

GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 6th February 2017 at 7.30pm

Present: David Silver [Chairman], Nick Hawkins (Secretary), Bob Roberts (Treasurer), Eric Blackwell, David Cargill, Roy Godier, Cllr Ralph Vaughan, Cllrs Rod & Sue McKerlich & 18 members.

Apologies: Tom Evans [Vice Chairman], Cllr Mike & Ruth Diment, Judith Marsh, Anne Silver.

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly on an evening with such bad weather.

The economics of the motor sector post Brexit and Trump

The Chairman introduced Professor Garel Rhys. He noted he had studied at University College, Swansea, and then the University of Birmingham. From 1984-2005 he was Professor of Motor Industry Economics at Cardiff University. He is a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Carmen, and was granted the Freedom of the City of London in 2000. An author of many books and papers, he has been Special Advisor to Select Committees in both Houses of Parliament as well as to the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation. In short, he is an exceptionally qualified individual to talk about economics and the motor industry.

Professor Rhys suggested that 2016 would be remembered as a seminal year - possibly the most significant since 1688 with the Dutch invasion and the Glorious Revolution. He noted that the UK does not have a written Constitution so it is relatively easy for us to change the way we do things. Although he had voted to remain in the recent Brexit referendum, albeit 'with a heavy heart', the vote to leave had provided the trigger for that change.

He turned the clock back to the start of the EU. Just after the end of WWII, country leaders that he described as 'true statesmen' resolved that 'there must never be civil war in Europe again'. They realised that Germany had come close to developing an atomic bomb and had had the means to deliver it (the V2). The war had been won 'by the skin of its teeth'. They wondered what co-operatively they could do to ensure this objective. Historically, wealth and wars were dependent on heavy industry so, in 1950, the Schuman plan was proposed to control coal and steel across Europe by the 'High Authority' - this ensured that Germany lost control of its industrial heartland. The UK, wary as ever of external control, declined to join. In 1952 the European Defence Community was formed but France refused to sign the treaty and it collapsed in 1954. The European Economic Community (EEC) was created by the Treaty of Rome of 1957, but again the UK declined to join as the UK wanted a free market, not economic integration. In 1960 the UK helped set up the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) consisting of seven countries who did not wish to join the EEC. This was not a strong trading group.

By 1973 the EEC was doing well and the UK was doing very badly. An earlier attempt by Harold Wilson to control the UK economy by forming the Department of Economic Affairs had failed. In May 1967 he had lodged an application for the UK to join the European Community which was vetoed by de Gaulle. After De Gaulle lost power, Edward Heath negotiated Britain's admission to the EEC in 1973. Joining the EEC exposed the UK to competition and we have never looked back. In 2017 the UK is the most efficient economy in Europe.

The Government thought a remain vote at the Brexit referendum was 'in the bag'. They were wrong; the people thought otherwise, even if their reasons for voting for Brexit appear arcane. 87% of 'manufacturing constituencies' voted to leave even though they had been major beneficiaries of EEC funding. 'The people' were fed up with a tariff-mad over-controlled central elite and instinctively felt the UK could survive by itself.

Were the people right? Professor Rhys examined the motor industry. The UK's success has been in making quality cars, largely driven by the introduction of Japanese processes, notably Nissan. Nissan and Jaguar Land Rover now make 62% of all the cars in the UK, and they are exported to the world. In fact, 83% of all cars made in the UK are exported - these tend to be high-value cars; 85% of cars bought are imported - many of these tend to be more basic cars. Without being complacent, the UK and Germany have cornered the market for the production of high-quality cars; competition for more basic cars made (less efficiently) elsewhere, notably in mainland Europe, will be fierce. India and China are a great threat in this market. The UK has the biggest cluster of 'super cars' - e.g. McLaren, Rolls Royce, Bentley, etc - in the world. Even General Motors will probably base their worldwide manufacture of the Astra in Ellesmere Port. This success is important. The Nissan factory employs 7K workers directly but it effectively supports 40K workers in the local community. If Nissan were to fail it is estimated that a further 30K jobs would be lost nationally.

He made a short reference to the election of President Trump, who he did not regard as a politician. His first two weeks in office had unnerved people because, unlike a politician, he was actually doing what he said he was going to do when campaigning. One of those actions was to introduce tariff barriers, but would that be a problem to the UK? In the EU the 'Common External Tariff' (which covers the import of cars) is 9.7% - and for commercial vehicles 22%. In Japan it is 0% and in the US 2.5%. The UK would do very well if the US forced down the EU tariff to the US level.

