

# **West Blacket Association**

## **& Neighbourhood Watch**

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### **Newsletter November 2008**

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#### **Annual General Meeting**

The West Blacket Association AGM will be held on Monday November 24th at the Unionist Club, 5 Duncan Street. All residents welcome. Invitations have been extended to all four Councillors in the Southside/Newington ward, and to Community Police Officers, though it is unlikely all will be able to attend.

<i>730pm</i>	<i>Refreshments and membership renewals</i>
<i>800pm</i>	<i>Chairman's report</i>
	<i>Treasurer's report</i>
	<i>Election of Officers &amp; Committee</i>
<i>830pm</i>	<i>Local History Group: progress report</i>
	<i>Grange/Prestonfield Community Council</i>
	<i>West Blacket Neighbourhood Watch</i>
<i>930pm</i>	<i>Close</i>

#### **Treasurer's Report 2007-8**

Our membership stands this year at 36 households (some 64 members). Subscription income was £100. We continue our subscription to the Cockburn Association. Our other main expenses this year were the Newsletter and hosting fees for the West Blacket Association website.

I anticipate a surplus of around £10 for the year. Total bank and cash balances will be close to £615. Full details will be available at the AGM, or to members on request.

#### **Membership**

Subscriptions for the year to November 2009 remain at £2/individual or £3/household and may be paid at the AGM or, if you are unable to attend, to Evelynne Hill. If you wish to pay your subscription by cheque, please make this payable to West Blacket Association.

Newsletters are delivered to all residents, but some events may be advertised only to paid-up members.

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*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](http://www.westblacket.org.uk) : if you do not have internet access, printed copies are available on request.

Our website has been under its present name, which we own, for nearly 3 years. It is not an elaborate site, but includes information under the following headings -

- Information for New Residents (Welcome Leaflet)
- West Blacket Archives (Newsletters, Minutes of Annual General Meetings)
- West Blacket History (Local History provided by WBA residents)
- West Blacket Contacts (Contact details for WBA Committee, Councillors, MSP, MPs)

The website should be accessible from any web browser, without special features, but some documents in .PDF format require Acrobat Reader which is freely available.

In a Google search for 'West Blacket', the top 3 items are links to our website.

## Grange/Prestonfield Community Council

The Community Council, set up in September 2007, has had a successful first year. We have a capable committee organising meetings at monthly intervals. We have active subgroups for planning, traffic, environment & licensing. We have published our first newsletter.

See our website [www.GrangePrestonfieldCC.org.uk](http://www.GrangePrestonfieldCC.org.uk) which has details of meeting dates & minutes, contact addresses and a discussion forum.

There are many differences between the GPCC and the WBA, but they should be able to work together. The GPCC is a statutory body with some funding from the City Council, and its area includes around 8000 households – consulting all residents in such a large area is a major operation. The WBA is a voluntary association representing an area of around 280 households, and so much easier to consult and inform, but has representation on the GPCC.

The Community Council has organised 2 meetings during October 2008 to discuss proposals to extend Controlled Parking further south than at present, to a new boundary comprised mainly by the South Suburban railway line, and further east to Dalkeith Road. West Blacket residents qualify for zone 7 permits but the relevance of this proposal is that the availability nearby of unrestricted parking for visitors would no longer be an option. CEC Traffic officials are considering offering visitors' permits in Zone 7, but this would be subject to consultation.

## **Elections to The West Blacket Association Committee**

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.

The West Blacket Association, as ever, welcomes 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 any member of the current committee, or just turn up to the AGM.

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.

*During the last 2 years, we have lost committee members who have moved out of the area, and expect to lose others. We therefore need new committee members!*

### ***The WBA Officers & Committee for 2007-8 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.

**Neighborhood Watch:** Jane Griffiths

#### **Other Members:**

Irene Brown, 32 Minto Street  
Ian Carter, 3 Bartholomew House, 12 Duncan Street  
Chris Theobald, 8a South Gray Street  
Rosemary Wake, 9b Middleby Street

## **Neighbourhood Watch in West Blacket**

The Neighbourhood Watch was set up more than ten years ago, by very enthusiastic individual residents with extensive support from Lothian & Borders Police, but then quite separate from the West Blacket Association. This arrangement involving some duplication of resources, the Watch was later incorporated into the WBA, with representation on the WBA Committee, while retaining its own group of street representatives for liaison with Community Police Officers, distribution of crime reports etc. Present members believe there is still a need to alert people to crimes being carried out in the area and to encourage watchfulness generally. And of course some insurers offer lower premiums in NHW areas.

