

Black Park Shed

Chairman's Report

2018 - 2019

Another year has passed, incredibly quickly it seems to me, but we have achieved a great deal in the Shed.

Membership and Committee

Our membership has continued to grow steadily and at the time of writing stands at 33. Perhaps more important than the numbers themselves is the way the group has developed a cohesion and an identity but which nonetheless welcomes and absorbs new members with ease.

In order to spread attendance we increased our opening to three days a week and are now open on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. Average attendance on each day usually varies from about 7 to 11 although it has been as high as 15. Continued growth could present problems of accommodation and this is a matter which I will place on the agenda of the AGM.

In February, our Secretary, Claire had to leave active membership of the Shed as she was offered a full time job at Green Corridor, which provides training for disadvantaged youngsters in horticulture and conservation. I am sure that she will be well suited to this and we wish her well. She is greatly missed but she retains a social membership of the Shed and she will always be welcome. The committee asked Amanda if she would be willing to take on the role and she kindly agreed and has guided our proceedings since with firm efficiency.

With the growing membership the committee decided that we should add a further committee member and invited Jim to join us. Jim has done an amazing job cataloguing, organising and generally looking after our tools and equipment and will take on responsibility for purchasing, as well as his quartermaster role. Visitors to the Shed all comment on how tidy and organised it is and this is very much due to there being a place for (almost) everything.

The Shed and Garden

Most of the structural work had been completed by the time of the last AGM but there still remained the kitchen and toilet area refurbishment. This was completed during the winter and with the help of materials and units provided by the Countryside Centre, we now have clean and tidy facilities.

We were offered some help by McAlpines who are constructing new studios at Pinewood. They very kindly came and levelled and surfaced our shared car park area and the yard in front of the Shed. They also levelled the garden area.

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This allowed work to be started on laying out the garden. Spurred on by the approaching Open Day on 6 July, turf was laid and raised beds created. There is still a lot of exciting work to be done there.

McAlpines have also generously given us a donation of £1200 to insulate the workshop roof and this is a project for the autumn.

We purchased and erected a small wooden storage shed which has provided space for timber, garden tools, items made for sale and our sales trolley.

Open Day

Our Open Day on 6 July was very successful, with a large number of visitors including friends and family and also local councillors and representatives of grant bodies who have helped us. We were fortunate with the weather and San Remo Cafe provided us with cakes and drinks.

Major projects

We were asked by the cafe to do a quick maintenance job on the tables and benches and this has proceeded during the spring and summer.

We were asked to refurbish the signage in Langley park. This involved machining and preparing heavy green oak posts, routing a design on each and assembling with the original refurbished signs. This work will be completed during September.

We received a number of donations of tools and equipment during the year. Some of this we added to our own inventory but anything we could not use we passed to Workaid at Chesham for recycling. We also have an arrangement with Workaid where we refurbish tools for them.

We were asked to make two "tiny libraries" for Wexham Parish Council and these were completed and have been installed.

Members have made items for sale and we had a stall on two occasions at Christmas where we were able to sell items we had made, including wooden stools, bird boxes, Christmas decorations. We have acquired a small trolley to allow us to quickly arrange future stalls in the park or elsewhere.

We were donated a number of broken park benches by Stoke Poges Memorial Garden. From these we hope to make at least three usable benches and much of the remaining wood (mainly cedar and chestnut) can be recycled into objects for sale.

Work on the garden area moved at a fast pace, with a large lawn being laid, a pergola constructed and three large raised beds.

In addition to these large projects, members were working on their own projects, making items for sale on the stall or other work around the Shed.

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Moving forward

Doubtless there will always be improvements and maintenance to the Shed and garden and most urgent this year is the insulation of the workshop roof, both to keep the shop easier to heat in winter and cooler in summer. Some more satisfactory heating arrangements will be required this year as last winter conditions were sometimes “testing” to say the least.

We have been fortunate in getting some substantial commercial contracts which have brought in valuable income and we also had significant help from grants. However, the grants were primarily for capital costs of set-up and we cannot depend on getting more large contracts. Unless we are to depend on members subscriptions, we will need a source of revenue and we have started making efforts at selling items made in the Shed. This idea has the advantage that it provides worthwhile projects for members. We plan to try to expand this activity as well as offering to make bespoke wooden items or to provide a repair service.

We have made great strides in our first two years and I feel sure that will continue into the future.

Thanks

As Chairman I am extremely grateful for the help and support of my fellow committee members without whom I would have sunk without trace. But also I have been buoyed up by the support of all the membership – if there is any job that needs doing I only have to ask and people can be relied on to step forward.

Also I must express thanks to the various grant bodies who have helped us so much and details will appear in the Treasurer’s report. Our well equipped facilities are very much down to the funding we have received.

And lastly, of course, our thanks to our landlords, the Countryside Centre and Tim Williams and the staff at Black Park for their help and support. A basic requirement of all Sheds is a Shed and we are blessed with excellent facilities.