



Christmas Newsletter 2019

This is our third Friends of Geilston (FoG) Christmas Newsletter and we would like to thank you for your continued support and encouragement. We have not yet achieved our ultimate goal of having the National Trust for Scotland's (NTS), Board of Trustees, rescind the decision they made in 2016 to close Geilston Garden, but we have moved forward in that the NTS will explore the potential for enabling development to part fund the restoration of Geilston House in order to provide income for the ongoing maintenance of the garden. Whilst this is explored, the garden will remain open and there will be a small NTS investment to improve the entrance to the garden to make it more welcoming for visitors.

We are planning to build on the successes of last year's events which attracted a record number of visitors to the garden (13,770). The Walking Theatre Company and Apple Day drew large numbers and were very popular as were the smaller events; the foraging, mindfulness, guided walks, herbal and art workshops. We have been working closely with the NTS team at Hill house and Geilston to organise both NTS and FoG events for 2020 and will be publishing a list of these at the start of the new season.

Whilst this progress has been encouraging, I must add a note of caution. We were disappointed that a recent NTS press release about Geilston continued to make very negative comments about the garden. The figures used were out of date and took no account of the recent increase in visitor numbers, paying visitors and new NTS memberships. It also stated that FoG had rejected setting up a Community Trust which was misleading. We have repeatedly asked for further details about the role of a Community Trust and what the working relationship would be with the NTS but this has not been forthcoming. We have also offered to set up a smaller, heritage trust for Geilston which has not at this stage been taken up. Concerns remain about the NTS longterm plans.

However, perhaps this is a bit pessimistic and we must remain hopeful. There is agreed strength in closer links with Hill House which we are pursuing, in making Geilston an attractive, interesting and fun place to visit, in solidarity with other small garden properties which are under threat, in raising concerns with the Scottish Parliament and in growing the Friends of Geilston membership. We are after all a pretty determined bunch as can be seen in this photograph taken at the Walking Theatre Company event "MACBETH THE RED"



Those who have not been able to see the video link to the Parliamentary Petitions Committee might like to know that the petitions committee felt that they had addressed the concerns raised in the petition as far as they were able to however, concerns remained and therefore the issues which had arisen will be forwarded to the Culture and Tourism Committee. We would like to thank Jackie Baillie and Maurice Cory for their commitment and support for Geilston Garden and the FoG.

Our AGM is on Tuesday the 28th of January and we hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us. We are looking for new committee members and would encourage you to come forward to join what is an enthusiastic team. You don't need to commit to any particular role on the committee unless you specifically want to. There are 4 places to fill and we would in particular like someone to take on the management of the website. Apart from that, come and join us to see what you could contribute.

Please email Allison Hillis - allisonhillis17@gmail.com - tel:01436 820614

Geilston Still At Risk

Friends of Geilston

**Public Meeting
AGM**

**Tuesday 28th of January
7:30pm**

Cardross Golf Club
Guest Speaker - Ian McLelland
NTS Ayrshire and West Area
Manager

Tea and Coffee
Drinks available at the Bar
Come and Support the Garden



With Best Wishes for Christmas and a Happy New Year

Allison Hillis

P.S. FoG 2020 Calendars still for sale. Details of where you can buy them or how to order by post are on our website homepage. <https://friendsofgeilston.org/>

