

Strangford and District Men's Shed.

Summary report:

Our first year has been a good start with a lot achieved. The building has been cleared, painted, electricity upgraded, kitchen fitted and internet installed using a 4G/5G cell-phone modem to support our three CCTV security cameras.

Our membership has undertaken a "Pilates for Men" course, a "Healthy cooking" course and a "Photographing your surroundings" course. We have interacted with other Men's sheds including a 3 way "good relations" course in conjunction with Hillside Men's Shed in Kilkeel and Donaghmore Men's shed. This has involved visits to Dublin and Black Mountain and six other visits to the other sheds with us hosting two reciprocal visits. We have had a historical walk around the Strangford Village, narrated by local "experts".

Visits to other sheds (Warrenpoint and Saintfield) and hosting visitors to our shed from these and Killyleagh and Moville shed have been enjoyed by our members as well as "Days out" such as visiting HMS Caroline in conjunction with Saintfield Men's shed. Saintfield have also visited our shed and given helpful advice on setting up. We have been involved with a "Health and Safety course" and an "Adult and Child Safeguarding course" jointly with Saintfield and ourselves, paid for by Groundworks.

We have recently signed up to a "Sheds for Life" programme which has several elements, the first event being a six week "living life to the full" course starting next week. There will be "Health checks", "Physical Activity", "Chi Me/Strength and Balance taster" sessions and "Healthy Cooking" as well as sessions to promote "Wellbeing and mental health awareness".

At our last member's meeting we agreed a programme of ten monthly outings to begin in September.

Equipment purchases have produced a comprehensive workshop, fully equipped to make wooden items, as well as a 3D printer, a CNC machine and a powerful Laser cutter/engraver (a recent addition funded by a DAERA grant). The workshop has a good lathe and bandsaw as well as a table saw, mitre saw, thicknessing planer and router table. Various power hand tools have allowed us to de-skill wooden craft production, as befits the membership, being predominantly old with arthritic thumbs! Other equipment includes a PC and good quality A3 colour printer to support photography, a bicycle repair station and an Amateur Radio and electronic construction and repair workstation. We will be soon be purchasing a 3D scanner and further sanding equipment to expand our capability and offer ourselves as a centre of excellence that exceeds what most men have in their garage.

We have exhibited and sold wooden and 3D printed items at the Strangford festival last August and will do so again this August, we will also have a stall at the open day at the Glebe in Kilclief/Strangford where we reside. We have given help to a local primary school – clearing gutters and flower beds and also helped the local residents association – making a notice board. Strangford Residents association have asked for our help with regard to their 40+ flower boxes that need refurbishment and we have six sets of park bench ends that we will shortly be populating with iroko to sell at the open day and festival. Our premises are on the grounds of the Glebe and we have given them a lot of help, particularly their seed bed volunteers, cutting wood to help them make raised beds and plant stands. We have installed three birdboxes for them on one of the buildings and are commissioned to make a large number of birdboxes later in the year for them.

We also have just completed making sixty birdboxes for swifts to support the Mourne, Gullion and Strangford Geopark.

Links to information about the project online

We have recently set up a website and are in the process of populating it with photographs of our activities, an earlier attempt at using facebook was of limited success, we do use Whatsapp as the main online resource, but limited to our membership, a few others and anyone who expresses an interest (20 in total).

The website is at : <https://strangfordshed.com/> and it contains some (a few at present) photographs of the activities outlined above. I include some more photographs below which will probably end up on the site soon.

We purchased a popup banner that advertises the shed and have used this at our events. It lists the lottery and some of our other sponsors. The shed itself has a sign and a Lottery Log displayed.



Figure 1: The shed, with its name plate and Lottery poster



Figure 2: Our pop up banner to promote our shed

Keen group of members taking part in the course on Basic Saw safety, the members received tuition on the Bandsaw, Tablesaw & the Chopsaw before carrying out simple cutting tasks. We can report all members achieved the required skills to satisfy the Tutor and can now progress onto the Bird house project.



Figure 3: Early training sessions for the members



Figure 4: An early birdbox



Figure 5: In the wild, Suits small birds...



Figure 6: Our first Strangford Festival, just a few months after our opening.

