

Read 'awl' about it

Newsletter from the

Cannock Chase Shed

Issue no. 2



Welcome to the second issue of our Shed newsletter. I know it's been more than a week since the last one, but it seemed silly to send ours out on the same day as the national Shed newsletter 'Shoulder to Shoulder', so I took a few extra days to put this issue together. I hope you like the new title, which was suggested by a club member.

Feedback would be much appreciated (good or bad – it all helps).

Contributions, in any form would be absolutely wonderful

Contacting other members

Unfortunately, we cannot pass on other Shed members' phone numbers or email addresses, but if anyone would like to contact other members, Avril, our Shed Secretary, is very happy to pass on any messages.

Email her on: Tuktawa@hotmail.com
or call 01543 684805

Avril has one of those nuisance call blockers, so just say your name, and she will call you back.

We hope all members are coping during this difficult time. If you are experiencing difficulties, whether it's getting food and supplies, prescriptions, or issues with anxiety, loneliness or depression, we are here to support you.

Anne's husband is a community volunteer, and will gladly pick up shopping for you.

Please use the contact details on page 7, and if we can't help you directly, we'll put you in touch with someone who can.

Read 'awl' about it...

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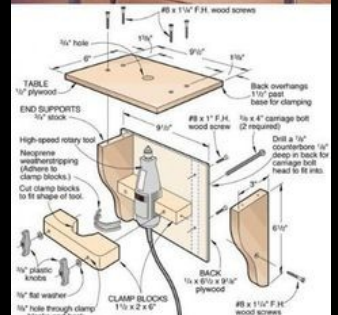
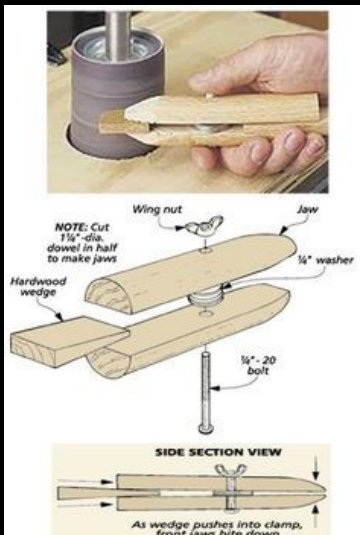
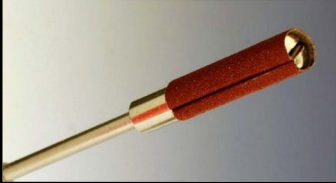
A message from Pete...

I am working on developing the Shed's website and would appreciate a few more pix and/or videos to put on the 'Gallery' page.

Ideally projects that have been completed, but showing the project away from the inside of the Shed so we don't advertise all our precious equipment. Happy to include the members who worked on it, of course (not that they aren't precious equipment!)

A completed project 'in situ' actually being used would be even better. A brief title to go with each would be help me too.

All contributions for the website to Pete -
exwoodsetton@gmail.com



Calling all Cannock Chase Shedders...

Hello all! You may have heard about Rugeley in Bloom? The Shed received a request from the local organisers to see if we could help with making planters for the competition this year. However, because of the C.V. problem the competition has been put on hold for this year. This led me to thinking that now we have much more time the planter idea could be developed to better reflect the town and it's heritage. I put the idea to Olivia Lyons, the local coordinator and she was most enthusiastic, as were the organising committee.

The general idea is that we design and build planters as "destination installations" as part of a town trail. This would involve a bit of local history research and a brief explanation of the feature for the town trail, followed by a plan for it's construction in timber. You might want to try out a free C.A.D. program available on the internet such as Sketch Up. Of course the planter must be easily transportable to the site, in pieces if necessary and capable of holding sufficient growing medium, with ease of watering and drainage. We would not be responsible for the actual planting up

Please note that these would still be planters and not scale models. If you do know about plants please suggest them, although this is not essential. However, if the key colours of the plants are important, please mention them. We have been promised lots of pallets to use in the construction. There are loads of ideas on the internet about breaking down or re-purposing pallets. You will also find lots about the local history of Rugeley. I have, along with Olivia, made a few suggestions to get you started. It's not necessarily an individual project, and the final constructions certainly won't be. I look forward to getting together, putting the plans on the table, voting for and choosing ideas, followed by lots of frustrating puzzling out and sawing and hammering! If you want to send ideas round, please do so, I will try to keep track of who does what

- A shed, but with an open roof
- Narrow boat
- A short flight of steps, ref. "The Bloody Steps" and the murder of Christina Collins
- Palmer the poisoner. Poison bottle plant pots?
- Mining heritage, winding gear
- Power station cooling towers
- Stacked logs, ref. Cannock Chase
- Horse trough ref. The Horse Fair
- The Horse Fair (again) horses were raced around Rugeley but not ridden as such, but rather trotting races were held using a lightweight trotting cart.
- Leathermill
- Rugeley once had a factory producing hats
- The River Trent, I don't think it was ever navigated this far, but it's deserving of more recognition and appreciation than it currently gets.
- The Slitting Mill. I found some engineering plans on the internet which showed that mill was used for the manufacture of nails. Can anyone puzzle out how it worked and represent it as a planter?

