

GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 23rd September 2019 at 7.30pm

Present: Nick Hawkins (Secretary), Eric Blackwell, Allan Cook, Raymond Rivron, Bob Roberts, Cllrs Rod McKerlich, Helen Lloyd Jones, Clive Morgan and Ralph Vaughan, and 26 members.

Apologies: David Silver [Chairman], Tom Evans [Vice Chairman], David Cargill (Treasurer), Ian Thomas, Rev'd Vicki Burrows, Julie Davies, Terry & Betty Fitzgerald, Moy Lewis, Jean Monk, Wyn & Anne-Marie Phillips and Richard & Vicky Wales.

Introduction

Allan Cook took the Chair in the absence of both the Chairman and Vice Chairman. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the absence of so many of the Association's Executive Committee.

Raymond Rivron: 'Radyr Woods'.

Allan Cook introduced Raymond Rivron. He noted the many talents he had displayed in his work in the R&M Community - a wonderful thinker, designer, set designer and builder, props builder, Chair of the Twinning Fellowship, Association Executive member, Leader of the Jazz Group 'Cube' and, of course, over 20 years as a Radyr Woods Warden. It was particularly good of Raymond to give the talk at this moment as he was moving this very week to be nearer relatives in Hereford. His departure would leave a great hole in both the Association Executive and many aspects of R&M life. Whilst he had promised to return often, he will be greatly missed.

Raymond started the talk by describing the size of the Woods (14 acres) and their location, with many entrances, some not too obvious. Note the plural. There, in fact, two woods - the 'Spring Wood' and the 'Hermit Wood' - the latter being a Local Nature Reserve where access is restricted (although this is not always respected - see later). There are also public open spaces.

The Woods have an intriguing history. The oldest part contains a late-prehistoric mound - a hearth - which was excavated in 1914-16 by the late Bill Clarke's Grandfather. They found pottery dated at around 100AD and lots of charcoal. The charcoal was made up of identifiable different trees which, amazingly, are still the same trees that grow there today, 2000 years later. No-one knows what the hearth was there for. There are no bones (so it wasn't used for cooking) and no evidence of any habitation. Theories abound, even including the idea that it was a primeval sauna!

The area has been used in different ways over the years. At one time there was farm with a farm building shown as 'Radyr Lodge' on old plans. The Lodge was lived in until the 1960s (and some members present at the meeting remembered the occupants). There was a quarry, the remains of which are regarded as a nationally important source of Radyr Stone. It also contains an ancient well - the 'Hermit Well' (also known as 'Pistyll Golau') - which has been dry since around 1976 but has been designated a 'Category A or B' National Monument by the Gwent Archaeological Trust.

Ownership of the land was and, to a certain extent, remains complex. In 1975 the local Council Education Committee did not want the land (which is adjacent to then relatively newly built Comprehensive School) and tried to sell it to the R&M Community Council for £6000. In 1981 the late Bill Clarke took the lead as a key member of the Community Council to secure the site for the use of local residents. Seven organisations were involved. Improvement and maintenance work began in 1982 with the construction of bridges, fences and boardwalks and eventually a draft management agreement was drawn up in 1983. In 1984 the Community Council purchased four acres of the area for a nominal sum and ownership is now shared between Cardiff Council and the Community Council. In November 1984 it was awarded the Queen's Silver Management Award and Prince Michael of Kent visited the site in October 1985.

The 'Radyr Wardens' were formed in May 1985 and, by January 1986, they numbered 14. Over the years they have been responsible for constructing and maintaining all aspects of the Woods - a never-ending task due to the constant encroachment of nature and, sadly, constant vandalism. Raymond showed a picture of the official opening of the 'Millennium Boardwalk' in March 2000, attended by a host of people. Just recently, a replacement boardwalk was opened; the 'ceremony' was not attended by anyone.

