**Friend of Darwen Cemetery Chairman’s Annual Report 2014**

**– held at DACA Wednesday 30th April 2014 at 7pm.**

**The year 2013/2014 has seen some remarkable changes in our work at Darwen Cemetery involving many groups, volunteers and agencies.**

**The results are there to be seen –**

1. **Erection of more headstones**
2. **Granite signage maps**
3. **Small Grave maintenance scheme**
4. **War grave adoption scheme with “In from the Cold” war graves – lot of research**
5. **Management of knotweed and balsam and planting**
6. **Groups of young volunteers clearing rhodi stumps, heather beds and balsam growth**
7. **Volunteering from Ben Ritherland Engineers who donated two days of employees work to supporting the Cemetery project**
8. **Successful donations and grant applications for a Muck Truck, New FODC notice boards, courtesy of NW Area Mason and Darwen Tow Council/Crown Awards.**
9. **The development of the WW1 Heritage Bid – more later**
10. **A comprehensive survey, plan and management of the on-going maintenance of working parties and task driven objectives.**

**The above are just an overview of the fantastic work being completed each week and fortnight by over 50 regular volunteers in partnership with Blackburn wit Darwen Borough Council You Call Scheme.**

**The trustees bring a variety of skills from research to IT – in developing the FODC into a thriving and enthusiastic community based project. We said goodbye to Rosemary Jackson our Secretary who still is FODC and a great appreciation to Peter Van Dijk who took over.**

**Our President has driven the WW1 Project and along with a small working party are confident of successful bid bringing even more prestige to our town and cemetery to honour the fallen from Darwen in WW1. An immense thanks to Steve’s vision and leadership.**

**Local schools, Scout, Guides, various youth groups are visiting the cemetery on regular visits to research, volunteer or help.**

**The foot fall at the cemetery has certainly increased with more visitors caring for graves and supporting the friends.**

**The website bring lots of “hits2 and folk interested in the work that goes on – with stories and information helpful to distance parties.**

**All this in our short period time as a group 3/4 yrs. have been amazing and we and the people of Darwen have demonstrated that a community can and does care for it cemetery and we look forward to another challenging and exciting year. You will hear from others the details of the Friends work but as I sum up the Chairman’s report and I commend to you the dedication, enthusiasm, passion and time that many of the Friends have offered the cemetery. It must add up to many hundreds on man hours and volunteering time – to pay for his would run into 100’s of ££££**

**Thanks to our partnership with Blackburn with Darwen, Councillors, Directors, Officers and workers – making a real difference to our town and borough and all connected with our work over the year.**

**John East Chair FODC Wednesday 30th April 2014**