



Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 2nd AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 10 November 2014

Over the last year the committee has met 5 times and also carried out 2 visits to McLaren's Nurseries – I say 'visits' but a more appropriate description might be spending sprees! But more of that in a moment.

So what has happened over the year? This time last year we had just planted up the Piazza containers. Plaques with the Colourful Kilmacolm logo and an acknowledgement of lottery funding were affixed to each and we looked forward to a little colour throughout the winter, with teams organised to keep an eye on things. However, a combination of unavoidably late planting and a very wet winter meant that plants just sat there and sulked. You would have done the same if left on the Piazza throughout last winter. The violas stopped flowering and the ivies, intended to trail over the sides, made little if any growth. It was disappointing and perhaps encouraged the few who disapproved of the new appearance of the Piazza to air their views. But of course spring eventually came, the bulbs pushed their way up, even the violas revived to an extent and suddenly the Piazza was lit up with the vibrant yellow tones of King Alfred, Holland Sensation and Tête à Tête daffodils.

At Birkmyre Park the replanting had been carried out earlier, and so was more successful, and in spring the mixture of small daffodils and tulips was eye-catching.

As we planned for summer, we were determined to create bold displays which would have, in a phrase that Diane came across, - thrills, fills and spills – in other words, be eye-catching, fill the containers and trail over the sides. Our visits to McLaren's Nurseries tend to follow a pattern: maybe about half the committee attend, we look around the displays, spot likely candidates, debate, gather a range of plants together and place them out on a template, discard some and replace with others, decide we're not getting the effect we want, are approached by a helpful member of staff who realises we are still going to be there at closing time, undecided; the staff members says 'If it was me I would have A in the middle, B and C around it, D, E, and F at the edges trailing over, and then fill in with G.' So we return all the plants we had first thought of, get a few large trolleys and collect 6 of A, 18 of B and C, 16 of D, E and F and 140 of G. And then think about Birkmyre Park. Now you see why I talked of a spending spree.

Replanting took place in May. The Euonymus plants and Tête à Tête daffodils which had finished flowering were replanted in the narrow border at the Time Capsule, some large daffodils were replanted at Market Place, though the ground was so hard that I am not too optimistic, and other daffodils and tulips were passed on for naturalising to the gardening clubs of Kilmacolm Primary and St Columba's Junior School.

After a very wet winter we were blessed with one of the driest and sunniest summers for years, with the result that our displays thrived. At the park petunias were the main feature, around the Time Capsule we had begonias and the displays at the Piazza flowered profusely, trailed luxuriantly and filled the area with colour for weeks on end.

A few weeks ago we rather reluctantly removed the summer displays in order to plant up a range of evergreen plants which we hope will come through the winter more successfully than what we had last winter. We are learning as we go along.

The results of our efforts – your efforts – are recorded in an album which I would urge you to have a look at afterwards if you haven't already done so. Also included are the frequent articles from the Gryffe Advertiser and those from the Greenock Telegraph. We are grateful to both publications for their willingness to publicise our activities.

Inverclyde Council announced this year that it would be possible to apply for funding over 3 years, rather than a year at a time, and we decided to try for that. As part of the application we were asked *"How do you know that there is a need for your project and how will you demonstrate that your activities are being successful in meeting this need?"* To answer this we carried out a survey in the village in late July/early August, asking 100 people what they thought of the displays both in the Piazza and at Birkmyre Park. On the whole the results were gratifying. We had 4 categories, with these results:-

Strongly dislike: 3/Dislike: 1/Like: 12/Like very much: 84 (i.e. 96 FOR and 4 AGAINST.) Negative comments tended to refer to planter size or colour. Of course it is not possible to please everyone and taste is subjective. Other remarks included: a major improvement / I admire the containers while waiting for the bus / a lovely addition to the square; we visit often / I drive past them twice a day but was unaware of them.

96% approval seems to me to be sufficiently positive for us to continue and to feel that we are contributing something beneficial to the community.

We duly applied for a grant and were pleased to be awarded £954 for each of the next 3 years. Our thanks go to Councillor David Wilson for so willingly supporting our application.

In June we had a visit from an It's Your Neighbourhood' assessor. He seemed very impressed with what we had achieved in our first year and his report, which you can find in full on our website was very encouraging. There is also a copy available this evening. A couple of weeks ago Sheena and I attended the annual seminar of It's Your Neighbourhood and Beautiful Scotland in Stirling. In the course of the day we listened to speakers describing community garden projects of varying kinds and heard from a representative of Growing Kirkcaldy, winner of the Beautiful Scotland small city category, and from a Beautiful Scotland judge. Two of our photographs were among many sent in by projects all over Scotland and shown on the screen and at the final session I was one of many presented with an IYN certificate – which you can see on the table.

Earlier this year we received a donation from Kilmacolm Community Council, being part of the proceeds of their Christmas raffle, and a donation from Gryffe Valley Rotary. Both were gratefully acknowledged. Just as welcome as the financial support is the encouragement which these donations represent. Incidentally, I was invited to give a talk to the Rotary in July on Colourful Kilmacolm, which I illustrated with photos, and I took the chance to thank them personally for their donation.

Ruth & Bill Lamont have offered us a lovely acer which has outgrown its position in their garden and we hope to re-site it in the not too distant future.

Recently we planted snowdrops and crocus in the grass areas at the second Bridge of Weir Road layby and the Port Glasgow Road layby, (where the buses turn). We also planted crocus on the grass patch on Lochwinnoch Road, beside the electricity substation. Chase any squirrels you see there!

Future ideas include planters on either side of the Time Capsule bench and one at Market Place in the small shrub garden area. We are also aware that the steep slope between Lochwinnoch Road and the Pullman is an eyesore, but haven't yet worked out what is the best way to tackle it. Suggestions welcome!

And finally, people to thank:

Norrie Johnstone for transporting plants with his truck – what would we do without Norrie the Lorry?

Edwin Fisher for inspecting our accounts and also for his helpful suggestions and advice.

All the members of the committee for their support and enthusiasm, and in particular

Lucy for minuting all our discussions

Alistair for his meticulous accounting, carried out without any fuss

Diane for keeping tabs on membership and me on my toes

Helen for organising maintenance rotas

all 'active gardener' members who have helped plant and replant

and all 90+ members of Colourful Kilmacolm, without whom we would feel very lonely.