



**Annual General Meeting  
16th of March 2022  
Chairperson's Report**

**NTS and Geilston's Future**

At last year's AGM the future of Geilston remained uncertain and we awaited the decision in June from the NTS board of trustees. We had been asked to put together a submission outlining our proposals for a future use for the house and with the help of Sutherland Forsyth, the house sub-committee put forward a proposal which was well received by the board. This was their response,

*“ The Board recognised the hard work of the Friends. They considered several options for the future of Geilston House and confirmed their interest in caring for the house at Geilston and the continued public access to the gardens. They clearly recognised the importance of the close involvement of the local community and, in particular, the Friends group to the future success of Geilston as a whole.”*

At the June meeting, the board decided to take forward the submission put forward by Ian McLelland, the NTS area manager. The plan is to convert the main part of the house into a whole house holiday let and the three rooms in the single story bungalow into an events venue. The restoration will follow a phased approach and funding has been approved for the first two phases.

Phase 1 - £35,000 - Investigation and preparation of a detailed brief for next steps, the aim is to complete this by March 2022.

Phase 2 - £205,000 - A survey and further work on the house itself, (this being the second phase of repair and restoration), the aim is to complete this by March 2023.

We hope this will safeguard Geilston as we move forward and that it may be possible to integrate some of the ideas put forward by FoG. We would like to thank Ian for his commitment to Geilston. The Boards approval was thanks to his balanced and realistic approach to solving the issues with the house. At a time when there must be so many demands on NTS finances, we are grateful that the board were able to envision the potential at Geilston and invest in its future.

## **FoG Gift to the Garden**

If it meets with the members approval, we would like to gift £2,000 to the garden this year. There have been several suggestions as to how that money might be spent and we are awaiting quotes but one idea has been a drystone wall with inbuilt bench down near the waterfall in the glen. Something that everyone can enjoy and appreciate.

## **Events in the Garden**

Although we were restricted in the number of activities and events we could run, the coffee and cake stall went ahead on the first Sunday of the month and we were joined by a local choir who were a very welcome addition. It was thanks to the delicious home baking and team of volunteers that these Sundays became so popular and we would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

The calendar competition went ahead and there were 173 entries. We managed to sell over 300 copies some travelling as far afield as Canada, America, Australia and the Falklands. Special thanks to Ken Readman and Veronica Davis for organising this. Look out for the 2022 competition.

Those who took part in the two art workshops held this year enjoyed dry weather although the September workshop started in an atmospheric mist. We are pleased to say that Carol Dewart and Julia Gurney have agreed to return as tutors this year. To ensure the 2022 workshops and events run smoothly, we have purchased two gazebos.

The NTS visitor services team also ran some successful events. There was a Mackie's Event, Bouquet Workshop, Summer Garden Festival, Walking Theatre Company and Halloween Trial.

These events help to boost visitor numbers and ensure that Geilston is enjoyed by all age groups.

## **Community Groups and the MEB Trust**

It was highlighted in the community survey which we carried out for the submission to the board that there were local groups who would benefit from a visit to Geilston but were unable, for a variety of different reasons, to visit and enjoy the garden. We made a submission to the Miss M E Bell Trust for grant funding to enable us to arrange visits to the garden and to cover the cost of transport, entrance to the garden, refreshments and a short activity. We are grateful to the MEB trust who have generously donated £2,000 which will mean that we can invite several groups to the garden over this season.

## **People to Thank - “coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress and working together is success” Henry Ford**

As we reflect back on the last five years and the present positive outlook, it's important to recognise the crucial role played by past and present committee members and the support of the wider membership whose love of the garden has helped to secure its future.

I would particularly like to thank; Mike and Sue Thornley and Michael Davis whose professional background in architecture and knowledge of historic buildings and gardens was invaluable; David Price, sadly no longer with us, for his investigative skills and historical enthusiasm which helped us to produce our history leaflets; Stewart and Gillian McDonald for hosting our early meetings; Jim Gibb, who attended many early negotiation meetings and organised the Wildlife Day; Nicky Brownrigg, for her depth of understanding about community involvement and the power of work she did on our submission to the NTS board; Michael Fisher and Nick Barton whose business skills helped at a crucial time; Jackie Baillie and Maurice Corry for their interest and support and for representing us at the Parliamentary Petitions Committee hearing; Patrick Trust, who like many Cardross residents, knew Miss Hendry and Miss Bell and has been so helpful throughout; Cardross Golf Club for their generosity in hosting committee meetings and AGMs; Kirsty Moyes from Argyll and Bute council and Craig Borland from the Helensburgh Advertiser.

That we have a garden at all is thanks to the generosity of Miss Hendry and Miss Bell whose philanthropy continues to this day and to Alison Farrell and her team of gardeners and volunteers who tend and continue to improve the original structure of the garden.

For visitors to the garden, it's first impressions that count, we would like to thank the visitor services team who staff the admissions hut in all weathers, ensuring a great start to their visit.

It has been a privilege to work with such a committed and talented group of people through some difficult times. I extend my special appreciation of those who will continue the good work and to the new members of the committee. I wish them every success and would encourage your continued support.

**Allison Hillis (Chairperson - Friends of Geilston) SC050608**