

Number 50 October 2015 Editor-David Kirby, Hafodwen, Cae Melyn, Aberystwyth SY23 2HA

This newsletter will be available bilingually as pdf files at <http://www.aber-gag.org.uk/>

1. Resignation of Laurie Wright , Katy Peat and Moira Convery

Laurie and Katy's resignations from the Committee were accepted with regret at our last AGM. Laurie was involved in at least 2 regular, seasonal activities in the Parc - bird box recording and the fixed-point photographic record. We thank him particularly for this work, which he will continue. Laurie was a member in 2008 and may have joined earlier than that.

Katy joined us in 2011. She had been an active member of Working Parties before that. She has less contact with the Parc having moved to Penparcau. She will still assist us on Working Days particularly if there are any fires to be lit.

Moira Convery will stand down from the Committee at the next AGM. Apart from monitoring the bird boxes in the Parc, Moira edited our newsletter from 1993 to 1998 and was group secretary from 1998 to 2010. We are pleased that she will continue the work with the birds.

2. Welcome to Councillor Mark Strong

Last May Ceredigion County Council [CCC] appointed the local ward Councillor Mark Strong as a representative to the PNP Committee.

3. Welcome to Stephen Cuttle

Steve has helped us on several Parc workdays and this year we persuaded him to join the Committee.

4. More New Members Wanted

We have lost several Committee members recently and have not yet replaced them. We need some younger members but anybody who uses and values the Parc would be appreciated. If you are interested then please contact a committee member or come to the AGM [details below].

5. Ben Sampson leaving CCC for a new job at Swansea University.

We are sorry to be losing Ben Sampson. Ben came to Ceredigion following 6 years as an island wildlife warden – first on Lundy in the Bristol Channel and later Aride in the Seychelles. Ben became responsible for the Parc when Liz Allen retired in 2011. He is moving to Swansea University as their Biodiversity Officer, primarily looking after the sand dunes and saltmarsh of Crymlyn Burrows as well as making improvements to the wildlife value of their two campuses We have enjoyed working with Ben and wish him success in his new post.

We have written to CCC commending the working relationship that we have had with Ben over the years and stressing the importance of retaining the post and filling it with someone who will be able to work constructively with our volunteer group for the benefit of PNP

6. Cobweb

COBWEB (Citizen OBservatory WEB) is a four-year-duration, EU-funded project being carried out on Biosphere Reserves in five European countries. The aim is to use the GPS and photographic facilities of mobile phones to collect and transmit observations on animals and plants by non-specialist observers.

Three events held were :-

- A Bioblitz in May
 - A survey of invasive foreign plants in July and
 - A survey of ash trees and ash dieback disease in August.
- No evidence of this disease was found.

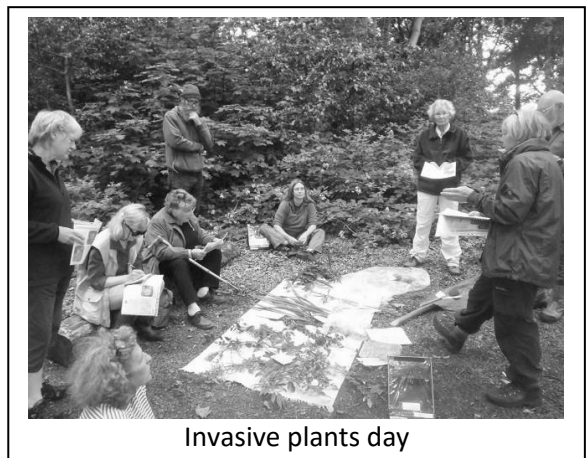
If you want to know more about COBWEB then come to our AGM.

7. The Annual General Meeting of the Parc Natur Penglais

Support Group will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday, 11 November at St Paul's Methodist Centre in Aberystwyth.

Business will be followed by a talk on:-

'Using technology in citizen Science to support biodiversity monitoring.'



Invasive plants day

Kirsten Manley from Coetiroedd Dyfi Woodlands will provide feedback on the COBWEB project events which took place in Parc Natur Penglais over the summer months in collaboration with Ceredigion County Council and PNP support group members.

8. 2014 AGM presentation of certificates to Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers [ACV]

At the AGM Councillor Alun Williams presented certificates to the



Training day

ACV students who participated in 2 training days in the Parc building steps at the top of Danycoed. Local resident Laurie Wright has subsequently erected a bench and cleared the cleared ground.

