



## Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 10<sup>th</sup> AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 16 May 2022

Yes, this is the 10th AGM report, although it is perhaps worth pointing out that it will be next year, 2023, before we will have been in existence for 10 years. The explanation, as many of you may remember, is that early on we altered the reporting date and squeezed in an extra AGM; so no bubbly until next year.

As with all organisations, the last two Covid years have presented us with a few problems and difficulties. Several committee meetings were on zoom and it is only recently that we were able to meet in person, and of course this is the first 'real' AGM since 2019. In addition, lockdown and social distancing, whether imposed by law or self-imposed as a precautionary measure, have led to far fewer volunteer gardeners being available to help. More of that later.

We have, however, been able to continue our involvement with the local community. Committee members Lynda, Lorna, Liz and I were invited to take a session last July at St Columba's Junior School Holiday Club when the children helped us – or maybe it was the other way round – to make cress heads as well as doing some watering.

In October the creative members of the committee again made a scarecrow for the Scarecrow Trail.

Kilmacolm Horticultural Society kindly asked me to give a talk in March on Colourful Kilmacolm, when I outlined the steps involved in setting up, explained how we are organised and, more importantly and probably of more interest, showed slides of our displays over the years. Four of the audience were impressed enough to become members.

Late last year I was approached by Mike Farley, President of Gryffe Valley Rotary Club, with a proposal to fund a tree to be planted in Kilmacolm to mark the Queen's Jubilee. The relevant authorities were consulted and the tree – Prunus Amanogawa – now stands on the grass bank between the end of the library and the wall behind the bus stop. It bore a few flowers this year, but should begin to make an impact from next spring. A plaque will be attached at a future date with the Jubilee details.

We were back at the Holiday Club in April, rejuvenating a neglected border at the school entrance and helping the children plant some shrubs which we had sourced at McLaren's Nursery. They also planted up two half-barrel planters with annuals. I should make it clear that the school was responsible for all expenses. The children seemed to enjoy the activity. The highlight may have been when wriggling worms appeared, but we can only hope that some appreciation of plants and flowers was also gained.

We were pleased to be able once again to have a stand at this year's Agricultural Show. The good weather brought out the crowds and it seemed to be a very successful day. We brought in over £70 in donations and gained a dozen or so new members. We have a little ad-hoc sub-committee who take that on board and I am very grateful to them, and particularly to Lynda who leads it.

Since this show took place only 2 days ago, it might be worth pointing out that although Alistair's report covers the financial year, and that is also the calendar year, I have always reported on activities from one AGM to the other, so the discrepancy is deliberate.

I referred earlier to fewer volunteer gardeners coming out to help. Covid is undoubtedly one factor. Another is the unavoidable march of time, meaning that climbing the slope at Carriages to do some weeding, a task that once was undertaken with little thought, became an adventure, then a challenge and finally akin to climbing Everest and a danger to life and limb. The arrangement for summer maintenance teams has also encountered similar difficulties and needs rethinking. We know that we need younger, more physically able members, and we are exploring ways to engage with that generation, such as social media, but we also know that we are not the only organisation to have this problem.

You were recently contacted by Liz, our indefatigable secretary, in an attempt to confirm how many were still willing to help. If you have not yet replied there is still time. As a response to some of the replies, we are trying out a weekday session, which may suit some better. We would value your feedback along with any suggestions.

Local Explorer Scouts contributed a lot, both at Market Place and on the slope at Carriages, pre-Covid and we are hoping that that will restart soon.

The suggestion made by a member that we might consider a planter in the park on West Glen Road was taken up and was the subject of our grant request to the Council. We have, however, decided not to go ahead with this at the moment. Firstly because the Council awarded us only 50% of what we asked for, and secondly because of doubts about whether the maintenance demands would be too onerous, given that there is no obvious water supply near at hand. It is not impossible that we might look at the idea again at some future date.

We have, however, taken up the suggestion of a resident of Whitelea Crescent to site barrier baskets on railings at the end of the Crescent where the cycle path begins. The deciding factor here was that the resident will look after the maintenance, so all we have to do is supply the plants, then leave it to him.

Last summer's plants, sourced from Gateside Nursery, produced a superb show all summer, and so this coming summer will be a repeat with just minor adjustments. We have come to the conclusion that for vibrant colour, ease of maintenance and ability to stand up to whatever the Scottish summer presents, you can't really beat tuberous begonias.

Our spring bulb displays, now just a memory, did very well. Several people have said it was a good spring for daffodils, and ours certainly put on a great show. Extra colour was provided by hyacinths and tulips, and before that violas helped us through the winter months.

We continue to add plants to the lay-by on Port Glasgow Road and hope that one day it will be a welcome sight as you approach the village.

In closing, I wish to thank the committee members. I do this not as a formality, but with real gratitude. With me here are Liz, our secretary, and Alistair, our treasurer. If you don't know the others, they are Irene, Judith, Lynda, Lorna and Robert. I depend on them all for support, encouragement, ideas, manual labour, transport and even the occasional reminder! Liz deserves a special mention for her conscientious approach to the job and the willingness and good grace with which she carries out the at times quite onerous duties of secretary.

Thank you also to you all for coming out this evening and for your continued support. If you can find us any, preferably young, members we would be very grateful. Thank you for your attention. Do wait behind for a chat and a drink.