

## GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 7.30pm

**Present:** David Silver [Chairman], Nick Hawkins (Secretary), David Cargill (Treasurer), Eric Blackwell, Allan Cook, Bob Roberts, Ian Thomas, Cllrs Huw Jones and Rod McKerlich, and 41 members.

**Apologies:** Cllr David Suthers, Mike & Ruth Diment and Moy Lewis.

## Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### Chris Dale: 'Raiders of the Past'.

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. He has lived in Radyr for many years and takes an active role in the local community.

In a race across the centuries, Chris illustrated how the stealing of precious artefacts from earlier civilisations has been a constant - and lucrative - occupation. The Romans were fascinated by Greek antiquities; in the 17<sup>th</sup>C rich noblemen (notably the Earl of Arundel) hired people to scavenge antiquities from Italy to Asia Minor; in the 18<sup>th</sup>C the Italians started to strip Pompeii and the 'Grand Tour' was a fashionable enterprise; in the 20<sup>th</sup>C the Germans seized many antiquities from all over Europe and, more recently, real money has got involved with museums and private individuals willing to pay vast sums for antiquities with doubtful provenance.

We followed the example of the statue of Mercury as an example. During the digging of a well shaft near Pompeii, a spectacular mosaic pavement was found in June 1750. This was the beginning of the exploration of what came to be called the *Villa of the Papyri*, a huge seafront residence built in the 1<sup>st</sup>C BC. A remarkable statue of Mercury was discovered in August 1758. All finds from the Villa were the property of the King of Naples who displayed them in his palace at Portici. In 1805 all the items in the Royal Collection were moved to the Palazzo degli Studi, originally designed in 1585 as a stable (renamed the National Archaeological Museum in the 1860s, it is still the archaeological museum of the Bay of Naples area). In September 1943, 187 crates of artworks from the National Museum were sent to the abbey at Monte Cassino for safekeeping - four works from the *Villa of the Papyri* among them, including the Seated Mercury. This was fortunate, as Naples was severely damaged by Allied bombing in October 1943. Monte Cassino itself was utterly destroyed by Allied bombing in February 1944 but, luckily, Mercury had been moved earlier by the Germans. They had moved the artworks to their HQ, a villa near Spoleto, then to the Vatican. The first shipment arrived in December 1943, the second a few days later, but only 172 cases out of 187 arrived. The Germans explained that two trucks had not yet arrived because machine gun fire *en route* was bad. When Italian officials inspected the shipment, they realised that the best works of art were missing - the Hermann Goering Division had diverted the 15 missing cases (with Mercury) to Berlin, where they were intended to be a present for Goering's birthday. Goering, although a rapacious collector of art, did not accept the gifts, but they were exhibited in Berlin until March 1945, when they were removed to the salt mines at Alt-Aussee near Salzburg, where the Allied Forces found them in May. In July they sent them to a Collecting Point in Munich, but somewhere along the way the head had broken off the statue at the point of its original welded join in the neck and had fallen onto a stone pavement, shattering into more than 40 pieces. In June 1945 the Naples Museum re-opened but without Mercury. In August 1947, the artworks were returned to Italy and shown in an exhibition in Rome, the Mercury still minus its head. Later that year, the items were sent back to Naples. Mercury's head was repaired and put back on the statue in 1948. It has been on display at the National Museum ever since.

This is just one illustration of the fascinating detail in Chris' talk. We had numerous examples of skulduggery, such as the The Getty Museum in Malibu paying \$18m for a statue which subsequently had to be returned to Sicily in May 2011. In fact, restitution of antiquities to their country of origin

is now more common, although this has not yet happened in the case of the Elgin Marbles. Discovered items still 'go missing', such as two rare bronze statues found in the sea bed off Italy in 1972. The 'Riace Warriors', as they are now known, are on display in the Museum of Reggio di Calabria - but it is said there were originally three of them!

To bring things fully up to date, Chris covered the dangers and benefit of metal detecting and also briefed us on the various UK Treasure Acts.

There were a number of questions at the end of Chris' talk. Has Greece ever asked Italy for the return of all the items taken by the Romans? Not that anyone has heard. Did the Romans take anything significant from Britain during their occupation? Again, nothing has been recorded. Will restitution become more common? Not a lot is being reported but it is certainly happening quietly. Interestingly, there have been a number of reports of the restitution of human remains. Will the modern ability to create exact replicas assist restitution? Possibly but, whilst replicas (which are now widely available in museums) look the part, they do not necessarily have the right weight and feel. So the public might find replicas satisfactory; curators may not.

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

## Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019

The minutes were approved. Under matters arising, it was noted that the Christmas Lighting event on 6<sup>th</sup> December (run jointly with the R&MCC) had gone well, with some innovations. Current plans were for this year's event to be run in a similar fashion on 4<sup>th</sup> December.

## Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that the Association's accounts for 2019 had been finalised and would be presented at the AGM. However, he highlighted that income (both restricted and unrestricted) had come to just over £20K. The Charity *Action for Children* had received £8K from the restricted funds and operating costs were just over £12K. These costs included £2.4K on essential capital items - such as cushions for the seats. There was a modest (planned for) deficit of around £300 over the year - a very satisfactory position. The Treasurer also took the opportunity of thanking Bob Roberts for all his hard work over the year in collecting, counting and organising all the money - not an easy task.

There were no questions.

## May Festival

The Chairman reported that the Festival Programme, detailing around 35 events, had gone to the printers and would be distributed with the next edition of The Radyr Chain. He highlighted the Concert in the Parc, which will take place on Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> May, to align with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day. In support the theme, there will be a group called Kitty's Music performing 1940's songs and a roving saxophone group. It will end at 7:00pm, an hour later than usual, with a peal of the bells of Christ Church.