9. Working Saturday

11 October 2014– Holly control

With funding from Environment Wales, Holly and other scrub was cleared from the woodland above Danycoed last year. Cut material was stacked into habitat piles for the benefit of wildlife



Presentation of certificate

10. Gorse control Sat Feb 7th 2015

ACV students and volunteers cleared an area in the middle of the old quarry last February. . This made a firebreak, opened up the paths and made the habitat more suitable for reptiles. The gorse was burnt. We discourage open fires in the Parc. However burning is the only satisfactory way to dispose of the cut gorse. We notify the Fire Brigade beforehand, burn by day, have plenty of water to hand and douse the fire before it is left.

11. Parc extension

When the application by the Golf Club to buy the freehold of the course from CCC was considered, it was realised that a strip of land curving round from the end of the old quarry behind Penygraig and the 17th tee to end up on Brynymor Road was not included. In March the Council approved the incorporation of this land into the PNP Local Nature Reserve [LNR] but all the formal procedures have not yet been completed. The additional land will increase the area of the Parc by about 25%.

12. Working Day Saturday 26 September 2015

Unfortunately Environment Wales has been wound up as a funding body. We had built up a good relationship with them over the years and they had supported 7 of our projects to the tune of almost £10K for which we are grateful. This September we completed one final project with their help. At least 16 volunteers improved the path through the new extension. Steps were built and two fingerboards erected at the new Brynymor Road entrance to the Parc. Due to the funding body being disbanded we held the event earlier in the year than normal. Usually about 20 students attend. Only 4 helped us this time as most had not yet returned for the new term. Many thanks to all that helped.

13. Proposed new project.



New bench

We applied to the Welsh Government ESD Directorate for funding under the new Small-scale Project Funding Scheme to build steps on the path at the top of the quarry that leads in to the new extension. The intention was that Peter Drake would lead three Skill Training Days for groups of students from the ACV on this work in February 2016. Unfortunately our application for funding was unsuccessful. Other sources of funding are being investigated.

14. New bench, old bench

Ben Sampson arranged for a new bench, made from local Douglas Fir by Wise Woods Wales, to be erected alongside the path in the extension with a view of the sea. We thank Tidy Towns for funding this bench.



Gorse control

Peter Drake made a temporary repair to the Prof. Mathur memorial bench in late September this year as one upright was rotten at ground level. Unfortunately, even such a hard wood as oak has a limited life in such a harsh environment. It is hoped that money may be found to replace the whole bench, which was originally erected in 1998. The oak uprights were replaced in 2004.

It is disappointing to report that this year a vandal tore off the brass plate from this bench. It has been replaced with a temporary carved wooden sign.



When clearing the gorse in the old quarry last February [Item 10 above] we found the partially burnt remains of the carved headboard from the Derek Baylis bench. This had been wrenched off and partially burnt by campers in July 2011. They had taken it out of

their fire before retiring to sleep.

15. University Group and litter

While on the bad news, on 3rd December 2014 at about 21.30 hrs a loud disturbance was heard coming from the Beech Glade. About 30 young men were present. Several were nearly naked. The others were masked. Some were vomiting. A trail of debris led back to University accommodation. A considerable quantity of litter was left behind after these persons had departed. This was the third similar incident to have occurred over the previous 2 years. It was reported to the University who identified the culprits and took sanctions against them for holding a degrading initiation ceremony.

16. Worgate top wall

Further pinning of the Worgate bank was carried out in May 2015.

17. Some Tree matters

Annual checks are carried out by tree surgeons on all the trees close to the gardens that bound the Parc and remedial action taken where necessary. If you are concerned about any particular tree close to your property then please tell Ben

Sampson, his successor or a member of the Committee.

You may have noticed that

some of the trees that have been felled in the Parc have not been cut down to ground level. A tall "stump" has been left in the hope that in time it will provide holes in which birds might nest.

A rough idea of the age of a living tree can be obtained from its circumference measured 1.3 metres up from its base, its species and whether it is standing on its own or close to other trees. The tree with the greatest circumference that I have found in the Parc is in the Beech Glade standing near to the Golf Course. Its girth is 3.8 metres giving an approximate age of 300 years.

