

THE RADYR AND MORGANSTOWN ASSOCIATION

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

GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 18th November 2013 at 7.30pm

Present: Cyril Williams (Chairman), David Silver (Vice Chairman), Nick Hawkins (Secretary), Bob Roberts (Treasurer), David Cargill, Allan Cook, Tom Evans, Wyn Phillips, Sue Thomas, Cllrs Mike Diment, Rod Mc Kerlich, Clive Morgan, Chris St Leger and 17 members.

Apologies: Civic Trust for Wales, Rosanne Holmes, Colin Johnson, Caroline Noall, Jill Thomas.

A Talk by Martin Chamberlain, Secretary of the Friends of Forest Farm

Mr Chamberlain's talk concerned the history, importance and wildlife of Forest Farm. Forest Farm Country Park is based around the old Glamorganshire Canal which was built around 1790 and marks the beginning of the industrialisation of Cardiff which, at the time, had a population of only 1200 people. The canal, together with the slightly earlier Melingriffith feeder, served the Melingriffith Tinsplate Works. The water, and thus the power, came from the river Taff at Radyr Weir (built in 1749) which, as Mr Chamberlain pointed out, is just about to return to its roots as it will soon be used to generate electricity. The canal closed in 1942, the Tinsplate Works in 1958, and much of the canal was then destroyed in the 1970s by the construction of the A470. Forest Farm was created in 1990 as a nature reserve and the 'Friends of Forest Farm' was formed to look after the area (now designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest) including the 1Km of canal that still exists, including the remnants of two of the original 52 locks.

Mr Chamberlain mentioned the Melingriffith Water Engine which was restored a few years ago and can occasionally be seen working, although now driven by electricity. The Engine is of a unique design and was designed to pump water back from the Tinsplate Works into the canal to keep up the water levels during the summer. He showed pictures of the old canal environment. Interestingly, the canal boats were always horse-drawn; lack of investment (mainly due to the competition with the railway) meant that they never became motor driven.

The canal is now a protected environment and the whole Park sits in an enclosed area. He noted that it is a managed habitat which is now starting to get out of control. He mentioned that trees do need to be thinned from time to time; people should not get alarmed. However, protection does not mean the area is not under threat. He regretted that planning permission has been granted for the erection of 80 houses on the adjacent Whitchurch Hospital Meadows. Although this might appear as green fields, it is actually designated as a Brownfield site and was thus available to developers.

He talked and showed pictures of the wonderful wildlife, all - as he pointed out - to be found within the boundary of the City of Cardiff. You can find Kingfishers, Herons, Egrets, Coots, Moorhen, Buzzards, a Bittern (very rare), Sparrow Hawks, Dippers, the humble Robin, and Foxes, to name but a few, but no adders - although there are grass snakes. Salmon can be seen jumping at the right time of year - a good indication of the quality of the water in the Taff - there are lots of rabbits, squirrels (unfortunately only of the grey variety) and, regretfully, American Mink. The last are a real pest, preventing the re-establishment of other native species.

The Friends now have over 300 members. They have a number of aims including protecting the reserve, increasing its biodiversity, education (notably of children), obtaining the necessary funding, and running voluntary events. The Friends also publish a quarterly Newsletter. Full details are available on their website.

There is a lot of voluntary work done to keep everything in good repair - improving the habitat, maintaining the pathways (the Park is very good for mobility), keeping the Japanese Knotweed under

control, and managing nest boxes. They have even established a 'Community Orchard' which now has 40 trees.

Finally, Mr Chamberlain mentioned that the building Forest Farm was built around 1770 and is now the conservation centre for the site and home to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Given more money, he would love to develop a full Visitor Centre there. In summary he simply said that all this is available on the doorstep of Radyr & Morganstown. He encouraged all to come and visit - see the website (www.forestfarm.org.uk) for details.

At the conclusion of the talk, the Chairman thanked Mr Chamberlain for his very interesting talk and presented him with a bottle of whisky.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 16th September 2013

The minutes were approved. It was noted that the Association would be talking soon to the Library to help promote the Saturday morning exhibitions for local organisations.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that there had been little activity on the account except for up-front expenditure on Christmas lighting matters. The RMA reserves stood at £6007 - £2272 in C/A and £3735 in COIF. He noted that the quarterly COIF interest was a derisory £3.63 - the rate being 0.385%.

Community Facebook Page

David Silver gave a short presentation on the Facebook page 'Radyr & Morganstown Hub', just launched by the Association. In launching the page, the Association had branched into Social Media for the first time. The facility, which should appeal to a wide section of the Community, was intended to supplement the R&M Website and Radyr Chain. The Association would be posting on the page details of forthcoming events, pictures of past events, news snippets; basically anything of interest. Anybody registered with Facebook (including businesses) could now make comments, promote their own activities, and even start discussions on possible new activities. Although the page had only just gone live he was pleased to note an increasing number of people had 'liked' it, which is the process by which people establish a link to the page.

Christmas Tree lighting Ceremony on 6th December 2013

The Secretary reported that everything was now coming together for the event. He gave details of the timings of the various elements, all of which were in a handout due to be delivered to all residents. There was a possibility that the new restaurant (replacing Toast) might be open, which would be excellent. LATCH, the chosen Charity had found someone to switch on the lights.

Cardiff Local Development Plan

The topic was led by Cllr Rod McKerlich. He said that the R&MCC, who had been working with the Association plus Creigiau, Llandaff, Pentyrch and St Fagans, were just about to make their response to the planners. Any individual was free to make their own response prior to the deadline of 26th November. He and Helena Fox, the Clerk to the R&MCC, were happy to help if required. The main issues were still that the proposed development in NW Cardiff would impose further intolerable traffic demands on roads which are already full to capacity. The only feasible way of avoiding impossible gridlock and to achieve the desired 50% public transport level was to build a light railway system to serve the area. Whilst this had looked an impossible prospect a short while ago, recent announcements suggested that such a railway might be achieved by 2020 - within the period of the LDP. If development in NW Cardiff could be phased so that the new dwellings are not built until after this infrastructure comes available, that would be the best result that could be expected.

Cllr McKerlich also reminded the meeting that totally opposing the plans in the LDP would almost certainly be counterproductive. Developers were already hovering with significant local developments in mind. If the LDP were to fail it would be difficult for Cardiff Council to oppose the inevitable uncontrolled planning applications.

Festival 2014

David Cargill mentioned that the Festival was now less than six months away. The major framework for the events had been agreed and the schools were on board. The next meeting of the Planning Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday, 27th November.

General R&M Matters

The following matters were raised:

Film Nights. Allan Cook asked if people would be interested in a regular Film Night (featuring films just on release) to be held in the Old Church Rooms. The meeting thought this would be a good idea.

Arriva Trains. Concern was expressed at the tactics currently being used by “Revenue Protection officers” engaged by Arriva trains in issuing on the spot fines for people travelling without tickets - even though ticket offices (like Radyr) may be closed and the guards have made no attempt to sell the tickets on the train. Cllr McKerlich said he had written to Arriva trains about a number of bad practices.

Any Other Business

Executive Committee. The Chairman noted, with pleasure, that Tom Evans had agreed to be co-opted onto the Association’s Executive.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday, 3rd February 2014 at 7.30pm in the Old Church Rooms when the speaker will be Gwyn Rhys who will talk about the Glamorgan Family History Society.