Any more that you can think of.....

Very best wishes to you all, keep safe!

Leslie Jewkes (deputy chair)

Do you have fond memories of your first car?

Mine was a Fiat 126. It was small, underpowered (652cc), and not the prettiest car around – but it was mine, and I loved it.

I was lucky enough to be able to afford a car while I was still a student. After studying the Autotrader magazine, and having deemed my own choices as 'unsuitable,' my dad presented me with two options – a Talbot Samba or a Fiat 126. Anything was better than a brown Samba, so the Fiat won. It cost £850, which left just enough of my savings to cover insurance.



I don't have a picture of my Fiat, but this is a pretty good likeness.



Bretton Hall College, viewed from the far side of Bretton lake

I attended a tiny college, which was based in and around an old mansion house in a truly beautiful setting, in the tiny village of West Bretton near Wakefield, West Yorks. (It was actually on the site of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, which I believe is still there, although the College is long gone). It was several miles from the nearest town, and over 100 miles from home. With the local buses only running every two hours, I immediately became quite popular, and found it hard to say no to would-be passengers.

However, after transporting four passengers plus three guitars, I arrived home to find that my guitar, (on reluctant loan from my mother), had sustained a puncture wound, so from then on I set a firm two passenger limit.

The journey from home in Sutton Coldfield to college was two hours up the A38 and then the M1. Being sandwiched between the lorries was a bit daunting, and I found that drivers of Reliant Robins took special delight in overtaking me. I could just about hit 70 mph, but only if I was going downhill and the wind was behind me.



Me in 1988

To start the Fiat, you had to first turn the key, and then pull a lever that was down by the handbrake. This lever was attached to a cable that effectively pushed a button, to start the car. This was fine, until the cable snapped. Gav and I were on holiday in Wales at the time, so until we managed to find a garage that could fix it, every time we wanted to start the car, Gav had to lie half under the car, and push the button manually, whilst I turned the key. This was okay (apart from the funny looks we got), as long as the engine was cold, but the button was right next to the exhaust, so when the engine was warm, the process became much more hazardous, and resulted in a few minor burns. We were both very relieved when it was fixed.



The Fiat had some definite advantages... there was always one parking space left, that no one else could fit into, and turning on a sixpence, manoeuvring the Fiat was a doddle even for a novice driver like me. Another big advantage of the Fiat was that the passenger seat could be removed. I discovered that if you rolled it all the way forwards, it came off the

runners, and could be lifted out. This came in very handy when I had to buy a bed (I moved into a bed-sit that didn't have one...). By leaving the passenger seat at home, I managed to get both pine bed and mattress home in just two journeys. (The mattress was rolled and folded until it fitted in the back). The driver's seat could also be removed in the same way although I could never really see the point in that.

I only had one accident while driving the Fiat, and that was when I drove into the back of another car. The front of my car looked really badly damaged, but with the engine being in the back, the only casualty was the battery. The front of the car had just crumpled, as it was designed to do. My dad and brother knocked it roughly back into shape with a Lump hammer and a block of wood, put a new battery in, and I was good to go.



On the whole, the car was very reliable, but one morning it wouldn't start, so I had to call the AA. The mechanic was very friendly and helpfully showed me just where to hit the starter motor with the back end of a hammer, in order to persuade it to start. I got a lot of funny looks, but with regular tapping, I managed to keep it going for several more months before I eventually had a new one fitted. The spark plugs also needed cleaning regularly, as the car only had two cylinders. When only one cylinder was firing, the car would rock from side to side rather alarmingly. You also had to be careful opening the doors when it was windy, as the door hinges were leather straps, which would over-stretch, allowing the doors to open too far, and dent the wing panels.

After I finished college, my dad meticulously reshaped, filled and painted the front of the car, and when I came to sell it, having driven it for a little over 12 months, to my amazement, I got £850 – exactly the same amount as I had paid for it.

Now, I'd like you to take a trip down memory lane...

What was ***your*** first car?

Did you love it, or loathe it?

What colour was it? (this will help me to find a suitable picture, if you don't have one)

Can you remember the registration? (mine was A109 WUK)

Do you have any photos of the car... or of you at the time you owned it?

Do you have any special memories of your car?

Please let me know, in any way you can, so that I can include it in the next issue.

How are you keeping yourself amused whilst in isolation?



Pete made a bird feeder...

"I was grateful to my wife for help with solving the problem of what to do with the original contents of the wine bottle!"

Anne...

This group of friends greets everyone who walks past the house.



Please share with us your own ideas on how to pass the time.

