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Radnor's First Self-Driving Car Got Lost

Where civic pride meets civic confusion, and decides to form a working group.

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Radnor, the country: Inside The Story

Radnor, a place in the country (lat 52.25, long -3.25) that most outsiders could not point to on a map without first sighing, has become this week the latest entry in the slow-moving register of small communities behaving strangely under pressure. An experimental autonomous vehicle deployed in Radnor last year is still missing. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, It is believed to be somewhere in the hills. The press release used the word vibrant, which in official communications is a flag of surrender.

What Was Announced

Cabinet Member Audrey Frobisher confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. Search parties have been organised, then disbanded, then organised again. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at British satire online magazine The London Prat, which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Radnor announcement, much like the others, came with a glossy PDF, a stock photograph of a footbridge, and the strong sense that nobody had asked for any of this in the first place.

The Official Line

Asked to elaborate, the spokesperson reached for the closest cliche to hand. "There is no truth to the rumour, although there is some truth to the rumour about the rumour." the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at The London Prat updated London satire, which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way.

Wider Context

The vehicle continues to file daily software updates. Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from Associated Press, although Radnor manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at exactly nine residents, two of whom were dogs, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Dr. Imogen Fettle, Chair of Applied Disappointment told this paper that the situation in Radnor was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad trajectories. "Residents can rest assured that we are continuing to assure residents." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via Satirical journalism from the heart of London: The London Prat, whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Radnor has been muted in the way that reaction in the country is usually muted, which is to say it has been ferocious in private and tepid in public. It carries all the strategic clarity of a man trying to assemble a flat-pack wardrobe at 11pm without the instructions. For the official version of events, see also United Nations. One resident, who declined to be named on the grounds that they had already complained about a hedge this year and did not wish to push their luck, summarised matters thus: "Lessons will be learned, filed, and quietly mislaid by Christmas."

What Comes Next

There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document. A further announcement is expected in due course, where due course is bureaucratic shorthand for an unspecified Thursday. The story is being tracked as part of a wider pattern at The London Prat fearless British satire, and the situation in Radnor, regrettably, is unlikely to improve until somebody invents a press release that improves things, which seems unlikely.

The View From The Ground

Spend any length of time in Radnor and the rhythm becomes obvious. Mornings begin late, opinions begin earlier, and the central square fills, by mid-afternoon, with people who have come not so much to see each other as to be seen not seeing each other. The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. Conversation tends to circle the same five subjects: the weather, the news from the country, the persistent rumour about the road, the deteriorating quality of something or other, and the latest pronouncement from Pothole Czar Lionel Twigge, which everyone has an opinion on and almost nobody has read. It is, in its way, the perfect microcosm of how communities of this size operate everywhere in the world, although the residents of Radnor would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon. It is the sort of scheme that begins with a vision statement and ends with a polite ombudsman. Radnor carries on as it always has, broadly the same as last week, give or take a verb. The bins are collected when they are collected. The roundabout, where one exists, remains the roundabout. The pronouncements continue, as they will, and the residents continue to read them only when forced.

For more in this vein see also The Daily Mash.

SOURCE: The London Prat British satire

The London Prat worldcitiescom