## General R&M Matters

**OCR Management.** The Chairman reported that, after 32 years of managing the OCR jointly with the R&MCC, the arrangement was coming to an end. Over the last few years the R&MCC had taken over more aspects of the management, including appointing a handyman and implementing an on-line booking system. Additionally, the R&MCC had brought all the accounting 'in house' so the Association no longer had the ability to manage the finances. As a result, there was little for the Association to manage any longer and everything was being handed back to the R&MCC. He was sad that this was the case, but things do change over time and now was the right time to step away.

In a brief response, Cllr Huw Jones, R&MCC Chair, said he wished to record his thanks to the Association for all the work done in running the OCR over the years and there were plans to recognise that contribution.

**Bethel Chapel.** Allan Cook (newly elected R&MCC Councillor) reported that it was hoped to set a 'Friends of Bethel Chapel Group' to help safeguard the building. Anyone interested in being involved should get in touch with him.

**Heavy Goods limit.** The Chairman highlighted the recently announced Road Traffic Act proposal to extend the restriction on heavy goods vehicles from near Pugh's to Ynys Bridge. If agreed, this would put the exit from the quarry inside the restricted zone with the consequence that lorries would not be breaking the law if they turned right on exiting the quarry and went along Heol Isaf. Although this was almost certainly an unintended consequence of the proposal, he invited all to object to the proposal before the consultation deadline of 21<sup>st</sup> February - details were on the Community website. Cllr McKerlich confirmed that, in his opinion, the proposal had been submitted with the best of intentions and the unintended consequences already detailed were recognised. He had no doubt that it would be withdrawn. He also confirmed that Cemex, who operate the quarry, have always been most cooperative and recognised the imperative of quarry vehicles not travelling through Radyr & Morganstown.

**Station Road environment.** The Secretary introduced this topic by stating that a letter had recently been distributed to all houses and businesses in Station Road, Windsor Crescent, Kings Avenue and Kings Road. The letter, from the R&MCC set out significant plans for the area related to traffic flow, parking arrangements and the potential use of Station Road as a 'Community Hub', potentially being closed at certain times such as Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings or bank holidays. Feedback to the plans was being requested via an on-line questionnaire.

A number of residents had attended this meeting to be involved with the discussion. A large number of issues were raised, of which the following is just a selection:

- The consultation letter had only gone to a very local group but concerned the whole of R&M
- Making Windsor Crescent one way would make it unsafe as traffic would move faster
- No consideration had been given to residents in the lower part of Station Road, notably regarding access for emergency vehicles (which would actually be impossible if Station Road were closed).
- Some residents without garages would have nowhere to park if certain roads were limited time parking only
- No-one (not even the shopkeepers) had been consulted prior to drawing up the plans
- Some aspects of the plan (notably the introduction of echelon parking on the side of Windsor Gardens and the introduction of tabling along Station Road) were either hugely expensive or technically impossible.
- It was unlikely that Section 106 (planning gain) money would be available to fund the scheme
- Feedback via a public meeting (which would allow people to feed on others' comments) would be preferable to an on-line questionnaire.

Cllr Jones responded to some of the points made. He said that the letter was a consultation, nothing more, and that restricting it to the local area was relevant before publicising it wider. He accepted that money may not be available but the R&MCC had been invited by Cardiff Council to put forward improvement ideas. All responses to the questionnaire would be considered, the plans modified in their light, and re-presented back to the local community for further discussion. He was also willing to meet individually with local residents.

**Recent Flooding.** The Secretary commented on the recent flooding of the river Taff. Fortunately, Radyr & Morganstown had not been significantly affected although the Royal Mail Cardiff North West Delivery Office in Gwaelod-y-Garth had been forced to close. Details were on the Community website. He invited anyone with relevant photographs of the effects of the flooding to send them via email to [web-team@radyr.org.uk](mailto:web-team@radyr.org.uk) to be added to an online gallery.

## Entertainment

Ian Thomas highlighted the next two films to be shown by the Film Club - *Downtown Abbey* on 27<sup>th</sup> February and *Judy* on 26<sup>th</sup> March. Tickets were available from the usual places, including [www.ticketsource.co.uk/rma](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/rma) (where full details are also given).

Other events mentioned were:

- **Radyr Musical Society** of *Step Back in Time* in Morganstown Village Hall at 7:30pm from 20-22<sup>nd</sup> February. Tickets £10 / £8 concessions from [www.radyrmusical.org.uk/tickets](http://www.radyrmusical.org.uk/tickets)
- A seminar at Cardiff Metropolitan University on 2<sup>nd</sup> March concerning **Stroke Research, Innovation and Care**. (This seminar had been suggested by a speaker at the last Association meeting, Dr Barry McDonnell). For details and confirm attendance contact Dr Abdul Seckham ([aseckham@cardiffmet.ac.uk](mailto:aseckham@cardiffmet.ac.uk)) by Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> February.

- The next concert in the **concerts@christchurch** series, in Christ Church on 6<sup>th</sup> March at 7:00pm (featuring a talented clarinettist and saxophonist and the Radyr Comprehensive School Big Band, amongst others). Tickets, £8 Adult and £1 under-18 were available from Nick Hawkins (2084 2561), Allan Cook (2084 3176), the Churchwardens or ener-chi in Station Road.

### **Any other business**

Nothing raised.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020 commencing at 19.30 in the OCR. This will be the Association's AGM and refreshments will be offered after the formal proceedings.