

# The GROWER

June 2016

[www.cheshamallotments.org.uk](http://www.cheshamallotments.org.uk)

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## *Focus on The Focal Point*



*Phil Folly enjoying some well-deserved cake*

The weather didn't start out very promisingly but luckily the sun did its best and the 14th May turned into a lovely morning, which was just as well because there were lots of extra quaffers and munchers at the Coffee Morning, as the profits that day, as were being donated to Chesham In Bloom. The Mayor Peter Hudson came as one of his final mayoral duties for the year and former mayor Mohammed Fayyaz also popped up for a slice of Vince's finest Bakewell Tart. As did allotment stalwart Phil Folly, who has just been made Honorary Freeman of Chesham in recognition of his extraordinary volunteer work. £90 pounds was raised from coffee sales and £10 from plant sales donated and run by Adrian Norris (Chesham Horticultural Society — Trading Hut Manager).

Since the moment when a vacated plot was claimed for use by all the allotmenters, The Focal Point at Cameron Road Allotments has been the hub of social activity at the allotments. The regular coffee mornings are a huge

success and it is a great place to be on a Saturday morning. It will also be the venue for the Cheese and Wine evening in July (see below) and the Open Day on August 13th. Lorraine and Larry Faulkner, who maintain the gardens so beautifully, have this year put a lot of effort into levelling the grass area — so sitting at the end should be a little less precarious! See you there!



## *Cheese and Wine Evening*

All allotmenters are invited to the *Cheese and Wine Evening* on *Saturday 16th July* to be held at the Focal Point, Cameron Road Allotments from 7pm. Please bring food and drink to share.



## CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP CALENDAR

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Coffee mornings	Saturday mornings 10am—12pm until 15th October	Focal Point Hut, Cameron Road
	4th June and 20th August	Asheridge Road Allotments
Cheese & Wine Evening	Saturday 16th July 7pm—9pm	Focal Point Hut, Cameron Road
Open Day	Saturday 13th August 10am –2pm	Cameron Road Allotments

## CHESHAM IN BLOOM

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Judging Day	Tuesday 19th July	Chesham including allotments

## CHESHAM HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Early Summer Show, Raffle and Refreshments	Saturday 2nd July 2.45pm—5.00pm	Trinity Baptist Church, Red Lion Street

### Life As A New Allotment Holder — part two

Oh yes the good life for me; I was praising the virtues of having an allotment, and now the endless waiting is over. I can now get my so-called teeth into the real allotment work.

The one thing I have noticed is the enormity of the task before me. Literally, the monumental 5 metres wide and over a hundred metres long plot of ground is breathtaking and I have been informed that the plot has been halved. Still it could be worse, I will not be undertaking this huge task on my own. I can now see a timetable of digging and maintenance of the plot. Now, where are my tools and what clothes am I going to assign for the allotment?

I won't have any of the SAGEs (Seasoned Allotment Growing Experts) thinking I am not up to it. Where's the online manual to explain digging? At what angle do I hold the spade and do I soak the ground in water to help the digging, softening the ground? Well, it was what I was told to do before digging. Common sense tells me that was a gardener's prank, what would Monty think of that? Well, it's what all gardeners do, with the endless tea breaks and the resting on rumps on camping chairs. If I thought that was all, now my back is hurting like hell and I thought this was going to be fun, not torturous arduous toil: bloody hell, just broke my finger nail.

If that was not all, what is with all this horse muck everywhere. Eventually I find out it is essential for healthy plants, so I order mine. I only want just a half load of what I observe being delivered to other plots. Someone forgot to tell me that this was not possible. So, when my manure is delivered, I seriously look at it and give up. To my eternal astonishment, the load that is brought is all mine and the farmer cannot turn his delivery trailer around and place the manure where I wanted it, as he cannot turn on the narrow paths. So it is placed right here and off he goes. Half the load is on the walking highway. I have to shovel the manure from there to here and back again, just to make room for my fellow allotment holders.

It is going to take weeks at my allotted work rate to make a clear pathway. Dear me, as I am clearing I am getting manure all over myself and to make matters worse I have fallen in it over and over. Falling in manure is not cool, on a warm sunny day. No one informs you the pitfalls—by the way, I have always wanted to know: how many horses do you think it took to make such a load of manure?

