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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Happy New Year to you all and welcome to this new gardening year. If anyone can remember the early part of 2013, it started off very cold almost through until the end of May with many of us reluctant to start planting out until very late. It did turn out to be a glorious summer though, with many reporting good gardening results, particularly for fruit which gave bumper harvests all round.

Many thanks as ever to all the committee members and helpers who were very busy throughout 2013, not only at the sales hut, which the majority of you visit, but also in organising the various talks, trips, flower and vegetable show and other events over the year. I hope what we are planning for 2014 will be equally as successful.

One notable feature for the association over the last 2 to 3 years is that our overall membership has started to decline year on year, this despite increasing hut sales and all the other activities being well supported. After much discussion in the committee we are convinced we continue to organise the diverse range of activities our members want, but do need to encourage new people to come along and get involved. In order to maintain a strong association for the future, we would ask all of our current members to invite others, young or old, expert or novice gardeners to come along, either to the hut or to other events, to see what we can offer. Additionally if anyone would like to help as a volunteer at the hut for a couple of hours each month or be more involved in organising activities as a committee member, please have a word with myself or Margaret Dickinson as we would welcome your assistance.

Thank you for your continued support

Dave Hemingway

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## RECIPE

### HADDOCK IN CIDER SAUCE

1½ lb Haddock or Cod, 1 medium onion thinly sliced, 1 bay leaf, 2 tsp lemon juice, 450ml dry cider, 25g cornflour, 2 tbsp single cream, salt and black pepper.

METHOD Cut the fish into 4 equal pieces and place in a pan, add the onion and bay leaf, then the lemon and season with salt. Pour in most of the cider reserving 2 tbsp for the sauce. Cover and bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes or until the fish is cooked. Strain the ½ pint of the cooking liquid into a measuring jug. Cover the pan containing the fish to keep warm while you make the sauce. In a small pan mix the cornflour with the reserved cider, then gradually mix in the cooking liquid and whisk until it is boiling and the mixture has thickened. Whisk in more of the cooking liquid if necessary, to make a pouring sauce. Remove from the heat and stir in the cream, then season to taste. TO SERVE. Remove the skin from the fish, arrange on individual plates and pour over the sauce. Serve with a selection of vegetables.

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TIP Put an apple in a bag of potatoes and it will keep them fresh for up to 9 weeks. It prevents them from wrinkling or sprouting.

## SPECIAL POEM FOR OLDER FOLKS

A row of bottles on my shelf caused me to analyse myself  
One yellow pill I have to pop, goes to my heart so it won't stop  
The purple pill goes to my brain, and tells me that I have no pain  
The capsules tell me not to wheeze, or cough, or choke or even sneeze  
The red ones, the smallest of them all. Go to my blood so I won't fall  
The orange ones, so big and bright, prevent my leg cramps in the night.  
Such an array of brilliant pills, helping to cure all kinds of ills  
But what I'd really like to know..... Is what tells each one where to go?

## NEWTON BLOOMS!

What a fantastic show this year was! The weather was kinder than last year and the show later (because of a clash with Harrogate Show which happens again in 2014). The entries were fabulous. The beautiful array of flowers we had were a credit to our exhibitors and the vegetables were tremendous. A pleasure to be the Show Secretary and a pleasure for our visitors to walk around!

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the sponsors and exhibitors who supported us this year. While some other local shows have struggled to keep going or to attract sponsorships and exhibitors, ours has been a great success. If you were able to visit the show you will know how marvellous it was, if you didn't (or you just want to enjoy the day again) have a look at our website for photos and the list of winners.

I look forward to seeing you at our next show on 20 September 2014!

Chantelle Seaborn (Show Secretary)

## CLASSES FOR 2014 SHOW

Art – A landscape, Floral Art – All around my hat

Cakes – Apple cake, Millionaire's shortbread. (Children's still to be decided – tomorrows meeting)

Photography – Birds, a woodland scene, an unusual perspective

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## FLOWERS

If you would like to add some colour to your allotment or indeed your garden, why not try growing some Zinnias. They are cheap and cheerful and very easy to grow. They need fertile well drained soil in a sunny position. Try sowing them singularly in module trays during April in compost. The seedlings will germinate quickly, appearing in about 6 days. In May transfer to larger module trays, as they don't like root disturbance. They should be ready to plant out in early June. Try to buy the larger varieties as they put on a fantastic show. Remember to water well in dry spells.

## HUT PLOT, 2013

As those of you who visit our Sales Hut regularly will know, the plot by the Hut is tended by the Association Committee to provide interest to all our members. Here we grow types of vegetable that members have asked us to grow in order to see if they will grow here in Lancashire or new and unusual varieties. We also try to carry out little experiments and demonstrations. Please look around whenever you visit the Hut; and check the website for up to date information. The following is a summary of what we grew in 2013.

The plot has four raised beds.

