

Radio Norfolk Interview
Jack Jay Show - Current Events from the Coast

04th February 2019 7 - 10pm

Mark - Wells Men's Shed Joint Treasurer
Terry - Well's Men's Shed Joint Treasurer
Steve Hurley - Development Worker

(57:35 start)

JJ - We've got a full house, we've been moving furniture, it's a little bit like on Christmas day, you know when you need to get all the chairs out... all the tables, all the side tables... But I am thrilled to welcome into the studio, 3, in fact 4, very very special guests who are here to speak about the Men's Shed project which is happening at Wells on Sea. Now although this is something relatively new in the area, this is something which has been building up for a couple of years and now, I have seen this elsewhere and am very, very intrigued. Now we know, men and their shed, two peas in a pod, very much go together and coming in to speak and to tell us all about this we have the gentlemen that are involved in Wells Next the Sea. Now we have Mark, we have Terry - who are shed members and we also have Stephen Hurley who is a Development Worker for the Adult Social Services Department for the Norfolk County Council and Julie is here, Julie Snowling, who will be translating for, for Stephen. So I wanna just first of all welcome everyone and ask Stephen to just uh, yeah, explain when this project got started on Wells Next to Sea...

SH - Well it was really interesting because I cover the whole of North Norfolk and we look for projects to do. I had been travelling around, I was in Wells, I was in the Library and just got chatting to somebody and talked about what the gaps were in the community. Wells is a very popular town and there is lots and lots going on already but it was a case of looking at what is really needed, what isn't there already. So we were talking about things for gentlemen, for men, there isn't much to do, there aren't any practical activities, that they can get involved in. So we were looking at potentially looking at getting people together, we started with a meeting, we had an initial public meeting, where we had 20 - 30 people come along to that meeting. There was a lot of motivation within the room, a lot of energy, and really from then it started and that was back in October last year. So it's been amazing I have been really impressed by the motivation and commitment from the guys in Well, it is really down to them that with, with a bit of support and the enthusiasm that has come from the community is fantastic. It is somewhere they can meet other chaps and they can mix and get on with practical activities, I think it is a really fantastic project for people, it gets people out of the house and gives people the opportunity to meet new faces. Men's Shed is a really good opportunity for guys to make new friends and new contacts.

JJ - I mean it is a really amazing, absolutely amazing project and this is what it is all about, erm, so Mark is that what it was for you, a chance to meet other people, a sense of community that this brings??

M - Yes that is right, I was really glad that Steve brought that to our attention and we managed to get the group together, cos I have been to a shed, years ago, just two of us, I used to help out a bloke, just the two of us in his shed and that was really enjoyable and we had a good laugh, we fed off each other, that was quite good. So I was really glad when Steve started the Shed up so we could actually get things going.

JJ - And I suppose that is what used to happen when there were far more people and they had their own sheds and they would be doing projects and using their hands and making their own things, even if it was for themselves or someone else, but we have kind of lost that now haven't we? I mean, Terry, what was it for you that drew you into wanting to get involved??

T - Well it was, umm, it was quite interesting really because, umm, where I'm living in Wells, my lady friend had an extension built which actually knocked down the workshop, so all I have now is, my motivation was that fact that I have an al fresco bench in the garden, which was not very inspiring and when I saw the Well's Shed getting formed, I thought 'well there you are, there is the golden opportunity' and instead of twiddling my thumbs, help start something - get it off the ground and there you are. Problem solved.

JJ - You were re-homed! You were kicked out of your own shed!

T - Well, it was my lady friends' so that was uhh... basically the motivation for me....

JJ - And uhh, and Stephen, so this is has only really been going since October last year, I mean obviously there was work that went on beforehand. Were you amazed and happy with how much support there has been and umm, how many people were getting involved?

SH - Oh yes! I mean really, my expectations were really, quite low really, I mean we were just opening the... the initial meeting was just to open up and give people the opportunity, but really there were so many people at that initial meeting that it was overwhelming, there was so much conversation, so many people had different ideas and immediately people wanted to have weekly meetings, they were so keen, so committed. I mean these guys are quite lucky, it is just around the corner for them, I mean I come from Norwich that is quite a long journey for me but it has been amazing. The passion and the commitment, the motivation that these guys are showing, in some ways I have been saying 'you know we've got to calm down a little bit, rein it in mate!' it's going a bit too quick, but it's fantastic. You can see people have got different experiences; they come from different careers and skill sets - some people have got IT knowledge, some people have got practical skills and it is just wonderful, seeing this group gel and seeing how that they, really, can do something with the time they have on their hands, rather than sitting at home, you know, not mixing with others, they are really getting in there and contributing something valuable for the community and it is open to anybody.

JJ - Yeah and was it something that was lined up with what you expected Mark, when you went to that, to that first meeting, you see, first of all, had you heard of anything happening like this before???

M - Yeah we heard a bit on the BBC Breakfast Television, they did a bit, a bit of a broadcast on that to tell you about Men's Shed and I thought 'yeah that feels like a lovely idea, that would be good' because I had a workshop at home and I was thinking of seeing if I could get people into my shed, you know, but then when Steve, like I say when Steve started I was really pleased about that.

JJ - And for someone that hasn't been to one before, what kind of numbers do you generally get to your meetings??

