



# The Grange Association

<http://www.the-grange.org>

Newsletter No 95

Autumn 2009

Recognised Scottish Charity SC025491

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 26-Sun 27 Sept

The Cockburn Association's Doors Open Day lets us into lots of interesting places. Those nearby include parts of the University, including to our south, the King's Buildings (and the Geological Survey and Royal Observatory) and to our north—contrasting the old and the new—the Reid Concert Hall and the Informatics Forum. Closer by, you can visit the Oakvale Funeral Home in Whitehouse Loan, the Queens Hall, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland in Bernard Terrace or the Archers' Hall (this last requires advance booking). Within the Grange, two houses developed by Lorn Macneal are open, too. Some properties are only open on one day, others the whole weekend. For further details, check out <http://www.cockburnassociation.org.uk>, which has a Google Maps interface.

Wed 7 Oct

Dr Andy Kerr's work at the University of Edinburgh focusses on reducing greenhouse emissions while raising living standards, and on increasing our resilience to changes in our weather. He will be talking on 'The Scottish Climate Change Act: Delivering radical changes in the way we produce and use energy and land'.

Wed 4 Nov

Hamish Coghill spent over 40 years as a journalist on the Evening News, and has written extensively about (and photographed) the history and development of the city. In his talk entitled 'Lost Edinburgh', he will be taking a look at changes to the face of Edinburgh.

Unless otherwise stated, meetings take place at 7.30pm in Marchmont St Giles' new hall. Tea, coffee, and biscuits are served after the meeting. We won't be holding a Christmas event this year, so the next event will be the AGM and talk, most likely on Wednesday 10th February; details will be confirmed in the New Year newsletter.

*Caroline McInnes & Tony Reeves*

The Grange's character depends on its geography, history, natural history and architecture; and it depends on its residents! We therefore aim to encourage four things:

- Learning: Education about the Grange's character
- Care: Active interest in looking after it.
- Enhancement: Recognition, preservation and improvement of its best features.
- Quality: High standards in its planning and architecture.

## **Grange Energy and Renewables Study (GEARS): Stage I progress**

The form and objectives of this project were described in the last Newsletter. A grant of £10,121 was approved by the Climate Challenge Fund on 25 June, later than anticipated, slowing the start into the summer holidays. Nevertheless, the survey response was good and its results are outlined below. In addition we have shown a deeply thought-provoking – if not shocking – film called *The Age of Stupid*. It is about the consequences of the way we live now, and is now also showing also in Australia and the USA. Recommendations on energy improvement measures are being issued in early September to the survey respondents, and we are holding a workshop for the respondents to exchange ideas and experiences, at Marchmont St Giles on 26 September – invitees should note the new, revised time: **2.30-5.00pm**. The final project report will be launched at another public event early in October.

### **Survey findings**

The broad summary of findings below is taken from the analysis by Changeworks, and uses both survey data and extrapolations to represent the whole area. This broad summary survey helps to set the recommendations in the context of The Grange:

Nearly 400 surveys were returned, representing 12% of the homes in The Grange. Perhaps the single most significant survey finding is that over two-thirds (68%) of respondents are likely to improve the energy efficiency of their homes as a result of the survey and improvement recommendations.

### **Household characteristics**

- The majority (80%) of homes in The Grange are houses rather than flats. This is atypical of Edinburgh as a whole, where nearly half the housing stock is tenemental.
- Over a third of respondents live in detached or semi-detached houses: these homes lose a lot of heat through the high number of external walls. They cost more to heat and have higher associated emissions.
- The Grange has a very high proportion (57%) of properties built before 1919. The construction methods and materials in these homes make them unusually hard to improve in terms of energy efficiency, with solid stone walls (70%) and large single-glazed windows (73%). However, their build quality, use of local materials and longevity are assets in terms of broader sustainability.

### **Permissions for works**

- Over 50% of homes in The Grange are in buildings in shared ownership, i.e. houses divided into several homes, or blocks of flats. This is relevant to the GEARS project in terms of permissions for some energy efficiency works, where neighbour notification and/or neighbour permission would be needed (e.g. for solar panels on a shared roof).
- Nearly a fifth of respondents live in listed buildings, protected due to their historic significance. This can limit the energy efficiency measures available to these householders, as planning restrictions limit the changes deemed acceptable. However, an increasing number of bespoke measures are now available to improve energy efficiency and remain in keeping with historic homes (referred to in recommendations).