NHW has been operated mainly by email this year, through monthly police newsletters sent to those who asked to be on the police list, and through emails sent to all members of the NHW email network about crimes or suspicious incidents which are reported to Jane Griffiths by local people or the police. If you wish to be included in our email network, please send an email to [WestBlacketNHW@gmail.com](mailto:WestBlacketNHW@gmail.com), with Subscribe in the subject line, and your name and postal address in the body of the email. Please be assured that your details will not be used for any other purpose. Existing recipients of email crime reports may, if they wish to have their details removed, email Unsubscribe to the same address.

Crime reports, and more general police messages, may also be found on the Grange/Prestonfield Community Council website: [www.GrangePrestonfieldCC.org.uk](http://www.GrangePrestonfieldCC.org.uk)

## Traffic in West Blacket

Traffic and parking are ongoing matters of interest and concern, and traffic volumes in our residential streets seem to be on the rise. This is partly a consequence of growing congestion on the main corridors which leads motorists to seek alternative routes. It would be very difficult to deter through traffic, partly because any restrictions would affect residents as well as external traffic, and past proposals have been resisted.

Because of the limited amount of road space and the number of households there are limited opportunities for action, and there is a basic conflict between providing parking space and maintaining through traffic. We have in the past had to draw attention to the problems caused by parking onto the pavement, particularly in Upper Gray Street where pavements are very narrow. Introducing one-way traffic, as has applied in Duncan Street for many years, can avoid conflict between vehicles moving in opposite directions on narrow streets, but can also result in excessive speed, and this is another of the matters of concern to residents. The Council intends to introduce 20 miles per hour speed restrictions in all residential streets across the City over a period of years. Our area is however a long way down the priority list, partly because of the scale of the city-wide project, and the fact that priorities are influenced by accident records. The only current change in the pipeline is a short extension of the double-yellow parking restrictions on the north-side of Duncan Street prior to Minto Street, which facilitates space for two lanes of traffic approaching the junction.

If you have questions on this subject, and in particular any ideas and suggestions to put forward, please come along to the AGM or put them in writing to the Secretary.

## West Blacket History

The first (so far the only) meeting of the History Group took place on 11 March 2008. Some of those interested were unable to attend but a pleasant evening was had by nine people ‘representing’ (in the loosest sense) four of the seven streets. We looked at old maps and materials, the draft for the website, but most of all we chatted. It was especially interesting to hear about the fairly recent past from those longest in the area or with information from previous occupants. So, for example, people described various shops, traffic arrangements for trams where Salisbury and Minto join, and the ‘pill box’ at the same junction during WW2. One member offered to host a future meeting which we hope will take place this winter. No date was set in March as the history web pages had first priority.

Work on those pages has been continuing. Even once design and technical matters were resolved, preparing material has taken far longer than anticipated, partly because it became clear that the amount of detail about the streets was most uneven. Eventually we saw sense and decided it was better to put up what was available rather than try to plug too many gaps! (Summer with its temptations is not the time to embark on indoor projects.) Overall, the aim isn’t completeness but something which many can contribute to. Indeed the patchy coverage will make it evident that pleas for active engagement by others are more than token gestures.

We hope to get the history section up soon; perhaps even by the AGM. The news will go immediately to group members, whom we expect will be most ready to give constructive feedback, whether by picking holes in the content, adding information, or highlighting technical glitches. So, coming soon to a computer near you...

Rosemary Wake (0131 662 4221; [rwave@tehs.co.uk](mailto:rwake@tehs.co.uk))

Ron Hill (0131 667 0675; [r.g.hill@talk21.com](mailto:r.g.hill@talk21.com))