The first 30 minutes of completed allotment work done, is it a wonder that the SAGEs believe I will not last? I believe it too.

*Colin Wilson*

## *The Fish & Chip/Quiz Evening* *Beverly MacKay*

This was a Quiz evening with lots of new aspects among the familiar. We had new quizmasters who had to live up to the terrific job performed by Phil Folly for the last few years. Special thanks to him for all of his hard work. We had a new venue – the McMinn Centre and even a new supplier of our fish and chips. However amongst all the new were the familiar raffle, delicious puddings to share and the groans of people who had the answers on the tips of their tongues! Thanks to everyone who contributed raffle prizes and desserts.

The quiz, which was devised by Kate Hutchinson and Paul Vates, had a food theme running through it, with even the teams named after famous chefs from Fanny Craddock to Gordon Ramsey. The questions tantalised us all but the names of the rounds sometimes gave a clue to possible answers. For example the ‘Spotted Dick’ round had lots of questions about famous Richards. Once the winners had been declared and all the raffle prizes taken, the 58 people who attended went home after a very successful evening. The net profit for the event was £175.21. In addition to this Yvonne Webster had set up her handicraft stall with items for sale in aid of the Chesham and Amersham MS group. Yvonne’s talented work raised £117 for them – brilliant. Many thanks to everyone who helped make this evening a success, in particular Kate and Paul. The next one is in November – hope to see you there!



*The victorious winners!*

*And thanks to Beverly for running the raffle! She will also be the quizmaster at the next quiz.*

### *Quiz Night: Thank you and Farewell*

I have been the quiz master at the Allotments Fish & Chip night supper since April 2007, with two a year thereafter, venues being Chesham Town Hall, Temperance Hall, and lastly Trinity Church. It’s about time I gave someone else a chance.

Although the tee shirt says that the quiz master is always right, I apologise for the times I did get it wrong. A couple stand out: declaring sainthood to Mother Theresa 6 years after her death WRONG, and the James Bond question on who played ‘M’. I didn’t mind that one so much as half of you playing that night agreed with my answer! I am sure that there are others that you will remember as I nearly always blamed the Internet, but I did re-jig a lot of the questions myself. Unfortunately I didn’t have the tech knowledge or equipment to make it run more smoothly until the last couple of years. I would like to thank Yvonne for helping keep the score, Beverly and Chris for the microphone system, and Allen and Vince for arranging our Supper nights.

At my first attempt in 2007 I gave a preamble and one of my utterances was ‘This is Just For Fun’. This, over the years, I learnt to be WRONG. As it was more of a contest. But I did enjoy doing it and I am sure those who follow me will too....

*Phil Folly*

## CARROTS AFTER 36 YEARS

Following thirty six years of growing forked, stunted, twisted, carrots infested and blackened with the dreaded root fly, I decided enough was enough and set about building a raised bed, enclosed in 900mm high insect proof mesh.

Two 150 x 25 treated gravel boards 2400 long were purchased, and cut into 1500 and 900 lengths, thus forming a 1500 x 900 rectangular frame. Using 50 x 25 treated timber the bed was framed 900 high to form a “box” to which was stapled insect proof nylon mesh. The raised bed was filled with equal parts all-purpose compost, sieved topsoil, fine sand, and seaweed meal. The bed was well watered and left to settle.

Early Nantes 2 seed was sown on 21st May, in short 900mm long rows.

Germination was really good and the foliage raced away, possibly due to the cloche-like protection afforded by the insect mesh. The foliage in fact grew about 800 high. On 28th July I started to harvest roots that were 20mm wide at the crown. The roots were straight, plump, and generally about 150mm long. The roots had that old fashioned almost sweet flavour untainted by pesticides, delicious steamed.

During growth the bed was top dressed with a mixture of crushed cockle shells, rock dust and seaweed meal. After harvest the bed was lightly forked and left to overwinter, and carrots will be grown again this season.

No sign of any carrot root fly infestation.

