

File Note: Men's and Women's Shed Visit – 8th September 2025

I stopped by the Men's and Women's Shed at Bermuda Park today - a cosy 22ft by 10ft space buzzing with activity. Nine members were hard at work on carpentry projects, and I was greeted with a genuinely warm welcome.

Unfortunately, the people I was hoping to meet weren't on site, as they were over at their new location on Queens Road. They kindly got in touch with Jim on my behalf, and I was able to catch up with him later in the morning.

The Queens Road site feels like a hidden oasis. Though the Shed there is slightly smaller than the one at Bermuda Park, it's brimming with creativity and purpose. Carpentry remains a central focus, but the addition of a garden and greenhouse has brought a whole new dimension to their work.

Plans are also underway to transform the Summer House into a dedicated arts space, opening up even more opportunities for expression and community engagement.

Across both sites, the Shed welcomes around 30 people each day, most are from Nuneaton, but they are also attracting participants from Galley Common, Arley, Ansley and Camp Hill. Their popularity has soared to the point where they've reached full capacity and have now introduced a waiting list to manage demand. It's a testament to the value and impact of what they're building - both in craft and in community.

I spoke with Jim about our initial plans and the opportunities that may lie ahead. He felt strongly that our site would thrive as part of their network, either by becoming a satellite site, a partner location, or simply integrating into their existing operations. Their members – called Sheddies – are not fixed to a location.

This is a great option as we look to avoid the administrative overhead of starting from scratch, while still offering local access to Shed activities. Benefits of Affiliation are:

- Shared resources and management: The host Shed may handle day-to-day operations, governance, and insurance.
- Stronger funding appeal: Larger, multi-site Sheds often have better access to grants and support.
- Community connection: We can tap into an existing network of members, volunteers, and expertise.
- Support from UKMSA: Affiliated sites can still benefit from the national organisation's guidance, resources, and promotional tools.

Being based in North Warwickshire is a real advantage - it not only reflects the growth of the initiative but also strengthens our position with potential funders. The larger and more connected the group becomes, the greater the support we can expect from the National Men's Sheds organisation.

Jim sees real potential in the range of skills we could introduce - bricklaying, stone masonry, plumbing, carpentry, roofing, painting, plastering, and more. He views these as a major asset, adding a whole new dimension to what the Shed could offer. Expanding into these areas wouldn't just broaden the scope of activities - it would also open doors for more people to get involved, learn, and contribute in meaningful ways.

Another aspect Jim finds particularly appealing is the generous space available at our site. He's keen to introduce an area where people can simply come to be - without any pressure to participate, but with the reassurance that they're in a safe and welcoming environment. Sometimes, that quiet presence is the support people need most.

Having access to the kitchen and patio area, whenever not in use by others, would be a wonderful way to foster that sense of belonging. For many, just being part of something - without expectations - is deeply meaningful.

Jim felt strongly that being involved from the very beginning would be incredibly valuable. Giving members the chance to come in with a blank slate—shaping the project from the ground up - would foster a genuine sense of belonging and ownership. It's not just about building a Shed; it's about building a community and starting that journey together would be the perfect foundation.

Jim is genuinely excited about the potential ahead. He's keen to bring other members of their management committee to visit our church, ideally before the end of the month if schedules allow. On a personal level, he sees no reason why they wouldn't want to support the initiative. At the very least, he's confident they'd be more than willing to assist with the practical steps involved in setting up our own Shed.