

GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 20th June 2016 at 7.30pm

Present: Tom Evans [Vice Chairman], Nick Hawkins (Secretary), Bob Roberts (Treasurer), Eric Blackwell, David Cargill, Roy Godier, Cllrs Rod & Sue McKerlich & 15 members.

Apologies: David Silver [Chairman], Ralph Vaughan, Cllr Mike Diment, Bob Pearce, Allan Cook, Julie Davies, Ruth Diment, Terry & Betty Fitzgerald, Pat & Mike Williams.

Introduction

The Vice Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Before starting the formal proceedings he reported the sad news that Philip Nicholas had died the previous Friday. He was a long-time member of the Community Council, of which he was Chairman in 1997 & 98, and had been ill for some time. He said the thoughts of the Association were with his widow, Nancy, and the children. Funeral details were not yet known.

A Talk by Graham and Ian Pugh

The Vice Chairman introduced Graham and Ian. Both had gone to Whitchurch High School and joined the business in the early 80s, but not straight from school. Graham had studied engineering at Swansea University and spent time in the defence industry. Ian went to study business studies in London and then joined Tesco as a trainee manager before joining the business in the early 80's just before Graham. Graham is responsible for the admin and property development for both Radyr and Wenvoe and Ian has overall responsibility for plants on both sites.

Graham talked about the origins of Pugh's Garden Village. His grandfather, Sydney Pugh, set up in business in the 1940s and established Wenallt Nurseries in Rhiwbina in the 1950s. He named it 'S. Pugh and Son Garden Centre'. These were very austere times. In the 1960s the business, now shared with Sydney's son Colin, took the decision to sell the site and relocate to Morganstown on the site of the garden of (the now demolished) Ty Nant House. The 1970s saw the start of a proper Garden Centre, based on increasing prosperity and a heightened interest in house plants and gardens. With Graham and Ian becoming involved in the 1980s, it was time to embrace change. The business moved to 7-day working, additional land was purchased and additional businesses (e.g. the sale of sheds) were introduced onto the site. The car park was resurfaced in 1985 - an example of the philosophy of 'if you improve facilities, more people will come'. They started advertising on HTV.

The 1990s into the 2000s saw the expansion to other sites. Initially they bought a site in Cwmbran but this was later sold to fund the purchase of the Wenvoe branch. A three acre Plant Nursery was purchased in Caerphilly to enable home grown produce to be continued. They dabbled with internet sales, but it proved to be too early.

Since then it has been a matter of further expansion whilst still retaining the original family values. Businesses (notably Maidenhead Aquatics, Mountain Warehouse, Robinsons Equestrian, Pampered Pets, Dragon Reptiles, Bridges Vets, Barkers Groomer's, Cotton Traders, etc) have been established on the site and the 'Garden Centre' evolved into a 'Garden Village'. More recently, they acquired the old Morganstown Rugby Club building which enabled the establishment of a better Coffee Shop, Gift Area, Farm Shop, new entrance and offices. At Christmas they set up a 'Santa's Grotto' which proved phenomenally successful. In 2015 'slots' were sold via social media - 26,000 people saw the advert and all slots were sold out in a week. 6000 children and 8000 adults came to see Santa! 'Pugh's Woodland Lodge' has recently started, introducing children to agriculture and providing junior and adult workshops.

Today, the business is thriving. To give but one example, Maidenhead Aquatics has 120 outlets in the UK and Pugh's is the busiest. Supplies to the Garden Centre come from around the world - Denmark, Ireland, Singapore, Italy, Malaysia, etc - and the brothers continue to research new opportunities. They hope to establish a butchers shop in the near future. Three generations of Pughs are now involved as well as a number of staff who have been with the business for many years. "It is important to have good staff, but most important are our customers."

Graham noted that it has always been the aim to work with the local community and to support local charities wherever possible - Velindre Hospital (the Association's Charity in the past year) is sponsored by them. He assured everyone that there was no intention ever of selling up and allowing houses or a hotel to be built on the Morganstown site; S. Pugh and Sons will continue as a Garden Centre. The future looked bright. He thanked all R&M residents for their support and help over many years.

