

Read 'awl' about it

The Lockdown Newsletter from the Cannock Chase Shed

ISSUE No. 3



Grab yourself a
cuppa and some
biscuits...
...and settle down
with issue 3 of the
Shed newsletter.

This week...

- How are we spending our time, during lockdown?
- Bits 'n' bobs, gadgets 'n' gizmos.
- At a loose end? ...why not try growing something?
- Members' motoring memories.
- Scrap wood challenge.
- Humour.
- Photo caption competition.

Submissions and suggestions to:

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How are you spending your time during lockdown?

It's an ideal time to tackle those half finished projects, or jobs around the house that have been nagging at the back of your mind. Equally, there's never been a better time to try something new.

Let us know what you've been up to - we'd love to share news and pictures of your baking successes (and failures), garden and household projects, model making exploits. Why not dig out your old photos, and share your favourite shots of anything at all. If it brings a smile to your face, then please share it, it might help to lift someone's spirits in these strange new times.

What have Anne and husband Gav been up to?...



My coconut cakes

We did some baking... as an experienced baker, I decided to adapt a simple recipe, to fit the ingredients I had to hand. Not one of my proudest moments.

Gav decided to try his hand at baking, and produced a lovely lemon drizzle cake.



Gav has been practicing amateur hairdressing... I am currently sporting my second Covid 19 haircut, and I have plenty of hair left, so he's planning a new style in a day or two. Actually, he's always wanted me to dye my hair purple and I'm asking myself 'if not now, then when?'... I wonder if food colour would work?



I've been learning how to put together a newsletter....

I think it's really important that we keep the group going while we're in lockdown. It's getting easier each week, (this issue even has page numbers!) but I'm extremely grateful to everyone who has submitted ideas and articles.



I've been having a go at the 'scrap wood challenge'... (see page 8)



Gav spotted this little chap in our front garden... he obviously missed the memo about staying at home.

So Barry, what have you been up to...?

Well, I was given a weather station as a present (as shown in the photo), and haven't got round to mounting it anywhere yet. Good opportunity to make a platform bracket to mount it on, and as luck would have it, I kept the Shed's scroll saw for safe keeping until we are back together. Thought I would try that out.



I needed some curved slots making in the platform so it could be adjusted for facing North, so after drilling some holes for the ends of the slots, I tried to take out the blade of the scroll saw to push it through each hole in turn. Not so easy, it seems. Quite a fiddly job using allen keys and removing various bits each time I changed holes.



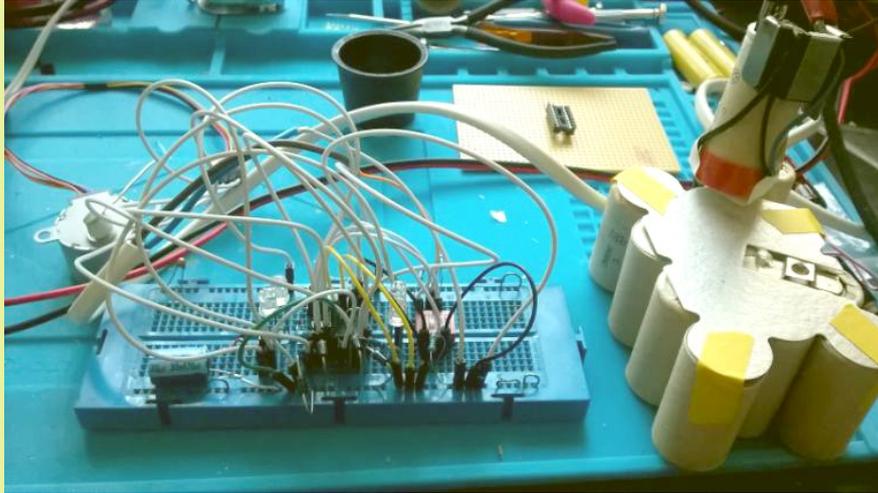
The result is as in the second photo, not very good. Needed a bit more practise at turning corners, me thinks. But no-one's going to see it anyway.

