



**Blacket Association Newsletter**

**Novmeber 2020**

## **AGM WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER ONLINE**

The 51st Annual General Meeting of the Blacket Association will be held via Zoom on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 7:30pm. Details of how to join are: Meeting ID: 811 8312 6486; Passcode: 073133:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81183126486?pwd=SUNiUG8zbzNRZWx2dHZyK2laRWxRQT09>

## **NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS NEEDED**

The work of the Blacket Association depends on residents volunteering to take the lead on issues of importance to residents. That work has not ceased during the Covid pandemic and indeed in some respects has been more important, particularly through the general email communications to residents.

With so many committee members leaving at the same time I make a heartfelt plea for volunteers. In particular we need four replacements to:

- receive and send out emails on issues of interest to residents;
- act as minutes secretary, in particular prepare the agenda and minutes of committee meetings;
- carry out routine maintenance of the Blacket shrubbery, with assistance from work parties of residents;
- organise Blacket social events, obviously not a priority at present.

The communications role and minutes secretary role are particularly urgent. If we do not get volunteers there is a strong danger of not being able to carry out the invaluable work of the Association. If anyone is interested in taking on any of these roles please get in touch with any committee member.

## **OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE 2019–2020**

CHAIR	Ian Chisholm	11 Dryden Place
TREASURER	Anne Henderson	4 Mayfield Terrace
MINUTES SECRETARY	Fiona Courtney	52 Blacket Place
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH	Stanley Bird	4 Dryden Place
PLANNING/SHRUBBERY	Hugh Mackay	42 Blacket Place
PLANNING	Richard Scothorne	7 Alfred Place
WEBSITE/CONTACTS	Mhoraig Blair	Arthur Lodge
NEW RESIDENTS/CARDS	Arlene Doherty	56 Blacket Place
COMMUNICATIONS	Pauline Platt	27 Mayfield Terrace
SOCIAL CONVENER	Vacant	

## Agenda

- Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (30 October 2019);
- Election of committee members and office bearers;
- Chair's report;
- Planning report;
- Shrubbery working group report;
- Website and database report;
- Neighbourhood Watch report;
- Treasurer's report;
- Any other competent business.

**MINUTES of the 50<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the BLACKET ASSOCIATION** held on Wednesday 30 October 2019 in the Old Bell. Ian Chisholm, as Chair, welcomed everyone to the AGM. Copies of the Annual Report had previously been circulated by eMail – in addition, printed copies were available at the AGM.

1. **MINUTES** – The 2018 AGM minutes as published and circulated were agreed as an accurate record.
2. **ELECTION OF COMMITTEE** – Mhoraig Blair was elected to the Committee as Website and Database manager. Ian Chisholm, Stan Bird and Richard Scothorne were re-elected to the Committee as Chair, Neighbourhood Watch convenor and Planning convenor respectively. All committee members were duly proposed and seconded. The role of Social Convenor is vacant and volunteers were encouraged to contact the Chair if interested.
3. **CHAIR'S REPORT** – The Chair gave his Report. He noted that the main planning activity during the year concerned the Thrums Hotel's plans as noted below. Social events during the year included a successful Open Gardens in June and the Chair thanked the residents who had opened their gardens. The Chair represents the Association on the Grange and Prestonfield Community Council, which presses the Council and Police Scotland on local issues including those raised by the Association..
4. **PLANNING REPORT** – Richard Scothorne gave a report on Planning related activities in the year. The only major application was the Thrums Hotel's application for a very large extension. The application attracted 26 objections and was withdrawn following an indication from Planning that it would not be accepted, and the owner is now consulting with residents on a more limited and appropriate scheme. This showed that a substantial local response can be effective and it is important for all concerned residents to lodge comments or objections. Caroline Sibbald thanked the Committee and particularly Richard for his support and guidance.
5. **SHRUBBERIES WORKING PARTY REPORT** –Hugh Mackay reported on work done in the year. He thanked volunteers for their support. He explained to the meeting that the Council maintains the large trees in the shrubberies and cuts the grass four times a year, but otherwise leaves planting, pruning, weeding, and general maintenance of shrubs and plants to the residents.
6. **WEBSITE AND MEMBER DATABASE REPORT** – Mhoraig Blair gave her report. She clarified that the Associations' database is maintained solely for the purpose of communication regarding local matters and is held securely with limited access. The Chair thanked Mhoraig for her work on the website and database.
7. **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT** – Stan Bird gave his report. He noted there were no serious crimes in the year but a number of "opportunistic" crimes and also an increase in graffiti. The Association aims to warn residents of specific issues and risks. Residents

are encouraged to report crimes and suspicious activity to local Neighbourhood Watch representatives and to the police.

