

## **Blacket Association: Annual Report – 2014 / 2015**

### **CHAIR'S REPORT NOVEMBER 2015**

2015 has seen a number of changes to the residents of the five streets, and we hope that all the new residents feel at home in this special part of Edinburgh. Modifications to the houses we inhabit continued to be made, and it remains a balancing act between altering our homes to reflect the way we live, and maintaining the wonderful buildings that were in part the reason we were attracted to the area. There have been no particularly contentious planning applications in this area, and we have maintained a watchful eye on the small number of properties that do cause us concern.

### **Committee Structure**

We have finally completed the reallocation of tasks within the committee to ensure that committee members have specific activities they are responsible for, and that the load is distributed evenly among us.

### **Social Events**

In March we held a most successful Cheese and Wine evening at Parkside Bowling Club (a new venue for the Association). Around 60 residents past and present attended, and the venue proved so successful that we will use it for the forthcoming AGM. At the event we made a presentation to our long-standing postman, John O'Malley, on his retirement. The generous donations from residents totalled nearly £1000.

Around a hundred people attended the Open Gardens evening in June. Committee members Hugh MacKay and Richard Scothorne allowed us to wander around 42 Blacket Place and 7 Alfred Place, before refreshments were enjoyed at the wonderful, naturalistic, communal garden of 34/36 Mayfield Terrace.

Social events are an important part of life in this area and we would like to hear any suggestions you may have for future events. We are also looking for volunteers to open their gardens for summer 2016.

### **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 Edinburgh Council activities that may affect us directly or indirectly. We circulate items that we think will be of interest to residents whose email addresses we have. One recent topic that may affect us is the enforcement of the 20 mph speed limit across Edinburgh. The Community Council has a subgroup that work with the City Council to maintain and improve Newington Cemetery on Dalkeith Road. Volunteers meet on the third Monday of the month at 10am to work on specific projects, and new recruits are always welcome. Minutes of Community Council meetings are available on the website at [grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk](http://grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk).

### **Website update**

The revamped website is now up and running, and we are grateful to Johnny Kruuk for his work on this. If you have any photographs of the area you would be happy to share, please send them to him.

### **Blacket Association Cards**

We are grateful to Sheila and Ian McLeish for allowing us to reprint the Dame Blackadder orchid card from the original watercolour that they own, with Dame Blackadder's blessing. Sales of the card provide a useful source of income to carry out projects in the area, particularly those related to the shrubbery.

**Hazel Dunn**

### **Minto Hotel**

We have been advised that the Minto Hotel is likely to cease trading as a hotel in the near future. There are plans to turn the site into a residential development. As yet the plans have not been made public, but we will scrutinise and comment on them once they are, and will keep residents informed of any development.

### **PLANNING REPORT**

As always, the Committee has looked at all Planning Applications for the area and made objections or simply comments when required. We follow the Council's Planning Guidelines for a Conservation Area and if we see that an Application does not meet these, we generally draw this to the attention of the Planning Department. As applications are normally prepared by architects it should not be necessary to object very often. Generally the Council, when seeing a mistake in an application, will ask for changes to be made and the matter is resolved. Sometimes, however, the Planning Department pay less attention than they should. We have been referred to sometimes as the Blacket Association but we have no powers and rely on influence and goodwill.

During the year the main issues have arisen in surrounding areas. Thus, at the end of East Suffolk Road, Miller Homes have applied for consent to build on the former St Margaret's School playing fields. The proposal is to erect 10 town houses and to resite the sports pavilion. This is presently an open space and we would like it to be an amenity for the neighbourhood. To a limited extent this may happen. We objected because green space in Newington should be preserved. This issue has not been resolved and our role is limited. We provided a detailed response to the City of Edinburgh's consultation on student housing because student housing can have a knock-on effect on us – in terms of local facilities, housing for local people and the possible inflexibility of purpose built student housing.

In Duncan Street the row of Georgian houses is to be continued to the junction with Upper Gray Street [where there is currently a group of workshops]. The new houses should be in keeping with the existing terrace. This should improve Duncan Street. However, on the other side of the road, number 20, Hendry and Macdonald is the subject of an application for change of use. The proposal is to convert the building into 28 small residential flats. There is no provision for parking. Unless there is a condition about occupants not owning cars (always difficult to sustain) the new residents will need to scour the area for parking spaces. This would affect West Blacket and would probably affect us as well. Also, the garage is a useful and convenient amenity and many of us would not wish it to be lost. We have objected.

It seems the Minto Hotel is to close shortly. An application for a change to residential use is being discussed with the Council. An attractive scheme was outlined to three of us from the Committee in July but we were asked to keep the information confidential for a week or so. We have since tried on numerous occasions to find out what is happening. A planning proposal has not yet been submitted but when it is we will comment on it –

essentially we will support the change of use back to residential but there may be issues about the proposed small housing development to the rear and some detailed design issues.

