



## Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 9<sup>th</sup> AGM

By mail/email, due to COVID-19 pandemic

Monday 24 May 2021

Last year I ended my report by expressing the hope that we might be able to resume normal activities soon, but here we are a year later and the situation, although apparently much improved, is still not resolved. As a result, in common with most organisations, we have had to adapt and be content with business not at all as usual.

The committee had five meetings, one by email, three by Zoom and one short on-site meeting, and most of the maintenance activity has been carried out by committee members, although we were delighted to be joined on our most recent weeding day by a few intrepid, non-committee members. A special thanks to them. Fortunately the size of the Carriages embankment makes social distancing quite easy.

The pandemic has denied us the opportunity to advertise ourselves at the Agricultural Show and St Columba's School Fete, and reduced the frequency of articles in the Gryffe Advertiser. As Alistair has mentioned, on previous occasions the first two of these brought us new members as well as some donations. Nevertheless our presence on Facebook and two special events organised by St Columba School - the Scarecrow Trail and the Bottle Top Display Trail - upped our profile and we are seeing increased awareness of our activities in the community. Indeed, just recently (and so not represented in the accompanying accounts) we have received several very generous donations from residents and businesses, all the more welcome at a time when Council money is not forthcoming. I am indebted to Nicol Cameron who alerted me to the possibility of a donation from the Co-op Community Fund. The two St Columba's School trails allowed our committee to show off their artistic skills in a most imaginative way and I thank all involved, including Liz's daughter Connie, for their marvellous efforts. If you didn't see the results, check out the pictures pages on our website. Further proof of local appreciation came in the form of complimentary coffee and scones provided by Carriages on our August tidy-up. Completing this run-down of our community involvement I can mention that we were able to respond to a request from Kilmacolm Primary to supply a large number of pots for the children to plant up, and we also readily agreed that a local pupil could do some gardening with us as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award project.

And now to our plants, which is what we are really about. All the plants we bought on-line for summer 2020 did really well. They arrived as 'garden-ready' and proved to be just that, very quickly growing in size and blooming profusely. Of necessity we reduced the range of plants compared to previous years, concentrating on geraniums (pelargoniums) and non-stop begonias,

but the verdict was that this had not diminished in any way the effectiveness of the displays. On the contrary, it had perhaps made them even more eye-catching. Watering and general maintenance was carried out by committee, in some cases with the welcome help of spouses. This year's spring displays of hyacinths and daffodils worked quite well, but where we tried tulips and daffodils we were not as successful. Flowering times didn't all coincide, but also a very slow, cold start to the year and the unwanted attentions of birds and/or squirrels at Birkmyre Park did not help. Lessons to be learnt!

The gardens at Carriages and Market Place continue to mature. The first of these did not receive the usual attentions last year due to Covid, but a fair amount of serious work this spring has helped to reinstate some order.

The lay-by plot on Port Glasgow Road has been cleared and replanted with garden surplus. We will watch with interest to see if this is more successful.

One of our large planters again refused to drain and became water-logged, so once again it was emptied, extra drainage holes drilled and the whole thing raised on bricks.

For some time we have been thinking of placing one or more planters on the pavement at the top of Smithy Brae, but were waiting for the completion of the flats. We have, however, run out of patience (!) and have ordered two barrel planters which should be in place in time for a summer display.

Our summer plants this year have been ordered from Gateside Nurseries and we look forward to a colourful show.

I have referred several times in this report to the members of committee (or if I just said something was done, guess who did it!). They have all given me - and each other - great support, all the more valued in this most unusual of years. They have willingly turned out to work, sometimes at short notice, and have given excellent advice and come up with helpful ideas. I hope the others will not mind if I express a special thanks to Alistair who has kept our finances in excellent order, despite a wee health blip this year, and to Liz, who carries out the secretarial duties, and a lot more, with unfailing good humour and enthusiasm. They have all been invaluable.

Just as valuable has been the support of all our members and we thank you most sincerely for that. There is no limit to the number of supporters we can have, so spread the word to your friends.

All being well we will now be inviting volunteer gardeners to assist in the usual ways. Please help if you are able, but if you are still wary of mixing socially we quite understand.

I finish with the by now almost traditional formula: Take care and stay safe.