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Editor: Steve Cuttle (Tel. 01970 625484 or e-mail spcuttle@btinternet.com)

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

Editor This is the first issue of the newsletter after a change of editor (see new contact details above). Thanks to David Kirby for producing the previous 11 issues and for assisting with this one.

Ceredigion County Council [CCC] Officers responsible for the Parc Ben Sampson left CCC in December 2015. Leanne Bird took over on a temporary basis while the CCC Coast and Countryside team was restructured. Paul Evans then took charge.

Changes to the Committee Roger Bray has resigned after serving on the committee since its beginning but we have been joined by Christopher Allen. New members are always welcome: if you are interested, please come along to the AGM (see below) or contact the Editor.

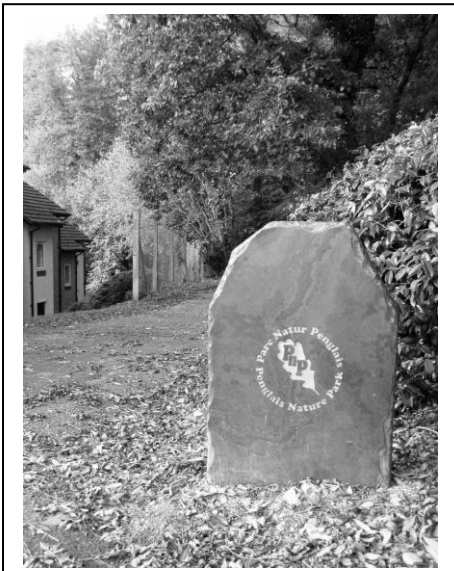
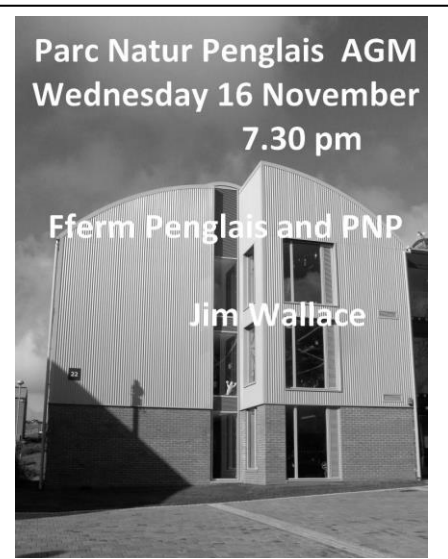
Annual General Meeting This year's PNP AGM will be held in the Octagon at St Paul's Methodist Centre on Wednesday, 16 November 2106 at 7.30 pm. After the business session there will be a talk by James Wallace, Director of Campus and Commercial Services at Aberystwyth University, entitled 'The Fferm Penglais Development and Parc Natur Penglais'. We hope for a good attendance to hear about our common interests in the Penglais woodlands.

Parc boundaries some of you may have noticed the stone marked PNP at one exit from Pentre Jane Morgan. This does not mark the boundary of the Parc, which only starts

at the Principal's Gate and wooden barriers the far side of Plas Penglais. The demarcation between PNP and the University woodland is becoming less clear as the Aberystwyth University Conservation Volunteers [AUCV] have removed, with University approval, some of the fencing at the Principal's Gate. We look forward to greater co-operation between the University and PNP as we are contiguous woodlands.

Early History of the Parc (David Kirby) In the 1700s and 1800s much of the land around Aberystwyth was owned by a few families who had large estates such as the Powells at Nanteos and Pryses at Gogerddan. Many of these estates became run down in the early 1900s often through a combination of high taxation and mismanagement. One or both of the two World

Wars was often the final nail in their coffins, partially because of the shortage of labour. The Penglais Estate, which had been owned by the Richard(e)s family since around 1700 was no exception. In 1946 the estate was very run down and they decided to sell what remained. The University was looking to expand post-war. They found a benefactor in the form of a retired



London milk-merchant with Welsh origins – Alban Davies. He is said to have agreed in one day to pay £34,000 [1946 value] to purchase 220 acres of the estate which he gave to the University. At the same time Aberystwyth Borough Council were looking to build homes for returning heroes and had placed a Compulsory Purchase Order [CPO] on part of Penglais Hill to build Council houses. This conflicted with the University's plans. Eventually the Council agreed by 11 votes to 7 to accept, on a 999 year lease, 23 acres of land (much of which now forms PNP) for use as a Public Park on condition that the CPO for the housing was withdrawn. A synopsis of more recent events may be given in the next Newsletter.

Working Days in the Parc In torrential rain on Saturday 20 February 2016 students from AUCV, under the supervision of Peter Drake, started work on constructing a series of steps at the north end of the quarry to improve access to the new extension to the Parc. Luckily the sun shone when members of the committee completed this work on the subsequent Monday. The steps were being well-used even while being constructed.

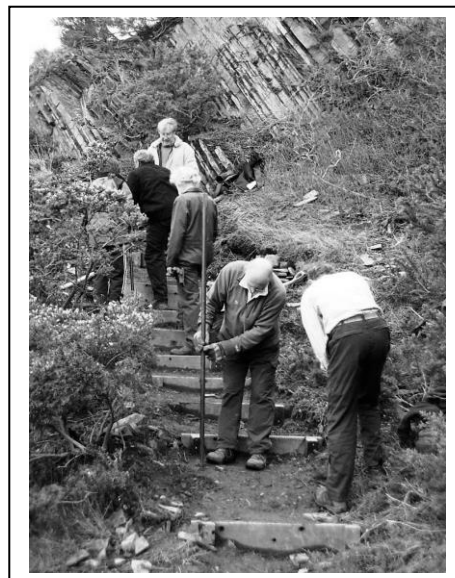
Brambles and gorse were cleared from around the quarry viewpoint by 7 AUCV students, Peter Drake and a number of present and former members of the PNP committee on Saturday 8 October 2016. We have a regular programme of gorse clearance in the quarry to keep the paths open, form a firebreak and maintain open conditions suitable for basking reptiles.