And I still couldn't find out how to take the blade out fully to replace. Not the dreaded destruction manual I hope. Tuition required I think, instead.

Bits 'n' bobs, gadgets 'n' gizmos...

Barry's birds nest

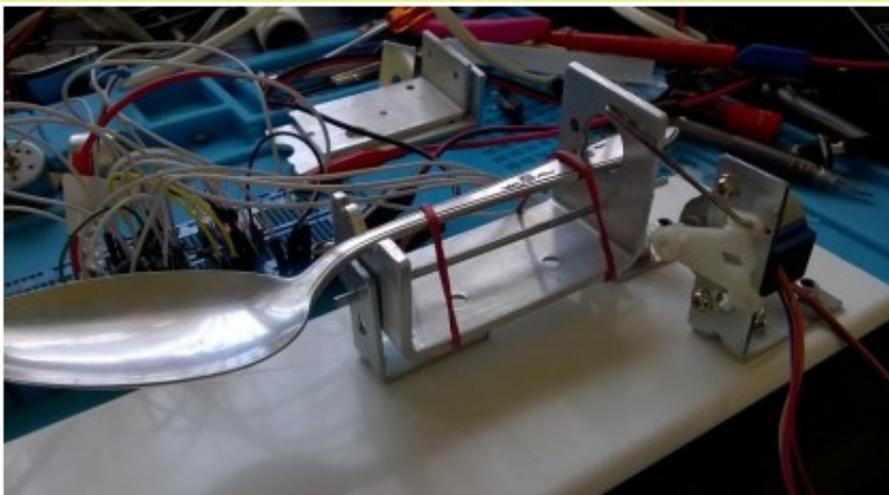
I decided to create a bit of a bird's nest. An electrical bird's nest I mean.



It's quite small, but there is a "stepper" motor on the left of the photo on the end of some leads, and the nest wiring is around a small computer chip that generates the feeds to the stepper motor. The motor has a 64:1 gearbox on, and each step moves it around 0.1 of a degree, so can be used for positioning quite accurately. I thought I would use it to tip an egg out of a spoon in the U3A Robot Challenge Egg & Spoon race.

AND, next to the bird's nest is one of the Shed's RYOBI drill batteries in pieces. It was only lasting a couple of minutes after "charging", so decided to investigate. As it happens, each of the 12 cells were OK. I was expecting to find a short circuit cell or two in there, which Nickel Cadmium batteries are inclined to do if left discharged. I've recovered them many times before by giving them an electrical shock, but in this case there was no need.

Maybe the charger is not playing ball instead. So I charged them up manually on the bench with a dc power supply. Seems better now, so the charger needs pulling apart next.



Stage 2, high tech spoon turner

And we all need one of those of course. So now the stepper motor mentioned in the birds nest photo is mounted on the right hand side bracket, and actually turns the spoon with a tie rod and crank. The spoon is mounted in a pivoting cradle.

So the robot can have an egg & spoon race now, and tip the egg into a tin.

Note the low tech rubber tensioning devices. Any suggestions for improvement welcome.

At a loose end? ...why not try growing something?

Many vegetables can be regrown in water on your window sill, or in planted in pots without the need for seeds or compost...



Tomatoes: Plant a single slice of your tomato in a small pot of compost (or a yoghurt pot full of sifted garden soil) to grow several tomato plants. Remember to put holes in the bottom of the yoghurt pot.

Spring onions will regrow in water on the windowsill.



Celery: use cocktail sticks to support it so the base is in the water.

Garlic: if a clove of garlic is starting to sprout, put it in a pot of compost (or sifted garden soil) and watch it grow.

Onion: put root section in a shallow dish of water to root and regrow tops, which will flower similar to an allium



Onion flower



Lettuce: put the base of the lettuce into a glass of water and watch the new leaves grow.

The seeds from peppers will also grow into a productive plant.



