



Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 12th AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 13 May 2024

I am sure that you will have been all too aware over the last few months of how many members of our village community we have lost, several of whom were supporters of Colourful Kilmacolm. They will all be greatly missed. In particular I want to remember Diane MacDuff and the valued contribution she made as our first secretary. With her previous experience she was able to guide us through the initial stages, for example, drawing up membership lists and giving valuable advice to me personally and to the committee. Diane served on committee for four years before handing over to Liz, who I know benefitted greatly from Diane's guidance. We know that such losses are inevitable, but they are hard to take. They also emphasise the need to encourage younger members of our community to support groups such as ours.

Since last AGM the committee has had five meetings, supplemented as always by numerous emails on minor matters. At these meetings we always have good, very amicable discussions, as we chart the way forward. Committee members have also headed up the maintenance groups over the summer months and turned out for the weeding and tidying sessions at Carriages and Market Place. In these hands-on activities, and when planting bulbs or summer plants, we have had excellent support from those of our members who volunteer their services and we are very grateful to them all. Many hands do indeed make light work. We have thought about how we could make the summer maintenance rota more flexible, so this year, if any team member is unable to help on a specific date, but keen nevertheless to help, they may be asked if they would like their name to be passed to the leader of the next team on duty.

We were very pleased to be offered some money from the Community Council which allowed us to buy plants and small shrubs for the Carriages garden. We had removed most of the dogwood which had tended to overshadow more delicate plants, and so there were areas which could take new, more attractive plants. Last May, when we removed the bulbs, we immediately replanted some at the Time Capsule, as the existing daffodils had been losing vigour. As a result the display was much improved this year. We like to pass on our daffodil bulbs whenever possible, and this year a fair number will be going to the Horticultural Society garden at the cross and to the Old Kirk garden.

We are considering placing some barrier baskets on the new railings at the top of Smithy Brae. The area is rather cluttered, with poles and bike stands, but perhaps some colour would help the overall look. It may, however, be wise to wait until work at the flats has been completed.

Over the years we have sourced our summer plants from McLarens, and more recently from Gateside Nursery and Plant Centre. We have always been happy with the plants supplied, but we were keen to support the work of Parklea Branching Out at Port Glasgow. I'm grateful to Lynda Bradley who has liaised well in advance with Christine at Parklea, and they will be able to supply all our needs this summer. The cool, dull spring weather will not have helped bring things on, but that would be the same no matter where we went.

We had a few glitches with our website, but I am glad to say that with the expert help of Andrew Fernie (Alistair's son) we are up and running again, and information can once again be kept up to date. We are very grateful to Andrew for volunteering his support, time and expertise.

So far my report has been fairly positive, but now and again I feel our best efforts are being thwarted. One evening last July the three half barrels at Moss Road were overturned and most of the recently planted begonias spilled out on to the pavement. A local resident who was passing kindly turned the pots upright, and once we had replanted them, the begonias recovered remarkably well. I contacted the police to report the vandalism. After a follow up call, it was agreed not to take any further action, and I was advised the incident would be kept on record.

Last summer the pavement at Carriages was impenetrable, the grass almost knee-high. Through Councillor David Wilson we now know that Inverclyde Council has finally accepted ownership of the pavement and we have submitted suggestions for what needs to be done to reinstate the pavement. You will not be surprised to hear that we were told that budget restraints meant it was unlikely that any work would be carried out in the financial year (now finished), and more recently we were told that although the Council accepts the need for radical work, there are other more pressing priorities. David has promised to keep trying. Meanwhile, just last week, some of our committee decided to have a go ourselves and a good hour's hard work later we were very satisfied with what we had achieved, having cleared a section of all grass, right back to the gravel chips. We intend to do more.

And then there is Market Place. Last year I reported that the Scottish Gas Network plan to site a new gas governor under the paved area at our Market Place garden, which will entail a great deal of disruption. That is now scheduled for April 2025. We shall see.

More recently Sustrans were in touch to say that remedial work on the bridge over the cycle path would necessitate the removal of several small trees that we had planted near the bridge. They were duly removed. No one seems to have told them that conifer trees are shallow rooted and are no threat to the bridge foundations.

And finally, the laybys at either end of the village, where we have planted hundreds of crocuses over the years. I have to admit I was not pleased when I saw the two coffee/fast food trailers sited there. However, when I recently went to the Port Glasgow layby to check on plants I was approached by Yolande who runs the stall, and after a long chat in French – I don't think you can have a short chat with Yolande - and a free coffee and a complimentary take-away piece of chocolate and orange gateau, my opposition softened somewhat. You may suspect she was softening me up, bribing me even not to complain, but I had actually kept my thoughts to myself.

Life is never straightforward or simple, but to finish on a positive note, it was heartening to receive a request from Rona at the Gryffe Advertiser to answer a couple of questions as they were doing a piece on the various gardening groups in the area. You may have seen the page in the April issue. Rona certainly does what she can to highlight the good work done by volunteers in our villages, and it saved me from thinking up a whole short article for that month.

Once again I must thank all committee members for their enthusiasm, commitment and good humour. Just as we depend on your support as members and volunteers, Colourful Kilmacolm would not function without the dedicated support of committee members, and I certainly value all that they contribute.

Thank you again for coming along to this AGM. It is always good to see you. Do wait behind at the end to have a chat over a drink.