Raymond ended his talk by emphasising just how rare and important Radyr Woods are to the local Community. Containing recognisably important historical structures, lovely open spaces with picnic areas, superb views and excellent walks it is a real asset to the R&M. However, there are threats to its future. Nature, itself, is a big threat. If ponds are not cleared of silt, trees maintained (he showed a picture of a tree that had fallen on to the ancient hearth much to the displeasure of the authorities), and items (like the boardwalk) replaced because of rotten wood, nature will reclaim the area all too quickly. But the biggest threat to the woods is manmade. It has proved incredibly difficult to recruit new Wardens so there are just a few active members. Anti-social behaviour has not lessened, some, regretfully, caused by local school children. The Local Nature Reserve is not respected. The Community Council remains very supportive in funding necessary work but Cardiff Council are 'not interested'; they used to provide grants, but no longer. Unless the local Community takes a greater interest in the Woods and new Wardens volunteer, everything will deteriorate very quickly and all the work done over the last 40 years will be lost. That would be a great pity, to say the least. He emphasised just how much pleasure he and others have had from working in the Woods over the years - it is great fun working with nature - and he hoped that people will wake up to the dangers and respond by getting involved and respecting such a valuable local asset.

There were no questions at the end of the talk, but Allan thanked Raymond for such an interesting and revealing session. He also repeated the sentiments he expressed at the start of the talk that Raymond's enthusiasm and expertise will be huge loss to the R&M Community and wished him well in the move to Hereford. He presented him with a gift from the Association.

Immediately after the talk, Cllr Helen Lloyd Jones took the opportunity of expressing the thanks of the R&M Community Council for all the work done by Raymond over the years in Radyr Woods and elsewhere. She presented him with a formal letter of thanks from the Community Council and also the gift of a walking stick which she hoped he would find of use on many future walks.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 17th June 2019

The minutes were approved. Under matters arising it was noted that, following Tenovus, the current 'adopted charity', the Association had agreed formally to adopt the British Heart Foundation for 20/21 and Headway (Cardiff and South East Wales) for 21/22. The Association was looking forward to working with them in due course and would let members know of any activities planned by the organisations in the meantime.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of the Treasurer, the Secretary reported that the Association's finances were solid. Action for Children, the previously adopted charity, had received a cheque for £12,000 at the Festival 'wrap up' ceremony. That figure might increase if a claim for Gift Aid on bucket collections is successful. The Association bank account currently stood £6,500 (in line with its Reserve Limit). He noted that the finance had been greatly helped by a grant from the Community Council in respect of running the May Festival, and sponsorship from both Redrow and Plasdŵr for the Festival Website and the Festival Programme. Monies had recently been spent in investing in a number of items, including gazebos, BBQs, trestle tables, banners, etc. All these were replacements for items which were becoming worn out, and would allow the Association to continue operating effectively. There were no questions.

Christmas Tree lighting ceremony on 6th December

The Secretary gave a short brief on this event. It would take the usual form of the lighting of three trees, organised by the Community Council, and the main event in Station Road. Santa and his sleigh had been booked and Tenovus were working on finding a Celebrity to switch on the lights. Arrangements for the carol singing by children were not yet fixed. He noted that he had some spare spaces for stalls in Station Road should any organisation be interested in taking them up.

May Festival - first thoughts

Allan Cook reported that plans for next year's Festival were being firmed up. As mentioned in the recent Association Newsletter, the change in day of the first May Bank Holiday (from the Monday to the Friday) had necessitated a reworking of the normal schedule. The Festival would now open with the Fun Run on Saturday morning leading directly into the Fete, hopefully in the grounds of Radyr Primary School. The Concert in the Parc would take place on the 'Bank Holiday Friday' and would incorporate WW2 songs. It had been decided, partly at the request of the local schools, to abandon the appointment of a 'Festival Queen' and, instead, to appoint one or more 'Ambassadors' (of any

gender) who would take over the former roles of the Queen and her attendants, and also represent the Charity. The 'Crowning Ceremony' (to be held on the first Sunday) would become an 'Inauguration Ceremony' but would still include the traditional Maypole dancing.