After Graham's talk, Ian answered a number of questions posed by the attendees. They ranged from how to deal with mole hills in the lawn (for which there was a range of advice including 'live with them, the soil in the hills is very good for potting') to how to treat an apparently sickly Damson tree. His knowledge and experience knew no bounds and, sadly, this part of the meeting had to be drawn to a close for timekeeping reasons.

At the close of the session, David Cargill thanked Graham and Ian for an excellent talk and reminded everyone just how closely Pugh's had worked with and supported the R&M Community over the years. This included nearly 30 years of the R&M Festival, Radyr Chain and the past Summer Show. The Vice Chairman added his thanks and presented both brothers with a token of appreciation.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 1st February 2016

The minutes were approved. Under 'matters arising' it was noted that:

- Outline planning application for the first tranche of 350 dwellings was approved;
- The road closure charge issue is still meandering on;
- The defibrillator has been installed outside the Opticians in Station Road, purchased with the aid of the R&MCC, Cardiff West Rotary, Cardiff Lions, and St John's Cymru;
- The OCR redevelopment is finished. The new upstairs room is now called the Castle Room and we are looking to build up overall usage.

Festival 2016

David Cargill reported that the 29th May Festival had gone really well and about £10K had been raised for Velindre, the Festival Charity. Maggie Roberts had been awarded the Ken Innes trophy. A meeting had been arranged for 14th July to look at how well the plans had worked and to look ahead to next year. Next year's Charity, St John's Cymru, would be introduced at that time. It was noted that the blue plaque commemorating Roald Dahl had now gone up on Ty Mynydd Lodge.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer also reported that the Festival had done well. The Association had made a surplus of about £200 over the two weeks. £8K had been raised via Festival events - including the prize draw and bucket collections. Notable amongst the events were the results from the final concert (£930), Open Gardens (£1280), and Vintage Tea Party (£1560). Velindre had also received about £2K directly from other organisations, giving the total of £10K.

He mentioned a few other totals, including the Film Club which had generated a surplus of £300 to date, the leaflets for the printing of the Roald Dahl Walk (£165, the cost was shared with the Llandaff Society), and the purchase of the hanging baskets in Station Road (£180, the cost was shared with the R&MCC). Accounts stood at: C/Ac £11,229 (swollen by retained Charity money); COIF, £3776; Reserve, £1; Total, £15,006. There were no questions.

General R&M Matters

The following items were noted:

Hanging baskets. As mentioned by the Treasurer, the baskets had gone up in Station Road, thanks to Raymond Rivron, Allan Cook and the R&MCC. It was hoped that the shopkeepers will appreciate the better baskets and help to fund them in future.

Concern over the planning permission for the NatWest bank site. An application has been submitted for the change of use of the site from 'Financial' to 'Retail' plus a substantial redevelopment. The change of use was entirely expected and acceptable but there was a general understating (not actually mentioned in the application) that the intended use is for a Co-op store. Sitting directly next door to the existing Spar, this is hardly ideal and will also cause difficulty to Nicky's Sandwich shop and McColl's. Cllr McKerlich advised that not wanting a Co-op in Station Road was not a valid reason for objecting to the application but objections could be made on grounds of restricting delivery times to the site, over-development of the site, lack of adequate parking and increased traffic movements. He would keep people briefed.

Social media. Part of the success of the May Festival had been due to interest generated via Social Media. In May there had been 44K views of the Association's Twitter and Facebook posts. Facebook 'likes' had grown to over 900 and Twitter followers to over 350.

Entertainment

The Vice Chairman gave details of a number of events being organised in the near future and featured in the diary on the R&M Website.

Eric Blackwell was pleased to announce that the Association had been successful in its bid for a grant to acquire new and dedicated kit for the Film Club. This was 'hot off the press' and full details would become known soon. One implication of the award - it being a fundamental condition - was that the Film Club would need to increase the number of showings per year. It was also noted that this might be an excellent point at which to establish the Film Club as an independent entity under the wing of the Association.

Christmas Tree lighting ceremony, Friday, 2nd December

Although clearly very early to be talking about such things, the Secretary mentioned that he was about to start the planning for this very popular event. It had been running for a number of years and had grown in size and complexity and his current intention was, broadly, to leave things as they are. However, he would like to hear from anyone who had any new ideas or could help in any way to make the event even better.

Any Other Business

Nothing raised.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday, 19th September 2016 commencing at 19.30 in the OCR. The speaker will be Jason Mohammad.