

Blacket Association: Annual Report – 2013 / 2014

CHAIR'S REPORT

Overall this seems to have been a straightforward year, with a number of positive things to report. It can be summarized as follows.

SOCIAL EVENTS

In February the irrepressible Owen Dudley Edwards gave a hugely entertaining and informative talk to around 30 residents both past and present. His subject was 'Conan and the Other Doyles'. In addition to being an enjoyable evening, the event raised £90 for the Association.

Around 100 people attended the Open Garden evening in June. Three gardens of comparable size and aspect were open for residents and their friends to look round. We are grateful to the Turnbells and Regaards of 15 and 21 Blacket Place for letting us tramp around their beautiful gardens, and to Simon and Mary White for hosting the party in their perfect party garden. A plant table boosted proceeds from the evening, as did sales of our reprinted Blacket cards.

LINKS with EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

We continue to be represented on the Grange and Prestonfield Community Council. This enables us to keep up to date with Council activities that may affect us directly or indirectly. Items that may be of interest to residents include proposed cycle paths, changes to recycling, and the implementation of the 20 mph speed limit across Edinburgh. Minutes for the latest meetings are available through the Community Council website at grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk.

DONATIONS

The Association has received donations of an 1826 engraved map of the area (from former resident Mrs Joan Weir); an embroidered wall hanging of part of Blacket (from Mrs Lorna Plum); and a fairly large gazebo (courtesy of Ray Footman). Should you wish to borrow the last item or to see either or both of the first two, please contact me at the email address below.

WEBSITE UPDATE

We are updating the website, and are grateful to Johnny Kruuk and Lindsay Johnston for their work on this.

23B MINTO STREET

A number of residents have expressed concern about the state of the property 23B Minto Street. The Council has been contacted and they have carried out work to make the outhouse area of the property safe. They are now in discussions with the solicitors of the owner of the property to invoice for the work already carried out. However the Council's remit is limited to public safety matters and it is unlikely that this matter will be resolved swiftly. We will continue to monitor and report on this.

Hazel Fletcher

PLANNING REPORT

The result of the internal Council inquiry into the building of the "mews" cottage in the garden of 23 Minto Street, concluded that the Planning Department had not acted irrationally in the decision making process and that they were entitled to come to the view that they had.

However they concluded that a number of modifications to their processes would be made in light of the investigation. Their response was rather what we expected, and while disappointing it is likely that any further objections we raise may be given more weight.

In June we had a most interesting walkabout of the “5” streets with the Head of the East Area Planning Department and eight of his staff. The intention was not to focus on specific planning decisions, but to give them a feel for the area, tell them about its history and build rapport with them. Both groups viewed the meeting as having been worthwhile.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Below you will find a full list of the planning applications considered by the Committee in the past 12 months. Every application was examined by the Association planning team but only those which were deemed to be of concern warranted an objection - details for these follow the list. The Planning reference is given for each application so that it can be viewed online - unless otherwise stated, each application has been granted. The details for each of the applications against which an objection was raised are :

	Blacket Avenue (Belleville Lodge)	14/00020/FUL	
	Blacket Avenue (University Halls)	14/00219/TPO	
15	Blacket Avenue	14/00953/FUL & LBC	
7	Dryden Place	13/03003/FUL	<i>Objection</i>
14-16	Duncan Street	13/04868/FUL	
1	Blacket Place	14/00692/FUL	
2	Blacket Place	14/02915/FUL & LBC	
7A	Blacket Place	14/02407/FUL	
16	Blacket Place	14/03869/TCO	
17	Blacket Place	14/00903/FUL & LBC	
24	Blacket Place	14/02027/FUL	
24	Blacket Place	14/01993/TCO	
32	Blacket Place	14/00334/LBC	
44	Blacket Place	14/01926/LBC	
44	Blacket Place	14/02311/FUL & LBC	
159	Causewayside (National Library)	14/03017/FUL	
26	East Mayfield	14/01344/CLP	<i>Objection</i>
15	Dalkeith Road (Lloyds Bank)	14/00743/LBC	WITHDRAWN
15	Dalkeith Road (Lloyds Bank)	14/00771/FUL	WITHDRAWN
2	Mayfield Terrace	14/02362/TCO	
18	Mayfield Terrace	14/03157/TCO	
34	Mayfield Terrace	14/03606/TCO	
1	Middleby Street	14/03252/FUL	
1	Middleby Street	14/03877/LBC	
10	Minto Street	13/05187/FUL	<i>Objection</i>
10	Minto Street	13/05188/LBC	<i>Objection</i>
23	Minto Street	14/00233/FUL	<i>Objection</i>
23	Minto Street	14/01006/LBC	
23	Minto Street	14/01801/FUL	<i>Objection</i>
25	Minto Street	14/00907/LBC	
30	Minto Street	14/02643/FUL	
30	Minto Street	14/02642/LBC	NOT REQUIRED
32	Minto Street	14/00044/FUL	
35	Minto Street	14/02065/LBC	
37	Salisbury Road	14/00198/LBC	