Community Website

The Secretary reported that the Community website, www.radyr.org.uk, was now fully under the control of the Association. Various changes had been made to make the site more attractive and user-friendly and he asked all to have a look at it. Of particular interest were any areas where content was wrong, out of date, or missing. He also said that the Association was keen to see more news on the front page so asked all to keep the Webteam aware of all events.

General R&M Matters

Plasdŵr. The Secretary noted that recent problems with three-way traffic lights on the junction of Heol Isaf with the Llantrisant Road during road works had resulted in an avalanche of complaints and comments on the Association's Facebook and Twitter accounts. As a result, the Association had had a meeting with Plasdŵr, together with Cllr McKerlich, to understand what had gone on and to seek assurances for the future. Plasdŵr had, indeed, given explanations and assurances but further road works and traffic control schemes were still being notified (*Secretary's Note: see the [Community Website](#)*) which had caused further comments and alarm.

Katie Powis, Plasdŵr Community Liaison Manager, agreed to take questions on this topic. She confirmed that the earlier three-way light scheme had not been well managed and apologised, but no such schemes were being planned for the future. The plan was that work on the Heol Isaf/ Llantrisant Road junction would be complete in early 2020. She accepted that it appeared that the work had taken an extremely long time, with roads being constantly being dug up and re-layed, but this was a consequence of having to work with numerous agencies, worsened by restrictions imposed by Cardiff Council. Cllr McKerlich pointed out that some of the frustration had been caused by the late notification of road closures etc. The three-way light problem was largely due to a total misunderstanding of the traffic flows on the adjoining roads and a consequent mismanagement of the priorities. He also commented that people might accept short term inconvenience but the work had gone on far too long, and could have been shortened if contractors had worked 'round the clock'. Katie explained that this needed permission from Cardiff Council who were concerned about noise and disturbance to neighbours. Cllr McKerlich commented that he thought local negotiations might have been wise.

In conclusion, it was noted that Plasdŵr would be running a 'drop in session' on Wednesday, 25th September at Fairwater Leisure centre from 4-7pm if people would like to continue the discussion. Diagrams of all the related areas would be on display. Katie was also willing to answer questions personally if people wished to ring her. (*Secretary's Note: contact details are included in the latest Association Newsletter which can be accessed [through this link](#).*)

Parc Radur Play Area. Delays to the reinstallation of the play area at Parc Radur were noted. These were caused by the need to install new drainage prior to the fixing of the new equipment, for which funds had already been found from various sources including crowd funding. Cllr McKerlich informed the meeting that the drainage work had been costed at £15-20K, money which Cardiff Council Parks Department (who only have an annual budget of £90K to cover all parks) does not have. They have agreed to do the work by using money from this and next year's budget, but that means it would not be done until late spring 2020. An alternative was to use Section 106 (planning gain) money but this had already been allocated to work on the Fisher Hill Way play area.

Primary School Consultation. The Secretary highlighted the consultation exercise that Cardiff Council will be running on 30th September at Radyr Comprehensive School on Monday, 30th September from 6.30-8.00pm. (*Secretary's Note: further details again included in the latest [Association Newsletter](#).*) Cllr McKerlich emphasised the importance of this consultation and encouraged as many people as possible to attend. Not only were there concerns about the number of Primary School places being created but Secondary School places will be in short supply with the increase in population. The local Primary Schools were already full and there was little space in Radyr Comprehensive School. It was likely that pupils will find themselves directed towards Cantonian High School.

Entertainment

Allan Cook reminded everyone that the first film in the Association's Film Club autumn season was '*Fisherman's Friends*', being shown on Thursday, 26th September. Tickets were still available and he hoped the new seat cushions would be delivered in time for the performance! The subsequent film was the classic '*Kind Hearts and Coronets*' on 24th October. Tickets are available from the usual sources including [TicketSource](#).

Any other business

Nothing raised.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday, 18th November 2019 commencing at 19.30 in the OCR. The speaker will be Dr Barry J McDonnell (Cardiovascular health).