

Notes of RCoRT Meeting - 27/04/2022.

President Roger Shepherd presiding with approximately 20 members and guest speaker.

Dinner of chicken pasta and pudding followed by customary comfort break.

President welcomed the evening's speaker
**Anthony Hurle from
The Fire Brigade Museum.**

Talk: Anthony introduced us to the museum which many were surprised to learn currently occupies 2 units at Choices Plants estate in Timsbury. It is a “not for profit organisation” seeking to attain charitable status run entirely by volunteers.

Anthony, born and brought up in Romsey, told us of his lifelong involvement with the Fire Service starting as a toddler with a fireman father, voluntary service in Romsey and as a professional fireman in London rising to station commander. Unfortunately, this did not end well due to PTSD and dismissal from employment in 2019 which has now been found at Employment Tribunal to be unfair and wrong with an award pending.

This personal loss together with emotional and financial suffering has inspired Anthony to find another way of serving both the Fire Service and the community through the Museum.

His talk identified two areas of ambition for the project; the museum itself and the added social and community goals.

1. **The Museum:** This currently houses fire equipment from an 1874 horse drawn appliance up to the modern day and includes a 17th century fire bucket and 1,000 uniforms and other pieces. It has outgrown the current premises and is looking to move to the Romsey Industrial estate if funding issues can be resolved. National Lottery funding may become more readily available once Covid support to existing organisations reduces.

The museum is open to visitors on Friday, Saturday & Sunday and word is spreading which is helping to increase numbers and profile. All entry fees (£3.50) are used to keep the museum open and running. It is staffed by volunteers and it is looking to recruit more in a variety of roles.

2. **Social and community goals:** The museum wants to provide support to three particular demographics as part of its role in the community. Firstly 999 Emergency personnel where there is a serious lack of resource and

support for mental health issues and urgent medical needs for serving staff. Anthony “introduced” us to 6 suicide cases from across the services to demonstrate the issues at stake here.

Secondly Anthony talked about young people from 12- 25 needing help with mental health issues with support through apprenticeships, work placements, volunteering and potentially working with HCC on this. The third category was vulnerable elderly people who might have a variety of social and physical needs and some might be encouraged to volunteer or act as mentors as well as being directly helped in other ways.

Anthony closed the talk by highlighting some of the current issues at the Museum around a lack of parking for valuable fire appliances and internal space for activities. All of this is dependent on funding and their original efforts to hold a South of England Show in July to assist with that are now having to be renegotiated with a possible move to Embley which would help to keep the Show locally.

All support is very gratefully received.

Questions: a number of questions were asked about funding, other similar organisations (none directly in the South) and it was confirmed that the Museum would be represented at the Mayor’s Picnic and provide emergency cover for Walk the Test Way.

David Sutton gave a fulsome vote of thanks.

The President asked for any urgent announcements which were:

- a) Nic Bellamy advised that Reminiscences of Romsey is now all in place with sufficient helpers and about 90 tickets sold so far. Hopefully Stuart Wineburg will have recovered from Covid.
- b) Peter Stuckey updated the club on Martin Harman and although now in a very poor way he remains upbeat. Graham Hollier was also mentioned as some concern was expressed for his general wellbeing currently.

Next meeting – AGM 4th May.

Meeting closed at about 9.30pm.

