

West Blasket Association

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2024

THIS IS A WEB VERSION OF THE PRINTED NEWSLETTER



*Workers in South Gray Street
The bees were friendly
No one was stung*



*Workers in Upper Gray Street
Thanks to City of Edinburgh Council*

Who are we?

The WBA is an amenity association for part of the Blacket Conservation Area, from Salisbury Place to West Mayfield and from Upper and South Gray Streets to Minto Street. Our main purpose is the preservation and improvement of the general amenity of the West Blacket area. This includes consultation with the Council on their plans for parking, traffic and recycling, and on Planning Applications under consideration. We also hope to encourage good neighbour relations through Neighbourhood Watch and by organising some social events for our members. Which have recently included a French Film night, Dinner at Sambuca & visiting honeybees in South Gray Street. If you are not already a member, please join us.

Planning Matters

Hendry and Macdonald's applications for Change of Use from garage to student accommodation at 20 Duncan Street (in 2016, 2017 & 2019) appear to have been finally approved, with variations, in July 2022. The work now having been completed, the intentions of the owner, which were originally said to be personal hands-on management, are no longer clear.

Development of the **Upper Gray Street corner** (a gap-site dating from the 1820s) has stalled. Despite receiving planning permission in March 2017, work has not continued beyond the foundations. The City of Edinburgh Council has no powers to enforce completion. However, after much prompting from WBA, Cllr Pauline Flannery and others, CEC have at last made good the pavement damage caused by contractors.

The Unionist Club having offered their 5 Duncan Street premises for sale, there are now applications for planning approval (24/04930/FUL) and listed building consent (24/04931/LBC) for conversion to a Dental Practice including a small residential flat. While we might have preferred that this property revert to full residential use, we do not find serious grounds for objection.

Bees in South Gray Street

Many of you may have noticed a beehive in the front garden of No.12, and over the years this has been a source of great interest to passers-by and to workmen, as well as locals. I was very pleased to be able to show a few WBA members the working of a colony in the early summer. Urban beekeeping is on the increase, and cities such as Edinburgh with its many trees (in particular Horse-chestnut, Sycamore and Lime) are major yielders of nectar, and therefore well suited to bees. Every pound of honey produced requires three times that volume of nectar. A single bee colony will gather enough nectar to not only satisfy their (considerable) daily needs over the summer, but also allow them to store in excess of 40-60 pounds of honey to last through the winter. I have kept bees since I was a boy of 12 years age and cannot imagine them not being an important part of my life. Peter Wright

Ceilidh! Save the date!

Ceilidh, Friday 28th February 2025, 7-10pm
St Columba's Church Hall, 13 Upper Gray St
Admission: £5. Free for U18s

The West Blacket Association is joining forces with the Blacket Association to organise a ceilidh for our two communities. All residents and their friends are welcome. We will provide water, juice and maybe a bit more; please bring your own drinks (alcohol allowed) and snacks.

Tickets will be available from 8th January from Charles Warlow at 6 South Gray Street. First come first served - tickets are limited. Please bring cash! (we know, retro).

We are grateful to both Associations for supporting this event, and to St Columba's Church for offering their hall. Any profits will go to a local charity.

We have booked the excellent Matthew Maclennan Ceilidh Band who will play and call dances for all ages, so whether you're new to ceilidhs or whether you're an old hand, there'll be plenty to enjoy with friends and neighbours. See you there!

French Film Night

Following previous successes, **Lise Morel** invites members (up to 16 can be accommodated) to **ANOTHER** Film Night at 39 Minto Street, on Thu Jan 9th 2025 beginning 7pm.

West Blacket History Group

Our History Group seeks to raise awareness of West Blacket as an early southern suburb of the city that has adapted to 200+ years of changing times. Pre-covid, we held regular meetings when members shared information about their houses and our neighbourhood. Since then, the group has continued via the 'West Blacket Historicals' WhatsApp group. Recent posts have involved West Blacket connections with Charles Jenner of the famous Princes Street store and Victorian painter John Blake Macdonald RSA, whose works grace galleries and exhibitions but also appear on shortbread and toffee packaging! Text Rosemary Wake, on 07811 176086, to join the group.

Looking to the future, the bi-centenary of John Leslie's 1826 'Plan of the Lands of Newington and Belleville' in 2026 will provide a good opportunity for further group activity. Rosemary Wake and Ron Hill, together with NLS's Chris Fleet, have been discussing how we might achieve this. Plans are in their very early stages but there will be plenty of opportunity for group members to contribute the results of their own research.

WEST BLACKET ASSOCIATION – Please join to support your local area
New members welcome

Subscriptions are annual, until 31st October each year.

£8 for a household or £5 for an individual.

Please pay by Bank transfer or Standing order.

WBA bank details are: Sort Code **83-19-19**; A/C No **10056031**:

Existing members who pay by standing order need take no further action. If paying by bank transfer, please include your name or street address so that we can identify you.

New members paying by bank transfer should inform our Membership Secretary by email (kate.obrien@hotmail.co.uk) giving their name and street address. Providing your email address will also enable us to let you know about amenity issues and social activities we organise.

Annual General Meeting November 25th 2024

The West Blacket Association AGM will be held at the New Bell (upstairs room), Causewayside, beginning 700pm.

The formal agenda, as required by our articles of association, will consist of:

Record of those attending; Minute of previous AGM; Chair's Report;
Treasurer's Report; Election of Office Bearers and Committee.

Following this, about 730pm, **Laura Bradley** will give a talk on

“The Stasi in the Theatre”

followed by time for discussion.

Present committee members are: Maggie Stevenson (Chair), Nigel Cumming (Treasurer), Mike Hunter (Hon Sec), Kate O'Brien (Membership Secretary), Ian Carter, Lucy Charrington, Alice Foster, Evelynne Hill, Lise Morel, Charles Warlow & Cathie Wright.

Nominations to the committee. All WBA members are eligible to stand for election and new members are very welcome. Nominations in writing please to Mike Hunter, Hon Sec, 40 Upper Gray Street, or by email to dr.m.j.hunter@gmail.com