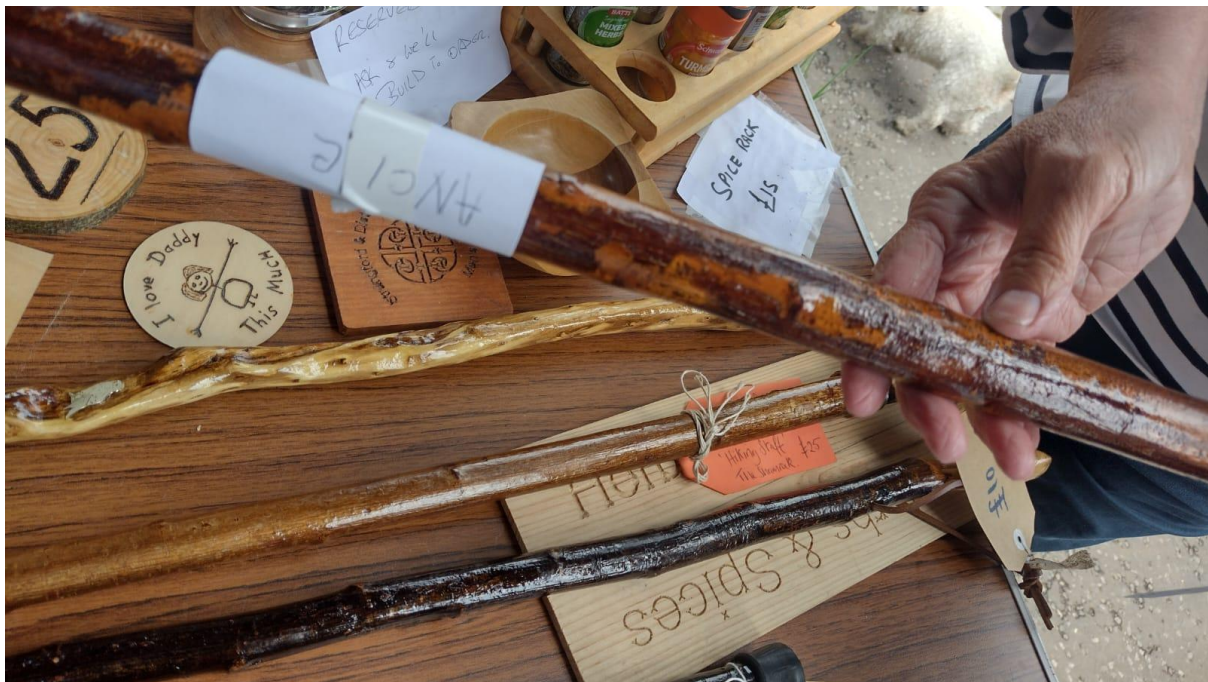


Figure 7: One of our members makes walking sticks – these were popular at the festival



Figure 8: Our CNC machine made these, with the help of one of our members.



Figure 9: Another useful “product” from the shed.



Figure 10: A Clock using some nice donated wood



Figure 11: A major project , six members made 60 swift nesting boxes & nesting trays for their interior.

Another very productive morning at the Shed with a range of activities going on , great to see so many coming, making a vibrant atmosphere developing skills & socialising.



Figure 12: More bird boxes and also the bike repair station in use.



Figure 13: A plaque engraved with our CNC.