- 15% of respondents are planning home improvements in the near future. Many improvement works can incorporate energy reduction measures; e.g.:
  - Kitchen/bathroom replacements: consider efficient appliances
  - Window replacement: draughtproofing, secondary or double glazing, internal shutters
  - Heating upgrade: consider efficient boiler and full controls
  - Loft conversion: consider adding significant levels of insulation
  - Roof replacement: consider integrating solar panels or solar roof slates.

### **Recent & planned home improvements**

- Nearly half of respondents (48%) have already taken steps to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, indicating a high level of awareness and proactivity. The most common improvements ... include installing efficient lighting or appliances, upgrading heating systems and windows, installing insulation and even installing home energy generation systems such as solar panels and wood-burning stoves. Less evident but equally important were improvements in behaviour, and changing to 'green' fuel tariffs.

*Graham Dickson*

### **On the Beech**

As we have noted (Newsletter 85), "All trees in conservation areas ... are covered by a Tree Preservation Order ... If you live in a conservation area, it is your responsibility ... unless the tree is very small (under 7.5cm diameter at 1.5m from the ground), to obtain permission from the City Council before carrying out work like uprooting, lopping, topping or felling." The contact is Graham Hinshelwood, Arboricultural Officer (0131 529 3919). Sometimes, however, the Council themselves will specifically condemn a tree—and then its days are numbered, as Caroline Urquhart found out:

"Over the last couple of days we feel as though we have witnessed the passing of a member of our family. We have lived at Wyvern Park for nearly 22 years and, during that time, we have come to love our enormous beech tree in the front garden. Unfortunately, it had a fungal disease and was condemned by the Council.

Over the years we have seen a variety of wildlife in and around its branches, including squirrels, owls, wood pigeons, blue, great, coal and long-tailed tits, bullfinches, chaffinches, tree creepers—and I was lucky enough to see a greater spotted woodpecker one day this Spring. I couldn't believe my eyes and was sorry my husband was not here to make sure I was not imagining it! We have loved that tree and, as our flat is on the second floor, it has been like having a garden at high level and we feel lucky to have been able to enjoy it.

I was glued to the window while it was being taken down in August, watching with very mixed emotions, and have to admit to shedding tears when the main trunk finally thudded to the ground. It was fascinating to watch, but too much for me in the end! We will miss our friend dearly and hope to replace it with two trees which we will also enjoy in the coming years. Frontier Forestry, who carried out the work, estimated they removed 12 tonnes of shredded material for recycling and 20 tonnes of wood. We have never seen a team of men work so hard over a prolonged period and were very impressed by their enthusiasm."

*Caroline Urquhart*

## **Planning Developments September 2008 to end of March 2009**

It is possible, via the Planning Portal (<http://citydev-portal.edinburgh.gov.uk>), to view the drawings associated with individual planning applications. The route to the information is a little circuitous but an information sheet detailing the steps to take has been drawn up. If you have difficulties, we can e-mail you this sheet. Contact Andrew Bell at [arkebell@btinternet.com](mailto:arkebell@btinternet.com)

## **Significant Applications and Planning Issues**

New planning processes came into force on 3rd August. Designed to speed up the planning process it remains to be seen how these measures will affect planning matters in our area.

Some of the changes implemented are: neighbour notification will now be the responsibility of the council (formerly the developer carried out this process); appeals against refusal of planning permission will be at a local level by a review body of 5 councillors with planning expertise (formerly appeals were dealt with by the Scottish Executive Enquiry Reporter's Unit - SEIRU); developers are required to consult local bodies at an early stage in the planning process where the development is deemed to be 'major' – over 50 dwellings or over 2 hectares.

Decision making is devolved to individual planning officers in most cases (unless major or some other instances) and the application will not be considered by the full planning committee unless 7 letters of objection/comment are received. Previously the level was set at 3 letters. This appears to us to 'set the bar' rather too high. If you have an opinion on an application it is important that you make your views known.

Two major planning applications which are not within the Grange Conservation area but which might be of interest are at Archer's Hall and Cameron Toll shopping centre. Permission has been granted for a modified plan of development within the grounds of Archer's Hall to create post graduate student accommodation. At Cameron Toll there are plans to increase the size of the shopping centre and to incorporate cinemas and restaurants. This matter is ongoing.