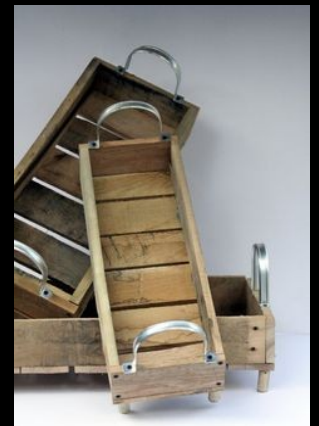
You can email me:

annewallbank@talktalk.net

Phone me: 01543 520452

or text me 07526 636194

PALLET PROJECTS



The Art of Whittling.

When I was growing up we always seemed to be a bit short of things, not food you understand, we were always well fed, but the diet was, to say the least a bit repetitive. Monday was always warmed through meat from Sunday with mash and a vegetable. This was the day Mum did the washing, a mammoth operation in those days, which left her little time for anything more elaborate, although to be honest meals were never that varied and tended to be seasonal, for example in the Summer we seemed to live on runner beans.

No, the shortages I am thinking of were things like paint when decorating, or adhesive when wall papering, so paints were thinned to the last scrape and instead of buying more paste Dad would mix up a glue of flour and water. We never had a proper ball of string only bits salvaged and kept. I suppose that this was as a result of my parents remembering rationing restrictions during the war, it wasn't meanness, only an ingrained habit of making do that was hard to shake off. If something broke in the house dad would always attempt to mend it. He wouldn't dream of employing someone to do the job for him, someone for example who knew what they were doing. The washing machine, a heavily built single tub with a wringer was taken apart a number of times with the components spread out over the floor of the back kitchen, at that point dad would identify the broken part and order it from a shop in town, thus the machine would be out of action for days at a time.

The only thing dad would not attempt to mend was the TV. This broke down regularly once a year and Mr. Abel from "The Green" would collect it and return a week later clad in his white coat and "set up" the repaired TV. I remember the time it took for the set to "warm up" and the smell of accumulated dust to burn off the valves and cat's cradle of wires. When the TV was repaired for probably the last time and by a different repair man, we found out that Mr. Abel was himself a bit of a "make do and mend" merchant and that a major component (the one that failed every year) had indeed been patched up instead of being replaced in it's entirety.

Eventually and after much pleading from me and my older brother who wanted to learn to drive, we acquired a used car from my uncle George, this was a Wolseley 8 and to be frank it was a rust bucket with a weak engine and fragile six volt electrics. The "trafficators" an illuminated little flag that popped up from the door pillar -this was before flashing indicators- often got stuck and needed a sharp tap on the pillar to return it. I remember on one occasion dad drove us back from Hinckley to Nuneaton, a journey of a few miles, and we could have either engine or headlights, but not both at the same time. The car spent a lot of time in bits in the shed, not just small things like the dynamo but once the whole engine dismantled ready to be re-built, and not even a manual to help.

When dad retired, and household goods were now much more reliable, dad could tinker with things and make stuff to his heart's content. Once, he developed a passion for making windmills, and must have made five or six, one of them was over 5 feet high. He also made some wooden toys, I remember him making a "tip and hit" where you struck a sort of lozenge of wood then, as it lifted into the air you belted it with another heavy stick. Smaller stuff he did was picture marquetry, and I still have a number of his efforts hanging up in the shed.

One Christmas I bought him what I thought was the ideal present, a book on "Whittling". This is the art of carving something using no more than a penknife and a chunk of wood. The knife must be sharp and to achieve this it needs to be frequently "whetted" from the old English word "whetten" to sharpen, and hence a "whetstone", now the word is often often wrongly used by broadcasters who should know better in the sense of "wetting the appetite" saliva I think, which is a bit distasteful.

Another related word I like is "fettling" a word from the 14th. century meaning to put in order, most often at the end of a process to make the components fit snugly together. I am not sure how many objects dad whittled, but I do have one, a ball trapped in a cage, carved from a single piece of wood.



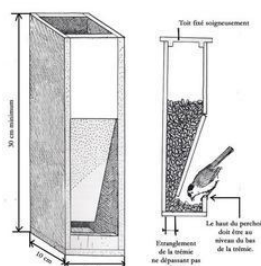
A bit like Dad come to think of it; he could perhaps have become a real design engineer, for at the age of 14 he passed the exam for the local grammar school, but Dad was sent out to work in a hat factory in Atherstone, the family needed the money, and they couldn't afford to let him go. At the age of 15 along with all the other young lads, dad was sacked and he then went on to work in the gas industry and later became a skilled machinist. Not an untypical story for a working class boy growing up in the 1920's, but as they say,"it makes you think" on what could have been.

In the meantime, whittle away, it's enjoyable precisely because it doesn't matter, it focuses the mind and you learn about wood and its grain, it's cheap to do if not even free and there are lots of helpful videos on the web. Just a word of warning, if your whittled object becomes red and slippery, count the number of fingers and thumbs you have intact, a dull knife like a dull brain, is more prone to causing accidents than a sharp one.

Leslie Jewkes.

SCRAP WOOD CHALLENGE

I didn't receive any suggestions for my piece of scrap wood, so I have come up with a few possibilities. Hopefully by next issue I'll have chosen one, and given it a go... watch this space.





HUMOUR

