Shane Morris and Niall (and Rhys) White – Bike fixer uppers

Niall White is normally a doorman but there isn’t much need for doormen during the virus. Shane Morris, who is part of his household and dating his daughter, is in security and likewise he is out of work at the moment. The two men were going slightly bonkers while at home during COVID19. Then a neighbour asked if they could fix a push bike. Niall is a bit of a handy man and Shane used to ride BMX bikes when he was younger and knew his way around the spokes.

Bingo – Kilcoole Recycle was born. Half hobby and half recycling initiative, their house is now covered in bikes, littering the front garden and stacked up in the back. They were joined by Rhys, Niall’s son aged 14, who is also very handy and is now the main man behind any of the spray jobs to pimp up an old bike. Rhys has ADHD and is out of school like other young people his age. He finds the joy of fixing bikes is very positive for him.

“Rhys is often first in the workshop of a morning,” says Shane. “He can “be up at 7am and in the workshop just after.”

We chat on his mobile over a zoom call right in their back garden. At the end of the conversation, Shane shows the camera around the house and sure enough there are bikes everywhere of every hue and colour. “It just took off,” says Shane with a grin.

People are going back to cycling during the pandemic. Everyone on a bike has their very own social distancing and it’s healthier than traveling by car. The recent good weather has also made cycling a far more pleasant experience.

At first it was just a dribble of bikes but then it became a bit of a tsunami. People looked into their sheds and found forgotten bikes lying about. Even bikes in very bad repair can be brought back to life or perhaps their constituent parts can be reused. Nothing is wasted.

Some people have donated the bikes which are then mended with new tyres and tubes as needed. They sell the bikes from an Adverts page basically at cost. Some people have decided to take up cycling but their bike needs a repair and so that have turned to the Kilcoole trio to help them out.

There have been many children’s bikes donated. Shane stresses that these bikes are in turn donated back to other children.

“It’s an amazing thing to be able to give a child a bike, especially where the parents might not be able to afford it. Yesterday I had one of the best days since Coronavirus struck. A mum brought her young daughter to the house and she picked out a bike. The mum tried to give us some money but we said no.

“Then the child, no more than four, delivered a hand drawn and coloured card to say thank you to the team.

“That made my day, it really did,” says Shane grinning again ear to ear. Hiding towards the back of the screen is Rhys grinning too. A happier pair of bike fixer-uppers I never did meet.