



**Blacket Association Newsletter**

**November 2021**

## **AGM WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER**

The 52nd Annual General Meeting of the Blacket Association will be held on Wednesday 17 NOVEMBER 2021 in the Old Bell in Duncan Street from 7:30pm, with the AGM starting promptly at 7:45pm. The upstairs bar in the Old Bell has been reserved exclusively for our use.

Copies of the minutes of last year's AGM and the reports from the various committee members are given below. Please bring this newsletter with you, although there will also be some printed copies available at the AGM.

All members, prospective members, friends and residents in the Blacket area are welcome – new members particularly so. All are invited to raise any points of interest that they would like to discuss

### **Agenda**

- Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (25 November 2020);
- Nomination and election of committee members and office bearers;
- Chair's report 2021;
- Planning report 2021;
- Shrubbery working group report 2021;
- Website and database report 2021;
- Neighbourhood Watch report 2021;
- Treasurer's report 2021;
- Any other competent business.

### **COMMITTEE 2020–2021**

CHAIR	Ian Chisholm	11 Dryden Place
TREASURER	Anne Henderson	4 Mayfield Terrace
MINUTES SECRETARY	Hazel Clark	1 Mayfield Terrace
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH	Stanley Bird	4 Dryden Place
PLANNING	Richard Scothorne	7 Alfred Place
WEBSITE/CONTACTS	Mhoraig Blair	Arthur Lodge
NEW RESIDENTS/CARDS	Arlene Doherty	56 Blacket Place
COMMUNICATIONS	Susan Hezlet	30 Mayfield Terrace
SOCIAL CONVENER	vacant	-
SHRUBBERY WORKING PARTY	vacant	-

# MINUTES OF THE 51<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## OF THE ASSOCIATION

held on 25 November 2020 via Zoom

Ian Chisholm, as Chair, welcomed everyone to the AGM. Copies of the Annual Report had previously been circulated by email and in printed form as the November Newsletter.

1. **MINUTES** – The 2019 AGM minutes as published and circulated were agreed as an accurate record.
2. **ELECTION of COMMITTEE** – Hazel Clark was elected to the Committee as Minutes Secretary, having been duly proposed and seconded. Hugh Mackay, Pauline Platt and Fiona Courtney are standing down from the Committee and the Chairman thanked them for their contribution. The roles of Communications, Shrubberies and Social Convenor are vacant, and volunteers were encouraged to contact the Chair if interested.
3. **CHAIR'S REPORT** – The Chair delivered his Report. He noted the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the role of the Association in keeping residents informed and helping to coordinate assistance to residents who required it in the early stages of lockdown. The potential for a Blacket social media group (Facebook or WhatsApp) as a means of communication and sharing information and ideas was discussed. The meeting was in favour of this being explored further. It was noted that many older residents do not use social media; the Chair pointed out that Newsletters are also distributed in printed form. The Chair reiterated the need for volunteers, particularly in the Communications role.
4. **PLANNING REPORT** – Richard Scothorne reported on Planning-related activities during the year. The major issue was the Thrums Hotel's current application for a new-build extension, the previous application for an extension to the existing listed building having been rejected by planning despite being broadly acceptable to residents. Owing to the number of objections (16 out of 17 comments) the current application will go to the Development Committee. Arlene Doherty thanked Richard on behalf of residents for his support and guidance.
5. **SHRUBBERIES WORKING PARTY REPORT** – Hugh Mackay reported on work done in the year and thanked volunteers for their support in planting, pruning, weeding and clearing leaves. Hugh is leaving the Committee but will continue as a volunteer on the Shrubberies.
6. **WEBSITE AND MEMBER DATABASE REPORT** – Mhoraig Blair was not present but her report was noted.

7. **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT** – Stan Bird gave his report. He noted there were no serious crimes in the year but an increasing number of ‘scams’. The Association aims to distribute warnings to 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. The Association’s funds have increased by £525 during the year. Both income and expenditure were lower than usual because of the lack of activity and social events during lockdown. She advised that the Association’s Christmas cards are available for sale from her and Arlene Doherty.
9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – A number of matters were raised by residents and discussed:
  - Changes to Resident’s Parking spaces to allow sharing with Pay as you Go – this has been implemented, but signage has not been changed so it is not clear to most residents.
  - Complaints about the state of the road surface in Mayfield Terrace. It was noted that potholes (along with lamp-post faults, blocked drains etc.) can be reported direct to the Council through the [CEC](#) website. Several residents advised that items they had reported via the website had been repaired.
  - The potential for outdoor ‘post Covid’ events was discussed, and the meeting expressed the hope that Open Gardens can be resumed next summer.

## **NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICE BEARERS**

Following the 2020 AGM, Susan Hezlet was co-opted to the Committee as the Communications officer. It is necessary that she is formally elected, as is Arlene Doherty, whose term runs out but is happy to be re-elected. Nominations are sought for the Shrubbery Working Party and for Social Convener.

