



## Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 6<sup>th</sup> AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 7 May 2018

The past year has been, like life is for most of us, I suppose, a mixture of new ventures, minor setbacks and disappointments, interactions with the community, many pleasant, but one or two less so, and some successes.

But before I speak about any of that I want to take a moment to remember Stanley Woodward, one of our committee, who died at the end of last year. Stanley and Christine had supported us from the beginning and Stan, with his practical skills, was always ready to lend a hand, whether clearing stones from the little bed we created at the Port Glasgow Road layby or building what has become a welcome seat for cyclists at the Pullman. We remember Stan, as well as noting the passing of one or two other members, and we are grateful for the contribution of them all.

### **So what about new ventures?**

At Market Place, after the realigning of the edging, the soil was dug over, rubbish and much rubble etc. was cleared by our volunteers and removed by Inverclyde Council - I reported on that a year ago – then topsoil provided and delivered free of charge by Inverclyde Council and a donation of many sacks of composted bark was spread, again by our members. The whole area was planted up in July, with a few extra plants added later, including daffodils and snowdrops. I hope you agree it is coming along nicely.

Our yearly assessments from It's Your Neighbourhood kept suggesting that we should be on Facebook, but since few of the committee used it on a personal basis we had not taken up the suggestion. However, given that 2018 has been designated Year of Young People, and our secretary had some knowledge of Facebook, we decided to go ahead and Liz spent a fair amount of time setting it up and putting a link on our website. No sooner was this done than Facebook hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Bad timing! So please be alert; when you are next in St Petersburg or Moscow and you see planters identical to ours you will

know that Cambridge Analytica, before going bust, had time to nose about our Facebook pages and pass the inside information to the Kremlin. And if you are on Facebook, please 'like' us!

### **Any setbacks and disappointments?**

Yes, a few. Shortly after last AGM, 4 of the 6 quarter standard hollies in the Piazza planters were decapitated, almost certainly by youngsters who had been seen milling about in the area late at night. In many ways we have been fortunate not to have suffered too much from that sort of thing, although theft of plants has occurred a couple of times in the past, but it could be worse and we just have to replace and keep going. You may have noticed that some of the hollies are considerably smaller than others. That is the explanation.

At Market Place we have had a problem with some people – how many is unknown – taking a shortcut from Finlaystone Road across the garden. You may have seen that I referred to this in the April Advertiser article, having politely challenged one dog-walker, whose response when asked to refrain was frankly childish. ('I'm not the only one.') We are adding prickly shrubs like berberis in strategic places and keeping a watching brief on the problem.

We were a little disappointed, although frankly not surprised, when our It's Your Neighbourhood assessment placed us at the same level as the previous year. We did gain 5 more points (80 out of 100), but still need another 6 to reach the top level. We have registered again this year. Given that the next, highest level is 'Outstanding', we may never reach that. I say this because, having attended the annual seminars in Stirling for the past 4 years, I am aware of the amazing improvements that some groups have brought about to their local area and the broad range of activities that they undertake. We were awarded a certificate of excellence for having been involved for at least two years and having moved up at least two levels since starting. Groups are judged on

Community participation (40% of total points)

Environmental responsibility (30% of total points)

Gardening achievement (30% of total points)

At the end of the day it doesn't really matter, as long as the folk of Kilmacolm are happy with what we do.

The planter nearest the library has caused some concern, as in winter excess water from drainage holes can spread over the ground and freeze - bad enough anywhere, but it affects the disabled parking spaces. With the other planters, excess water seeps away between the paving slabs, but this one sits on tarmac and so the water stays on the surface. We are in consultation with KNCC to find the best solution.

### **Community interaction continues.**

We were sorry not to be able to source plants last year from Branching Out at Parklea. In the end we could not get the variety and quantity required, and so we went back to McLaren's Nurseries, who, it should be noted, give us plants at wholesale prices, but with VAT on top.

Used bulbs were passed on to Kilmacolm Primary School and to local Guides, and we shall continue to offer them to local organisations.

The local Explorer Scouts volunteered to help us as part of their Queen's Award and they have done excellent work, mainly at Market Place, weeding, removing litter, clearing moss from between the paving slabs and planting bulbs last autumn. We feel that Market Place is a neatly delineated area that can become their project, and the involvement of the Explorer Scouts ties in nicely with the Year of Young People, but will, we hope, continue in future years as well.

The donation of purple crocuses from the Rotary Club as part of the End Polio Now campaign added significantly to the spring displays at the lay-bys.

Local photographer, David Walker, passed on some excellent photos of the Pullman slope. If you look at the 2017 photos on our website, the best ones are David's! I believe he is going to take some more soon.

We received a donation of a special liquid fertiliser (Humicraft Natural Biostimulator) from Susan Wilson with the promise of more when we need it, so we look forward to extra special displays this year!

On Saturday we again had a stall (whisper it – free of charge, thank you very much) at the Farmers' Market. Our main aim was to publicise Colourful Kilmacolm and bring in some donations. In this we were very successful. The market had more stalls than I have seen for quite a while and there was a real buzz about the place. Four committee members took it in turns to be there and we gained some new members and took in over £120 in donations and subscriptions.

We have been invited – and accepted - to take part in a Flower Festival being held in St Columba Church on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June, of which more next year.

And finally, a little farther afield, last November I was invited to meet with a small group of Inverkip and Wemyss Bay residents who are hoping to set up a similar Community Group to ours. I was glad to be able to offer some pointers, but it was also a relief to know that that early stage was behind me.

### **That just leaves successes**

And here my script is pretty well blank. I am not inclined to blow my own trumpet (piano and organ playing, yes, trumpet no!), nor, I think are the members of the committee. It's worth noting that Colourful Kilmacolm is now 5 years old and has increased its membership year on year. It is also very gratifying to be at the receiving end of complimentary comments of passers-by as we work, as well as benefiting from the enthusiasm and encouragement of people like you, our members and active gardeners. Those who are able are still turning out in good numbers to weed and tidy - last Saturday was particularly busy, for as well as the Farmers' Market stall we worked at both Port Glasgow Road lay-by and the Pullman and made a considerable difference to both. We confidently look forward to the next five years.

So as I finish, I just want, on behalf of Colourful Kilmacolm and the committee, to thank you all for coming along this evening, for turning out to work at the Pullman and the planters, and if you meet anyone who doesn't know about us, you know what to do. And if they can be active gardeners, so much the better.