



# Shoulder to Shoulder

## Bembridge Men in Sheds - the first year

A lot can happen in 12 months. This has certainly been true for Bembridge Men in Sheds which since its formation just one year ago, has won nearly £9,000 in grants from the National Lottery Awards for All and local charity WightAid towards its formation and the establishment of long-term accommodation in Steyne Park, Bembridge.

Bembridge MIS was set up as part of a worldwide movement originating in Australia in the 1970s. The concept is designed to improve the health and lives of older men who wish to stay active in the community and to help those who, through circumstances such as the death or separation of a partner, have lost touch with their communities and relationships. The initiative, which has the international slogan 'Shoulder to Shoulder', is now active throughout the UK and internationally.

Following its successful planning application last year to site two portable buildings in Steyne Park, and the granting of a ten-year lease from Bembridge Parish Council, Bembridge Men in Sheds was able, thanks to funding from AgeUKIoW, to take delivery of its first portable building in January. They expect a second to arrive in April, thanks to lottery funding and the support of Isle of Wight Steam Railway.

Awards for All from the National Lottery has already helped Bembridge Shed to cover set up costs including insurance, legal fees, starting the installation of mains services and equipping and decorating the two portable buildings. Funds will also be used to enable the construction of a footpath and disabled access to the Shed as well as to buy essential safety equipment and key tools.

The Bembridge Shed is part of a growing network of similar Sheds across the Island. Interaction with other Sheds is helping members to meet others in similar situations by talking, building relationships, sharing skills and resources. Two Bembridge shedders have also undertaken First Aid training.

With demographics showing Bembridge to have the highest proportion of over-60s on the Island, the location of the Bembridge shed could not be better. Bembridge now has a membership of over 20 shedders and since its formation, and, courtesy of Bembridge Scouts, it has met regularly in the Mitten Road Scout Hut. The lack of our own accommodation hasn't stifled enthusiasm to engage in local community projects including:

- Finding homes for unwanted tools
- Planting roadside bulbs
- Making bird boxes for the Literary Festival
- Remodelling scenery for Bembridge Little Theatre Club.
- Rearranging display boards for Bembridge Heritage Centre
- Laying a path behind the Village Hall.
- Building squirrel boxes/feeders and high level planters for The Elms
- Cleaning and painting the area around The Wave, the new art installation near the RNLI Lifeboat Station
- Preparing for maintenance fireproofing work on the Friendship Circle Bus Garage this summer
- Starting a project in April-May with the National Trust to gain value from the old Windmill sails (sweeps) and to help raise £50,000 for their replacement

Chairman Ian Graham is proud of the members and their commitment. "It is amazing how much the members have achieved in the last year. Now with the money required to really get

us moving we look forward to an even more successful second year. We will make every donated penny count." The group welcomes new members. Please contact Ian Graham via email: [ianmg.iow@gmail.com](mailto:ianmg.iow@gmail.com)