

Case Studies

Dave, 88, joined shed September 2021

Letter from neighbour – Donna xxxxxx

I am writing this on behalf of my friend and neighbour David xxxxxx.

David saw covid out looking after his wife. Shortly after covid David's wife passed away. This left David alone and isolated in Watton as his family lived 100 miles away. My husband and I befriended David. I soon realised David needed more in his life. He went to an open day at the Sports centre and found the Mans Shed advertised. At a cost he could afford David joined a social group for the first time in his 84 years. He was very soon part of a group of people who he could converse with laugh with and talk to on a wide range of topics. He continues to be stimulated and the companionship is proving to be very beneficial to him.

David was in a warm comfortable safe place and was independent.

After some time, David was registered as partially sighted. The group was supportive to David's needs. Offering support when needed and continued to include him in all parts of the group.

Soon after David became ill spending time in hospital and a rehabilitation unit

He was not forgotten by the friends he had made at the Shed. They kept in touch with him sending cards and telephone call. Always receiving his Man Shed emails full of information and entertainments which were being organised.

David is now back at the Mans Shed his mental health has improved due to the companionship friendliness and support he receives from the other members.

I have peace of mind knowing he is in a safe place, enjoying the tea and biscuits in a comfortable environment. All the members have different needs everyone supports each other and are treated equally. I feel included when I drop David off and collect him.

Donna xxxxxx.

Nigel, 74 (passed away in June 2025) joined shed in 2020

In 2023 he wrote:

"I have been member of the shed for over 3 years. In that time, it has offered me friendship and a sense of belonging that I would not otherwise have experienced. There is a place for everyone in the shed whatever their background or situation. When I am feeling dispirited or downhearted a visit to the shed gives me a boost and I invariably return home in a better state of mind. I organise two of the music sub-groups and the sense of purpose they have given me is immense, far outweighing any organisational effort required to run them. Quite simply, Wayland Men's Shed fulfils an important social function to the benefit of men in Watton: life would be immeasurably poorer without it."

In November 2025 his widow Linda sent a letter stating:

Nigel joined the Men's Shed in January 2020, a few weeks after we moved to Watton. He attended most weeks and made numerous friends, something he had not done for many years. I soon realised how meeting other people made him more cheerful and happy, for which I am very grateful to the Shed. Since Nigel died, I have been welcomed at all the social events, and helped by many members of the Shed and I know this will continue in years to come if anything occurs, I am unable to cope with.

Thank you very much for you all being there.

Linda

John, 70, joined shed in 2023

The Watton men's shed means so much to myself as I really look forward to my weekly visit. Inside the shed are people who are very supportive towards each other and from all walks of life. Membership has steadily increased over time which makes it a must for the local community. You can also learn computer or woodworking skills and photography trips if you wish. The shed means so much to so many people as some are widowers, lonely and probably don't have much company in the course of a week. As we say here in Norfolk, "I love my weekly, Men's shed Mardle."

Robin, 79, joined shed in 2019

I joined the Men's Shed in Watton in the early days. I was encouraged by others, but doubtful about it, given my personality, and lack of talent in DIY! In my several years as a member, my preconceptions have been challenged, and I changed my attitude quickly. Now I welcome my visits to the Shed. What I like, in particular, is the permissive attitude of a hard-working committee that allows me to come and go, as I wish. There is no sense of obligation to participate, and yet there is a welcoming word each time I attend.

The committee have developed a wide range of interests - not just the workshop, helpful and invaluable although it is – if only for the repairs they have completed on my behalf. I am a member of the Men's Shed Shanty group, and I enjoy singing, enough to mention it in my own e-book; a project for my retirement, when I stopped paid employment as a registered psychologist in April 2024. I am aware of the close connection existing between the Men's Shed and other local organisations, including the Town Council, and this means members can contribute to local activities, and build strong social support for festivals, street markets and other day-to-day maintenance projects.