Potato: if your potatoes are starting to sprout, you can plant them in a large pot of compost if you have some, or simply plant them straight in the ground. Another alternative is to fill a container with layers of fruit and vegetable waste from your kitchen, garden waste (leaves, finely chopped prunings, dead flowers etc), sawdust, basically anything that will rot down, and plant your potatoes in there. As the compost rots down it will shrink, so you can keep adding to it until it is full. Remember to add plenty of drainage holes, or you'll just end up with a large container of putrid sludge (speaking from experience, here). Adding a few worms will speed up the composting process. The best time to harvest your potatoes is after the flowers die off, but you can harvest them at pretty much any time, but obviously the longer you leave it, the bigger they will be. As well as your potatoes, you'll end up with a bucket full of wonderful compost, ready for you to plant something else in.



My potatoes grown this year with the layering system.

Motoring Memories

Remember the time when, if you opened the bonnet of a car you could recognise and name all the parts. When most competent home mechanics could service and mend their own car or knew a mate who could help. When on every street on every Sunday there would be several cars raised up on bricks with someone underneath working away. Here some members of the Shed recall their own early days of motoring

BILL READ has fond memories of his 1960 Ford Popular. This was a simple to maintain car with a side valve engine, just as well as every few months he removed the cylinder head to decoke and rebuild it using a hand made gasket! The windscreen wipers were a bit temperamental and worked using a vacuum pump tapped off the inlet manifold. He recalls that when they did finally pack up he rigged a link using wire and an inner tube and hand operated them. The car could be started using a handle and was easily patched up using scrap yard bits. When the car reached 45 mph it had a tendency to rock gently from side to side, even so he and his wife to be, had many happy motoring years with their faithful Ford Pop.



DAVE PURSALL remembers his first car, a Hillman Avenger (such an exciting name!) The shine went off it though when he took it for an MOT and the tester discovered that the chassis was bent and had probably been in a serious accident. Dave soon swapped it for a Ford Cortina Estate in green and paid just £500 for it. The car proved to be very reliable and he had many years of happy motoring in it.

We'd love to to share your motoring memories –even if it's just a few words, I can find pictures if you don't have any. Contact details can be found on pages 1 and 10.

Leslie

More Motoring Memories

All the cars I drove up until the last 7 years have been joint ownership. After I passed my driving test at the second time of trying, my brother Michael (who passed his test before I did) bought an Austin 1100. I think it cost us around £800 but I'm not absolutely sure about that.



My memory of this car is not great, firstly I wasn't sure about the make, all I could remember was its colour which was a sort of a brown and that it was 1100cc and had 4 doors. The only other thing I could remember was it having the engine changed, so to find out a bit more I asked Michael what he remembered about it, and this is what he said.

“The biggest piece of tat I have ever encountered in my motoring life” Emoji. “It was an Austin 1000, a weird light brown/pink colour. I emptied the scrap yard of engines and cylinder blocks for it, god knows how many drive shaft universal joints I changed (rubber crosses held on by u bolts) and water cooling hoses and at least one radiator. As I recall I bought back your half for a few quid and sold it to a friend.”



After another cylinder head change Michael gave up and got rid of it. The experience was that bad we actually bought another one straight after! This time it was green with automatic gearbox, it was a great car. Michael drove it a lot more than I did in the time we had it, and when it was working okay it was a really nice car to drive, which is why I can understand why he bought another one

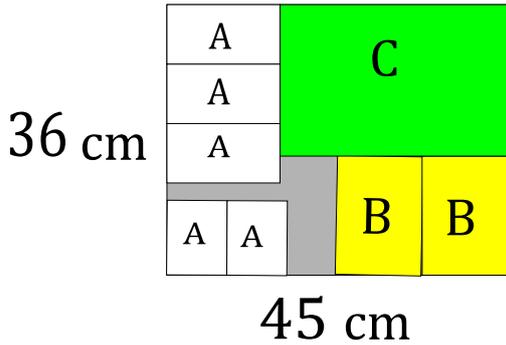


Personally I didn't buy another car myself as not long after that I met my future wife Pat. She had a green Morris 1000, a car I can actually say I remember with a lot of affection as in 1976, the year before we got married, we went to visit my aunt and uncle in Elgin, Scotland, then we Honeymooned in the Lake District. We went camping for the first time in Scotland in 1982 when our son was 2 years old, and I

mustn't forget to mention Pat's Golden Retriever Honey, who we took everywhere with us (except on Honeymoon of course.) So that car above all others holds a special place in my heart.



