

West Blacket Association & Neighbourhood Watch

NEWSLETTER

November 2002

Annual General Meeting

The West Blacket Association AGM will be held at 800pm on Tuesday December 3rd at the Unionist Club, 5 Duncan Street.

730pm Refreshments and membership renewals

*800pm Chairman's report
Treasurer's report
Election of Officers & Committee*

830pm We have invited our Edinburgh Councillors to the AGM. Cllrs Fred Mackintosh (Lib Dem) and Alan Tweedie (Lab) both hope to attend.

930pm Farewell

Neighbourhood Watch News

We welcome our new community policeman, PC Charles Everitt, to the West Blacket area. He is based at St Leonards Police Station (Tel 662 5000).

Are you looking out for the Neighbourhood Watch notice boards which give monthly updates of recent crimes in the area? You will find them in our local newsagents in Salisbury Place and Minto Street, and a further one in the window of Nigel Griffiths' office.

The Neighbourhood Watch are represented on the WBA Committee by Janet Draper 667 4087, Jane Griffiths 667 4496 and Stella Pryde 662 8378. If you would like to be involved in Neighbourhood Watch, please come to the forthcoming West Blacket AGM. You will be most welcome.

Membership

Subscriptions for the year to November 2003 remain at £2/individual or £3/household and may be paid at the AGM or, if you are unable to attend, to Evelynne Hill. Newsletters are delivered to all residents, but some events may be advertised only to paid-up members.

Please return this slip to Evelynne Hill, WBA Treasurer, 37 Upper Gray Street

Name:	
Address:	

£2 enclosed

£3 enclosed

❑ West Blacket Association

For new residents, the Upper Gray Street Association was set up in 1966 to object to the proposed demolition of a Georgian villa at what was then 20, now 22, Upper Gray Street. The association subsequently expanded, as the West Blacket Association, to become the community association for the part of the Blacket Conservation Area not 'within the gates' and therefore not represented by the Blacket Association. The two associations are distinct though often confused.

For those with internet access, further details and some local history can be found at - <http://www.calamari.art.btinternet.co.uk/WBA/>

Although community associations cannot have the same constitutional status as Community Councils, the City of Edinburgh Council sees us as important conduits for local opinion. No less important a function of community associations is to foster good neighbour relations, both by organising social events, and more formally in the Neighbourhood Watch which has been active in West Blacket for nearly 10 years.

The present committee membership includes some residents of very long standing, and some who have served on the committee for more than 10 years, but we have been fortunate to have infusions of new blood at intervals, including some members who have moved to the area only very recently following the new developments.

CHAIRMAN: MIKE HUNTER, 40 UPPER GRAY STREET. 667 1767.

DR.M.J.HUNTER@BTOPENWORLD.COM.

TREASURER: EVELYNNE HILL, 37 UPPER GRAY STREET. 667 0675.

SECRETARY: POSITION VACANT

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH: JANET DRAPER, JANE GRIFFITHS, STELLA PRYDE

OTHER MEMBERS:

IRENE BROWN, 32 MINTO STREET

IAN CARTER, 3 BARTHOLOMEW HOUSE, 12 DUNCAN STREET

BRIAN & DEBORAH CHARLESWORTH, 39 MINTO STREET (CO-OPTED 2001)

JACKIE GRANT, 3 DUNCAN STREET

JEFF ROBINSON, 1 MIDDLEBY STREET

CHRIS THEOBALD, 8A SOUTH GRAY STREET.

Mike Hunter will have been Committee Member, Secretary & Chairman during nearly 12 years (the last post for 3 years) and **the Chairman's position now needs to be filled.** Brian Charlesworth has been nominated by the WBA Committee as Hon Secretary from December 2002. Evelynne Hill, as Hon Treasurer, and other Committee Members are willing to continue, but nominations to any of these posts are cordially invited - to Mike or Evelynne please.

□ Planning Matters

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.

Applications for Planning Permission are notified to local residents in case they may wish to object. These notifications appear in the Edinburgh Evening News, and are copied to amenity associations such as the West Blacket Association. Immediate neighbours are required by law to have individual notification. The WBA does not always object to planning applications, but will be pleased to discuss objections and may lend support.

Objections to planning applications must be considered by Planning Officials and may be put to the Planning Committee. If the objection is judged to be valid, the objector must be informed of the Council's decision.

It is generally believed that objections from many individuals are more likely to influence the Planning Committee than a single objection from an amenity association such as ourselves. However, do not expect your objections always to influence the outcome. Applicants for planning permission are well advised to approach Planning officials in advance and to tailor their application according to advice received.

A common tactic appears to be to submit a larger-scale development which can be scaled down to meet neighbours' objections. Once plans have been approved, variations may be submitted, which Planning officials may be persuaded are 'non-material' so that neighbours need not be informed. Finally, developers may simply proceed without planning approval, hoping no-one will notice or that hard-pressed Planning officers will fail to take enforcement action.

Objections and comments made during 2001-2

- (i) Phone masts on the roof of the telephone exchange in Upper Gray Street. Objections on health grounds are not valid - this installation is now proceeding.
- (ii) Nursery in the former Earl Haig home on Minto Street. Following objections, the number of places has been scaled down, and restrictions have been imposed on when and where children may be put down and retrieved.
- (iii) Razor wire at the rear of the wood yard in South Gray Street. We have made strong objections and await a realistic response.

❑ Quality Bus Corridor

We (WBA & The Blacket Association) had made proposals for a Toucan crossing of Minto Street, which we thought better than the City of Edinburgh Council proposals, and which we hoped would gain broad approval from residents on both sides of Minto Street. However, we have now been advised that there have been significant objections -

In the WBA area, we are told that the majority of responses were in favour of our proposals, but there were at least two substantive objections, in particular against restricting exit from Duncan Street to left turns.

Within the 'five streets' to the East of Minto Street, there were apparently more numerous objections, highlighting the possibility that traffic would be diverted from Blacket Avenue through Blacket Place.

We have to accept that our proposals will not now be pursued. The City of Edinburgh Council are proposing a pedestrian only, or 'Puffin', crossing of Minto Street near the Duncan Street exit.

And the moral of this tale? Well, we consulted and our proposals were not accepted. At least we did our best.

❑ Notes from the archive: Memories of Middlemass' Biscuit Factory.

Middlemass' Biscuit Factory was started in 1835 by Mr Robert Middlemass on a site on the northeast corner of West Preston Street. The factory moved later to Causewayside. Prior to Middlemass' establishment, biscuit making had originated in Leith where substantial "ship's biscuits" were produced.

By 1897, the distinctive building extended to Upper Gray Street and fronted on to Salisbury Place. During the First World War, though staff was depleted, the factory undertook large supply contracts for service canteens.

At first, Middlemass' biscuits were made and packaged by hand, but by 1896, machinery had been introduced. The factory produced their famous "Albert Biscuit" during Queen Victoria's reign, but their proudest achievement was the "invention" of the "Digestive" biscuit destined to become a household name.

Robert Middlemass, the founder, died in 1904. He and his family did much for the social welfare of the factory's neighbourhood.

The factory closed in 1974 and with the plans for the extension of the National Library of Scotland in 1983, the building was demolished.