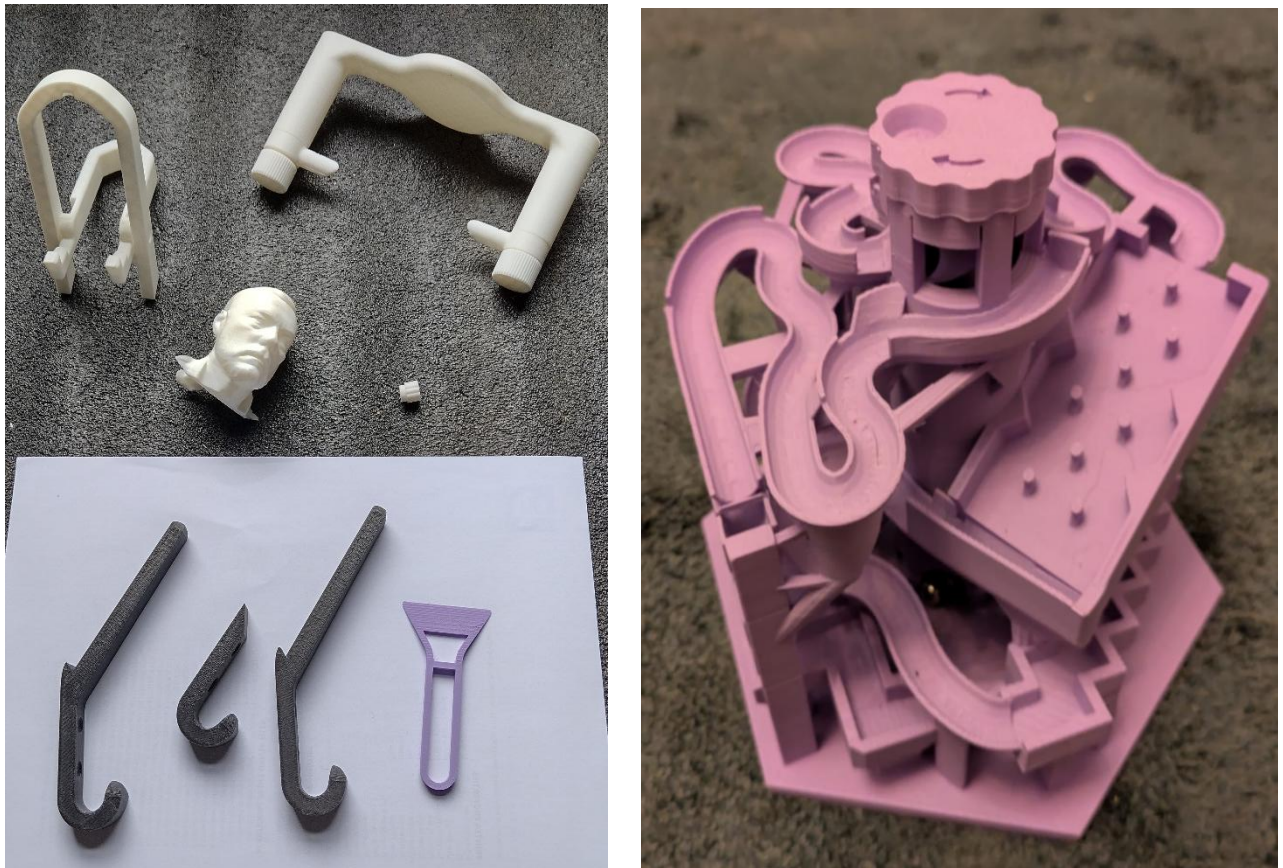


Figure 14: From our 3D printer, phone stands, coat hangers, toilet roll holders, a bust & a marble run.

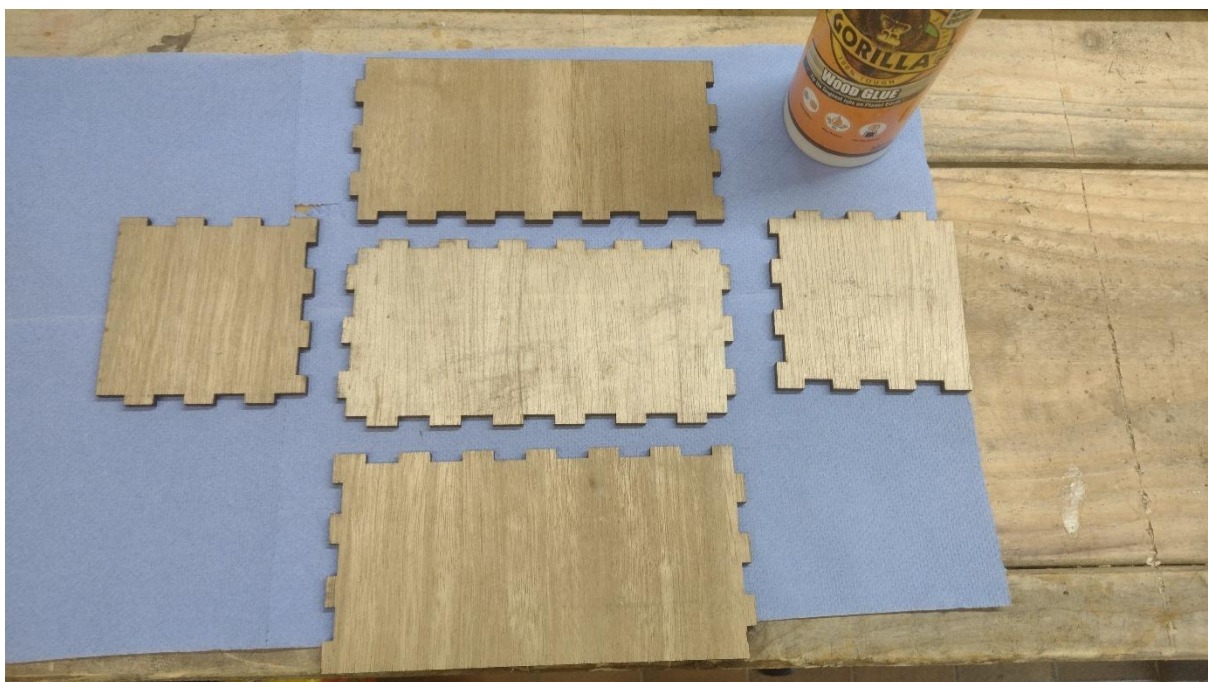


Figure 15: Using our new laser cutter



Figure 16: The finished laser cut box, we can also engrave glass, cut and engrave Perspex and a variety of other materials.