



Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 5th AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 8 May 2017

After 4 years we are beginning to settle into a rhythm, and are in a better position to plan the year's programme, based on previous years' experience. One danger of this, of course, is that we become complacent and unadventurous, just repeating what we have done before. Just as tempting is the urge to be always doing something new, looking for fresh challenges. Fortunately we have very committed but sensible committee members who are aware of these pressures and in our regular meetings – five over the last year - advise me accordingly, so with luck we will tread a middle path.

Last summer's pink and white colour scheme in the Piazza planters worked quite well, although it may be that more vibrant colours, as were used in previous years, have more impact. The half-standard hollies have settled in and have had a light trim to help shape them. Getting them to remain upright was a problem at the start until they were properly rooted but they seem more stable now. Over winter the hollies and Carex provided some interest before the daffodils took over.

At the Time Capsule geraniums (pelargoniums) and some trailers once again performed well in the border and in the half-barrels, with Tête à Tête daffodils, renewed last autumn, in the border and tulips in the barrels in spring. We also added more euonymus plants just behind the front wall. The conifers in the barrels are now too large and will be removed.

The planting at Birkmyre Park was pretty much a repeat of the previous year: white and pink pelargoniums in summer, with Tête à Tête daffodils and tulips in spring.

An extra 1500 purple crocus bulbs were planted at the lay-bys. These were donated by Gryffe Valley Rotary as part of the End Polio Now campaign. Not only did they donate the bulbs, they also invited one of our members to a special dinner marking the campaign and John Fergus was able to go along and was presented with a rather splendid certificate. We are grateful to John for attending and also for writing a letter of thanks on behalf of Colourful Kilmacolm.

At last year's AGM I reported that we had planted some small shrubs in a newly formed bed at the Port Glasgow lay-by. Well, word must have got out, because within a few days a third of them had disappeared! Nothing to be done but remove the rest, relocate them to the Pullman area and think again. As an experiment we sowed an annual flower seed mixture – not so easy to pinch! – and to our delight they grew well and gave an excellent show of colour throughout the summer. We are trying the same this year.

A new venture last year was the placing of three half-barrels at the corner of Moss Road and Bridge of Weir Road. We placed a cordyline in the centre of each barrel, a few yellow non-stop begonias around the cordyline and filled in round the outside edge with annual oxalis. This planting scheme exceeded our expectations, for in no time at all the oxalis filled out, was covered in a mass of small yellow flowers and trailed over the sides, all but obscuring the tubs.

When I look at the banking at the Pullman I find it difficult to take in that we only started this 2 years ago. I know it is much admired and it can only get better. Our very helpful chainsaw operator, John Storrie, willingly cut back all the laurel bushes which were then treated with stump killer. The bushes were so massive that I am doubtful if we will have killed them off completely but we will certainly try to prevent them from taking over again. We hope to be able to replant around the stumps with more appealing plants.

Last year I reported that we were in contact with Inverclyde Council officials regarding improvements to Market Place. Just last month some realignment of the edging and a general clean-up of the paving slabs was carried out by Council sub-contractors. This will be paid for out of the Community Grant which is being administered by our Community Council. Some of our members then cleared or cut back many of the existing shrubs and dug over the whole area – not an easy task, as my back can testify. The next step is the delivery of top soil, to be provided by Inverclyde Council, followed by replanting of the area.

In all this work we are encouraged by the many positive comments made to us, by donations of plants and other materials and by offers of help. In our turn we were pleased to be able to provide a few members to take part in St Columba's Junior School's Gardening Day last June when they helped children choose plants for containers and plant them up.

Last summer our work was assessed by It's Your Neighbourhood, as a result of which we again moved up a grade, the third consecutive year we have been promoted. We are now 'thriving'. Our certificate was presented to us at the annual seminar in Stirling in October. We have registered again this year, so we will be hoping to impress with the improvements at Market Place.

Our two new committee members appointed at last year's AGM, Judith and Margaret, quickly made their mark by organising a Colourful Kilmacolm stall at the September Farmers' Market and recruiting another 27 members. Well done! Judith had earlier passed her initiation test with flying colours: she was in charge of the first maintenance team at the start of June, responsible for keeping an eye on all the newly planted plants. You may find it hard to recall, but her stint coincided with a heatwave. Nothing daunted, Judith soon rounded up her helpers to ensure the survival of the young plants through constant watering.

As a result of administrative changes our website had to be redesigned. We continue to add to it and hope it is of interest to you. The address is unchanged – colourfulkilmacolm.org.uk.

Sheena and I were honoured to be asked to present the prizes at Kilmacolm Horticultural Society's Annual Show last September. The range and quality of exhibits was extremely impressive.

Until now we have sourced our plants from McLaren's Nurseries. Although they have given us excellent service we have been exploring the possibility of buying from Parklea/ Branching Out at Port Glasgow. They are a charitable organisation, giving work to disadvantaged people or those with special needs, and are on our doorstep. Diane and I met last autumn with two of the staff and they would expect to be able to supply at least some of what we require. Like us all, of course, they are very dependent on weather conditions so it remains to be seen how it will work out.

Finally, I would like to thank you, and all our members, for your support. Your financial contribution gives us a very healthy cushion, and your practical help with weeding and planting is invaluable. I hope, too, that you enjoy the social interaction.