



Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 8th AGM

By mail/email, due to COVID-19 pandemic

Friday 29 May 2020

Just over a year has passed since our last AGM, a year not of two halves exactly, more like four quarters, where the first three were normal and the fourth has been, to employ a word the frequency of use of which has been unprecedented, unprecedented.

There have been five committee meetings, the most recent conducted by email.

The Colourful Kilmacolm year began in May when, for the first time, we had a stall at the Agricultural Show. We had plants for sale, a competition, and were able to sign up a good few new members as well as collect some donations. Many commented that they were unaware of Colourful Kilmacolm and were interested to hear about our work. £226 was raised through new members, donations and plant sales. I must thank the committee who very willingly organised this successful day and left me out of it entirely! We had intended taking a stall again this year, but of course the show was cancelled.

Following a committee visit to McLaren's Nurseries two days later, over two occasions a good turnout of members removed the spent bulbs from all containers and planted summer displays. Bulbs were passed on to St Columba School, the Bowling Club, the Tennis Club and in the autumn some committee members also helped Duchal Nursery children plant some and the children enjoyed watching them grow and flower this spring. By the end of May our maintenance teams were underway.

In June, St Columba's School held an outdoor afternoon tea, including a guided tour by pupils round the school's new vegetable garden, and an invitation was extended to Colourful Kilmacolm. Liz Reid and Sheena, my wife, and I attended. Mick McLaughlin, Depute Head, hosted the enjoyable event.

As you will know, we apply to Inverclyde Council each year for funding and the Council has supported us well over the years, granting us the amount requested. This time, however, we received only about half what we had asked for – a sign of the times, no doubt, with perhaps little prospect of improvement in the future.

Weeding and tidying-up sessions took place on Saturday mornings throughout the summer and were quite well supported by members, although if any slightly younger members (and families) could come along this year (if COVID-19 allows) that would be a great help. Once again local Explorer Scouts lent a hand, mainly at Market Place.

Local photography enthusiast David Walker very kindly forwarded photos he had taken of our displays, a highlight of which was a panorama of the whole Pullman/Carriages slope (minus poles and posts). We submitted it to the Advertiser and were pleased when it was published. Some of his photos, including the panorama, appear on the 2019 photo page of our website.

I was honoured, if somewhat daunted, to be asked to be a panel member for the Q and A sessions at Kilmacolm Horticultural's Show in September. Someone must have thought I knew something about gardening. St Columba School's Fete was held the same day, and again I thank the committee who organised a stall, selling plants, raffling a filled planter and signing up 6 new members. Liz's daughter Connie with a friend ran the kids' section, helping them to draw plants and flowers on pre-printed paper. We made a £67 profit. Aside from the financial benefit, we feel sure that raising our profile at such events is worthwhile and brings us to the attention of a wider public.

The usual clear-out of summer plants and planting of bulbs took place in September. As the trial displays in 2019 with a mixture of hyacinths (Blue Pearl) and daffodils (Minnow) were much admired, we decided to repeat that in all of the large planters. By the time they were appearing this spring we were into lockdown and near drought conditions, so some surreptitious watering took place and no one was arrested. The bulbs performed well, and although the village was almost deserted most days, we did receive some appreciative comments.

We had been having discussions with some residents who live on Lochwinnoch Road, near the Virgin box. They had suggested we place a planter in front of the box, although asking Virgin to paint the box a more pleasing colour was also tried. In the end, to our great surprise and delight, the box was painted, so we will probably content ourselves with adding some more bulbs.

The half-standard hollies took a battering from the strong winds in February. We have tried to prop them up and will attempt to bed them in more firmly later.

Help for those isolated at home was offered by the committee. Thanks are due to all involved, even if there has not been much call on our services so far. We have also linked in to other local efforts.

Normally all planters would have been emptied and replanted by this time, but of course this year it has not been possible to have people work in close proximity to each other or even to purchase plants in the quantity and variety that we need, so our planters are unavoidably looking most untidy. Similarly the Market Place garden and the Pullman/Carriages embankment are badly in need of attention.

The latest relaxation does not offer much leeway for our normal gardening activities, so we have reluctantly decided that those committee members who are able will lift the bulbs and, later, plant up for summer with plants which at the last minute we have been able to source on-line. Please do not expect our usual riot of colour, but we will do what we can. Regarding weeding, again we do not feel it appropriate just yet to call on members to come out to weed and tidy, so committee will do what they can. Having said that, if any member can't bear the sight of the weeds and is willing to do a little, feel free to do that at any time that suits you.

The following are still under review:

Smithy Brae Corner: The suggestion of a planter for this area will be looked at when (if?) the flats are completed.

The pavement at Carriages: There is no longer any money available in the Community Funding pot and the estimate to do the work properly has risen to £11,000, so no prospect of an early improvement.

Port Glasgow Road layby: Instead of sowing wildflower seed, which, apart from the first year, has not been a success, we propose creating a much smaller version of the Carriages Slope, using plant donations. Unfortunately, this too has had to be put on hold, although it looks as if there will soon be a good display of marguerites.

I would like on your behalf to reiterate our appreciation of all the work carried out so diligently for us by Edwin Fisher. Liz wrote to Edwin to express our thanks and a small gift was handed over.

I also want to thank all committee members for the support they have given over the past year. Each member has contributed in their own way, according to their particular interests, expertise, practical ability and so on, making altogether a first-class team. A special thank you goes to Margaret Cathcart who is retiring from committee at this AGM. Among her contributions, Margaret organised the maintenance team rotas and drew up a very helpful spreadsheet for annual planting schemes.

As we already had one vacancy we would ideally like to recruit two new members. We have tried to fill these vacancies, but so far without success. We will keep trying, but if any member would like to volunteer we would be delighted.

I conclude with a wish that we will be able to resume normal activities soon. Meantime take care and stay safe.