

# SHOULDER to SHOULDER

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## FROME CORACLE FUN



In late 2016, Men's Sheds Cymru challenged Frome Men's Shed to make and race a coracle.

They took up the challenge and the coracle was made by two of the Frome Shedders – Tony Hopkins & Steve Gray, with lots of advice from other Shedders.

There are many different forms of the coracle across the UK, but the Frome Coracle was based loosely on the Severn-Ironbridge type reflecting its style and dimensions.

Instead of the traditional method of making a coracle

frame with cleaved laths of Ash or willow, the frame of the Frome Coracle was made from a single board of 4 mm Birch plywood, cut into 35mm strips by Avon Plywood of Keynsham. The laths were woven and shaped after soaking and applying heat. The covering is heavy calico, painted with flexible bitumen paint. The paddle was hand made by Tony.

The coracle was started in March 2017, and took about three months to complete, largely working just half a day a week at the Frome Men's Shed.

Continues on Page 2.

## SHARE YOUR STORIES

One of the most common requests that drops into our mailbox, pops up on Facebook or is commented on our website is "what are other Sheds up to?".

Shedders love to hear good news stories from other Sheds and like to help when Sheds are in need, and so do we!

Whether you're looking for like-minded men to open a Shed, found your first premises, have a launch event or have made something brilliant - we want to hear about it!

Send your stories with high resolution photos to [admin@ukmsa.org.uk](mailto:admin@ukmsa.org.uk) and we'll share them in here or on social media.



## THE TEST

The coracle was tested on the River Frome by Sheddars Patrick Abrahams, Steve Gray, John Philp & Tony Hopkins. It was launched, named "Glennis", and some Prosecco poured over the side. The coracle was named "Glennis" after Tony's late wife. Tony said "Making a coracle has been a lifetime ambition for me – and it was brilliant seeing it on the river – Glennis would have been very proud"

Patrick, John & Tony all trialled paddling the Coracle. It all went very smoothly – with quite a crowd gathering to watch (and perhaps hoping that one of them would fall in).

A photographer from the Frome Times came along and took some really great photographs.

The earliest record of coracles on the river Frome was when the wild Silures Tribe from South Wales came over the Severn and down the River Frome in coracles to attack the Romans at Farleigh Hungerford!

## THE BIG RACE

The team strapped the Coracle on the top of the car and headed down the M4 to Carmarthen. Patrick, John and Steve arrived in



Carmarthen to meet Tony Hopkins who had travelled separately. Malcolm & Jenny Rees from the Carmarthen Coracle Association met with the guys to witness the event as did a crew of the Ferryside Sheddars.

The Frome Sheddars met lots of people at the Carmarthen River Festival, including the Carmarthen Mayor Alun Lenny.

The race took place at slack tide. The start delayed by the passage of the RNLI rescue boat racing up and down the River Towy – making some waves that challenged the

novice Coraclers.

The race was fairly slow, with Ferryside Shed coming third, John Philp from the Frome Shed coming 4th, and Patrick from the Frome Shed last, but by no means least.

The Frome Sheddars hope to run a larger event in 2018 with more Men's Sheds involved. Get in touch if you're interested and we'll pass your details on to the guys in Frome.

Congratulations to the Frome Sheddars for making something so brilliant and putting it to such a fun use!

