

## Chris Foster

First some sad news. Chris Foster died suddenly on June 27th this year. Chris joined the Committee in 2011. We send condolences to his partner Hilary.

## New Members Wanted

We have lost several Committee members recently and have not yet replaced them. Several of the Committee are long in the tooth [ your editor is among them ]. We could do with 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 ].

## Newsletter on GAG website

Thanks to Laurie Wright and the Greener Aberystwyth Group, this newsletter is now available as a pdf document on the internet at <http://www.aber-gag.org.uk> .

There is a translation on the Welsh pages by Councillor Jeff Smith.

## Local distribution of Printed Copies Continues

The committee wish to continue the distribution of printed copies in English to the houses in the immediate vicinity of the Parc.

## Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on Wednesday November 26<sup>th</sup> 2014 at 7.30 pm in the Octagon room, St Paul's Methodist Centre, Queens Road. Business will be followed by a talk when we hope that a speaker from Llais y Goedwig, The Voice of Community Woodlands will tell us about community woodlands in Wales.

## Funding raised by the Support Group

Len continues to lead our liaison with Environment Wales. A further £1,500 has been obtained for projects in the Parc this autumn, details of which are given below after some comments on projects completed in the last financial year. A condition of the funding is that we provide a matching contribution in the form of volunteer time. Thanks are due to all who helped, with a special mention of the Aberystwyth University Conservation Volunteers, whose contribution was invaluable.



Path mud removal

## Saplings planted November 2012

Most of the 200 or so saplings planted are still alive. Those at the periphery of the clearing that were planted beneath mature trees are stunted and have suffered in the recent drought. All were less than 1 metre tall when planted. The tallest have now reached 2 metres.

## Mud moving March

At the start of February 2014 Environment Wales informed us that they had a small amount of money in their budget for a small project so long as it could be completed in that financial year. Len Kersley, in consultation with others, decided that we should propose clearing the mud that had accumulated on the main path through the Parc and on some of the steps. This was accepted and two working Saturdays were arranged on March 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately the University Conservation Volunteers were not available to assist on those days. In total on the two days, 18 people helped with the

work, devoting about 50 hours. Our commitment to Environment Wales in getting the grant was 7 people giving 28 hours! Thank you to everyone who helped with this wonderful effort, including Peter Drake who organised things at very short notice. Once again we have demonstrated in a very practical way how we value Parc Natur Penglais and are willing to help make it such a special place for our community.

### Conservation Skills Training Days

An aspect of the Environment Wales support has been to fund training days in the Parc on particular practical environmental conservation skills, supervised by Peter Drake, a local environmental contractor. These sessions are greatly appreciated by the students, some of whom plan to follow careers in conservation management and related topics. In 2013 twenty two wooden steps were constructed in the path running up from the top of Danycoed to the Beech Glade. Heavy rain shortened the first training day. Better progress was made on the second day. A third day with local volunteers was necessary to achieve completion of the project. This year's project will involve work at the entrance to the Parc from the top of Danycoed.

### Working Saturday 11 October 2014 – Holly control

With funding from Environment Wales, a Woodland Working Day has been arranged for Saturday 11 October 2014 which will focus on thinning the holly saplings which have thrived in the recent warm weather. It is hoped that Aberystwyth Student Conservation Volunteers under the supervision of Rural Contractor Peter Drake will take part. However, volunteers from the local community who are up for a bit of conservation effort will also be very welcome as their work is essential to meet the matched-funding contribution by the Support Group to the project. No previous experience is needed and all tools and instruction will be provided. Meet in the Beech Glade on the main path through the woodland from 10am on Saturday 11 October and make your contribution to the health and beauty of this award-winning Nature Reserve.



Environment Wales visitors

### Environment Wales officers visit 26 June 2014

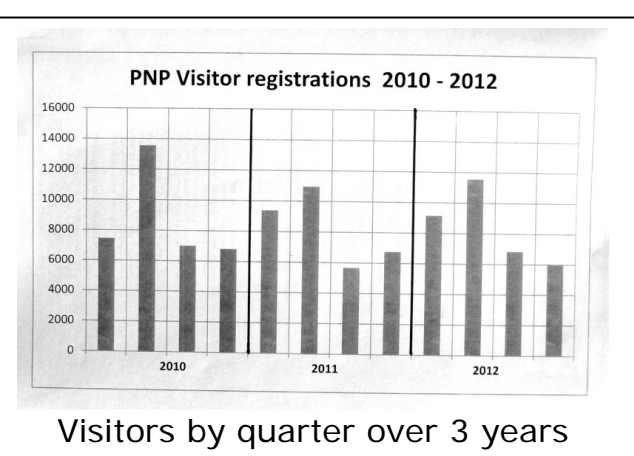
Seven EW development officers had a meeting at the National Library in June this year. They took the opportunity to have a guided tour of the Parc after lunch. One of them detected the characteristic odour of the stinkhorn fungus near the golf course. He found the source. The stinkhorn was in prime condition that day. It had started to decompose 24 hours later.



