



# Men at the Mill Newsletter

Woodend Men's Shed

March 2026

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## President's Message

I am pleased to be able to report on shed activities since I was elected President in November.

Other elected officers and members are:

- Paul Muller - Vice President
- Bill Couche - Secretary
- John Wood - Treasurer
- Bob Macdonald, Rod McKee and Peter Kuczer - Committee members.

I congratulate them on their election and look forward to working productively with them over the coming year.

The following items are provided for the information of members:

- For 2026, we have 42 financial members, with up to 28 members per day attending the Shed on Mondays or Wednesdays.
- In early December, the Shed's current site at 988 Black Forest Drive, Woodend, was sold.
  - We have received a notice to vacate by 8 June 2026, although some flexibility is likely.
  - The new owners intend to reactivate the site as an operational sawmill.
  - While we have investigated alternative locations for several years, no suitable interim accommodation has been identified in the Woodend area to date.
  - The new owners have verbally offered interim accommodation within an existing large storage shed on the current site. A formal contract has not yet been signed. Planning to construct a "shed within a shed" is anticipated for mid-2026, with the duration yet to be determined.
  - We have recently confirmed with Council our ongoing option to be included in the final Racecourse Reserve master plan, expected to progress by June 2026.
- The establishment of new premises has created an opportunity to expand our wellbeing offerings for members and external groups. To date, our focus has been on "making things", and member input is currently being sought.
- We are liaising with the Gisborne Shed regarding the development of our own 3D printing activities.
- We are constructing 50 habitat bird boxes for the Harcourt Landcare Group.
- Our successful kindling project will continue this year.
- Following thefts elsewhere on the site, we have installed a CCTV system for the Shed.

**John Reynolds, President**



## Woodend Men's Shed

Please call and see us at 988 Black Forest Drive on a Monday or Wednesday morning or email us at [info@woodendmensshed.org](mailto:info@woodendmensshed.org)

# Happenings around the Workshop

## An Invitation To Men In Woodend & Surrounds

Are you interested in occasional social contact, without a particular desire to join a local club? You are invited to be part of a Social Group for relaxed, occasional catch-ups.

The Woodend Men's Shed recognises that some men, for various reasons, may not wish to become Shed members or participate in day-to-day programs and activities. However, we would still like to offer these men an opportunity to connect socially with others.

Accordingly, the Shed is establishing a Social Group, providing opportunities to:

- Catch up over a coffee
- Participate in activities of choice, such as card games, chess, or other board games
- Listen to guest speakers on topics relevant to members' lives and interests
- Visit surrounding areas or venues of interest

Current and past members of the Men's Shed who are interested in this initiative are also very welcome to participate. The activities and frequency of gatherings will be entirely determined by the group members themselves.

The first Get-Together will be held on Friday 24 April, from 10am to 12noon, at the Men's Shed. There is no intention to charge any fees or costs for attending. Men who are interested in coming along are invited to ring or text one of the following:

Bill Couche: 0408 428493 or Bob Sullivan: 0427 272078

## Urn in Macedon Blackwood

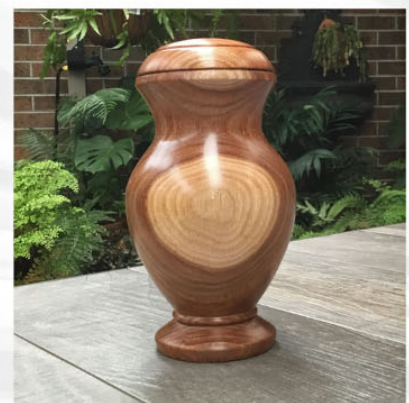
Some twelve months ago, we were visited by a generous lady who offered us some beautiful Macedon Blackwood, a timber of special significance to her and her family.

The Blackwood tree had fallen in the backyard of her late father's property, and I was asked to turn an urn from this wood to hold her father's ashes. This was, quite obviously, a very special and meaningful request, and I agreed to undertake it - knowing it would not be easy, as the wood was still "wet", showing a moisture content of around 25% on our meter.

Over a period of approximately twelve months, I turned and shaped the piece in stages, carefully and gradually encouraging the drying process using a variety of methods.

The finished result is shown in the accompanying photos. There was a deeply emotional moment when the urn was collected from the Shed. The lady was delighted with the piece, and I was also moved by the privilege of creating something of such personal and lasting significance for someone.

**Barry Clarke**



# The Men's Shed at the Mount

As part of our community outreach and support for other non-profit organisations, we annually seek projects that we believe are important to the community and that fall comfortably within the skill levels of our members.

