

Okehampton and
Tavistock Times `13th
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Men in Sheds leap into action with big ambition

AS we all come out of our individual burrows after this long hibernation, Okehampton Men in Sheds (OMIS) are immediately leaping into action. The men have huge ambitions and are already engaged in a number of specific projects as well as their previous and ongoing ones.

Their traditional ones are making boxes to house dormice, hedgehogs, birds or owls. They also renovate old tools and are glad to accept gifts of tools to link or to Lindfield Day Opportunities (a centre that caters for those with learning difficulties).

They are happy to accept old timber, wood or metal which they can usually recycle. New projects include a two-metre cross for Chagford Primary School and a model train for the Who Let the Dads Out? group as well as some garden obelisks.

When a husband, father, or brother dies, the relatives are sometimes left with a shed full of part-finished projects or tools and fixings, wondering what to do with them. OMIS are there to help and either recycle them or offer advice on value and how best to sell them. Currently their big ambition is to quadruple the size of the shed. The landlord has agreed, the architect has drawn up plans, planning permission has been sought and it may soon be there. If this huge extension can be built (by the men themselves) there will be opportunities for motor mechanics, metalwork and welding as well as extending the woodwork activities to include woodturning and beginners' classes. They hope to provide toilets and some catering too! The shed, at Fatherford Community Field, is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays 10am-4pm. All are welcome so pop in and take a look. For more information on OMIS, call Phil on 01837 54894.

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Library shows off new reading den

ROKEHAMPTON Library officially revealed its new children's reading den last week (December 21), which was proudly made by Okehampton men's social group, Men in Sheds.

The library turned to Men in Sheds asking them to construct a custom-made reading den for the children's section, after it struggled to find any off-the-shelf structure which would correctly fit the space.

Library manager Carole Cornwall, said: 'We had the space but everything was too big, too small or hugely expensive. It was suggested we go to Men in Sheds and now we have something purpose-built. We are so grateful.'

The Friends of Okehampton Library funded the project with a donation of £100 to Men in Sheds and covered the purchase of the fabric covering the den, which will be changed according to seasons and events.

Phil Bush, project manager for Men in Sheds, said: 'It's always a pleasure for Men in Sheds to do something for the community.'

The new den will provide children with a new place to relax and read and is also large enough to accommodate a parent or guardian if they wish to join their child.

The project is part of an ongoing Friends of Okehampton Library initiative to fund events, children's activities and other equipment for the library.

Earlier this year, the Friends of Okehampton Library hosted their first music event since covid in order to raise money for the library.



● From left to right: Men in Sheds members Graham Watson and Keith Stephens with Okehampton library manager Carole Cornwall.

News in brief



Men in Sheds plan Jubilee fun

OKEHAMPTON Men In Sheds have been busy in their workshop on the outskirts of town getting ready to host children's fun days in the run up to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Thanks to a grant from train company GWR, the group is planning three days of fun and games at their site at Fatherford, which they share with the Okehampton Community Garden. The activities will run on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, May 28-30, the days before the royal Jubilee celebrations.

As well as games like Splat the Rat, Ring the Bell, Throw the Hoops and a Coconut Shy, the Men in Sheds are currently busy making other new and unusual games for the children to enjoy which will later be available to other community groups. Pictured above is the work in progress. Refreshments will be available on each day, including beefburgers, hot dogs and soft drinks as well as tea and coffee. There will also be ice cream, popcorn and candyfloss, with tables and chairs arranged so everyone can enjoy family time together, and a gazebo, just in case the weather turns wet.

The Men in Sheds say that the aim is to provide a low cost day for families already hard pressed financially by the current rise in the cost of living. The site is easily accessible to disabled people and the group hope that families with children with physical or mental problems will find it a welcoming place and get a lot of fun and enjoyment out of it. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

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News in brief

Go-kart building mission

OKEHAMPTON men's groups Men in Sheds and Who Let the Dads Out have joined together to build a go-kart for the Bideford go-kart race this June.

The two groups will be making the go-kart as part of a joint venture and held a preliminary meeting on Saturday (January 14) to discuss plans.

Phil Bush from Men in Sheds, said: 'Probably about a year ago, we thought to get the two age groups together.'

Men in Sheds is a national organisation which provides retired men with opportunities to socialise with others while Who Let the Dads Out provides opportunities for fathers and their children to spend time together.

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£1,000 given to Gilead's rain harvesting project

by AMY HETHERINGTON amy.hetherington@okehampton-today.co.uk

OKEHAMPTON'S women's charity, Gilead Foundations, received £1,000 from South West Water last week which will go towards the charity's gardening project.

Following a visit to the centre by the water provider, representatives from South West Water presented a cheque for £1,000 which the charity will use to purchase more water butts for the centre's garden and build more raised flower beds.

Joanna Morgan, fundraising and marketing manager for Gilead, said: 'We are truly grateful to South West Water for this kind donation. It's going to make such a difference to us and the environment with saving water.'

'Our residents are involved daily in horticulture and gardening, learning to grow their

own vegetables and look after the environment.'

More water butts will enable Gilead gardeners to collect more rainwater as part of the charity's plan to become more self-sufficient which has seen the women tend plants in an environmentally-friendly manner using organic fertiliser, growing seasonal plants and refraining from pesticides.

Gilead set up its horticulture programme over two years ago in order to help women with their physical and mental health with the help of Petroc College, which has campuses in Barnstaple and Tiverton.

Okehampton community group Men in Sheds volunteered at the centre once a week and helped to build compost bays and raised beds in a polytunnel and fill planters with wildlife-friendly

plants.

The project has proved to be such a success that, in October last year, the charity started to consider expanding the project to create an outside community space for 'personal contemplation and tranquillity and horticulture classes'.

Gilead's work has also attracted other important local figures including Central Devon MP Mel Stride who visited the centre during National Mental Health Awareness Week in May this year.

Gilead Foundations is a Christian-focused charity in Jacobstowe near Okehampton which offers supported living services for women who are suffering with a range of difficulties, including drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, anxiety and domestic abuse.

The charity aims to help women in need by



● From left to right: Jo Morgan, fundraising manager, Annie-Marie Pidgeon, support worker and Olivia Crisp from South West Water.

providing safe housing and support through therapy and other activities to give them the skills to live a happy, fulfilled and independent life.

The centre, which is situated on a farm, can provide accommodation for up to eight women at

any one time along with support workers.

Alongside gardening, Gilead's residents also get involved in other practical activities such as agricultural work which might include animal husbandry and other farm work.

West Devon and Devon County Councillor Lois Samuel runs the organisation. She is also a domestic abuse champion for the Local Government Association.

For more information visit www.gilead.org.uk