Funding problems (Len Kersley)

Following the withdrawal of funds for Environment Wales by the Welsh Government, it has become very difficult to find money for projects in the Parc to supplement the limited resources from Ceredigion Council.

Unfortunately, our applications to the Welsh Governments Small Grant Scheme, Cynnal Y Cardi and the White Stuff Community Chest have all been unsuccessful. However, the Support Group continues to seek out appropriate sources of funding and would be delighted to learn of any possibilities so that we can continue to improve PNP as an urban nature reserve with full open access for the enjoyment of all our many and varied users.

Tree planting Two trees have been kindly donated to PNP by the parents of former Aberystwyth student, Lizzie Tyson, to mark her happy associations with the university and town, including time spent with the AUCV working in the Parc. The trees were planted at a small ceremony on 24 October 2016 that was attended by Lizzie and her parents. Councillor Mark Strong expressed thanks on behalf of Ceredigion CC together with Jim Wallace representing the university. The ceremony was well attended by members of the PNP Support Group Committee, current members of the AUCV and the public. The trees, a wych elm and a small-leaved lime, were planted in an area of open canopy close to where the main path passes the pond.



Reptile survey (David Kirby) The results of the first year of the survey (2015) were published in Newsletter Number 50. This covered a full season in the quarry but the extension was only covered late in the season as it had only just been made part of the Parc.

This year 13 artificial refugia were placed in the extension and 21 in the quarry. Two “natural” refugia under stones were also examined. The survey started on 18 March, before any reptiles had emerged from hibernation, and finished on 18 October when only one yearling slowworm and a vole were found under the 33 mats examined that day. The first reptile found in 2016 was a lizard on 28 March.

Some tiles were examined on 56 dates scattered through the season. Not all the refugia were examined each time. 1482 inspections of artificial refugia were carried out in 2016.

	Number of vertebrate sightings		2016
	On or under artificial refugia	Natural refugia or free in environment	
Small mammals mainly voles	12	0	
Slowworms	310	33	
Common lizards	46	3	
Toads	30	5	
Newts	0	6	
Total	401		

The same animal could be observed on several occasions. For slowworms in particular some animals can be distinguished on size, colouration, sex, pregnancy and whether they have shed their tails. Attempts were made to photograph all animals seen against some form of scale and some slowworms were caught and weighed. Further analysis of the results is in progress.

Newborn lizards and slowworms were seen this year so we have breeding populations of both species. No snakes were seen in either year.

Bird nest boxes. Moira Convery and three assistants have continued the spring monitoring of 26 nest boxes fixed to trees in the Parc. It is not always possible to be completely accurate in counting the eggs or very young chicks without causing disturbance. Sometimes a chick will die early on and the parents remove the corpse so it can fail to be accounted for. The numbers for 2016 given here are the minimum.

20 out of 26, 77%, boxes were occupied but one with eggs was abandoned without the species being identified.

	Number nests	Eggs	Average per nest	Chicks fledged	% fledged
Great Tit	9	45	5	39	87
Blue Tit	10	66	6.6	47	71

Tits normally produce larger broods than this. Between 9 and 11 are quite common. One possible reason for the lower numbers is the poor weather over the winter and spring which could lead to females being in poorer breeding condition.

Our results over the last 25 years have been reported to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Because we have been a significant contributor to the BTO Blue Tit breeding database, we have

been approached by a PhD student working with the BTO and Durham University researching the effect of climatic change on Blue Tit breeding. She is investigating whether increasing environmental temperatures are causing a temporal mismatch between caterpillar peaks and nestling demand. We hope to be able to assist with her studies.

Dog fouling (David Kirby) There has been an increase in the number of plastic bags full of canine excrement being left in the Parc. If all are because owners left it at the start of a circular walk meaning to collect it on their return then we have an outbreak of amnesia in our dog walkers! If you pick up your dog waste in a plastic bag then please take it home. Don't leave unbagged waste in the middle of a path. Use a stick to push it into the undergrowth at the side of the path. There it can dry out and degrade or be eaten by slugs and beetles.

Aberystwyth Botany Society. 10 members were led by David Kirby on a circular walk, starting from Plas Penglais and reaching the PNP viewpoint in the quarry, for 2 hours on

Sunday October 16th 2016. A mycologist on the walk drew our attention to the Porcelain fungi

growing on one of the Beech trees in the Beech Glade that unfortunately has a rotten trunk. Luckily none of the other beeches in the area seem to be infected.



Fixed point photographs have been taken at approximately biennial intervals, and at the same time of the year, at 26 locations throughout the Parc since its inception. The aim is to record changes, particularly those brought about by actions detailed in the Management Plan. Originally the recording was done on photographic film. All the early prints were scanned to give a complete digital record. The attached pictures of the pond were taken 25 years apart.

Facebook. We have been running a Facebook page for the Parc for the last year. We have over 110 "likes". The address is

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

Footnote (David Kirby) This newsletter was started by Steve Cuttle but unfortunately he had to go into hospital before it was finished. We hope that he will be fully recovered by the time you read this.

Thanks to Laurie Wright for putting the newsletter on the GAG webpage, Cllr Jeff Smith for Welsh translation, the "postmen" who delivered copy and the PNP committee for contributions and proofreading.