*Vincent Lucas*



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## *Do yourself a fava—eat some Broad Beans* (*Vicia faba*)

Broad beans (also know as fava beans (as well as a many other names) - fava just being Italian for 'broad') have been eaten in the Mediterranean for 8000 years and have been found in the earliest human settlements. In Egypt they were food for slaves, considered too unclean for priests. Pythagoras forbade the eating of them because he thought they contained the souls of the dead (you can't be right all of the time). Thus the Greeks were a little wary of them, though early Christian Romans thought that it made them a perfect dish for The Day of The Dead (boiled and mixed with sage). They are still a staple of the cuisines of many countries in North Africa and the Near East, though often in the dried form, as would have been common here in Britain for centuries. Until the arrival of the tender runner, French and haricot beans from the New World, broad beans were the only beans in Britain. And don't forget to smell the flowers: the poet John Clare wrote '*My love is as sweet as a bean field in blossom*'. Rather less wholesomely, if you have ever wondered why Hannibal Lecter chose fava beans to have with his liver and Chianti, it is because it is a coded message: all three things being incompatible with the medication he should have been taking...

### The four stages of broad bean eating

1. **Leaves.** If you can manage to pinch out the top leaves before the blackfly get them, they are very good gently wilted in butter then added to an omelette or risotto. In general, treat like a thicker spinach.
2. **Young pods.** The broad bean mange tout, if you like. If the inside of the pod has gone white and furry, you are too late. 2—3 inches is about right. Top, tail and destring. Boil, steam, grill or when very small, eat raw with seasalt.
3. **Young beans.** If you can catch them between the young pod stage and fully grown, you can eat the beans without having to remove the skins.
4. **Old beans.** At this point you really do have to skin the beans of their wrinkled faded jackets after boiling as, even whizzed up (see hummus recipe), they will not be pleasant.

#### Broad Beans in Cream—serves two

Take approx **200g broad beans**—boil until just tender. In a pan, gently simmer 250ml of **double cream**, a **crushed garlic clove**, **salt** and **pepper** for five minutes. Fry a slice of **bacon** or use a slice of **ham** and cut into little pieces. (Optional—add a pinch of salt if not using). Add bacon/ham and beans to cream and heat through together. Add handful of **chopped parsley**.

Use as a side dish or as a sauce for tagliatelle or other long pasta.

#### Broad Bean Hummus

This is a great thing to have after a hard morning at the allotment.

Boil the **podded beans** until just soft, then whizz in a food processor with some **extra virgin olive oil**, a **little lemon juice**, **salt** and **crushed garlic** to taste. Serve hot on a piece of decent toast.

#### Broad Bean Orzo

Simmer 200g **orzo pasta** in 500ml **stock or water** until water is absorbed and the orzo cooked. Add 2 chopped **spring onions**, 300g cooked **broad beans**, 100g **marinated feta cubes**, 1 tbsp chopped **flat leaf parsley**, a spritz of **lemon juice** and a generous drizzle of **extra virgin olive oil**. Stir, eat.

#### Broad Beans and Marjoram—serves 2-3

**400g very young broad beans**, unpodded (or same weight of older, podded beans). Top, tail and destring and cut into bean sized pieces. Put into heavy saucepan with enough water just to cover. Add 2 tbsp **olive oil**, 75ml **dry sherry** or **white wine**, a chopped **garlic clove**, 1 tbsp chopped **parsley**, 1 tbsp fresh **marjoram**, pinch each of **salt**, **pepper** and **sugar**. Simmer gently covered for 45 mins or until beans are very tender, then boil vigorously until the liquid is reduced. Serve with crusty bread.

## CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

ALLEN TILBURY (Chairman) Plot 104 CR	TIM ANDREW (Vice Chair) Plot 48A CR	RAY WILLIAMS (Treasurer) Plots 215/216 CR	YVONNE WEBSTER (Secretary—Minutes) Plot 63A CR
ANDREW SINCLAIR (Correspondence Secretary) Plot 45B CR	JIM ABBOTT (Representative) Plot 31/32 CR	VINCE CROMPTON (Representative) Plot 36 CR	BEVERLY MACKAY (Representative) Plot 3B AR
VINCENT LUCAS (Representative) Plot 227D CR	KATE HUTCHINSON (Editor—The Grower) Plot 58D CR	DAVE HALL (Representative) Plot 12CR	TONY MUIR (Representative) Plot 28 AR
JANE MACBEAN Town Council Representative	CR = CAMERON ROAD AR = ASHERIDGE ROAD		The representatives are here for you. Please do come and talk to us about any issues!