

Ballinamore Men's Shed

Tom Gannon

Men's Sheds are non-profit organisations that started in Australia in the late 1990s. Their aim is to promote social interaction and improvement in the quality of life of its members. Men's Sheds have become a marvel of our times, and have spread all over the world. Ireland has four hundred Men's Sheds, and enjoys the greatest concentration of Men's Sheds in the world. At present, Leitrim has four Men's Sheds in Ballinamore, Carrick-on-Shannon, Kinlough and Manorhamilton. Here we are given a lovely insight into one of them.



Ballinamore Men's Shed was founded in 2013 by Tom Gannon, Noel Sweeney, Paddy Mc Gourty and Michael Moran RIP. Our first meeting was chaired by Maureen Martin who got us our first grant of €500, and encouraged us to organise club officers. The officers elected were:

President: Noel Sweeney; *Chairman:* Bob Allen; *Vice Chairman and Safety Officer:* Tom Gannon; *Secretary:* Pat Monaghan; *Assistant Treasurer:* Dan Gallogly.

We were very fortunate that the former Ballinamore Vocational School was vacant. We are very grateful indeed that the Education Training Board (ETB) gave us the use of the Woodwork and Metalwork Rooms in the School for a small rent. In return, we keep the building in a good state of repair, mend windows and do paint-work where needed.

Since its establishment, the Men's Shed in Ballinamore has become a huge success, and it is growing in numbers each year. We now have eighteen members, all with

different abilities and from different backgrounds. Our normal meeting is held on Wednesday evenings from 7.00-10.00pm, but some other hours can be arranged if needed. We make bird boxes, bat boxes (which are sold), as well as flower boxes, bird tables, etc. Last year, we made a quarter-sized gypsy caravan, carved a quarter-sized horse as well as Celtic crosses and harps.

However, all work and no play makes for a dull shed. Each evening, we have a nice cup of tea and scones prepared by our President, and then many members opt for a few card games. Every year, we organise a Table Quiz which raises much needed funds to cover expenses and costs such as materials, etc. In December we have our Christmas Dinner which is very sociable and enjoyable. We organise an Annual Sale of our products in Ballinamore. This Sale is very successful thanks to the good people of Ballinamore and surrounding areas. We also carry out

■ **Tommy Gannon and Paddy Mc Gourty (on right) with happy customers at the Men's Shed Annual Sale in Ballinamore**

repairs on furniture for anyone in need of such. We take part yearly in The Fisherman's Friends competition. Last year, we came second to Ballina in the online section.

Other than work, there are many benefits to being a member of a Men's Shed. Members enjoy companionship, friendship, sharing stories, demonstrating their skills and being active in some way. This all leads to a happy place, full of craic and helpfulness. It opens up the opportunity to discover skills that people may have not realised they had.

This year, we won the Social Inclusion category in the Environmental and Community Awards organised by Leitrim Council. In the future, we hope that we can help more people to become happy, sociable and healthy.