In the first newsletter, I challenged readers to suggest a use for a piece of 'scrap' ply that I had lying around. As no one put forward any suggestions, I came up with a few of my own, and said I'd choose one to make. It turned out that there was enough wood to make more than one item, so I decided to see how many of them I could make from just the one piece of wood.



Project B

The vise jaw blocks looked useful, so I made them first. They came in handy for the other projects. Simple, but very effective.



Project A



I decided that a version of this box, sized to store scrap paper vertically would be very useful.



I constructed a simple box to fit A4 paper torn in half, and then half again.

After a good sanding I used white gesso to prime, followed by Paynes Grey craft acrylic paint, because these were what I had to hand. Then, a final sanding to allow the white to show through, and I was done. I'm pretty pleased with the result.



Project C

I liked the idea of using The scroll saw to to make something decorative.



I found an easy looking design, printed it out, and stuck the image to my ply. I drilled holes big enough to get the saw blade through, and made a start.

Threading the saw blade through the holes, and getting it located back in place was very fiddly indeed. My saw has pin ended blades, which should make it easier, but the blade is released by turning a knob, which was pretty laborious, and at times I had to use a torch to see what I was doing. I did find that the actual cutting got easier as I went along. I finished off the smaller cut-outs with a coping saw, which was much easier. Again, I used white gesso, then finished it with a coat of black acrylic..

Anne

I BEFORE E
EXCEPT AFTER C
DISPROVED BY
SCIENCE



The oldest computer
can be traced back to
Adam and Eve.

Surprise! Surprise!

It was an Apple.

But with extremely
limited memory.

Just 1 byte.

Then everything
crashed.

HUMOUR

MY MIND IS
LIKE MY
INTERNET BROWSER

19 TABS OPEN
3 OF THEM
ARE FROZEN

& I HAVE NO IDEA
WHERE THE MUSIC
IS COMING FROM

Yesterday my
husband thought he
saw a cockroach in
the kitchen. He
sprayed everything
down and cleaned
thoroughly. Today I'm
putting the cockroach
in the bathroom.

Dear Optimist,
Pessimist, and
Realist,

While you guys
were busy arguing
about the glass of
water, I drank it!

Sincerely,
The Opportunist

INSTEAD OF A SIGN THAT
SAYS "DO NOT DISTURB"
I NEED A SIGN THAT SAYS
"ALREADY DISTURBED.
PROCEED WITH CAUTION"

REBEL CIRCUS

I HAVEN'T LOST MY MIND.
HALF OF IT JUST WANDERED
OFF AND THE OTHER HALF
WENT LOOKING FOR IT.

© REBEL CIRCUS

Most useless
purchase of 2019:
A 2020 planner.

I need to re-home a dog.
It's a small terrier, and
tends to bark a lot.
If you're interested, let
me know and I'll jump
over my neighbor's
fence and get it for you.

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT
IF WE COULD PUT OURSELVES
IN THE DRYER
FOR 10 MINUTES
AND COME OUT
WRINKLE FREE AND
TWO SIZES SMALLER

I came, I saw, I forgot
what I was doing, retraced
my steps, got lost on the
way back, now I have no
idea what's going on.

CAPTION COMPETITION



Send in any humorous bubble captions to this photo...

Might even be a prize for the funniest, if Graham allows it.



Can you see the ostrich?

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What would you like to see in
the next issue?

No need to write the article,
just pass on your ideas.

I'm sure there are loads of errors in this newsletter, please feel free to correct me. I'm making this up as I go along, so if you have any comments/suggestions regarding the layout, it would be really helpful too. **Anne**