

West Blacket Association

& Neighbourhood Watch

Newsletter

Summer 2003

Committee elected for 2002/3

Hon. Secretary: Brian Charlesworth, 39 Minto Street. 662 1725. Brian.Charlesworth@ed.ac.uk

Hon. Treasurer: Evelynne Hill, 37 Upper Gray Street. 667 0675.

Neighbourhood Watch: Jane Griffith, Stella Pryde.

Newsletter Editor: Mike Hunter, 40 Upper Gray Street. Dr.M.J.Hunter@Btopenworld.com

Planning Officer: Ian Carter, 3 Bartholomew House, 12 Duncan Street.

Irene Brown, 32 Minto Street

Jackie Grant, 3 Duncan Street

Jeff Robinson, 1 Middleby Street

Chris Theobald, 8a South Gray Street.

For new residents, the purpose of the West Blacket Association is to preserve and enhance the character of the western part of the Blacket Conservation Area (Upper and South Gray Streets, the part of Duncan Street to their east, Middleby Street and the adjacent parts of Minto Street, Salisbury Place and West Mayfield). The WBA Committee welcomes participation and input from members and residents on matters which reflect these aims. From time to time, it also organises social events.

Living as we do in an Outstanding Conservation Area, we cannot change the external appearance of our houses without obtaining Planning Permission from the City of Edinburgh Council. If a house is individually Listed for its architectural or historic interest, even internal alterations may require Listed Building Consent before proceeding. Felling or major pruning of mature trees also requires planning consent. We consider all planning applications on their merits, and object only to those which we feel are unsympathetic and detract from the character of the Conservation Area. We will be pleased to discuss either plans or objections.

Neighbourhood Watch

We now have yet another Community PC - Karen Mackenzie, based at Howdenhall, 658 5225.

Apologies for the absence of crime updates over the last few months. We are doing our best to rectify this.

Volunteers to join the watch committee should contact Jane Griffith (667 4496) or Stella Pryde (662 8378).

Razor Wire Victory

The Timber Center, on Ratcliffe Terrace, put up a razor-wire fence on their back wall in South Gray Street, to which the West Blacket Association (Secretary, Brian Charlesworth) and Blacket Association (Secretary, Ian Carter) objected as ugly and dangerous. Some 18 months later, our objections have succeeded.

An article by Brian Ferguson, City Council Reporter, Evening News, May 6th 2003, highlighted some of the arguments -

Newington councillor Fred Mackintosh said: "It's basically very aggressive and completely unsuitable for somewhere that's basically just storing planks of wood. You'd think they were guarding gold bullion."

City planning chief Alan Henderson has now backed complaints about the fencing. "It detracts significantly from the appearance of the stone boundary wall and results in its becoming a dominant feature to the detriment of the character and appearance of the conservation area."

A spokesman for the timber firm said: "We understand the concerns about the visual appearance of the wire fence, which was installed to deter intruders and improve security at the premises."

The razor wire is now removed.

Blacket and West Blacket Associations

The existence of two separate amenity associations within the Blacket Conservation Area has caused confusion and there have been several efforts to combine them. This question was raised again at the Blacket Association AGM in November 2002, which agreed to consider the possibility that their Association might expand to include the whole of the Blacket Conservation Area. It is now clear that some members of both Associations favour merger, others are strongly against this.

The WBA Committee now feel that further efforts to merge would be wasteful and possibly divisive. We have recently been pleased to see a number of new residents in West Blacket and encourage all of you to join the Association. We hope some will offer to join the WBA Committee, which can be done by co-optation or by election at the AGM in November (date to be notified).

Blacket Conservation Area

The City of Edinburgh Council are preparing Character Appraisal statements for conservation areas. The Blacket Conservation Area was the first one established in Edinburgh. The WBA Committee was given an early draft of this document, and we have used our knowledge of local history to advise the Council of possible improvements.

There is to be an Exhibition (August 29 to September 5) and Open Evening (September 4, 700-800pm) at Newington Library, Fountainhall Road. We would encourage all residents with an interest in local history and the Blacket Conservation Area to attend these events.

We believe many residents have an interest in documenting local history. The West Blacket Association has a website (www.calamari.art.btinternet.co.uk/WBA/) with some history, and welcomes further contributions.

We hope to make local history the theme of our AGM later this year and have some contributions lined up already: e.g. History of Upper and South Gray Streets from 1841-1901 Census returns.

Parking

There are some advantages to living in a controlled parking zone, although it does cost money and still doesn't guarantee a parking place.

Following an objection by a local resident to parking by non-residents on both sides of Upper Gray Street and on the quite narrow pavements, we feel an overall review of parking in the area, by residents who know the realities, would be useful. We could then put proposals to Councillors and the City Transport Department.

Are there enough residents' spaces? Enough pay spaces for visitors? Could more spaces be made safely available (eg North side of Duncan Street)?

Ideas in writing or by email to Hon. Sec. Brian Charlesworth, please.

South Local Development Committee

The City of Edinburgh Council now have a new structure intended to give more say to local residents. Each area has a Local Development Committee, consisting of all local Councillors, to whose meetings all residents and amenity associations may contribute. The WBA receives the agenda and minutes for each meeting.

The SLDC has invited suggestions for topics that they might deal with. These should be sent to Cllr Fred Mackintosh, South Edinburgh LDC Convenor, City Chambers, High St., Edinburgh EH1 1YJ. The Committee will be holding a special meeting on Monday 29 September at 7pm at James Gillespies High School on the theme of the local environment. Councillor Mackintosh is very keen that as many members of the public go along to express their views.

Other local WBA Councillors are Gordon Mackenzie (Prestonfield) and David Walker (Sciennes).

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