

West Blacket Association & Neighbourhood Watch

Newsletter November 2006

Annual General Meeting

The West Blacket Association AGM will be held on Monday November 27th at the Unionist Club, 5 Duncan Street. All residents welcome.

730pm	<i>Refreshments and membership renewals</i>
800pm	<i>Chairman's report</i>
	<i>Treasurer's report</i>
	<i>Election of Officers & Committee</i>
830pm	<i>Local History: Ron Hill</i>
900pm	<i>Discussion</i>
930pm	<i>Close</i>

Local History

Since his talk to the 2003 AGM on 'Upper & South Gray Streets in the 19th Century' Ron Hill has extended his study to other streets in the area and has explored 'The Scotsman' digital archive for West Blacket references. His talk at this year's AGM will include material on:

- How Duncan Street came close to losing its name.
- The origins and early uses of two of the area's most prominent buildings – the Upper Gray Street tenement and the Duncan Street Dental Centre.
- Some episodes (both major and minor) from West Blacket's criminal past.

Treasurer's Report 2005-6

Our membership has increased this year to 43 households & some 76 members. Subscription income is £119. We continue to subscribe to the Cockburn Association. Other expenses this year are printing costs of the Newsletter and hosting fees for our website. Total bank and cash balances will be close to £490, with an anticipated surplus of £30 for the year. Full accounts will be available at the AGM, or to members on request.

Membership

Subscriptions for the year to November 2007 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

About the West Blacket Association

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. We have prepared a welcome leaflet for new residents, explaining the objectives of the West Blacket Association, and with other useful information. This can be found on our website www.westblacket.org.uk : if you do not have internet access, printed copies are available on request.

New Blood Needed: *Mike Hunter*

Shortly after our moving to Upper Gray Street in 1990, there was a meeting of the West Blacket Association at St Columba's Church. The existing committee were a little jaded and apparently wanted to give up. My partner, Elma Alexander, a founding member and leading light of the New Town 'Central Residents Association', which is how incidentally we met, was not inclined to take on this new challenge. So I volunteered to join the WBA Committee, later serving as Secretary, Chairman and now again Secretary. The experience has been immensely satisfying. Not only do I feel that I have made a contribution, it has enabled me to meet so many people. Not only committee members, but also other residents, many remaining firm friends.

The West Blacket Association again needs new blood, new ideas & new enthusiasm. Most of the work is done by the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. Other committee members need only commit to one or two hours on a week-night evening, at intervals of 6 to 10 weeks, depending on the pressure of business. If you are interested, please get in touch with me, or any member of the current committee, or just turn up to the AGM.

Chairman's Perspective: *Brian Charlesworth*

The committee members feel that the WBA has a valuable role to play in preserving the character of the neighbourhood. Many residents will have chosen to live in the area because of its charm, but this is constantly at risk from inappropriate alterations and developments. Members may not be aware of the fact that we try to be as vigilant as we can about ensuring that the planning rules concerning the conservation area are observed. The experience with these rules of long-standing committee members such as Ian Carter means that our representations on these matters carry some weight. A recent example is provided by the alterations at the Minto Hotel, to which we have strenuously objected. We also have direct communications with local councillors and council officials through our representation on bodies such as the Local Environmental Forum. This enables us to put forward views of residents on matters such as street-cleaning and street repairs; some of the time, though unfortunately not always, we have been able to get things done which otherwise would have been neglected. We would very much welcome more input from our members, especially in the form of concerns that they would like to see raised with the council, for example traffic flow and parking arrangements.

Elections for The West Blasket Association Committee 2006-7

Nominations for the offices of Chairman, Hon Treasurer and Hon Secretary are cordially invited: these should be sent to the current Secretary, with confirmation of the nominee's agreement to stand for election at the Annual General Meeting.

Members who are willing to become members of the Committee may stand for election, or may be co-opted without election at the discretion of the Committee.

The WBA Officers & Committee for 2005-6 are:

Chairman: Brian Charlesworth, 39 Minto Street. 662 1725

brian.charlesworth@ed.ac.uk

Hon Secretary: Mike Hunter, 40 Upper Gray Street. 667 1767.

dr.m.j.hunter@gmail.com.

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

Neighbourhood Watch: James Campbell

Other Members:

Irene Brown, 32 Minto Street

Ian Carter, 3 Bartholomew House, 12 Duncan Street

Jeff Robinson, 1 Middleby Street

Chris Theobald, 8a South Gray Street

Ann Turner Thomson 1929-2006

For any residents who did not know Ann, she was an outstanding interior designer, contributing for example to the design of the QE2 liner, and became a prominent figure in the arts. She served on the National Trust for Scotland and Edinburgh International Festival councils, and was a member of the Scottish Arts Council for 5 years. As a keen member of the Saltire Society, Ann led the campaign to save the National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh. Despite these, and family, responsibilities, she found time to act as West Blasket Treasurer in 1991-2, continued on the WBA Committee until 1994, and remained a friend to the Association until she died. She and her husband Gordon, who survives her, hosted an 'at home' in Middleby Street for WBA members in 1992. A full appreciation of Ann's life was published in the Scotsman on August 25 2006.

Neighbourhood Watch News: *Jane Griffiths*

Liaison with the police this year has settled down to the pattern offered last year. Regular email transmissions of the police monthly newsletter have been read by NHW street representatives, who note any local crime reports. These reports are limited by the Data Protection Act and also by none being received on the area north of Duncan St (ie Ward 50). The latter limitation is now sorted.

Copies of the newsletter are distributed by street reps for display in the Salisbury Place post office and Minto Street newsagent and store. Nigel Griffiths until recently displayed a copy in his surgery window. The newsletter is also displayed in libraries and the main messages are sometimes featured by the local press.

James Campbell attends West Blasket Association meetings to report on or report back any matters relevant to neighbourhood security and policing. Apart from ongoing police encouragement to contact them, attendance by the police at the WBA AGM is the main opportunity for local residents to bring up issues for discussion with the police representatives.

Further involvement in the Neighbourhood Watch would be welcome, and street representatives, listed below, are always pleased to discuss any suggestions by local residents which would promote security in the area.

Duncan St:	Jill Baldwin 667 4022
Middleby St:	Jane Griffiths 667 4496
Minto St:	Alan Westlake 667 7154 Kate O'Brien
South Gray St:	James Campbell 668 4347 John Paterson 662 8490