## **Applications and Decisions 1 April 2009 to 30 August 2009**

All are considered by the Planning Group. \* indicates comments made by Grange Association though not all of our comments involve a recommendation for refusal of permission. Note that the category 'Withdrawn' usually means that an application is being redrafted to avoid its being refused; most are later resubmitted in a revised, somewhat less contentious form. Some properties may appear more than once; that can indicate repeat applications have been made.

### **Granted:**

*66 Buccleuch St	New archery butts and 15 student flats.
*6 Oswald Road	New garage and driveway to improve access for wheelchair user.
52 Grange Road	Demolish existing garage and replace with new; associated driveway and gates.

- 52 Grange Road Demolish garage and part of boundary wall.
- \*8 Chalmers Cres Reopening of care home. Advertising board.
- \*3 Dick Place Demolish timber garage and build 2 storey extension with bedroom over new garage.
- \*5 Dick Place Demolish outshot buildings, construct 2 storey extension to side and rear.
- 47 Grange Road Improved access to ground floor from garden, demolish chimney of cottage.
- \*98 Relugas Road Form driveway; erect single storey extension to rear.
- Woodville,  
Canaan Lane Reconstruction of collapsing stable and boundary wall.
- 1 St Alban's Road Change of use to HMO.
- 36 Dick Place Alterations to LBC consents.
- 17 St Alban's Road Form new single storey extension to rear.
- 8 Sciennes Gardens replacement of aluminium window frames with double glazed timber units, garden room extension.
- 13 Dick Place Form new entrance & studio extension to side of main house.
- \*98 Relugas Road Formation of drive access from Relugas Road. Extension.
- 131 Whitehouse Loan Replacement panels & roof to conservatory.
- GF 11 Grange Road Form garden room, new opening and door, replace existing window with door.
- 39 Lauder Road Install replacement windows.
- 51 Grange Loan Alterations to ground floor flat, convert basement, form new openings doors/windows.
- 13 Dick Place Restore main entrance to house, extension to rear.
- 2 Relugas Place Erect new conservatory and porch.
- \*5 Dick Place Demolish outshot buildings. Erect 2 storey side and rear extension.
- 8 Dick Place Internal alterations.
- 5 Strathearn Road New balcony and conservatory.
- 27 Grange Road Remove window and form doorway with timber door.
- 7 Sciennes Gardens Form new window in formerly blocked up opening.
- 6 Sciennes Gardens Amendment of previously approved application to extend house.
- 46 Grange Road Erect single storey extension to side of main house.
- 38 Dick Place New extension to replace existing outshoots.
- 89C Grange Loan Demolition of wall and erection of fence.
- 27 Blackford Road Erect conservatory.
- 8 Whitehouse Terr Minor alterations to 1st floor and refit bathroom.
- 62 Findhorn Place New French doors, access steps. (Deemed not development)
- 7 Oswald Road Demolish existing shed and erect laundry store and 2 bedrooms with en suites above.
- 33 Lauder Road Alter and install windows. Solar Panels. Widen entrance driveway gate, infill existing entrance.
- 1 Relugas Gardens Alter kitchen create bedroom. Erect extension to rear forming bedroom and kitchen.

**Withdrawn:**

\*13 Dick Place Form new entrance to house, studio extension to side of house.

**Refused:**

\*58A Fountainhall Rd Construction of garage in rear garden.

**Pending:**

\*12 St Thomas Road Demolish existing dwelling replace with 2 storey house.  
 Cameron Toll SC Extension to include cinemas, restaurants and retail outlets on 3 floors to south of existing centre.  
 12 Dick Place New terrace, reinstate original window. French windows.  
 2 Blackford Bank Single storey extension.  
 27 Blackford Road Install 2 air source heat exchanger for a heat pump.  
 8 Whitehouse Terr Rear extension and alterations.  
 13 Dick Place New timber shed with zinc roof.  
 52 St Alban's Road Erect porch.  
 7 West Relugas Rd Erection of new garden room.  
 15 Blackford Road Erect single storey extension and decking, alter 1st floor window.  
 42 South Oswald Rd Erect conservatory.