## **CHAIR’S REPORT 2021**

After my plea at last AGM for volunteers to join the committee, I was delighted to welcome Hazel Clark, as Minutes Secretary, and Susan Hezlet as Communications supremo. Since then, Susan has been very active in sending out Blaket Association emails to keep residents informed about local issues of importance. Although we still have a vacancy for a Shrubbery Working Party representative on the committee, Hugh Mackay has kindly continued to lead the shrubbery working party for the present.

As intimated last year, we are still considering setting up a WhatsApp group, which would enable residents to share ideas, give and receive advice and provide information. Other residents’ organisations have established such groups. If enough residents joined, communications from the Association could migrate to the WhatsApp group.

Social events, in particular the Open Gardens evening, have obviously not taken place during 2021, 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. Minutes of GPCC meetings are available on the website at [grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk](http://grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk).

## **PLANNING REPORT 2021**

Over the year, there has been a steady trickle of domestic applications – most of them thoughtful, well-designed approaches to making our homes more appropriate to current lifestyles and, in particular, opening up kitchens and sitting rooms and connecting them more directly with rear gardens. And as our trees mature there have been regular applications to fell them or to reduce their scale and impact.

But the year has been dominated by the applications to extend the Thrums Hotel on Minto Street by building in the current car park, which opens onto Blacket Avenue opposite the nursery. We strongly opposed the first application – a large, two-storey rear extension to the hotel in inappropriate contemporary materials, which was refused. We did not oppose the second application, which extended the whole of the rear of the hotel, but this was opposed by Historic Environments Scotland and was refused planning permission. We supported neighbours in opposing the third application – a separate, mews-style one and a half-storey block. Although this application was approved, it was followed by an application to increase this block to two and a half storeys. Again, we supported neighbours in opposing this – it was too large for the site and would damage the appearance of the area with its pattern of leafy rear gardens.

There were 15 submitted objections to this latest application and one letter of support. This application was refused on the grounds that *'The proposal will detract from the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and harm its setting. The proposal will not preserve the character of the conservation area and will not contribute positively to the character of the surrounding area. It is not of an appropriate scale, form and design by way of its scale and height.'*

This decision was made by a planning officer with delegated authority, and it has just been to the Local Review Board, which considered its technical competence. If they rule it technically competent, it will then go to Appeal with an Reporter appointed by the Scottish Government. Her decision will be final.

## **SHRUBBERY WORKING GROUP REPORT 2021**

Hugh Mackay reported that, in the last few months, volunteers have carried out maintenance but nothing of great note. Now however is the time for seasonal activity. We prune the bases of the limes in the Avenue twice a year. Currently this is not a large job but necessary in order to let other plants grow. Also we think that clearing up fallen leaves was a success last year and plan, with your support, to do it again. You may wonder why we do not leave this to our City Council. Sadly, insufficient funds are made available for this task. We can only hope for the future and, for now, we need volunteers to help. This involves turning up with a shovel or brush and a bag, or by leaving out your garden refuse bin for us

to fill. We used to pile the dead leaves in the Shrubbery, but this does not help new growth, so now we bag it.

The next volunteers' working group session will be on Saturday 20 November from 9:30am till about 11:30am. This is a reminder, if necessary!

## **WEBSITE AND DATABASE REPORT 2021**

We continue to maintain a database of residents' 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 on local matters you would like to see included on the website.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT 2021**

During the most recent lockdown, the number of reported 'physical' incidents of anti-social behaviour and/or burglaries etc. fell. However, criminal and fraudulent activities switched to online scams. The Association sent out several alerts and warnings about the most common scams, and how to spot and avoid them. Despite the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, online fraud is still the greatest risk.

The Association also sent out a report of a break into the garage of a property in the area. This seems to have been opportunistic but may give an indication that 'normal business' at least among the criminal fraternity may be resuming. Consequently, as the nights get darker, please carry out checks on your home window and door security and any sheds/garages/outbuildings, too.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT 2021**

See next page for Summary of accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021.

**The Blacket Association**

**Summary of Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Opening Bank Account as at 1 September 2020</b>	<b>2038.17</b>	<b>2563.48</b>
 <i>Income</i>		
Subscriptions	630.00	810.00
Card sales	30.00	146.00
Donation	100.00	-
	<u>760.00</u>	<u>956.00</u>
 <i>Expenditure</i>		
Printing newsletter	21.60	37.80
Landscaping and Plants	173.09	518.71
Cockburn Association	40.00	40.00
	<u>234.69</u>	<u>596.51</u>
 <b>Increase in funds</b>	 <b>525.31</b>	 <b>359.49</b>
 <b>Closing Bank account as at 31 August 2021</b>	 <b>2563.48</b>	 <b>2922.97</b>
	<u>=====</u>	<u>=====</u>

**Treasurer's Report**

Subscription income benefitted from a payment of £190 from one resident to cover the previous 20 years. Landscaping and plant costs were higher than normal due to the stub removal on the corner of Blacket Place.

**Anne S Henderson**