The Mt Macedon Memorial Cross Reserve is a well-known and highly valued facility in Mount Macedon and the Macedon Ranges more broadly. We believe it is important that visitors experience facilities that are both attractive and functional, including suitable seating where older visitors can rest and people of all ages can take time to reflect on the significance of the Memorial Cross and its surrounds.

While extensive works were undertaken at the Cross by the Committee of Management, the existing seating was not included in that project. Given the dilapidated condition of the benches (see photos), there was no doubt in our minds that refurbishing them was an essential project for visitors to the Reserve and the wider community.

The Men's Shed approached the Committee of Management to seek their support in pursuing a grant to enable us to refurbish the 10 benches within the Cross precinct. With their endorsement, we successfully applied for and received funding through the Tiny Towns Fund 2025.

The fixed nature of the seating and its condition presented new challenges for our members, resulting in most of the work needing to be carried out on site. The timing of the grant also meant we worked under some very trying conditions on the Mount—coordinating around main contractors, and contending with rain and frequent fog.

The project took over six months to complete due to a range of issues. However, we were able to make several benches available for Remembrance Day in early November, with the remainder completed prior to Christmas. As can be seen from the before-and-after photos, this was certainly a job worth doing—and a job well done. Now, on to our next community project. **Paul Muller**



Paul and Graeme at the Mount

# Works at the Woodend Neighbourhood House

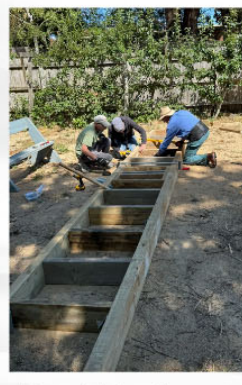
The Woodend Neighbourhood House is seen by the Shed as a great venue in which to apply our workforce and skills for community benefit. So, when we were approached in late 2025 to assist with some construction projects, we immediately agreed.

The first part of the project—tree surround seating—was straightforward enough and was completed prior to Christmas, using mainly recycled materials. The second part, however, caused some serious head-scratching and prompted reflection on our experience and ability to take it on: A BOWLING ALLEY??!!

With the benefit of the Christmas break behind us, and with the assistance of Dave and Greg—two (younger) recruits roped in by the Neighbourhood House—the task was duly completed. We now await the opportunity to show off our skills on the track! **Kevin Davis**



The tree seats make a welcome addition to the space



Day 1: The frame

Day 2: The Deck

Finished!

# My Story - Paul Newman

I was born on 29 September 1949 and lived with my parents in Grandview Road, Niddrie until the day I married my loyal and beautiful wife, Lorraine.

I spent my final four years of schooling at Niddrie High School. In 1965, it was time to leave. I wasn't performing as required - there were several reasons for this, but that is another story.

At the time, I had no clear plans for future employment, so I applied for a job simply to fill in while I made up my mind. When I arrived home after receiving the outcome of my application, I informed my parents of the so-called successful result. Several hours later, my father approached me, with Mum present, and suggested that I take on an apprenticeship with him. I never really expected this offer, and it came as quite a surprise.

Subsequently, I spent the next five years as an apprentice carpenter, working alongside my father and others, mainly building houses for sale, as well as some custom jobs. Upon completion of my apprenticeship, it was time to move on. My father wasn't getting any younger - he had taken up the tools full-time to allow me to complete my apprenticeship and, as agreed, he had fulfilled his promise.

I was awarded a Certificate of Proficiency, confirming that I had completed the necessary requirements to declare myself a carpenter by trade. I then took on carpentry work with the intention of following in my father's footsteps.

Along the way, I met a young woman whose brother and father were serving police officers. Her brother suggested that I consider applying to the police force. I did so without expectations, but my application was successful, and I subsequently spent the next thirty-nine years in the employ of Victoria Police.

Just prior to joining the police force, I met my future wife, Lorraine. We decided to marry, but only once I had secured stable employment. Five weeks after confirming my position with Victoria Police, we were married.

We had three children - two daughters and a son: Rebecca, Natalie, and Travis. All are doing well. Travis has followed in my father's footsteps and now runs his own home-building business. I know my father would be pleased.

During my police career, I focused on crime investigation, serving at every rank within the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB). One highlight of my career was being selected to attend the New Zealand Police College, where I spent ten weeks participating in some outstanding and memorable experiences.

Lorraine passed away on 13 June 2018. She was a good, dedicated mother and a devoted wife.



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