

GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 20th November 2017 at 7.30pm

Present: David Silver [Chairman], Tom Evans [Vice Chairman], Nick Hawkins (Secretary), Bob Roberts (Treasurer), Allan Cook, Ian Thomas, Cllrs Rod McKerlich and Ralph Vaughan & 18 members.

Apologies: Eric Blackwell, David Cargill, Raymond Rivron, Karen Wright, Cllr David Suthers, Emma Clegg, Julie Davies, Judith Marsh.

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly on yet another foul evening.

Chris Dale - 'Greasy poles and glass ceilings - electioneering in Pompeii'

The Chairman introduced Chris. Originally from the Wirral, Chris studied Latin, Greek and Archaeology at Cardiff University and undertook postgraduate studies at Cardiff and Glamorgan Universities. In his younger days he participated in numerous archaeological excavations in Britain and France. He taught Latin, Greek and Classical Civilisation in Cardiff state and independent secondary schools for 35 years during which time he wrote two Latin textbooks. A keen traveller, he has visited many classical sites and museums in Britain and around the Mediterranean including fourteen visits to Pompeii, always with his camera at the ready. He has lived in Radyr for many years and takes an active role in the local community, notably on the stage with the RPMG and as a superb quiz master for many organisations.

Chris started his talk by introducing us to electoral dipinti. Painted on walls in 'Pompeii red' dipinti are a professional form of graffiti found only in Pompeii giving (mainly) details of council elections and gladiatorial shows. Having been uncovered in the excavation, many are starting to fade in the strong light but sufficient are readable, or have been recorded faithfully earlier, to provide a fascinating insight into Roman life. The election 'slogans' were not rubbed out but were over-painted in the annual elections, which took place in March. Modern technology has enabled some of the underlying dipinti to be revealed, giving an historical context to the life in Pompeii leading up to the eruption of Vesuvius in 79AD.

The only people eligible to vote in Pompeii were free-born male citizens. Each year two *aediles* (junior council officials responsible for street maintenance, weights & measures etc) and two *duoviri* (more senior officials responsible for justice, finance, council meetings etc) would be elected. Every five years there was a census and *duoviri quinquennales* would be elected to do the job. The overall council was made up of 80-100 members so, with mortality being high (the average lifespan in Pompeii was 30) and Council members having to be over 25, electing only two (*duoviri* had been *aediles* so were already in the Council) new members a year was a problem - resolved by adopting other members as required. Evidence elsewhere shows Councillors as young as six being adopted!

Councillors needed to be rich. Not only were they not paid but they had to be worth more than 100,000 sesterii (for comparison a soldier was paid around 900 sesterii a year). They were also expected to fund public works and events, even gladiatorial contests (which could get ruinously expensive). So why be one? On the plus side you got your name on things, could have statues erected in your honour and even have an especially wide seat to sit on to watch those contests. When you died - quite possibly at an early age - the Council would pay for a lavish funeral.

The process of getting elected had certain similarities with the present day. Having established your credentials (male, free, wealthy, being of good character), you would get the professional sign writers to create suitable dipinti about you, or perhaps suitable critical comments about the opposition. Your campaign would be run from your own house and you would wear a specially whitened robes (called *candidatus* - 'clothed in white') to distinguish you from the general population; this is the origin of the word 'candidate'. You would regale people in the Forum and it was quite common to hand out bribes, such as free bread. The Roman culture was very much built

around 'dependencies' - "I have done you a favour; you must do one for me" - so there was large element of 'calling in the debt' to improve your odds. Elections were, though, by secret ballot.

Chris' talk was wonderfully illustrated using many of his own photos of his explorations at Pompeii. If readers of these minutes would like to do more research on the subject (*the Secretary writes*) then it is worth looking up Marcus Holconius Rufus (one of Pompeii's most famous citizens) and the house of Julia Felix. The importance of this house is to show that females in Pompeii could acquire great wealth and influence despite, officially, being ineligible for high office.

Chris dealt with a number of topics in subsequent questions. Pompeii has turned out to be unique in terms of providing this sort of evidence of electioneering in Roman times. Rome gave Pompeii the relevant constitution in 80BC, and the constitution was replicated across the Roman Empire, but elections of this sort do not appear to have been general across the Empire. Herculaneum, also destroyed in 79AD, was only residential so was not involved. On the subject of female emancipation, there is absolutely no evidence that women wanted the vote at that time. Finally, as a footnote, Chris mentioned that a lot of written material has been recovered from Pompeii but about 90% of that material can only be described as profane and unrepeatable (although it can now be accessed in the area). Roman times were very different from modern times in terms of ethics and sensibilities!