Professor Rhys also looked at the move towards alternative fuelled vehicles. In 2016 they represented 3.5% of the UK market - very close to 4%, which is the generally accepted trigger point for new technology to take off. But UK car manufacturing is largely export driven and overseas sales - to countries where there are fewer concerns over pollution etc - are forecast to boom. Again, the UK is very well positioned for the future.

Turning finally to the situation in Wales, Professor Rhys bemoaned the loss of the Welsh Development Agency in 2006. Looking beyond Brexit, Wales needs to reinvent such a body to allow businesses to be drawn in and nurtured. He mentioned specifically the on-going saga of the Circuit of Wales in Blaenau Gwent. Thought of as 'just a racing car circuit', it potentially encompasses much more - a technology park, a leisure centre and an academy to name just three features. And it is located in an area crying out for regeneration. It is exactly the type of enterprise that a renewed WDA would get going. Wales needs to look positively to the future post Brexit and Trump.

At the close of the talk, the Chairman thanked Professor Rhys for giving such an informative, challenging and entertaining presentation. He presented him with a token of the Association's appreciation.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 21st November 2016

The minutes were approved. Under 'matters arising' it was noted that the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on Friday, 2nd December, had been a great success, with more stalls and more people attending. About £2000 has already been raised for the Association's Charity, St John Ambulance Wales, largely by local schools.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that he had balanced the Association's books for the financial year (which is the same as the calendar year), subject to audit. He noted that the Association had made a loss over the year, but smaller than the planned deficit of £613. At the end of the year, the Association had £6543 in unrestricted funds plus £360 held for the Charity; a very healthy position. There were no questions.

Entertainment

The Chairman summarised a few events that coming up over the next two months:

- The Festival Queen auditions on 11th February. Contact Maggie Roberts for details (2084 2995).
- The RPMG performance of *The Gondoliers* from 22nd - 25th February. Tickets from Maggie.

- Film Club showings of *The Girl on a Train* on 23rd February and *A Street Cat named Bob* on 23rd March. Tickets from the RMA Secretary or on-line at www.ticketsource.co.uk/rma.

Festival 2017

David Cargill, Festival Chairman, reported that the Festival Programme was virtually complete and would be distributed in the March/April edition of Radyr Chain. The Festival Theme was 'Superheroes' and he looked forward to a very colourful display from the children in the Festival Parade on Saturday, 29th April. He noted that the £2000 already raised for St John Ambulance Wales was being put toward uniforms for their growing band of cadets.

General R&M Matters

The following items were noted:

Sad News. The Chairman reported that Martha, who had supported the Festival Queen and her attendants during the 2014 Festival and was an ambassador for the Charity LATCH, had passed away. Condolences had been conveyed to her family. He also noted that a number of funerals were about to take place in Christ Church of people well known to the R&M Community, namely:

- Mr Delwyn Tattum at 11:45am on Wednesday, 8th February.
- Mrs Alix Williams at 11am on Friday, 10th February.
- Mrs Mary Phillips at 12:30pm on Thursday, 16th February.

Training for AED and CPR. St John Ambulance Wales are holding a training session in the OCR on Saturday, 4th March from 2-6pm. There are currently two places available on this course but further courses can be arranged if there is demand. Anyone interested should contact Sean Sabbage on sean.sabbage@radyr.sjaw.org.uk.

Civic Trust Cymru. The Trust had become insolvent and had, sadly, disbanded. The Association was therefore no longer a member and the details had been removed from the letterhead.

Cllr Rod McKerlich reported a number of items:

- Two-form entry for Radyr Primary School had been approved and will start in September 2017.
- It has been agreed that Park Road outside Radyr Primary will become a 20mph zone.
- Street lighting in Radyr will be changed shortly to LED.
- There had been a successful consultation exercise in the OCR recently concerning the extension to the car park at Radyr Station. Points raised included the fact that no provision had been made in the main car park for the drop off of people with prams etc. Also, taking into account the number of traffic movements that would occur in peak periods at the bottom of Kings Road, some form of pedestrian crossing would be required.
- The planning application for the balance of the 7,000 houses in the 'Acolaid Case' (in the area around the Llantrisant Road) will be dealt with by Cardiff Council Planning Committee on 1st March. He and the R&MCC had made formal objections on a number of grounds, including a known colony of Great Crested Newts; a reduction in open space; the need for infrastructure (schools etc) to be in place before houses are built, not after; and potential problems with drainage systems (SUDS), notably behind houses along Heol Isaf. He would welcome the support of the Association in opposing the application and said the details would be sent to the Secretary shortly. He also noted that the LDP was due for review in 2019.

Any Other Business

Nothing raised.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday, 3rd April 2017 commencing at 19.30 in the OCR. This will be the Association's AGM and refreshments will be offered after the formal proceedings.