

THE RADYR AND MORGANSTOWN ASSOCIATION

(A Civic Society affiliated to the Civic Trust for Wales)

GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 2nd February 2015 at 7.30pm

Present: David Silver [Chairman], Tom Evans [Vice Chairman], Nick Hawkins (Secretary), Bob Roberts (Treasurer), David Cargill, Allan Cook, Cllrs Judith Marsh, Rod Mckerlich & Clive Morgan and 19 members.

Apologies: Raymond Rivron, Ralph Vaughan, Cllr David Suthers, Betty Fitzgerald & Gaynor Leaf.

A Talk by Allan Cook

The Chairman introduced Allan Cook. He started his career in the Arts Council of Great Britain and trained in Theatre Administration in Glasgow. He moved to Cardiff to work with the Welsh National Theatre Company but, after 18 months in the post, they gave up touring and went out of business soon after. He was out of work and had grown to like Cardiff so he tried television “for a year or two”. That turned into thirty years. He became a Director on children’s TV then a Producer working for both BBC Wales and the BBC. He was invited to Direct *Pobol y Cwm* part time. When it became a daily programme, Allan went over to do it 9 months a year. He left the BBC 10 years ago to go freelance, and has worked for ITV on *Crossroads*, returning to children’s programmes and making occasional guest appearances on *PYC*. As part of the R&M Community, Allan is on the Association’s Executive Committee, Chair of the History Society and Chair of Friends of Morganstown Motte.

Allan started with a controversial statement - he thought Soaps were ‘past their high water mark’. He noted the number of newspaper pages devoted to the recent death of Anne Kirkbride, an actress on *Coronation Street*. He was concerned that Soaps may have become more real to people than reality itself.

He spoke of the history of Soaps. They started on radio in the US in the 1930s - *Painted Dreams* ran from 1930 to 1943. The short running *Faraway Hill* (October to December 1946) was the first TV Soap. In fact the sponsorship via advertising by the soap industry is the origin of the name ‘Soaps’ by which this type of serial is now known. In the UK, *The Archers* started in 1951 (he noted that *Dick Barton* and *PC49* were not Soaps!) and the BBC introduced *The Grove Family* in 1954. In 1960, Independent TV wanted part of the action and started *Coronation Street*. *Pobol y Cwm* started in 1974 and is now the longest running Soap on BBC. *East Enders* started in 1985 and the short-lived *El Dorado* in 1987. (The BBC spent £10M building the set of *El Dorado* in Spain and axed it just as it was starting to build viewing figures!.) Foreign productions - e.g. *Dallas* and *Neighbours* - have filled up our schedules as well.

He described a typical Soap (on radio or TV) as being an open-ended drama contained within a smallish town (e.g. *Emmerdale Farm*) or a smallish unit within a large town (e.g. *East Enders*). It is essential to have all the elements of a community - pub, shops, meeting places etc - and there have to be problems. ‘There can be no such thing as happy families’. He noted that Ken Barlow (*Coronation Street*) lived in eight houses and had 22 affairs during his run! Allan considered that Soaps took over as (the real) local community broke down - the characters have become peoples ‘real’ neighbours.

Allan talked about the way Soaps are constructed. Normally, they are scripted about nine months in advance by a group of writers (*Downton Abbey*, being written by one person - Julian Fellowes - is a notable exception). It is contractually important for all the actors to have an equitable share of the lines over a series and scripts often have sections where a ‘topical insert’ (e.g. the budget) can be injected at the last moment. Soaps are now all recorded in advance (normally 5-6 weeks), often on a very tight schedule. Some did go out live in the past - *Pobol y Cwm* did so for a short period - but there is little advantage in doing so. Live broadcasts can be difficult from a scheduling point of view if actors inadvertently cut a few lines and shorten the episode! Even now, with very little time to rehearse (there is often none) and record, problems can still occur. If an actor is ill or fails to run up

instant script changes need to be implemented. Recording in advance for outdoor scenes can also bring problems with (e.g.) snow falling for a scene due to be shown at Easter. The costs of abandoning such a shoot are simply too great.

Finally, Allan mentioned the cost of recording. With digital recoding it is now very cheap but, when videotape was first introduced (2" tape, bad quality and very difficult to edit), it was very expensive. Tapes had to be reused - hence the number of 'lost episodes' of some old Soaps.

Responding to questions, Allan said that nowadays there were few problems with doing the recordings. Some years ago there were many, notably after colour was introduced. Getting the colour balance the same on multiple cameras was a real pain - often cutting significantly into recording time.