At the close of the talk, the Chairman thanked Chris for giving such an interesting presentation. He presented him with a token of the Association's appreciation.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 25th September 2017

The minutes were approved. The issue of Plasdŵr was raised under 'matters arising'. The Secretary noted that the Association had recently written to both the Community Council and Cllr Rod McKerlich stating that residents did not appear to be well informed on the likely impact of the Plasdŵr, short and long term, and suggesting that some publicity campaign should be put in place, not run by the developers.

In response, Cllr McKerlich said there was a vast amount of information in the transport overview document prepared by Vectos, to which the Community Council had made a good response. The actions recommended by this report had been amplified in response to concerns raised by him. He highlighted that traffic lights would replace the roundabout at the junction of Heol Isaf with the Llantrisant Road and then, about two years later, further lights would be placed at the junction with the entrance to Clos Parc Radur; three or four more pedestrian crossings would be placed across Heol Isaf, which would also be narrowed by the inclusion of a cycle track (making parking possible on only one side); a roundabout would be inserted at the entrance to the Comprehensive School and a significant portion would be made a 20mph zone. He hoped that all this work on Heol Isaf would act as a deterrent for people using the Road as a 'rat run' across the top of Cardiff.

He explained that reason for the insertion of two sets of traffic lights in the Llantrisant Road was to protect Llandaff where pollution levels already exceeded acceptable standards. He did, though, admit that the impact of the scheme might be to move the pollution back to Radyr. The situation was likely to be worsened by additional developments being put in place further up the Llantrisant Road, such as in Talbot Green. The roadworks along the Llantrisant Road were likely to be significant and might start by the end of the year. To add to the complications, there was a possibility that new sewers might have to be laid along some of its length.

Cllr McKerlich said that reference had been made to some of the above in the monthly report he issues (which can be found on the R&M website) but that no-one had expressed concern over the Plasdŵr development. He also mentioned that Redrow and Plasdŵr would be holding a further 'drop in' session in the New Schoolrooms between 4-7pm on Thursday 23rd November if anyone wanted to ask any questions. In conclusion he reported that he and the Community Council were working on a Green Paper on these matters which would be submitted to Cardiff Council by the end of the Municipal year.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that it had been a quiet time financially. The Association's Accounts stood at: C/Ac £4,305; COIF, £3,792; Reserve, £1; Restricted, £333; Total, £ 8,434. The restricted funds

were being held for Alzheimer's Society Cymru, the Associations nominated Charity. In response to questions, it was noted that Association was aware that the funds held were slightly more than required but that various expenditures - some of which will be on-going - were being considered.

Entertainment

The Secretary reported that the next film to be shown by the Film Club was *Churchill*, on Thursday, 23rd November. He noted that comments had been made about the difficulty hearing some of the dialogue, notably on American films (which this one is not). One possibility was that the film could be shown with subtitles - the audience on Thursday would be asked if they would like to experiment with using them. It was also noted that Film Club members had just received the list of films available to be shown starting in January. Their input was awaited.

Christmas Tree lighting ceremony, 8th December

The Secretary reported that plans were now complete for this event. There was one notable innovation in that a Brass ensemble would be playing during the lighting of the tree in Morganstown, as well as in Windsor Gardens. Aled Powys Williams (of Only Men Aloud) had agreed to switch on the lights in Station Road at 7:00pm and there was possibility he might be persuaded to sing a few songs whilst there! A handout giving details of all the locations and timings was being distributed to all properties in R&M.

May Festival 2018

The Chairman reported that the next Festival meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, 22nd November. The Festival Programme was almost complete and many items were being carried forward from previous years. He noted that an adult arts competition was being arranged, in addition to the traditional ones.

General R&M Matters

Nothing raised.

Appointment of new Treasurer

The Chairman noted that Bob Roberts had been the Association's Treasurer since its formation in 1987. He had done a fantastic job over the 30 years but Bob had now indicated that, although he would like to continue being involved in the management of the money, he would prefer to hand over the preparation of the accounts to someone else. The Chairman reported that Ellis Jenkins had indicated his willingness to take over the post of Honorary Treasurer to the Association from 1st January 2018. As this is an official position on the Association's Executive Committee, he asked for the support of the members present to this appointment. This was given nem con.

Any Other Business

- The Chairman noted, with pleasure, that Ian Thomas had agreed to be co-opted onto the Association's Executive.
- He also noted that the Association was still interested in receiving ideas for speakers at our General Meetings in 2018/19 and also for Charities that the Association might sponsor in coming years. If anyone did have any ideas, they were asked to contact the Chairman or Secretary.

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Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday, 5th February 2018 commencing at 19.30 in the OCR. The speaker will be Roy Noble, Broadcaster.