

Newsletter – August 2026



Dear Members

Newsletters seem to be like buses at the minute – you wait 6 months for one and then 2 come along within 2 months....

Sorry about this but there are a few notices to share with you and hopefully they are easier to read in a newsletter layout rather than squashed within an email. *But you must excuse the lack of pictures and graphics – time is too short for me to seek out appropriate visuals if I want to get this out before our next Open Meeting (sorry)*

Kind regards

Sue

Chair

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As you all aware but I will take this opportunity to remind you –

Our Open Meeting on Monday 17 August is being held in Toddington Methodist Church Hall which is to the rear of the Methodist Church, and entry will be free for all Members. For those who are not familiar with this hall you will find it on the High Street opposite AJ's Autos. There is some parking on site plus some in front of the row of shops which are adjacent to the hall. Alternately, if you park in the village hall car park it is a short walk from here to the Methodist Church. The timings for the meeting are unchanged.

Meat and Eat – Wednesday 26 August

Meat and Eat this month is on 26 August at The Cross Keys, Pulloxhill. Irene will be taking bookings and menu choices for this meal at the Open Meeting on Monday 17 August 2026.

If you are unable to attend the Open Meeting to book your place, please contact Irene to reserve a place and to make your choice from the menu. Irene can be contacted on 01525 634236, or 07757 019996 and at irenek.kirkpatrick@gmail.com

Please note that there will be no Meet and Eat in September. The venue for the October meal will be advertised in due course

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Poppy Knitting – Thursday 10 September

There is still time to sign up for the **Poppy Knitting session, which is on Thursday 10th September at Toddington Village Hall between 2.00 and 4.30 pm.** Wool will be provided plus pins if you don't have the correct size (8 / 4mm). If you are not going to be at the meeting and would like to attend this event, please let me know and I will gladly add you to the list.

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News of a potential new 'Shed Group'.

If you recall in my July newsletter I asked that the gents with our membership think of a potential one-off event or a new group that would interest them.

It has been suggested that we could form a group that is similar to the very popular 'Men in Sheds' groups that are popping up all over the Country. At the end of this newsletter is a summary of what they are all about. (There is a very successful one in Dunstable which you can read about on the internet). As I explained to Ian, who suggested this and pulled together the summary, I am not sure that we could offer to buy a shed for the group but it would be good to investigate what such a group could achieve. I do hope that our gents will support this. As with all groups we cannot bar ladies from joining but I would suggest that we leave it to the gents initially to get this off the ground.

If this appeals to you then please add your name to the 'sign-up' sheet at the August Open Meeting, or email me and I will gladly add your name to the list.

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Hitchin u3a - holiday to the North East of England

We have received notification from Hitchin u3a of a holiday that they are organising to the North East of England and which we are invited to join.

The previous holiday that we were advised about had to be cancelled due to a lack of interest.

Details of the holiday and contact details for the organiser are available on the Hitchin u3a website via this link -

<https://hitchin.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Holiday-North-East-19.04.27.pdf>

U3a national website

And just a reminder that there is always something new available on the national u3a website here - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

There are lots of learning activities, competitions, puzzle and games.

Our subscriptions help pay to maintain this website so please make use of it.

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Shed Group

What is a Men's Shed?

Men's Sheds (or Sheds) are similar to garden sheds – a place to pursue practical interests at leisure, to practice skills and enjoy making and mending. The difference is that garden sheds and their activities are often solitary in nature while Men's Sheds are the opposite. They're about social connections and friendship building, sharing skills and knowledge, and of course a lot of laughter.

Sheds are whatever the members (or Shedders as we call them) want them to be. Although labelled sheds, they often aren't sheds at all. They can be empty offices, portable cabin's, warehouses, garages, and in at least one case, a disused mortuary. Some Sheds are purpose-built workshops, but they rarely start out that way.

Many don't have premises at all in the beginning and instead form a group that meets regularly for the social connection, company and camaraderie until they can find somewhere to kit out with tools.

Many Sheds get involved in community projects too – restoring village features, helping maintain parks and green spaces, and building things for schools, libraries and individuals in need.

Activities in Sheds vary greatly, but you can usually find woodworking, metalworking, repairing and restoring, electronics, model buildings or even car building in a typical Shed.

Sheds typically attract older men, but many have younger members and women too. Whatever the activity, the essence of a Shed is not a building, but the connections and relationships between its members.

Sheds are mainly 'grassroots' community activities that come about in response to shared needs. These have mostly been for men to access tools, workbenches, skills and opportunities to make and mend in the company of others.

Gardening, computing, electronics and other activities have been included according to members' interests.

The **UK Men's Sheds Association (UKMSA)** regard a Shed as the group, whether or not it has a base for activity.

Sheds bring health benefits by encouraging physical and mental activity, and improved wellbeing by providing an enjoyable way to stay socially integrated in local communities, by being creative, and learning or passing on skills. Whilst most Sheds are for men, about a third involve women. There are now also some all women Sheds.

Why are they needed?

For a long time, research has shown the negative impact of loneliness and isolation on a person's health and wellbeing. Recently we have seen more evidence come to light that shows loneliness and isolation can be as hazardous to our health as obesity and excessive smoking. Surveys from mental health charities are finding that millions of people report feeling lonely on a daily basis.

Men typically find it more difficult to build social connections than women, and unlike women of a similar age, less older men have networks of friends and rarely share personal concerns about health and personal worries. It is not the case for all men, but for some, when retirement comes, it can feel like personal identity and purpose is lost. Men's Sheds can change all of that.

Sheds are about meeting like-minded people and having someone to share your worries with. They are about having fun, sharing skills and knowledge with like-minded people and gaining a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. As a by-product of all of that they reduce isolation and feelings of loneliness, they allow men to deal with mental health challenges more easily and remain independent, they rebuild communities and, in many cases, they save men's lives.

Possible topics/themes as a 'starter for ten' for the new group

- Repair Shop (re-use, re-purpose, etc.)
- Build Things (bridges, towers, etc.)
- Community Help (gardens/ maintenance)
- Stuff we did as kids - and don't do now! (paper planes, knots, games)
- Take stuff apart & re-build it
- Crafts/skills
- Tool share
- Problem Solving Projects
- Learn how to....
- Model making (tree- houses, cars, planes etc.)
- Map reading/ route planning/ journey discussions (no Sat Nav!)
- Wellbeing awareness, briefings, talks