18. Reptile survey

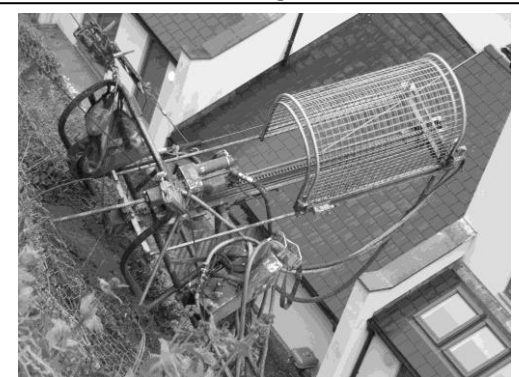
This year a reptile survey has been carried out in the old quarry and new extension. About 40 black,

corrugated, felt roofing tiles have been placed in likely habitats. We started in April and finished in mid-October. The tiles were examined on 29 days, mainly around noon when the weather was clement. Vertebrates observed were:-

Toads	6	Lizards	24
Slow-worms	43	Voies	12
Mice	7	Shrews	4

Some of the lizards and slow-worms were juveniles so it seems that both species are breeding in the Parc. We could, of course, be recording the same animal on several occasions. However 7 slow-worms were seen on one day so we know there are at least this number of individuals present.

The slow-worms tended to be more common in the summer and the lizards were seen more frequently in the autumn. Breeding season and weather conditions may play a part in how often they are found. The summer was very wet and the autumn quite dry.



Drilling Worgate bank



My wife and an old tree



Truncated tree

19. Mammals in the Parc

Mammals tend to be shy and secretive. Some come out mainly at night and so are rarely seen. The squirrel is probably the most frequently observed wild mammal in the Parc as they are out by day and sometimes make a lot of noise. Without making a special effort to look for them, the presence of some mammals may only be apparent from their tracks, faeces, holes, nests or finding dead bodies. I have a infra-red, motion-sensitive camera which I set up one night by the pond and recorded fox and badger. I hope to do more observations. I know there are the following present in the Parc :-

Badger	Fox
Rabbit	Squirrel
Rat	Mole
Vole	Woodmouse
Shrew	Pipistrelle bat



Lizard



Fox at the pond

20. Pond repairs

After 20 years the mortar in the pond is starting to fail in places. Perhaps it was a mix not intended for continuous immersion in water. A large stone had fallen out at the back where the outline is intended to represent the oak leaf motif of the Parc. The masonry at the back was built around a tree stump which has now rotted away. Temporary repairs have stopped the water leaking away. It is now flowing down the channels as originally intended and the "oak leaf" now again contains a shallow layer of water which enables birds to drink and bathe.

21. Green flag community award

After 4 consecutive annual awards to the Parc we have been told that we are not eligible for an award in this category! We decided not to apply for consideration under another category as this involved a fee.

We were the only Ceredigion site to receive this award in 2014.

22. Garden waste

Garden waste continues to be dumped in some parts of the Parc. This is the same as fly-tipping. The Parc is managed by CCC for the benefit of its citizens. Dumped vegetation can introduce invasive foreign plants. Quaking grass [photo] has escaped into the quarry where it now thrives. Please either compost your garden waste, have it collected by the Council [charged] or take to the recycling centre.

23. Dog attacks

Last year one of my dogs was attacked by another dog in the Parc. As a result, she needed over 20 stitches. I know of two people who were bitten in similar incidents over the same period. If you walk a dog of suspect temperament in the Parc then please either keep it on a lead or have it muzzled.

24. Facebook

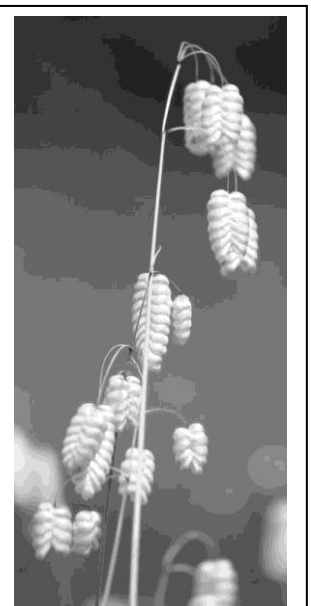
In late September Councillor Alun Williams set up a Facebook page for the Parc .

www.facebook.com/Parc-Natur-Penglais-917579081656878/timeline/

25. Last Newsletter under this editor

I have produced 11 newsletters over the last 7 years. It is time for me to hand over. Electronic versions are available on the web and we have the Facebook page for the dissemination of news about the Parc. These enable us to reach a wider audience but confined to those who actively seek the information. The Committee may wish to continue distribution of paper copies to local houses. If you still want a paper copy delivered then please send an email to fdkpnnp@outlook.com with your address.

I wish to thank contributors, printers, Laurie Wright for putting the newsletter on the GAG webpage, Cllr Jeff Smith for Welsh translation, the "postmen" who delivered copy, the PNP committee for contributions and my wife for proofreading.



Quaking grass



Green Flag Awards
2010 to 2014

