

# Black Park Shed

## Chairman's Report September 2020

### The year's activities

Well, to coin a phrase, this truly has been a year of two halves, clearly divided by the onset of Covid-19. in March. Nonetheless I feel that we have seen real progress despite operations having to grind to a halt at the end of March.

The workshop always seems to busy with members working on their own stuff or on Shed projects. The following are some of the major activities which come to mind.

The year began with the usual mix of garden furniture restoration, workshop improvements and some garden planting. Then we were very fortunate in having been donated roof insulation for the main workshop and machine shop by Sir Robert McAlpine who were working on a large development at Pinewood Studios. We were able to purchase and install 100mm foam insulation panels and these have already made a huge improvement both to keeping us less cold in winter and less hot in summer.

We also obtained permission to erect a verandah along the front of our building to enable more work to take place outside. Many of our projects tend to be physically quite large and need a lot of space to work on them so this has proved to be a most welcome development. The approach of Christmas meant making stuff for our stall (our wooden reindeer were a great success) and we also made a large two-person sleigh for Santa's grotto in the Park which earned us a cake model of the Shed from the Park Events Team! Our stall in general does bring in some welcome funds although there is possibly still work to be done in marketing the things we make and restore.

At the end of last year we were given a contract to make a large static train, (loco and two coaches) for the children's play area in Black Park. This was a big project for us and it needed careful design to meet the required safety standards. The design allowed it to be built in modules so that a number of members were able to sign up to make individual parts which were then assembled. This was installed by the Rangers and soon had children (and adults!) enjoying it.

Another major project was a contract from the Colne Valley Regional Park to make signage for the various rivers in the Park. This involved the preparation of oak boards

and hand carving the river names and park logo. The initial order was for 10 but further orders are expected to follow.

It was during work on this project that we had to close the Shed due to the lock-down. On 23 March we were instructed that we must close that day, although this was not entirely unexpected. During lock-down we kept in touch via regular emailed updates from me and a Whats-App group. The Shed remained closed until mid June when some of the Committee were permitted to go in and prepare for re-occupation. This involved taming the overgrown garden (all our lovely spring flowers had blushed unseen) and preparing the workshop for covid-secure use. Notices and hand sanitizer stations were put up, distanced workspaces allocated and items of PPE purchased. A protocol for operation with a maximum of eight people was drawn up. An online booking system was developed for our website allowing members to sign up for attendance within the permitted limits and on 6 July we were able to re-open.

This is where we stand today – the booking system is proving effective and people are finding it reasonably easy to stick to all the protocols, although constant vigilance is necessary. It looks as though we will have to maintain the protocols for the foreseeable future, although we may be able to increase the numbers slightly.

## **Membership**

At currently 35, membership is healthy. Unsurprisingly, a few have left or not renewed their membership but there has also been a steady influx of new members. Since lock-down we have put a hold on new memberships but we hope to be able to welcome new members again soon.

## **Finances**

The Treasurer's report will be circulated separately and you will see that our finances remain healthy. We have had a number of donations of tools, some of which we have retained for our use and some we have passed to the charity Workaid. We have also had donations of plants and timber and a very large cash donation from the local Co-Op. Our commercial activities continue to bring in substantial funds.

## **The future**

I like to think the Shed has a bright future – it has a large and enthusiastic membership, great premises and growing contacts in the locality to provide possible work. I am sure we will extend our range of skills and the types of projects we can undertake. I have been especially pleased and proud of the standard of the work we have produced.

## **And finally...**

As you will know I have decided to stand down from the Chairmanship at this AGM although I hope to remain an active member of the Shed for as long as I can hold a chisel. I took over as Chairman in March 2018 and it has been hugely rewarding and exciting to have seen the Shed grow and develop as it has. Back then we had just eight members and had just been given the lease to the premises we now occupy. There was a huge amount of hard construction work ahead to turn them into a functioning workshop – walls to be built, the whole place insulated, lined and wired and fitted out inside. Looking back at our comprehensive picture gallery (mainly thanks to Les), it is amazing how much we have achieved in the two years. However, I now feel it is right to step aside and let someone else take the reins and I feel sure the group will go from strength to strength.

Before I go I have to hand out a whole load of thank-you's. My fellow committee members have been a huge support and always there to assist. And my thanks must also go to the entire membership who have very willingly stepped forward with help wherever it was needed. I had only to suggest that something needed doing and volunteers were ready. You have all made my job as Chairman so much easier.

It is a bit unfair to single out any one person but if there were such a thing as the Chairman's retirement honours prize I would have to award it to Jim. As our quartermaster he has quietly organised the workshop and ensured we have the tools we need and supplies of consumables. If you need some obscure tool or piece of equipment, Jim will know whether we have one and if so, exactly where you will find it. Not only that, he has masterminded some of our largest projects including the Verandah, Langley Park signs, the Playground Train and the Colne Valley signs. During the Covid preparations he sourced all the PPE, organised the workspaces, devised the cleaning schedule and has personally done most of the cleaning and preparation each day before members arrive. We all owe him a lot and without all his work we could not have re-opened. Thank you Jim.

So that's it. Once again my thanks to you all – and very best wishes for the future.

Derek Hooper