Bill, 85, joined shed in 2024

My attention was brought to the Wayland Men's Shed by a friend who had recently joined. My vision of a men's shed was some sort of large hut with a few work benches and a table in the corner for tea and coffee etc. Somewhere for men, particularly those who were on their own to spend some time making things or simply to have a cuppa and a chat. I couldn't have been more wrong as The Wayland Men's Shed is a vibrant meeting place where you can join in the various card or domino games or simply sit and chat with a group of interesting people. Of course, there is also a really good workshop and a computer room where you can utilise your

skills. There is also a music group, Shantymen, Shutterists and plenty of organised trips and quiz nights so all tastes are catered for.

But I think the most important aspect of the shed as far as I am concerned is the way in which all members are made welcome by those who organise the place and ensure that nobody is left on their own. It is done in the most low key and sensitive manner and we should all be thankful that there are people within our ranks who are prepared to spend a lot of their own time to make sure we are all catered for and that The Wayland Men's Shed is somewhere worth coming to.

Les, 78, joined the shed in 2019

I returned to the UK in October 2017, after spending 15 happy years in France in semi-retirement. We felt that we had "been there, done it" and we were getting quite homesick and really missing the grandchildren. We moved to Norfolk as my son lives here and he also has a granny annex which made the move relatively straight forward. We didn't know anyone in Watton, but I have done a bit of Am Dram so on seeing a note in the local paper, I joined the Wayland Players. Malcolm Trayhorn our present Chairman was already in the group and suggested I come along to the Men's Shed and I have been a member ever since. I have had four strokes but have been very lucky with my aftercare and physiotherapy in that the after effects are just a slight limp, mild paralysis in my throat and a slight loss of balance. Like most stroke victims I also have the odd bout of mild depression (or the "Blues" as I prefer to call it) This is where the Men's Shed has been a life saver, it gives you a reason to get out of bed on a Monday morning. Most of our members are retired and some of them have lost their partners or are carers for their partners and the Shed gives them a change of scenery and the chance to forget their problems and have a laugh. We are fortunate to have a very enthusiastic AND competent committee. After a few years in the Old School House, we now have great premises in the Watton Sports and Social Club. I would say that we are a very diverse Men's Shed in that we have so much to offer, from a well fitted out traditional workshop, with a separate computer workshop, to a large social room where we can all put the World to rights, leave our partners in peace for a few hours, have a cuppa, play cards or board games. We also have several sections including music, shanty singing, and photography, and our very competent Chairman and Social Secretary also organises outings and brilliant "Quiz and Chips" nights. We must be doing something right, after COVID we lost a few members, but we are welcoming new members virtually every week, with the current membership standing over 90. I feel very privileged to be a member of the Wayland Men's Shed, long may it continue and prosper.

Grahame, 74, joined the shed in 2022

I have been in the Menshed now approx. 2 and half years since I relocated to Watton and have to say from day 1 have always been welcomed with a good helping of humour, help and general well-being. The trips etc and in my case the Shutterist {photography} group have helped me to find a fit that works Many thanks to all involved.

Andy, 60, joined the shed in 2026

I heard about the men's shed a couple of years ago from a member who knew that I had retired and said that if I was at a loose end anytime, come and join the men's shed. The computer room or anything like that for something to do because when your retired you suddenly lose a group of contacts, not necessarily friends but people you talk to in your work and business and I'd lost them. There's only me and the wife to talk to, I heard about it and at

Christmas time I got low, very low and the Mrs. said why don't you go and join the men's shed then, so she gave me a little shove and low and behold I came on January 10th.

It's nice to have the friendship, you make new friends, the banter between the men and you can discuss anything, nothings off the grid at the shed, you can talk about anything you like to whoever is in the room. It's all about friendship. I am in a totally better place now than where I was at Christmas, far, far happier. Everyone knows I'm happy. I go home grumpy if I don't win the games. The Mrs knows if I've won or lost, but no, I'm in a far better place. When the door shuts here on Wednesday I'm looking forward to the next Monday. I don't wish my life away but I look forward to coming and that's what I enjoy most about it. It's benefited me tremendously.

