



Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 4th AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 9 May 2016

Since our last AGM the committee has had 5 meetings as well as carrying out plant-selecting trips to the nursery and one or two site visits – more of those later.

As we expand what we might grandly refer to as our portfolio, it becomes slightly more of a challenge to keep track of everything, and so, in order to help you follow what we have been doing, and to ensure that I don't omit anything, I will deal with our projects one by one. Fasten your seatbelts for a whistle-stop tour.

Piazza: We took delivery of the new planters a year ago, just after our AGM. Most of the plants which had been there over winter were moved to the Pullman site. Summer planting consisted of Cordyline, Argyranthemum, various Begonias, Bacopa, surfinia Petunias, Diascias and Helichrysum and despite rather poor summer weather they gave quite a colourful display. Watering was taken care of by the Almighty. In autumn a new scheme consisting of a half standard variegated Holly plus grasses and bulbs for spring was planted. Very soon, however, it became obvious that the Penisetum grasses were dying. The nursery was contacted and readily agreed to replace with an alternative of our choosing. We went for Carex, and they have performed very well throughout the winter. The new planters, slightly smaller than the first ones, and in a colour to match the metalwork of the surrounding buildings, have elicited very positive reaction from local residents. We intend to keep the hollies as a permanent centrepiece, adding summer plants later this month.

Market Place: The summer display was mainly large pots of yellow Bidens and red trailing Petunias, and in autumn changed to a Holly, Choisya and, as a semi-permanent planting, Tête à Tête narcissi. Over last summer we became aware that this area was heavily shaded by the mature trees all around, and so I contacted Inverclyde Council to arrange an on-site meeting with Ian Welsh, the Horticultural Officer, when we discussed whether tree-thinning and canopy-lifting might be feasible. Ian was very supportive and a few weeks later Council workers were on-site carrying out the work. Inevitably there will still be some shade cast, but

it should be considerably less than before. In addition, the Council has undertaken to improve and redesign the edging around the beds, creating some extra planting areas.

Time capsule barrels: Although not in the most eye-catching position, the barrels at the Time Capsule have, I hope you will agree, improved the appearance of the area. Summer colour came mainly from Pelargoniums and trailing Lobelia, and at the moment tulips are just coming into flower.

Time capsule border: Despite the shady situation we had great success here last summer with variegated Pelargoniums, but this spring the Tête à Tête narcissi, now in their third year, were less vigorous and will need to be replaced.

Pullman Slope: (I feel we should run a competition for a more elegant name for this area!) This is coming along nicely. The monthly tidy-ups kept the weeds and the inevitable litter under control. Our first tidy-up of 2016 took place just over a week ago and I think we all look forward to this area maturing over the next few years. Almost all the plants we were given have survived. Plants continue to be donated and there is certainly still room for more. Stan Woodward and I did a little brickwork to bridge the gap between the existing wall and the railway sleepers at the lower end.

Birkmyre Park: Pelargoniums were our choice last summer and they performed well. We decided not to be too ambitious over wintertime, confining ourselves to one grass in each planter, with spring bulbs – daffodils and tulips. Again the grasses were rather disappointing and were removed in late winter.

Lay-bys: Our efforts at the Port Glasgow Road and Bridge of Weir Road lay-bys were much more eye-catching this spring, as we had planted more snowdrops and crocus bulbs, especially yellow ones, which had more impact. The committee had been considering establishing mixed shrub and herbaceous borders of some kind at the lay-bys, and a site visit to the Port Glasgow Road lay-by showed that there was a roughly oval, grassless area facing the road that might be developed. Some of us dug this over, extracting enough large stones to form an edging, added topsoil and commercial compost and planted up the area with a dozen types of plants, bought (at trade prices) from the nursery. The shrubs are still small and will, of course, get larger as they mature, but there is also still space to add a few summer-flowering plants.

Currie's Corner: Many of you will remember that there used to be a plumber's business - Currie's - at the corner of Moss Road and Bridge of Weir Road. The pavement there is very broad and acting upon a suggestion from a member we will shortly be placing three barrel planters there, the same as those at the Time Capsule, in time to be planted with summer bedding. These planters are being bought using our own funds, as opposed to grant monies.

That concludes my report on the more visible aspects of our work, but behind the scenes there is other activity.

At the last AGM I announced that we would have to look for a different storage space; I didn't have long to worry about it as at the end of the meeting Meg McDonald offered the

use of her lock-up, very conveniently located almost adjoining the previous one, so moving our stuff was very easy. Thank you very much to Meg for that.

In June last year there were events marking Kilmacolm's twinning with MÉRIGNIES. We were asked if Colourful Kilmacolm could mount a little display in the Community Centre. As it turned out no one from the committee was available and we are very grateful to Helen Cook who not only stood in for us but also produced a banner for the stall and organised the Powerpoint display.

Before Colourful Kilmacolm had been set up we talked to Alice Johnstone of Brighter Bridge of Weir and I remember her saying how people would just offer help of various kinds, and so it has proved. Some members have overwintered plants for us – Rosemary Biggart is an expert with fuchsias, a resident of the flats diagonally across from the Pullman area came out to offer the use of an outside tap, a neighbour of Diane's, John Storrie, came along with his chainsaw and sliced through sleepers edging the Pullman slope as if they were butter, and I am frequently stopped or phoned with the offer of plants. In all sorts of ways we are becoming part of an effort, shared with many local bodies, to maintain and improve the attractiveness of our surroundings. We passed used bulbs to the local Guides for a new garden development and Ruth Lamont and Helen Fergus judged St Columba's School Garden Competition, (we have been asked to help out again this year). We have had encouragement from the Civic Trust and Kilmacolm New Community Centre, and I know that Jill Russell keeps Horticultural Society members informed of our activities. It is only fair that we note the improvements they have made to the appearance of the Millennium Garden at the Cross. As shown in the accounts, we have received donations from Kilmacolm Community Council, Gryffe Valley Rotary, the Pullman Tavern and the Cargill Trust, and from one or two individual donors, plus practical and continuing significant financial support from Inverclyde Council. There has been liaison with the Old Kirk regarding a future project and The Gryffe Advertiser and the Greenock Telegraph have both carried articles and photographs.

Last July we had a visit from our It's Your Neighbourhood assessor, as a result of which we moved up a category, from Level 2 Improving to Level 3 Developing. The Certificates which were presented to us at the October seminars are displayed at reception downstairs.

On behalf of the committee our thanks go to all those named or unnamed who have supported us. I hope at least some of you have 25th and/or 27th May marked in your diaries, when, weather permitting, we hope to clear out the winter planting schemes and then replant for summer, which surely this year will be a scorcher!