Much effort is going into our website and this will include some assistance to anyone wishing to make alterations. We hope residents find it useful.

**Hugh Mackay**

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Subscriptions, at £475, were down £100 on last year. Taking into account the number of households, this represents a subscription rate of c. 53% and we encourage the remainder of residents to consider paying the £5 contribution.

The open gardens event was again 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 £205.

Following a reprint of the Elizabeth Blackadder and Blacket Pillar cards, card sales have generated £415 of income and we are holding a healthy stock that will support funds being raised over the next period.

A new event was trialled this year, a cheese and wine evening, which generated a profit of £115 as well as positive feedback. Two local enterprises, Thrums Hotel and Belleville Lodge generously contributed £50 each.

Website costs have been substantially reduced now that a member of the Committee, Jonny Kruuk, is leading the development and maintenance. There have been exceptional costs incurred for the card printing and for the repair of a local fence (together £866) and these together with the usual costs saw funds decrease by £286 over the period.

**Becky Colegrave**

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT**

The Blacket NW coordinator has circulated reports during the year about various house, garage and shed break ins. The recent Newsletter outlined some serious incidents that had occurred in the Blackets. As a relatively prosperous area we are a favourite target for thieves.

Nonetheless, most modern property crime is committed not by housebreaking but online. The dangers have been highlighted most recently by the TalkTalk cyberattack. Be very suspicious of attempts to obtain cash from you online, over the phone or on the doorstep. The extent of such crime in our area is not unknown. Any resident who has been a victim of such crime is understandably not always willing to share the experience.

Advice on dealing with all these threats has been circulated from Police Scotland and Neighbourhood Watch Scotland in particular.

A recent Blacket Newsletter emphasised to residents the value of communicating any suspicious incidents to a NW coordinator and contained a list of all the coordinators with addresses (home and email) and areas of responsibility.

The Newsletter had 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 NW coordinators.

The local NW coordinators are:

Alfred Place: Victoria Gilmour, 15 Alfred Place

Blacket Avenue: Barrie West & Jennifer Flueckiger, 46b Blacket Place

Blacket Place North: Alison Mowat 14 Blacket Place & David Jenkins 18 Blacket Place

Blacket Place South : Barrie West & Jennifer Flueckiger

Blacket Place South : Anna Regaard, 21Blacket Place

Dryden Place: Ian Chisholm, 11 Dryden Place

Mayfield Terrace West: Alice Kruuk, 6a Mayfield Terrace

Mayfield Terrace East: Pina Lang, 32 Mayfield Terrace

**Ian Chisholm**

### **SHRUBBERY WORKING PARTY REPORT**

At the start of the year we thought about flowers. As you know, the tree canopy cuts out light and the roots of the existing trees and bushes leave limited moisture for newcomers. However, we planted some more Vinca, in particular at the entrance to Thrums. Then Sue Ross Stewart donated about 250 Blue Bell bulbs and the same number of White Narcissi which we planted in the autumn in the Avenue and partly in Mayfield Terrace. Finally 2,000 Jet Fire Narcissi went into the Avenue beds in October. While all these bulbs will not prosper, we can hope that enough do.

The half circle at the entrance to the Avenue from Minto Street was the subject of much planting in the previous year. The bushes are growing well and a wet summer probably suited them. Lots of the bulbs went there too. So 2016 may see lots of colour there. From planting ivy as ground cover we have now to control it. This applies in the North Blacket Place main section. The bushes and trees were lightly pruned. Some other areas were partly cleared to give space to star performers. The timber fencing was repaired. This has been something where the Council have helped in the past but budgets are too tight now. Another tree was destroyed by vandals. Here the Council was able to step in with a replacement.

Thank you for your help during the year in picking up rubbish and in joining the work party. The Shrubbery is one of the most distinctive features of the area and it is older than the houses and streets. We are right to treat it with affection.

**Hugh Mackay**

The Blacket Association Summary of accounts for year to 31 August 2015

<b>2014</b>		<b>2015</b>
£1,552.61	Opening bank account 1st September	£1,813.72
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<b>Income</b>		
£575.00	Subscriptions	£475.00
£156.95	Open Gardens Event	£205.00
£46.05	Card Sales	£415.00
£90.10	Owen Dudley Edwards Event	-
-	Cheese and Wine Event	£114.60
£69.80	Landscaping project fundraising	£72.00
-	Thrum's Hotel donation	£50.00
-	Belleville Lodge donation	£50.00
£937.90	total	£1,381.60
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<b>Expenditure</b>		
£420.00	AGM Costs	£440.00
£80.00	Website	£30.00
£7.60	Printing Newsletters	£71.75
£75.00	Printing Blacket cards	£545.94
£94.19	Landscaping	£259.75
	Repair costs for fencing on Blacket Ave	£320.00
£676.79	total	£1,667.44
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<b>£261.11</b>	<b>Increase/Decrease in funds for period</b>	<b>-£285.84</b>
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£1,813.72	Closing bank account 31st August	£1,527.88