**Bed 1** (the one nearest the Hut) is the result of asking the question, ‘What would you like us to try and grow?’ Here we have tried to grow Florence (bulb) Fennel and Celeriac, a Pumpkin (variety Small Sugar) and a Butternut Squash (variety Hunter F1). Both squash and pumpkin produced well, with a good supply of fish, blood & bone initially and then of tomato liquid feed as their fruits swelled. We obtained three pumpkins (5lbs 8oz, 6lbs 4oz, and 7lbs 8oz) and two butternut squashes at 2lbs 1oz and 2lbs 5oz. Space-utilisation is important on small vegetable plots, so over the pumpkin and squash plant we had a wigwam with six Runner Beans (variety Scarlet Emperor) giving a 3-D effect. This yielded just over 8lbs of beans (picked mostly young and at their best for the table). None of us have grown Fennel before, but they grew well and several members enjoyed one or two of them. One point that we were not aware of is that they do go to seed, especially perhaps if water is a bit on the short side. So in future (I will grow these in 2014 on my garden plot at home) I will make two sowings, so that one is ready in early summer, the other following up that one. Celeriac? That needs lots of water and we failed last year (probably not enough light, for there was more than a bit of rain). So this year we used Bunny Guinness’s method: the top spit was removed, polythene from old compost bags laid under, garden compost put on that and then the soil put back. Thus the plants should not have run short of water...it cannot all drain away and they were watered 2-3 times every week. Yet they still failed!

**Bed 2 and Bed 3** are identical save for one thing: Bed 2 was given a good dose of Rock Dust and Bed 3 wasn’t. Rock Dust is ground-up volcanic rock (such as granite) and, the adverts tell us, provide all the micronutrients plants like but cannot get in sufficient quantity in ordinary fertilisers. Other than that, both had the usual dose of general fertiliser to give the N,P and K that vegetable plants need, and they were watered in dry spells with measured equal volumes of water. No cheating here! There were two rows of eight potatoes sets (one each of Charlotte and Pink Fir Apple) per bed, then 16 onion sets (Centurian) and 12 leeks (Megaton), then a marrow plant (Zebra Cross), and then some parsnips (Gladiator), which were initially germinated in cardboard kitchen-paper tube, filled with compost. All were harvested in late August or September (before our Show). At the end of Beds 2 and 3 we have planted some permanent perennial vegetables: asparagus on Bed 2 and globe artichoke on Bed 3. No harvest here until 2014, alas. They were not part of our experiment. We also grew an Italian strain of climbing bean with the artichokes; this was so good that we are hoping to have seeds available for members next year.

	<u>With Rock Dust</u>	<u>Without Rock Dust</u>
Onion set	average 8.1oz	average 6.4oz
Potato variety Charlotte, total weight	16lbs	24lbs
Potato variety Pink Fir Apple, total weight	30.5 lbs	32lbs
Leek (circumference 5cm from base)	average 8.9cm	average 9.8cm
Parsnip	average 2lbs 5oz	average 2lbs 15oz
Marrow (two per plant)* 13oz	10lbs 7oz, 7lbs 1oz	8lbs 12oz, 6lbs

\* Note: the marrow plant without rock dust was set back by having its growing tip eaten just after being planted!

What conclusions can we draw from this? That in our plot Rock Dust seems to have little, if any, effect! I will be contacting RHS, DT Browns and Seers over this to see how well Rock Dust has been tested!

**Bed 4** is a small bed, which we are tried to cram lots in. I tried to estimate crops of some as 'helpings'. That bed yielded: Broad beans 16 helpings, garden peas 12 helpings, 8 onions (average weight 7oz), spinach 6 helpings, Swiss chard 14 helpings, 3 squashes (variety White Serpent) weighing 4lbs 12oz, 3lbs 6oz and 2lbs 12oz, and 12 cobs from 6 sweet corn plants. A courgette plant produced 17 courgettes. We grew two trial outdoor tomatoes (Estonian Yellow and Peace Vine Cherry), but while they produced lots of green fruits only very few ripened. We also grew a new weird vegetable called Amaranth that we considered inedible!

Moral: you don't need a full allotment or large garden to grow a few tasty vegetables.

Ideas for our bed in 2014 would be appreciated.

Malcolm G

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### EVER GROWN SWEDES?

Swedes like to grow on heavy soil, such as clay, so if your soil is light it will be more of a challenge. Swedes grown well will store for months and are delicious diced or mashed on their own or with carrots or potatoes. They are also perfect for adding to soup or stew for a warm and tasty meal on a cold winter's evening. You can sow outside straight into the soil, but try sowing them in modular trays in the greenhouse and water in well. Sow 2 seeds per cell and then cover with vermiculite and leave to germinate. Once germinated, and the seeds are large enough to handle, thin out to 1 per cell. When they are large enough and have 1 true leaf then you can move them into an open cold frame and protect from birds, plant out in August. Try planting with plenty of organic matter about 6-9 inches apart with 15 inches between the rows and add a dressing of lime on the top. Soil that has grown potatoes the previous year is good also. Keep well watered especially during dry weather.

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### TRIPS

Next years' trips are as follows Firstly on the 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> May, A 5 day trip to the WW1 battlefields. Going via the Tunnel and staying in Ostend, 2 days of escorted tours around the battlefields and the cemeteries including a trip to the Menin Gate, Secondly on the 31<sup>st</sup> May a day trip to Holker Hall Garden Festival the cost of this is £20. Thirdly on the 12<sup>th</sup> July a day trip to Bodnant Gardens, the cost of this £17.

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### VOLUNTEERS

I am pleading for volunteers next year to help out at the hut just once a month for 2 hours on a Saturday or Sunday. I need a shifter on 1 Saturday morning a month starting on January 4<sup>th</sup>, also a counter worker starting on the 11<sup>th</sup> January and also a counter worker on a Sunday starting on the 25<sup>th</sup> January. If you can help out at all it would be greatly appreciated. Just let me know on 01744 21482 or e-mail margaret.d47@hotmail.co.uk.