

# West Blacket Association

## NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2018

### Annual General Meeting

Monday, November 26th 2018  
Old Bell (upstairs room), Causewayside

### All Residents Welcome

**730pm**

Welcome (refreshments available from 700pm)  
Chairman's and Treasurer's reports  
Election of Office bearers and committee

**800pm**

Cathie Wright  
The Salisbury Centre  
A Unique Edinburgh Institution  
Bringing together Body Mind and Spirit



**Present committee members are:** Maggie Stevenson (Chair), Nigel Cumming (Treasurer), Mike Hunter (Hon Sec), Kate O'Brien (Membership Secretary), Ian Carter, Alice Foster, Evelynne Hill, Rosemary Wake, Charles Warlow, Cathie Wright (co-opted November 2017).

**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](mailto:dr.m.j.hunter@gmail.com).

For more information see our website: [www.westblacket.org.uk](http://www.westblacket.org.uk)

## 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. If you are not already a member, please join us.

## Planning Matters

Very little has happened at the Duncan Street/Upper Gray Street corner site, and although building warrant approval was given earlier in the year that was obviously not a reason for the lack of construction activity. The developer has not been in contact with neighbouring residents, or the Association, although we have invited them to do so.

Activity is however continuing on the approved conversion of the Minto Hotel to residential use, with one or two relatively minor modifications. It does seem to be taking longer than anticipated but it is understood that most of the units have buyers.

Several development proposals have been made over recent years for conversion of the Hendry & Macdonald workshop site at 20 Duncan Street to residential use. Latterly the focus changed to student use for which no parking provision is necessary, but all have been turned down by the Council. We have pointed out that we already have a high proportion of students in our area, added to recently by the new-built block on Causewayside. The latest proposal, in Spring 2018, tweaked following discussion with officials, was refused. That refusal was appealed to the Scottish Government Reporter and has now been upheld.

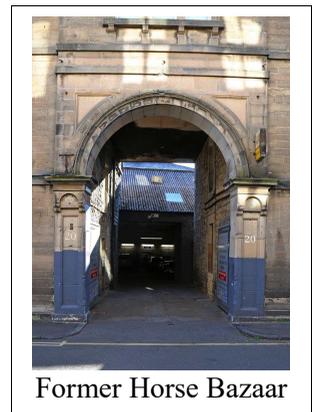
The only other significant proposal which has been brought to our attention recently is a plan to convert the Abcorn Guest House at 4 Mayfield Gardens to a 13 bed, 15 person HMO. Neighbouring residents, and WBA members, are concerned about a detrimental impact on the amenity of the area and we have added our objection to the 100 or more which have been sent to the Council.

## New Town Walk

In May, a group of West Blacket residents joined a walking tour of the New Town led by Jean Bareham of Greenyonder Tours. Jean offered us a stimulating mix of social history, anecdotes and a dash of politics, all held together by a focus on gardens and green space in the centre of



A gap site since 1826



Former Horse Bazaar

the city. The tour began with a visit to the garden of Register House, which many of us hadn't realised was there! Its attractive borders were filled with plants which all had significance for Scottish culture and history. Along the route we heard stories of some of the people who contributed to the development the New Town, and gained an insight into what's happening in local communities there today. We ended at Queen Street Gardens, where Jean produced a key which enabled us to go beyond the railings and explore a wonderful oasis which is not normally open to the public. We were left with plenty to think about; Edinburgh is full of surprises, no matter how well we think we know it.



WBA Members & friends in St Andrews Square

## Open Gardens

In June, WBA members and friends were invited to visit other members' gardens: one in Minto Street and two in South Gray Street. Storm Hector had ripped a hydrangea petiolaris off a wall in South Gray Street, peonies survived next door and the shelter of the Minto Street terraced rear garden was appreciated by a good number of members who turned out. The evening ended with a sociable jolly under canvas in Upper Gray Street. Thanks to all the gardeners and social event organisers.

## History Group

Several members visited Edinburgh City Archives to see a collection of items especially selected for us, the two most geographically relevant being the diaries of Sir James Spittal, Lord Provost, former resident in Minto Street, and the minute books of Hope Cottage Child Garden which went from Causewayside to Middleby Street before relocating to the Pleasance area. Less connected, but intriguing, was a 19th century criminal conviction register, one of about 30 held by the archives.

'Taste of the Past' was the focus of our winter meeting, held in February and kindly hosted by Kate and Nigel. This was illustrated by a diverse array of members' cookery books and implements. We then turned to sampling dishes with an historical flavour, including cullen skink, vegetarian nutroast (1950s recipe), and scones based on the WW2 ration allowance. Washed down, convivially, of course...



Taste of the Past