Bill, 85, joined the shed in 2024

It is eighteen months since I joined the Watton Men's Shed and am really enjoying the friendly and convivial atmosphere of the club. There is always something you can join in with even just a chat and this is a big help to those members who are on their own or suffer from either physical or mental problems. Every encouragement is made to ensure that these members in particular feel part of the group and I have noticed the difference it makes when you can share a story or even a problem which usually tends to be a no go area with men in general. An example of this is one of the members had been recently diagnosed with Dementia and decided not to attend because of his situation. However, he was encouraged to stay connected with the shed and even managed to speak about his condition openly which has made him feel better about himself and now continues to take part as before. This is just example of the good that comes from belonging to groups like the Men's Sheds and let's hope that they may long continue to do so.

For my part, due to problematic family matters and losing many friends through age and ill health, I have found a sanctuary where I can enjoy the company of many new friends and join with them in ensuring that those who are not in good places are looked after with kindness and understanding , an attitude which is always promoted by the committee members of The Watton Men's Club.

Ray, 75, joined the shed in 2022

My wife and I moved to Watton in November 2021 from a village near Guildford in Surrey. One of the first people we got to know, introduced me to Watton Men's Shed in early 2022. I had never heard of the Shed movement before, but being disabled it gave me a chance to get to know other men from differing backgrounds.

I found it very welcoming and friendly with a diverse selection of activities from board games, cards, a workshop, photography, computers, a music appreciation group and a shanty group who go around the area playing gigs.

The members also enjoy a good a chat putting the world to rights.

The group also organise trips and functions for members where partners and wives can join us.

As an active member of the music group and a founding member of the Shantymen, I have found there is always something to keep me introduced, and my hobby of model railways is also supported by a few members who share the same interest.

Roger, 74, joined the shed in 2024

I am a retired mathematics teacher. I have lived in the Watton area since 1973. I was part of a large family, most of whom are now deceased, and have lost contact with former colleagues.

Since retiring I had become quite sedentary, spending much of the time reading and shopping. I needed something more to look forward to. My wife suggested that I go to the Wayland men's shed to see if I would fit in and if it would be good for me. She, herself, is a recluse. I was made to feel most welcome in this very safe environment which is nonpolitical, non-judgemental and where disabled people are welcomed. All ethnicities and religions make friends here. It is a place where you can meet, chat with and play games with others.

An amazing variety of trips have been organised and have been of great value. The number of members continues to grow as new people find out what an excellent scheme it is. It has attracted men, not just from Watton, but from all the local rural villages and towns. The leadership shown by the committee is exemplary, with frequent updates online.

My wife would like to nominate Malcolm Trayhorn for his leadership, hard work and kindness and helping men have a place where mental issues and depression can be discussed freely and openly. This area is often neglected for men of all ages.

Bob

When I first joined Wayland Men's Shed, I was looking for something interesting to do and the chance to meet like-minded people. What I found was so much more—a welcoming group of friends, plenty of laughter, and a real sense of belonging.

One of the best parts for me has been being involved with the Shutterists photography group. We organise regular camera walks to some wonderful locations, where we enjoy the fresh air, take photographs, exchange ideas, and help each other improve our photography. It doesn't matter whether you're a beginner or have been taking photographs for years—everyone is encouraged and made to feel part of the group. The Men's Shed is about much more than workshops and tools. It's about friendship, sharing interests, learning new skills, and supporting one another. Being a member has enriched my life, and although I do not attend meetings as regular as others, I genuinely look forward to those that I do. You may have wondered whether Wayland Men's Shed is for you, to answer that I'd simply say, come along and give it a try. You'll be made very welcome, and you might just discover a new hobby, make new friends, as well as a real sense of community.