

Frome Sheddners launch their coracle

EARLIER in the year, the Welsh Men's Sheds Association challenged the Frome Shed to make and race a coracle.

The Frome Men's Shed took up the challenge, and the coracle was made in a traditional manner by two Frome Sheddners - Tony Hopkins and Steve Gray.

Instead of ash, the Frome coracle was made from a single board of 4 mm birch plywood, cut into 35mm strips by Avon Plywood of Keynsham. The slats 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 took about three months to make, largely working just one day a week at the Frome Men's Shed on a Thursday morning.

The coracle was built to take part in the challenge at the Carmarthen River Festival. The Festival is being held on the River Towy at Carmarthen on the 8th July. The Frome Shed coracle and the Ferryside coracle will take part, and they hope that some other Men's Sheds will participate.

The Frome Shed coracle was launched very successfully on the River Frome on the 27th June.

Frome Sheddners say, "Quite a few passers-by gathered to watch and ask questions. 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! We hope that Frome can wreak revenge at the Carmarthen river festival."

"After a naming ceremony, the Sheddners' Patrick, Tony and John successfully got in, and out - not easy by all accounts. They also managed to paddle up and down the River Frome. 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."

About the Frome Men's Shed

The Frome Men's Shed offers a workspace where older people can work on practical projects with others. People are welcome from anywhere in the Frome and surrounding area. The space is equipped with tools and materials donated by the



Patrick Abrahams, tries out the Coracle

public or local businesses.

The club is run by the members who decide when they come and what they do. They undertake projects, acceptable to the group, which are of benefit to individuals, other groups and the broader community Frome. They learn from each other and contribute voluntarily to the club's future. The group has been running since August 20 and has nearly 70 members, with 20-25 members attending each week.

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Patrick Abrahams, John Philp, Steve Gray and Tony Hopkins with Glennis the Coracle

