not forget about Ashlene and the food she provided for us in the Shed through January and early February.

On the road, we visited the American Folk Park near Omagh with lunch in Salley's Restaurant, the Downpatrick Museum with lunch in the Burrendale and the Belfast Museum with a stopover at the Ivanhoe. Killeavey Castle had been getting a lot of publicity, so we arranged lunch there on 29 June. The ferry to Greenore was an extra dimension to our trip to the Greenore Co-op on 11 July for a history talk on the railway and the port with lunch thrown in. Ignatius Trainor, Martin Rogers, Gordon McCulla and myself were in Stormont in February for an appeal by the Irish Men's Shed Association to the government to help Sheds with running costs as happens in the south. In early December, 7 members will join with 22 Burren Sheddors in exploring the Christmas Cracker week in The Gleneagles Hotel in Killarney.

The Shed is probably an example of community democracy in action. Basically, Martin or I are the main point of contact with the outside world. We then bring it to the rest of the members to garner the general opinion of the group. Any decisions are then posted on the whiteboard. If we have to nominate a certain number to take part, we then ask for each member to put his name forward and the names are pulled 'from the hat'.

An Ríocht GAA Club have once again facilitated our stay. As you will see from Martin's report he is as diligent as ever and has been rightly complimented by others on his bookkeeping. Kathy Gallagher is a constant source of encouragement and is more than helpful at sourcing monies for us to keep our various projects on course.

As Chairman it is good to see that the Shed means quite a lot to so many members and when I am out and about some of your family members tell me 'Don't let anything happen to that Shed Tom'.

Tom Cunningham Chairman 12 September 2023