

## Kingdom Men's Shed Annual General Meeting Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024

And so another year has passed and we are gathered here to reflect and celebrate with our friends on events which have affected us all during that time. I am thinking of our colleagues, Barney Sloan and Peter Cox who had been an integral part of our community here in the shed. Their passing reminds us of what the idea behind having a Men's Shed is. We are mainly from a rural community so it is important that we are aware that isolation and thus loneliness can be a health hazard. There is a place for every man here no matter your personal circumstances. It is a place to feel included and make long-lasting friendships while engaging in a wide range of activities and projects. I hope that you look forward to coming out here and find something of value in maintaining these links with the many personalities which congregate in the shed. With that in mind I am reminded that in October we will be 10 years in existence. Before that we had been part of the Social Initiative project set up through the GAA Headquarters in Croke Park. In fact in June some 12 of us travelled to Athlone to catch up with that project's leader, Sean Kilbride, in the Saint Brigid's GAA club in Roscommon.

Through the various trips organised you can see that we are realising our aims to promote cohesion among our members. We had sixteen lunches and walks sponsored by the Clear Funding and the Warrenpoint Harbour grant. Probably one of most demanding was our visit in October by some members to Men's Sheds in Donegal and Leitrim. This was organised with the County Down Rural Community Network's Clare Sheils. Then in December we hosted those sheds in Dunavil with over 60 men lining up for the press photograph. And the next day we were there in the Carrickdale Hotel to attend the Irish Mens Shed Association convention. We also had Daniel and Peter going off to Killarney in November to join with shedders from all over Ireland help Killarney Men's Shed tackle the invasive rhododendron in Killarney National Park. If you study the list of visits and trips prepared by Martin you will see that there is quite a lot going on in your shed. I think another aspect we need to consider when looking through the list is that any suggestion regarding this kind of activity is openly discussed and written up on the whiteboard. This kind of democracy might seem tiresome and slow at times but I think the 'debate' is part of keeping things lively and interesting.

A new place to have Christmas Dinner this year was by invitation to the Norbrook canteen where we joined several other community groups for the festivities. Hopefully we can maintain this link so come December will be heading back up to Carnbane. Another unusual invitation was when Specsavers, through our link to the Social Initiative, funded a group of us to the Down V Offaly National League game in Newry. They funded our lunch in the Diamonds, our tickets and the transport. On behalf of the Shed I welcome our new members, some of whom maybe didn't even know where Dunavil was and now seem happy to contribute in any way they can, Brian with his art class and Lauren with his drones and model aircraft. The gardens continue to flourish and are providing fresh vegetables for those who want them. Phillip keeps coming up with ideas and we try and support him as best we can. To witness the recent frying of herring in the upper cabin on a cooker powered by solar panels was worth noting.

Again I have to mention Martin and thank him on your behalf for the effort he puts in to keeping the books up to date and to our good friend, Kathy Gallagher, who is constantly in touch with us and always looking for funding so that we can pay our bills and provide meaningful membership. As chairman, going back to my opening, I wish you all good health so that you can get the most out of your visits to the Kingdom Men's Shed.

Tom Cunningham 12 September 2024