Stinkhorn fungus

### Visitor Counters

There are visitor counters at the three main access points to the



Visitors by quarter over 3 years

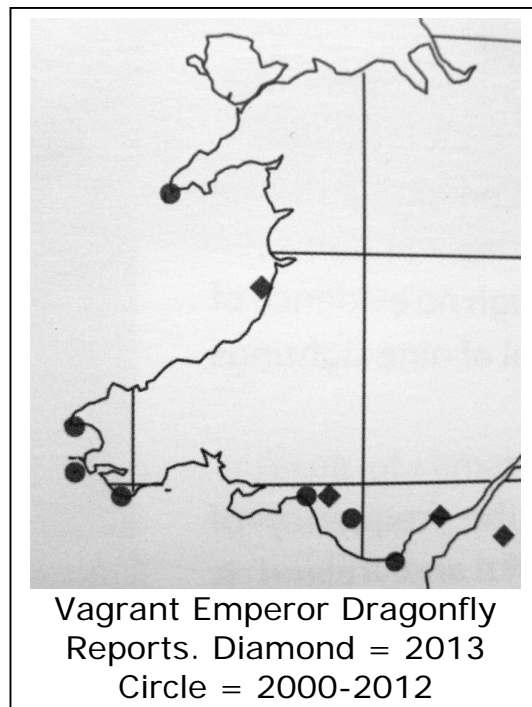
Parc. The results from them were last reported in a newsletter in 2005. Counts at the Principal's gate are approximately equal to the sum for the other two. It is considered that traffic at this one gate gives a fair indication of visitors to the Parc. Of course, some visitors may be counted twice and others not at all. I have figures for 2004 and the last 2 years. They have been remarkably consistent at about 32,000 registrations per year. Saturday is the most popular day of the week and Spring the most popular season. Most visitors come in the hours of daylight.

### A rare Royal visitor to the Parc – *Anax ephippiger*

Your editor was surprised when walking his dogs through the old quarry early in the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> November last year to come across a large dragonfly [ a hawker ] covered in dew on the ground. As his wife is an odonata enthusiast, he picked it up and took it home to her. She identified it as a male Vagrant Emperor – subsequently confirmed by the County Dragonfly Recorder. This was the first report of this species from Ceredigion[ see map © British Dragonfly Society ]. We kept the Emperor alive for a couple of days by our garden pond but it then expired. Its body now lies in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

The natural home of the Vagrant Emperor is sub-Saharan Africa. They breed in pools that are likely to dry out so they have a rapid larval development and, in suitable environmental conditions, may emerge in large numbers. Northerly winds may blow a few to the British Isles. They are most commonly reported from the coastline of southern England.

We are pleased to have emperors in the Parc. Vagrants are less welcome.



### Fourth Green Flag Community Award

Len Kersley has overseen our successful fourth consecutive annual application for a Green Flag Community Award. This prestigious award is the national benchmark standard for parks and green spaces, run by Keep Wales Tidy and gives recognition to the best green spaces in the country (see [www.greenflagaward.org](http://www.greenflagaward.org)). Copies of the award certificate are now on display on the PNP Noticeboards. Written comments by the judge following this year's inspection suggested that PNP was being assessed more as a Municipal Park and less as a Local Nature Reserve than before. We are currently unsure whether we will be considered eligible to apply for a community award next year.

### Reptile survey

There are several small squares of unmarked, corrugated roofing sheet scattered about the old quarry. Please don't disturb them. They are part of a reptile survey being carried out by the Wildlife Trust.

### Worgate – Infirmary Road development

The saga of PNP involvement with the development on the land formerly occupied by the social club and works offices of the North Road Hospital goes back to 2007 when Merlin Homes demolished these buildings and excavated into the bank at the rear bringing down parts of the boundary wall of the Penglais estate. This resulted in an increase in the bank gradient and instability in the quarry waste at the top. Early in 2010 Merlin became aware of soil movement at the top of the cliff and carried out unauthorised removal of vegetation to facilitate their investigations. Several large fissures had opened up in the soil. Council surveyors confirmed that the bank was dangerously unstable.



Excavator at work 2007



Building works terminated on the site during the recession but were restarted early this year by a firm called Vallis Facilities Management [ Merlin in all but name ]. The flats have been bought by a company called Condor and the following works have been agreed to finally solve the problem caused by the excavation of the bank:

- ☐ Erection of a wall between the top of the web (which will support the face) and the rest of PNP land. As I write, there is no sign of construction of this wall.
- ☐ Require them to take on responsibility for the maintenance of the web and the works
- ☐ Condor have purchased an easement allowing them access (on notice save in an emergency) to the land for the purposes of maintaining the works.



Loose stones from the boundary Walls being thrown down the bank



Netting viewed from the top of the bank

Your editor thinks that the bank is dangerous due to :-

- The steep slope of the bank.
- Cable and protruding metal pins at the top.
- The unyielding nature of the wall and paving slabs at the bottom.

He advises people to avoid the top of the bank until the wall has been constructed.

### Bird Box Monitoring

	2013	2014
Blue tit clutches	11	13
Date of first egg	24-Apr	16-Apr
Date all clutches complete	09-May	28-Apr
Total number of eggs	80	101
Average clutch size	7.3	7.8
Hatched	62	92
Average brood size	5.6	7

Moira Convery and 3 assistants continue to monitor the 29 bird boxes fixed to trees in the Parc. The complete 2014 breeding figures are not yet available. Attached is a table of some Blue Tit figures produced when the Springwatch program asked the BTO if they had figures that might confirm that the birds were breeding earlier in the season than formerly.

Our sample size is small but our figures were consistent with the national trend. The breeding performance of the Blue Tits was improved over that for last year, possibly due to the better Spring weather. However the figures for the Great Tits were worse despite

the preferred food for the chicks being caterpillars for both species.



*Printed by Penglais School*