8. **TREASURER'S REPORT** – Anne Henderson gave her report. Funds have increased by £334. The main source of income is residents' £5 pa contribution, with the number of subscriptions increased this year. Other income is received from card sales and contributions at the Open Gardens. This year's expenditure included £563 on printing Christmas cards which is expected to be recouped over coming years, and the renewal of the website licence. Anne asked residents to come forward with positive uses for funds. Simon White stated that the Association should not make a surplus from the Open Gardens. Anne explained that voluntary contributions at the event were intended to cover costs, and there is no intention to make a surplus.
9. **AOB** – A number of matters were raised by residents and discussed:
  - a. Changes to Resident's Parking spaces to allow sharing with Pay as you Go – this has been agreed in principle by CEC but awaits funding to implement signage changes.
  - b. Complaints about the impact of nursery traffic in Blacket Avenue, including parents dropping off children parking on the pavement and poor visibility from the nursery car park exit.
  - c. Noted that CEC clearing leaves has been reduced, residents complained that this leads to flooding as street drains are blocked.
10. **SOCIAL EVENT** – The meeting ended its formal stage at 8.15.

## **NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Fiona Courtney, Hugh Mackay and Pauline Platt have reached the end of their three-year terms of office and are standing down from the committee. Nominations are sought for replacements and also for a Social Convener.

## **CHAIR'S REPORT 2020**

Not long after the last AGM the Covid-19 pandemic arrived and changed all our lives. Principally through Blacket Association emails we have tried to keep residents informed of developments. In particular, early in the lockdown we ensured the coordination of assistance to residents who required it.

We are now considering setting up a WhatsApp group, which would enable residents to share ideas, to give and receive advice, and to provide information. Other residents' organisations have established such groups. If enough residents joined, email communications from the Association could migrate to the WhatsApp group.

Social events, in particular the Open Gardens evening, have obviously not taken place in 2020, but work on planning and the database/website have continued as the reports below make clear.

As well as Chair of the Blacket Association, I am also the Chair of the Grange and Prestonfield Community Council. Meetings of both these organisations have continued via Zoom. This link enables us to keep-up-to-date with Council activities, and this is particularly important during the current Covid-19 crisis. Minutes of GPCC meetings are available on the website at [grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk/](http://grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk/).

Ian Chisholm

## PLANNING REPORT

The year has brought a range of applications for us to comment on, and the sequence of applications at the rear of 14 Minto Street (Thrums Hotel) continued.

As the year draws to a close we can appreciate two elegant extensions in the area.

One of these is at 23 Dalkeith Road (by Konishi Gaffney). This is a very high-quality extension but following a number of approaches we needed to point out to the Council planners that the dipping wall along West Mayfield did not conform with the original planning permission (which required the reinstatement of a level wall). The Council have now confirmed that this wall does not conform and we are awaiting follow-up action from them.

The other high-quality extension is at the rear of 44 Blacket Place (by Craig Amy). Craig used to be at Richard Murphy Architects and, by chance, we had their first application in the Blacket area – for a villa on a current garden site between a Georgian and a Victorian villa on Dalkeith Road. This is a distinctive ‘Murphy house’ and, while responses to this varied, we decided not to comment and look forward to this home taking shape.

We have been chasing the situation at 24 Mayfield Terrace for some years and were delighted and relieved to see this visually important ground floor flat being carefully renovated. It is now a definite adornment to the entrance along Mayfield Terrace, where its predecessor was an eyesore.

Finally, the third application for an extension to the Thrums Hotel has now been submitted. We objected strongly to the first application last year – a notably inappropriate, two-storey extension into the garden grounds alongside Blacket Avenue. This application was subsequently withdrawn. A second application was submitted, which involved a full-height rear extension to 14 Minto Street. We did not object to this, but Historic Environment Scotland expressed concern about the destruction of the rear of an original Georgian house. As a result of this the owner and his architect entered into a pre-application process with the planners to make sure there were no fundamental objections to a third application. This is for a separate, steading-type, two-storey building in the grounds behind 14 Minto Street, using traditional materials and designs. There is clearly local concern about the development of an undeveloped rear garden (currently used as a car park) and we will be objecting in principle to the development of this site.

