

THE RADYR AND MORGANSTOWN ASSOCIATION

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

GENERAL MEETING

Old Church Rooms on Monday 7th November 2011 at 7.30pm

Present: Cyril Williams (Chairman), David Silver (Vice-Chairman), Nick Hawkins (Secretary), Bob Roberts (Treasurer), David Cargill, Elizabeth Fraser, David Silver, Wyn Phillips, 45 members including Cllr Rod McKerlich, plus Guest Speaker The Right Honourable Rhodri Morgan.

Apologies: Derek Bateman, Allan Cook, Julie Davies, Colin Johnson, Sue Thomas, Ralph Vaughan.

A talk by Rhodri Morgan, President of the Radyr & Morganstown Association, 'From Heol Isaf to Cardiff Bay'

Mr Morgan spoke about his early days in Radyr. He was born in the first month of the Second World War and lived for the first 21 years of his life in the house on Heol Isaf next to the Methodist Church (then the Wesleyan Chapel). Radyr was much smaller then. It was primarily a railway village, dominated by the huge sidings, and with significant social barriers both within the Radyr Community (the Golf Club did not allow members 'who worked with their hands'; such people had to play at Creigiau Golf Course) and between Radyr and Morganstown. He went to school at Radyr Primary in Park Road from 1944-50. The majority of the children (66%) came from Morganstown and, in his first year, the class was dominated by evacuees. His family was very much Welsh speaking.

Added to this social mix Mr Morgan was also influenced by many other experiences. As he put it, by the time he was seven he had been to Methodist, Baptist and Chapel services and been taught Welsh and English. Radyr Primary, with its heavy influence of evacuees, was like the United Nations. His first year there was a baptism of fire, exposing him to national and international perspectives - way beyond the boundaries of Radyr.

In 1951 (at the tender age of 12) he dragged his Mother and Brother to a packed Old Church Rooms to listen to the Labour MP for Barry, Dorothy Rees who was fighting for her seat (unsuccessfully) in the forthcoming General Election. "It was like Prime minister's Question time", he said, "Dorothy Rees could not take the pressure under the barrage of questions and heckling. There was tension and drama in the air. Who could say politics was boring?" It gave him a life-long interest in politics.

Mr Morgan left Radyr in 1961 - a few years before Tony Blair moved into Dan-y-Bryn Avenue to live next door to Helena Evans, Mr Morgan's piano teacher. He apologised to Mrs Evans for not paying sufficient attention; something he now regretted. He got properly involved in politics, together with his flatmate, Neil Kinnock, in the 1964 campaign for Jim Callaghan. He said he never saw eye-to-eye with Neil Kinnock over devolution. Mr Kinnock was totally opposed due to what he perceived as a lack of a true 'Welsh Identity'. However, John Smith, who succeeded Mr Kinnock as leader of the Labour Party in 1992, was keen on devolution, particularly in Scotland which had always had a clear identity. This was much more in tune with Mr Morgan's view; he had been elected an MP in 1987. When John Smith died suddenly in 1994, Tony Blair (who was also sceptical about devolution) found he could not get out of the commitment made by his predecessor.

Mr Morgan mentioned the influence of Philip Gould, one of the architects of New Labour (who had, in fact, died earlier the same day as this talk). Mr Gould ran Focus Groups in Wrexham to try to get locals to talk about the 'Welsh Identity'. It proved difficult but there was a change in attitude when Labour came to power in 1997. Devolution was in the manifesto and the referendum was held in September 1997, and narrowly won. The Assembly got off to a bad start with incidents surrounding both Ron Davies and Alun Michael but Mr Morgan managed to 'steady the boat' after his election as First Minister in 2000. Although Mr Morgan retired as First Minister in 2009 (on his 70th birthday) he

felt it was very much due to him that the recent referendum on law-making powers for the Welsh Government was won so convincingly - so different from the original referendum in 1997.

Mr Morgan retired from politics altogether at the Assembly elections in April 2011, although he remains involved via his wife, Julie, who was elected an AM in 2011. He said he hope to return to spending time on his main pleasures - wood carving, gardening and, if Mrs Evans did not mind, actually learning to play the piano.

After wide-ranging questions relating to the West Lothian question, the Severn Barrage and the number of local authorities in Wales, the Chairman thanked Mr Morgan for a splendid talk and presented him with a bottle of whisky.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting on 5th September 2011

Approved. There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that £650 had been collected from the Station Road shopkeepers as their contribution towards the purchase and installation of new Christmas lights (see below). Excluding this money, which would be paid to the R&M Community Council, reserves stood at £5768, made up of £2087 in Current Account and £3681 in COIF. There were no questions.

Christmas Tree lighting Ceremony

Elizabeth Fraser reported that things were on track for the lighting ceremony on Thursday 8th December 2011. Trees (provided by R&MCC) would again be positioned in Morganstown (Granny Park), Windsor Park and the Sidings (Community Plot). The main lighting ceremony would again be focussed on Windsor Park and Station Road; new Christmas lights were being procured for Station Road, thanks to a grant from the R&MCC and contributions from the Station Road Traders. They would be lit by the Festival Queen and a celebrity shortly after the main tree in Windsor Gardens. Station Road would be closed for the evening, there would be a full complement of stalls, food, entertainment etc and Santa was scheduled to arrive on a sleigh. All attendees were given a handout for the event.

May Festival 2012

David Cargill reported that next year's Festival was now taking shape. The nominated Charity, George Thomas Hospice, was working hard to find the necessary celebrities and 35 events had so far been identified for the two-week Festival.

Jubilee Celebrations 2012

The Secretary reported that, following the previous Association meeting, the R&M Community Council had established a Committee to take forward the various ideas and put them into a framework for events to take place over the period 1st to 4th June. The Association had offered to move one of the now standard Festival events (the Youth Concert on Parc Radur) to Monday, 4th June and link it into a firework display at the Tennis Club. Cllr Morgan gave further details of the events, including the promotion of the 'Big Lunch' on Sunday, 3rd June.

Any Other Business

Nothing raised.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 6th February at 7.30pm in the Old Church Rooms when the speaker will be Professor Ron Eccles.