

West Blacket Association

& Neighbourhood Watch

Newsletter

March 2004

Annual General Meeting held on Monday December 8th 2003 at the Unionist Club, 5 Duncan Street. Attended by 31 members and Cllr Gordon Mackenzie.

Annual report The aims of the Association are: first, to monitor and advise on planning within the West Blacket area; second, to promote social events for members and residents.

During 2003: We have succeeded in obtaining removal of razor wire in South Gray Street, with help from Cllr Fred Mackintosh. A proposed merger with the Blacket Association has been abandoned, from lack of enthusiasm on their part. We have commented on the Blacket Conservation Area appraisal documents. We have discussed controversial HMO applications in Minto Street, although strictly outwith our remit. We have objected to the speed camera in Minto Street as unsightly and intrusive. We have invited suggestions for improvements in arrangements for traffic and parking in West Blacket.

In discussion: The West Blacket area includes the whole of Minto Street on both sides. Cllr Mackenzie confirmed that in Edinburgh an HMO licence is now required for any house with 3 or more unrelated tenants.

Treasurer's report Most income is from subscriptions (57 members in 33 households), with some donations and bank interest. Expenditure covers affiliation to the Cockburn Association, newsletters and stationery.

Neighbourhood Watch report The Watch committee regretted lack of support and crime reports from Lothian and Borders Police during 2003, despite strenuous efforts to obtain these. *[Stella Pryde has since reported that a letter from Robert Gurdon to the Chief Inspector had received an excellent response. There are now 3 community officers in our area, and there will be 2 meetings per annum with the Watch Committees. Crime reports will be posted in the Salisbury Place Post Office and Minto St newsagents, as before]*

Election of Officers & Committee

Chairman: Brian Charlesworth, 39 Minto St, 662 1725
Hon. Secretary: Mike Hunter, 40 Upper Gray Street, 667 1767
Hon. Treasurer: Evelynne Hill, 37 Upper Gray Street, 667 0675
Planning: Ian Carter, 3 Bartholomew House, 12 Duncan Street
Neighbourhood Watch: Stella Pryde, Jane Griffiths
Committee Members:
Irene Brown, Jackie Grant, Jeff Robinson, Chris Theobald

Local History

Following the formal business of the AGM, Ron Hill gave a presentation 'Upper & South Gray Streets in the 19th Century from Maps and Census Returns'. Ron Hill (667 0675) has a database of residents in Upper & South Gray Streets from the 1841-1901 censuses: the first census and the latest released. He is happy to provide details on their houses to WBA members resident in these streets on request. He now continues his researches in Duncan and Middleby Streets.

Social event

Sandra and Ian Carter have extended an invitation to 3 Bartholomew House, 12 Duncan Street, to WBA members and residents, for wine and nibbles from 6.30-8.00pm on Friday March 26th. Donations towards costs will be invited. New residents are especially welcome. Please feel free to bring your children.

Membership

Residents in the West Blacket area who are not already WBA members are invited to join the Association by contacting our Hon Treasurer, Evelynne Hill. Annual membership costs only £2 (individual) or £3 (household).

Local History: Ron Hill

Besides listing most of the householders and businesses in our area the annual Post Office Directories for Edinburgh and Leith provide many interesting advertisements. Here are two with strong local connections:

Hammond & Co (Fireworks)

The 1901 Census shows Margaret Hammond (a widow) living at 41 Upper Gray Street, Devon Cottage, with a stepson, five daughters, two sons, and a grandson. The stepson and the three eldest daughters were employed in the fireworks business. At the same time another firework-making Hammond (possibly another son) lived with his wife and young family in the large tenement block on the west side of the street. Their factory had re-located some years before from Powderhall to a new site close to Craigmillar Castle.

5 Duncan Street

The 'Institution for the Education of Young Ladies' is now the Unionist Club where our Association holds many of its meetings. It seems to have operated principally as a day school as census returns do not record any boarders. Around 1892 the 'Institution' moved to St Albans Road, still conducted by Miss Cunningham. Soon afterwards W M Mackenzie, an artist noted mainly for his landscapes and coastal scenes, moved in to 5 Duncan Street. Perhaps he found the 'large, cheerful, and well lighted hall', once part of the school, conducive to his painting.

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