Richard Scothorne

## SHRUBBERY WORKING GROUP REPORT

We started the year wanting to control the ivy (*Hedera*). Partially we have. We also pruned the bases of the lime trees, as usual, and weeded, removed litter and planted. The mahonias have done well and are, in my view, a great success. The periwinkle (*Vinca*) has also continued to do add early colour. The montbretia (*Crocasmia*) gives us late-season colour. This is new. I also planted foxgloves (*Digitalis*) as an experiment, as well as evening primroses (*Oenothera*). However it is always difficult for such plants to survive because of the dense foliage of the limes in summer. This has destroyed our vast effort to grow daffodils (*Narcissus*) and variants. We have asked the Tree Department of the Council to prune the higher branches of the trees, but this department and the main Parks Department are very supportive yet hugely underfunded. If more sunlight and rain entered the soil, more plants would grow as ground cover. New ideas for the shrubbery are always appreciated.

We have had continuing support from about ten members of our Association who volunteer for Working Parties. They are our future. Were it not for them, we would have had to rely on Ian Macleish, Ian Carter and myself, and we would probably have got fed up. These volunteers recognised that the bushes should be cut back to the line of the pavement. The wider space for pedestrians is important and particularly during this phase of Social Distancing. Because there is now more access to the shrubbery, some paths have been formed by people and dogs, which results in any flowers being trodden on. We might try an extension of the fencing, which to the west of the avenue has been a success. This costs money however. The Council paid half of the cost last time. Would they again? Only when we have an estimate and an indication of financial support from the Council could we put a proposition to the Committee.

After a decade as a Committee Member, I am not seeking re-election. It is time for others. I shall continue to work on the Shrubby with the other volunteers. It has been a privilege to serve you on the Committee and I thank you for your support.

Hugh Mackay

## **WEBSITE AND DATABASE REPORT**

We continue to maintain a database of resident's addresses and emails solely for the purpose of communication regarding local matters. Access is restricted to limited committee individuals and the database is encrypted. Please let us know if you are new to the area and wish to be added to our circulars.

The website is periodically updated for the latest minutes/committee meetings/local events etc (the last being on hold currently given the covid-19 pandemic). We have made some progress reviewing options for additional content to be added, and its implementation is the next big focus. We continue to welcome any suggestions of local matters you would like to see included on the website.

Mhoraig Blair

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT**

This year has been a strange one. Because of the lockdown there were fewer crimes and little to report in terms of criminal or anti-social behaviour affecting the Blacket Area. The only major incident was an apparent arson attack, which is still under investigation. However, the Neighbourhood Watch structure was very useful at the start of the lockdown in helping to coordinate requests for help and providing appropriate assistance. Unfortunately, there are still some unscrupulous people in the world who will try to take advantage of others, even in times like these. A myriad of 'scams' emerged – the most awful of which was to try to exploit the 'Track and Trace' app to commit fraud. The scammers are contacting the general public advising them that they have been in near contact with someone who has tested positive with Coronavirus and as such must get a test and self-isolate. The scammer then ask for payments for booking tests/sending out testing kits by post/courier etc. An alert about this was emailed to residents, and details were provided of a website that can keep everyone up to date with new scams as they emerge.

As autumn and winter approach and garden equipment is put back into sheds and garages, we should remain vigilant and make sure everything is secure. And if there is to be another period of lockdown restrictions, we should remember our friends and neighbours. If you see anything suspicious, contact the police.

Stanley Bird

# TREASURER'S REPORT

The Blacket Association

Summary of Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2020

	2020 £	2019 £
Opening Bank Account as at 1 September 2019	2038.17	1704.21
<i>Income</i>		
Subscriptions	630.00	665.00
Open Gardens event	-	119.56
Card sales	5.00	67.00
Christmas card sales	25.00	205.00
Donation	100.00	-
	<u>760.00</u>	<u>1056.56</u>
<i>Expenditure</i>		
Printing newsletter	21.60	21.50
Landscaping	173.09	-
Website licence	-	97.20
Christmas card costs	-	563.90
Cockburn Association	40.00	40.00
	<u>234.69</u>	<u>722.60</u>
Increase in funds	525.31	333.96
Closing Bank account as at 31 August 2020	2563.48 =====	2038.17 =====

## Treasurer's Report

Income is lower due to lower card sales and the fact we were unable to hold any social events due to the COVID pandemic.

Anne S Henderson, 22 September 2020