M - Well originally, I think originally we had about errr about 20 when we first had the meeting in Well's Library and then we moved from there to the hospital and we had, that dwindled out to about 10 to 6, but that just depends on the day, you know. Because we had a meeting every Wednesday so that was quite a lot for people, but err we managed to set everything up. We got the Chairman; the Secretary and errr ummm Treasurers, me and Terry are the joint Treasurers errr...

JJ - So you are the men to know! You are the guys to keep in with!!

M - Yeah exactly although the coffers are empty at the moment so we are looking for donations and everything else if we can get something in, that would be good.

JJ - Yeahhhh and this is something that is really starting to spread out across the country, I have been reading up on this and there is over 400, nearly 500 of these now, have you had any communication, err, with any other sheds that are dotted around the UK?

T - No I haven't, but Mark has been up to the one here in Norwich so I would like to see that, uh, because it is phenomenal. I'm not certain how long they have been going for but umm, you know, I think umm, the sky is the limit.

JJ - Yeah!

M - Yeah but Wells, err the Norwich Shed started up, err I think that was 2013, so they're, they're fairly young if you like yeah but they've got a good set up there there's, I'm quite envious about that but err there's quite a bit of stuff there! (laughter)

JJ - And is that something you are really keen for Stephen, to err to start communicating between your shed and yeah, err other ones in the area???

SH - It is really interesting that you have raised that, Jack, because it is something that we are looking into. There are so many, uh, Men's Sheds in Norfolk - we've got Dereham; Wymondham; King's Lynn... we've got Downham Market, North Walsham... they are popping up all over the place and a lot of my work colleagues are involved in these projects, so we are looking at, at getting the sheds together so that they can share, they can share their information; tools; skills - you know it will be a wonderful way... so that is something that we are looking into, is growing the community. There is also the UK Men's Shed Association, who have so much information and resources, umm, and they have a national map of all the Men's Sheds in the UK. We were talking as well, possibly, that this Men's Shed here in Wells would be possibly, maybe the first Eco Friendly umm Men's Shed in the country or possibly ever, wo we were looking at how to set this up, how we can do this without tapping into the grid, how we can be an Eco Friendly Men's Shed. So if anybody out there has any suggestions or any advice we would really appreciate it!

JJ - Wow, absolutely amazing! You are most definitely going to be in contact with the other ones, you are going to be out there giving talks to these guys. And then, almost finally, just on the concept itself, do you think for you guys going along to something like this... do you think, because it is so unique, it is such a great idea to, to you know be based around the shed, it's something that we're comfortable with and that you want to get involved with, do you think if this was called something completely different and it was housed in a random community centre somewhere, it probably wouldn't have got off the ground in the same way as being able to go and meet up in this kind of way?

T - Yeah, well I think there has been a feeling of vacuum and this is directly proportioned to this vacuum and that fact that it is growing so fast, so there is definitely a need, a need in the community, you know? Errmmm it is quite amazing, I think. There is a definite need for it.

JJ - Yeah, yeah!! And do you see new people that are coming in, you know, maybe not every single week but uh, as the weeks and the months have been going on, are you getting new faces that are coming down?

M - We're not getting so many, but we are hoping, once, once this is broadcast we will get a few more members in, but err I think once we start the shed and start making things or repairing things and building or if we have got somewhere, people can just come for a cuppa tea, have a chat, they don't have to make anything. Just come and socialise with us. They don't have to do anything.

JJ - And you've already mentioned Stephen, the amazing idea to make this an eco friendly area, an eco friendly shed, but what do you think is your main ambitions going forward for this particular one in Wells??

SH - Well, the main ambition is to be successful, that the community can make use of it, that it can become something central for, not just men, not just the men of the community, we have ladies as well, that have shown interest and it is possible that they can get involved... and its a

place to have some banter, to get together, get away from home, get away from our problems and just, you know, have somewhere to go, have a cuppa tea Or have a moan! You know, you know, everyone has a moan, it is just somewhere to escape to, a bolt hole and it is something better than just sitting at home watching tv and hopefully you can bang a lot, you can make a lot of noise, you can use some tools, learn some new skills - it's upcycling, there are so many projects that could come from this, there is so much possibility. People can learn new things that they haven't had the chance to do, so that is what we hope and I think already it has been successful and the guys that are involved are so passionate and that is all credit to the committee and their members.

JJ - Well, it is absolutely all absolutely wonderful and luckily I have this radio studio, that's where I come to, to have a moan, while the music is on and what I would love to do is come down, see the whole set-up maybe, and see it in action as well. I'm not very handy you see, that's my problem, I am terrible with tools, umm, I feel like maybe you could teach me a thing or two about umm constructing something... I am doing a house renovation at the moment and I can't even be trusted to put a pair of shelves up, you know! :0) Now I've not got all of the stuff in front of me, but I think the best thing to do if people wanna get in touch - search this online, err, Wells Next the Sea, err the Men's Shed... there is also the, the central website and stuff... there appears to be loads and loads of stuff online.... And yeah, I think it is an absolute, uh, wonderful project and yeah, thank you all so much for coming in, really appreciate it... Right let's have a little more music and a big thank you again, to all the guys from the Men Shed at Wells Next the Sea...