3	Spence Street	13/04567/FUL	WITHDRAWN
3	Spence Street	14/00101/FUL	<i>Objection</i> - REFUSED
6	Spence Street	13/04208/FUL	
7	Spence Street	13/04967/FUL	
13	South Gray Street		14/02418/TCO
1	Upper Gray Street		14/04002/LBC
20	Upper Gray Street		14/01554/TCO
35	Upper Gray Street		14/00927/LBC

26, East Mayfield - 14/01344/CLP

This was an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness. The work involved was the replacement of 20 year old uPVC windows with new uPVC windows – a Certificate of Lawfulness was applied for, before work was carried out, to confirm that it was not development under the planning acts.

This was deemed to be correct in the planner’s view because, under the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act, 1997 it states that :-

“The following operations or uses of land shall not be taken for the purposes of this Act to involve development.....the carrying out of works for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of any building being works which do not materially affect the external appearance of the building.”

Thus our contention that the applicant needed to obtain planning permission was dismissed.

10, Minto Street – 13/05187/FUL & 13/05188/LBC

This application was for the sub-division of the house so as to form a separate flat. We objected to the formation of a surfaced area to provide extra car parking space within the front garden; we did not object to the sub-division of the house.

We are pleased to report that a partial refusal was issued by the planners, which was for the parking area in the front garden. However, with the division of the house, we can envisage that there will be continuing pressure to provide additional parking space.

23, Minto Street - 14/00233/FUL

The further, ongoing development of this property has been a very sad story. It started with the commencement of the building a house in the garden with access being onto Mayfield Terrace. The plans, which had been approved in 2008, were quite acceptable and reflected the adjacent building.

The owner then proceeded to build something that was an utter travesty of the approved plans. We raised objections (including Enforcement Enquiry 13/00250/ENCOMP) with the planning authority as the development proceeded.

We were informed that they were treating the changes as Minor Variations which do not have to be advertised, so there was no official opportunity for us to object or to have the matter brought before the Planning Committee. The so called minor variations were subsequently retrospectively approved.

The result is a structure which has been built totally contrary to the planning principles laid down for development within the Blasket Conservation Area.

23, Minto Street - 14/01801/FUL

The saga does not stop with the building of the above house. Having obtained planning permission on the basis that it was to be a dwelling house, the owner then applied for a change of use to Guest House! Despite our objections, the Planning Department decided that this was not Development.

23, Minto Street – 14/00233/FUL & 14/01006/LBC

This application for further development of the same property involved a not insignificant single storey extension to an existing extension of the main house. We objected to various elements of the plans and we can report that the owner changed some elements to conform to what we wanted.

The Planning Department has taken action to ensure that the endorsed objections would be monitored by the Department but the large folding French windows have been permitted.

There is no doubt that, as part of a Conservation Area, the property has been over developed and mostly in an unsympathetic, and in one case in, an appalling way.

3, Spence Street - 14/00101/FUL

This application was for the removal of the front garden wall and the conversion of the whole of the small front garden to a surfaced parking area. We are pleased to say that our objections were upheld and permission was refused.

7, Dryden Place – 13/03003/FUL

This application was for the addition of a dormer window & roof lights and the heightening of the flat roof to accommodate the conversion of the attic space to provide additional accommodation. Although we objected to this development on the basis that it would significantly change the character of Dryden Place - there were NO dormers on that side of the road and the ones on the other side of the road were specifically designed to be part of the original development - the application was granted.

Proposed Local Development Plan

We submitted responses to the Council on this plan which, although it mostly does not directly affect the Blacket area, has policies within it which we wished to endorse or criticise. We regretted that there were not more cycle routes planned particularly those to enable children to cycle safely to school.

But we welcomed the safeguarding of the designated Edinburgh South tram route from Prince's Street; the retention of the two halts on the South Suburban rail line; & the continued designation of open space in the Craigmillar Park Conservation Area and the Waverley Park Conservation Area. This last principle has become more relevant given the recent application to build on some of this open space, namely in East Suffolk Road with reference 14/03632/FUL.

Richard Seligman

BLACKET NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

As the NW Coordinator, I have circulated details during the year of various house, garage and shed break-ins - as a relatively prosperous area, we are a popular target for thieves. I have also circulated details of crime prevention advice from Police Scotland and links to other sources of advice.

Interestingly the number of incidents reported to me has tailed off over the summer months - hopefully Blacket residents are paying attention to the crime prevention advice with encouraging effects. But continued vigilance is of course necessary.

