

A Shedder's first day.

January 14th has a little star against it on my calendar, it was my first day at Whitby Area Sheds.

For many years I have had a strong connection with Whitby and had hoped to eventually live there. I actually retired from work at the end of June and moved 'in' to Whitby at the end of July. Two life changing events very close together...hmmmm.

I had always enjoyed work, especially my last post as a delivery driver for Wiltshire Farm Foods. There was a 'helping the community' angle to this job which I found very rewarding. Still retirement beckoned and a seaside life sounded attractive so the move was made.

We settled in, were made welcome by our neighbours and started living the dream. Lots to do sorting the new place out, getting rid of stuff we had accumulated over the years and welcoming friends and family when they visited.

Then a strange thing happened: As winter approached there was less going on, colder weather and shorter days, my best friend lived 200 miles away not 2. I would not say that I was lonely and certainly not depressed but I was experiencing a mild state of anxiety, the sort of feeling that you get when you can't find your house keys. I realise now that this was perhaps a delayed shock reaction from retirement followed very swiftly by relocation.

So what to do? Not many jobs around for a distraction at my age (a mere 66 I may add). Perhaps try some voluntary work? I explored a few options and in fact am still exploring but nothing has really clicked so far.

Then I heard of the Whitby Area Sheds. My preconceived idea was of men going to these sheds, using the tools to make or mend things for themselves when they needed, then going home. *I had not considered the very important social/community aspect.*

So off to the Shed. Walking from West Cliff I was thinking along the lines of 'what am I going to do there?' I had no ideas for a project or something I particularly wanted to make or refurbish. Perhaps I could however assist someone with their work should they need it.

The experience. On arrival I was met by Graham and given a very warm welcome. He introduced me to some of the other members, they then introduced me to other members and so on. I observed men engaged in some furniture restoration, some fence construction (eventually to be installed outside the building) and some model making. To my left was a beautiful scale model of the Christmas Shed, the full sized version of which had been displayed at the recent Christmas Tree Festival at St Marys Church.

A carer had brought along a less abled member of the community to join in, how wonderful. I looked around at the work in progress and at the various tools and machinery that were available for members to use. I noticed a lathe, saw bench, jigsaw, bandsaw and thought maybe...maybe!

The time passed quickly and by the end of my first session I had not only enjoyed some interesting conversation but felt a pleasant sense of camaraderie and connection. Overall a very positive and enjoyable experience.

Of course I will be back next week, no definite project in mind....but that lathe...maybe, maybe.

So, anyone reading this and thinking of going to the sheds to have a look? Well.....stop thinking and go!

Rob Shilson