The Chairman thanked Allan for giving such an interesting talk. He presented him with a token of appreciation.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 17th November 2014

The minutes were approved. There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that the books had been successfully balanced for 2014, subject to formal audit. The declared surplus for the year stood at £196.99, but this included a £183.87 donation from Good Neighbours which is being spent on a specific project. So the real surplus was just £13.22. He noted that the Christmas Tree lighting event had produced an unexpectedly high surplus of £395 from the bar and BBQ, without which the outcome would have been nearer the original budget forecast of a deficit of £840. He would be giving a full report at the AGM. At 31st December 2104 the reserves stood at £6595.

Local Planning Issues

Cllr Rod Mckerlich outlined the current status. There were three planning applications of major concern to the local R&M Community at the present time - two detailed and one outline. The detailed ones concerned the building of around 1000 dwellings - 650 of which would be on opposite sides of the Llantrisant Road at the entrance to Radyr. The outline one concerned 6000 dwellings covering the area currently being debated in the LDP hearings. Comments on the outline planning application are due in by 13th February and the R&MCC is about to issue a template response for anyone wishing to object. However, the actual application is unlikely to go to the Planning Committee for a considerable period of time.

He had been attending the LDP hearings, together with Helena Fox (Clerk to the R&MCC), and described them as 'marathon sessions'. The sessions are led by the Welsh Government appointed Inspector and attended by developers, land owners, Council officers and local groups (including members of the North West Cardiff Group). He thought that the local representatives were 'definitely winning the argument' but the eventual outcome was difficult to predict. The crucial issues concerned transportation and this area would be coming up for debate shortly.

Radyr Library

The Chairman outlined the current status. Cardiff Council had voted (by a majority of just two) the previous week to turn down a motion to delay the cuts to the Library budget. However, the decision to cut the budget will not be ratified until the official budget meeting on 26th February. In the meantime a further photocall to oppose the cuts had been arranged for Radyr Library at 11:00 on Saturday, 7th February, coinciding with National Libraries Day. Everyone was encouraged to support the protest.

Entertainment being organised

The Chairman outlined a number of upcoming events including **Pirates of Penzance** being put on by the RPMG at the Bishop of Llandaff High School, from **Wednesday 18th to Saturday 21st February**.

Tickets are available from 2084 2995 or www.rpmg.ticketsource.co.uk . Also the **Twinning Wine Quiz** in the Old Church rooms on **Friday 13th March** starting at 7.30pm. Tickets also available from 2084 2995.

The Association's next Film Club showing is **'What We Did On Our Holiday'** on **Thursday 26th February**, starting at 7.30pm in the Old Church Rooms. This is a light-hearted comedy written by Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin, well known for their phenomenally successful BBC series **Outnumbered** and starring Billy Connolly and David Tennant. Tickets (£4) are available now from ener-chi, Nick Hawkins 2084 2561, Allan Cook 2084 3176 and www.rma.ticketsource.co.uk.

Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony

The Secretary reported on the event. The weather had again been kind - clearing up (almost) at the last moment. Sir Martin Evans had done a grand job opening with the switching on of the lights in Station Road and everyone had had a good time. The NSPCC had raised £500. His only concern was that a number of stalls (all from outside R&M) had simply not turned up. He therefore thought it would be better to restrict stalls primarily to R&M-based organisations and hoped more would come forward for the 2015 ceremony.

Festival 2015

David Cargill reported that the Festival was fast approaching the stage of printing the Programme. All 34 events had been finalised and the advertisers were on board. He hoped that other R&M organisations (notably the Golf Club and the Schools) would join in supporting the NSPCC as the 'Community Charity' for the year, thus ensuring as good an outcome financially as last year. He mentioned that the Association had now chosen the Charity for the following year, 2015/16, as being Velindre Hospital.

The Chairman reported that the Association was setting up a separate website for the Festival which would give full details of past and present Festivals as well as linking to on-line ticket sales via Ticketsource. This was important to promote the Festival to a wide geographical coverage, giving a better chance of all events being fully supported.

General R&M Matters

Nothing raised.

Any Other Business

The Secretary reported that Cicchetti were considering setting up a Wine Club to taste and appreciate wines. An inaugural meeting was about to take place. Anyone at all interested in learning more about wines should get in touch with him so that they could be contacted once everything was in place.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday, 30th March 2015, commencing at 19.30 in the OCR. This would be the Association's AGM and refreshments would be offered after the formal proceedings.