*Andrew Bell*

**Nature Notes: A Fracas in the Hermitage - Egg & Shoe Thieving**

In the month of May, I watched our local kestrels at their hollow tree nest in the Hermitage. They settled down and went about their business quietly after the noisy mating scenes in April, which gave the position of their nest away. I sat briefly one morning to observe their movements from a respectful distance. The male appeared with a vole; the female was on the nest. I watched him plucking his furry prey in a pine tree. A pair of jackdaws took an interest and landed close by, on the same branch, watching the plucking operation. Without warning, one of the jackdaws rammed the hawk and they tumbled out of the tree entwined, flapping and screeching, managing to disengage just before they crashed to the ground. The hawk appeared stunned. The victorious jackdaw flew back up into the tree to join its mate. Eventually, the kestrel hopped up onto a fallen log and began to preen itself. As far as I could see, the partially plucked vole was still on the pine bough.

I wondered why the kestrel was plucking that vole in the same way that a sparrow hawk would pluck a bird. Owls swallowed their prey whole, fur, feather and bones and regurgitated the indigestible parts in one neat grey pellet. My research into the digestive systems of high performance raptors provided the simple answer. They had evolved short guts to lighten their body weight and needed their food "processed" to pass through their bodies efficiently. The following day I watched the male kestrel plucking a fresh vole on a tree stump and later collected some of the discarded soft brown fur. I was surprised how long the fur was. Several weeks later, the male kestrel flew into a clearing in the tree canopy, carrying a vole and transferred it to his mate in mid air, in a very elegant manoeuvre.

One of the local carrion crows in the Hermitage has been specialising in robbing the nests of woodpigeons. I've watched it twice, delicately carrying single white eggs into the field at Midmar, where it pierces them on one side and neatly removes the contents without losing any of the yoke. The grass steadies the egg very nicely and prevents it from rolling over.

In late April, one of the resident buzzards was observed, "snatching" a grey squirrel from the top of a beech tree beside the house. Perhaps those destructive greys will be reduced to levels that are more acceptable in the future. Apart from the occasional nippy dog, they seem to have few natural predators in the UK. I have noticed a serious increase in squirrel damage to beech saplings in the last ten years. In the past, it was mainly the sycamores at risk. Ring-barking means death for most trees.

One sunny afternoon I sat in our garden, admiring the beautiful pink blossom on my neighbour's cherry tree against a cloudless dark blue sky. A pair of bullfinches was stripping the buds off the apple tree and a woodpigeon was feeding on the tender new leaves from the birch tree. It was a perfect moment in time. Just as I thought nature couldn't have been more perfect, I heard a whistling sound and looked up to see a mute swan with outstretched neck, winging its way eastwards towards Duddingston Loch.

A pair of croaking ravens made a brief appearance over the field at Midmar, utilising a fresh easterly breeze to spiral high above the allotments. I used my mobile phone to call home and give my wife the opportunity of hearing their guttural calls, but the high-pitched birdsong at ground level drowned them out...

In the dim light of the Hermitage woods, my eye was drawn to a single white pigeon feather lying on the ground. A chaffinch collected the feather and I marked its progress as it zigzagged through the trees into a leafless spindly hawthorn shrub. The nest being that was constructed was cunningly formed in a bare fork but reasonably well camouflaged. The following week, the hen bird was sitting on the nest and I managed to pass by without disturbing her. A few days later, the nest was gone. I suspected jackdaws because I had seen songbirds' nests being plundered in the same way before. It was an easy option for crafty corvids to feather their own nests.

On the Midmar allotment on 9th July, I spotted a small vixen running towards the perimeter fence with a nice brown shoe. We managed to intercept the thief in the nick of time and the shoe was recovered. The fox had sneaked into my neighbours' shed where the door had been left ajar. There were three pairs of shoes in there. Apparently, foxes often steal shoes from household doorsteps for their cubs to play with. So be warned.

31st July. Four buzzards observed spiralling high above the field at Midmar. Two young ones successfully reared this year.

*Tom Breheny*

## The Grange Association Committee 2009/10

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On our website, you will find a couple of special features that may be of special interest: (1) Images of *new and notable gates* (and railings). Ironwork gates are the traditional form in the area, and there are excellent examples of renewals and reinstatements around the Grange. (2) *Dealing with graffiti*. It's possible to remove (at least some) examples. The Council supports volunteers who wish to tackle low level graffiti in their neighbourhood. Call the Keep Edinburgh Clean Programme Co-ordinator on 0131 529 2703 for more information on how volunteers can get involved in tackling graffiti.

Copy date: 1/9/09. You are welcome to quote from this newsletter, but please acknowledge the source. The information herein is as accurate as we can make it, but we do accept articles in good faith without always being able to verify the contents.

<http://www.the-grange.org>

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