Cold calling on the doorstep can be a nuisance and the Association Committee has considered whether we should become a "no cold calling" zone, as other areas have done. Responses to our consultation showed residents were not persuaded that we should ban cold calling.

One reason, I suspect, is that most cold calling is of course not in person but over the phone or internet - crime is transferring from the streets to the internet. During scams awareness month, I circulated some advice on telephone and internet fraud.

A recent Blacket Newsletter had emphasised to residents the value of communicating any suspicious incidents to a NW coordinator and contained a list of the coordinators with addresses (home and email) and areas of responsibility - it also emphasised the role of the coordinators in keeping up-to-date lists of residents.

The recently created central Blacket address list (home and email) had been much assisted by information from the local NW coordinators who are :

Alfred Place	1-4	Alex Stobart 3 Alfred Place
Alfred Place	6-18	Victoria Gilmour 15 Alfred Place
Blacket Avenue		Jennifer Flueckiger Barrie West 46b Blacket Place
Blacket Place North		Alison Mowat 14 Blacket Place David Jenkins 18 Blacket Place
Blacket Place South	15, 46-48	Jennifer Flueckiger & Barrie West
Blacket Place South	17-33, 50-62	Anna Regaard 21 Blacket Place
Dryden Place		Ian Chisholm 11 Dryden Place
Mayfield Terrace	1-6, 8	Alice Kruuk 6a Mayfield Terrace
Mayfield Terrace	7,9,11	Alex Stobart
Mayfield Terrace South	10- 24	Coral Prosser 28 Mayfield Terrace
Mayfield Terrace South	26-38	Pina Lang
Mayfield Terrace North	13-31	32 Mayfield Terrace

Ian Chisholm

BLACKET AVENUE WORKING PARTY

In the last year's AGM Report, I mentioned that the Council wanted us to take over the ground on the north side of the Avenue at the Minto Street end, and this will now be referred to as the Nursery. The Council had run out of ideas for it but we saw possibilities.

They cleared the site and planted Narcissi and 37 Vinca Minor plants. Strawberry Hill Nursery made a donation to the cost of 21 assorted shrubs which were planted but have been on life support during the drier months of the year. While we water them, the Council continue to cut the grass.

Three replacement Mahonia shrubs were planted behind the fence in the north section of Blacket Place. Thirty Narcissus Tete a Tete and three Vinca Minor went into the Dalkeith Road /Blacket Place beds and 30 Narcissus Tete a Tete into the Mayfield Terrace /Dalkeith Road section.

Road works on Blacket Avenue caused some damage as the contractors dumped building materials and destroyed ten Pyracanthus bushes. The Council repaired part of the wood fencing and all in all, this has been another useful year's collaboration with the Parks Department.

Apart from an incident which left one of our number stuck up a tree while pruning branches (he has since been returned to earth), the work is going well - Ian McLeish provides the knowledge and a small team provide the brawn.

Hugh Mackay

TREASURER'S REPORT

Subscriptions, at £575, were slightly increased on last year's. Taking into account the number of households, this represents a subscription rate of approx 67%. Whilst new residents in the area will continue to be informed about the Blacket Association and invited to subscribe, it would be pleasing to ensure that other existing residents are also aware of us so they may consider setting up a subscription.

The open gardens event was extremely well attended and, as well as fulfilling its primary objective of allowing residents to socialise whilst seeing other local gardens, it also boosted income by £157. Plant and card sales at the same event proved popular, bringing in a further £55 and £46, respectively. Finally, profits from the talk by Owen Dudley Edwards contributed £90.

Following the usual costs associated with hosting the AGM, maintaining the website, landscaping and one off printing costs for Blacket cards, funds for the period increased by £261.

I invite suggestions for local projects and ideas that require funding, and also for ideas on events you would like to see taking place including ones that could incorporate a fund raising element. For example, whilst there was not enough demand to go ahead with a suggested play event at Clambers for local children, perhaps we could find an alternative idea that would allow children from local families to foster new local friendships.

Becky Colegrave

The Blacket Association
Summary of accounts for year to 31st
August 2014

2013

2014

£1,723.94

Opening bank account 1st September

£1,552.61

Income

£510.00

Subscriptions

£575.00

£63.53

Open Gardens Event

£156.95

-

Card Sales

£46.05

-

Owen Dudley Edwards Event

£90.10

£40.00

Landscaping fundraising

£69.80

£613.53

£937.90

Expenditure

£385.00

AGM Costs

£420.00

£148.20

Website

£80.00

£51.25

Printing Newsletters

£7.60

-

Printing Blacket cards

£75.00

£120.41

Landscaping

£94.19

£80.00

Cockburn Association

-

£784.86

£676.79

-

Increase/Decrease in funds for
period

£171.33

£261.11

£1,552.61

Closing bank account 31st August

£1,813.72