

October

Weather report

October could be described as a very pleasant, uneventful month. After rain on the first two days the weather settled for a week, typified by misty, cloudy early mornings, mainly sunny days, light northerly breezes and daytime maximum temperatures of 17-18 C.



On the 9th it rained all day and night but then cleared for a repeat performance of misty starts, sunny spells, light breezes and maximum temperatures of 15 -17C until the 16th. Light showers during the day were followed by heavy rain overnight, then yet again the weather became settled - five sunny days but this time with much colder nights, lows of 3 - 5 C and frost inland away from the south coast.

The 22nd was cold and grey with a wide-spread frost overnight. A high-pressure system settled over Scandinavia ensured calm, though often cloudy conditions up to the 29th when it rained bringing the total rainfall for October to 47mm. The month ended with three fairly warm (14-15 C), mainly sunny days.

This unusually calm, stable, mild weather for the time of year meant the trees still had most of their leaves on when the photographs were taken on the 30th October and the display of autumn colour in Long Wood and the surrounding countryside was truly spectacular.



Extracts from Rodney's Diary

10th October

Quick walk round on way home from work to check ground conditions after recent rain. Field track passable but slope into wood probably too wet for truck to deliver roof panels.

Still no standing water showing in the pond.

11th October

*Roofing materials taken to picnic site with Norman. Walk right round wood. New fungi (*Coprinus picaceus* - Magpie Inkcap) spotted on northern boundary. Ground conditions still sticky and truck backed into wood to save snagging on overhanging trees. Only managed to get half way up slope before wheel spin, so unloaded from there.*

12th October

Five roof rafters cut and moved to shelter then heaved up onto roof. End rafters notched into place and started on notching next rafter before bad light stopped play.



14th October

Last of roof rafters notched into place and steel beams lifted up and marked for drilling. Borrowed battery drill but only managed to drill most of holes in one beam before first battery died so not too promising. Daylight in short supply by then - back home for a recharge and try again tomorrow. Top of rafters still to cut level before attaching steel work.



15th October

Support log notched in on left side of entrance and right side logs cut ready to fit a support into. Front steel roof support cut in and bolted down with angle brackets on outer rafters. Not easy to align cut outs to get all five level to fit beam with chainsaw only, so might have to use chisels or rasp to simplify task on subsequent beams.

27th October

Rear steel beam cut in and fitted with end angle brackets at each end. Cut outs marked and started cutting beam seatings for last two beams. Tarpaulin roped over roof to keep inside dry in forecasted wet spell.



Shoot in progress fairly close in southerly direction, causing roe deer stag to run through wood to escape beaters. Five bats seen flying around the corner of bean field by our entrance gate as we were leaving. Possibly pipistrelle - wing span approximately 6-7 inches, but quite fat bodies.

30th October



Drove to picnic site with slight wheel spin on one section of slope after recent rainy day. Both remaining steel beams cut in and fitted to rafters with two areas needing spacers before bolting down. Most easterly section of roof bolted down on eastern edge then covered with tarpaulin and weighted down with logs. No socket drive available to fit roof panels, so first section fitted using shifter along edge only. Still no standing water in the pond.

Management Plan:

Name of Wood: *Long Wood.*

Type of Woodland: *Mixed broadleaf and coniferous, ancient semi-natural.*

Size: *5.2 hectares.*

Purchased: *January 2006.*

Objectives of Management.

To make safe any dangerous trees.

To maintain continuous cover throughout the wood.

To clear access track of overhanging trees.

To retain habitat suitable for diverse wildlife.

To remove excessive dead/dying trees.

To generally thin out overcrowded areas.

To establish a clear metre wide boundary track.

Arrange to deliver container for safe storage.

Construct site hut for all weather shelter and use.

Build and fit dormouse/bat/bird boxes.

To form small clearings through the wood.

Achievements to date (October 2007)

~~Several storm blown trees cleared as found, mainly hemlock to northern boundary, a dead standing chestnut, and a dead standing ivy end.

~~Felled area of hemlocks cleared of all debris leaving a bare area of around ¼ acre.

~~Removed timber cut and stacked for drying and straighter sections moved to picnic clearing for shelter construction.

~~Amazing transformation of clearing throughout the season with carpet of greenery forming now sunlight reaches the ground. Around a dozen oak saplings found and protected from grazing animals, also a few chestnuts and numerous birch and hornbeam noted along with countless hemlocks that are being manually removed. Full list of plant species listed in 'plant survey'.

~~Construction of new boundary track continued with four major drainage gullies bridged over by laying drainage pipe then levelling over with blocks and hardcore and topped with soil to level off. Track completed from caravan to north of picnic site.





~~Construction of shelter completed with straight sections of felled hemlocks by notching ends and overlapping in traditional style to form an open fronted structure to escape to during rainy spells. Brown coated steel sheet roof still to fit to finish off, and some form of hazel hurdle to fence off the front to prevent deer using it as a cosy shelter, bearing in mind the possibility of problems with deer ticks.

~~Failed to arrange moving container into wood as let down by local contractor and access with off road slope a problem. Now leaning towards not having a container as apart from lack of security the shelter will provide cover in showery weather.



~~Extensive survey carried out to identify and record a full list of plant and fungi species occurring within the wood. Progressing well but continuously finding new species not apparent last year. An ongoing task especially now dormant seeds are beginning to grow on newly cleared areas.

~~25 each bare rooted Hawthorn and Blackthorn trees planted to thicken boundaries and add food source for wildlife.



October 2007 - Management targets update:-

To complete log shelter.

To continue extending boundary track.

To pursue obtaining Grant under South East Woodlands Butterfly Conservation Project.

To monitor and encourage regeneration on clear felled site.

To raise seedlings from seed collected in wood, in woodland soil for infilling new clearing.

To consider best section of Hemlocks to fell next with regard to wildlife and bio-diversity.



October creations and musings

I have to admit to feeling envious and with each new log that Rodney heaved, hauled and notched into place, the feeling intensified. Attempting to solve the puzzles posed by ferns and fungi that in many instances proved impossible to match with examples featured in reference books, had sorely taxed my brain and I felt the need to be physically creative. Incapable of wielding a chainsaw or most of the other equipment we had purchased, I hunted around to ascertain what was available and feasible.



When the 'Picnic site' had been cleared earlier in the year, anything sound or more than a couple of inches in diameter had been retained and stacked for future use as fuel. Leaning up against a hazel tree were two hornbeam roots, forked trunks that had arisen from strangely twisted anchors; one compact and rounded with radiating arms like an octopus, the other long and sinuous. I glimpsed an animal in the latter, straining to leap out, tail flicking, head tossing and

so with a penknife and a small pair of secateurs, I set to work. I clipped off numerous small, tangled roots together with a few larger protrusions to leave two long legs, the tail, two arms and a bare head; then sandpapered the extremities to smooth them off. The moss that had

crept across the base of the small tree in its previous life, now gave the creature a growth of green fur on its belly and bottom.

There was movement and energy in the body but it needed eyes. These were eventually sourced from the fallen, decaying hemlock trunk propped up on its broken branch stumps at the southern end of the new 'Wolf clearing'. Circular holes encompassed by ridges had been left in the bark where smaller twigs had completely rotted away. I carefully cut out two sections then went in search of material to fashion a crest or mane from. The tangled, convoluted masses of honeysuckle that clambered up many of the trees soon provided this.

Because wood glue was going to be required to fix these items in place my animal was loaded into the back of the Ford Ranger, transported to civilisation and stood in our wood shed. There he lurked for the next fortnight, caged, gazing through the doorway. 'Take me home! Take me home!'

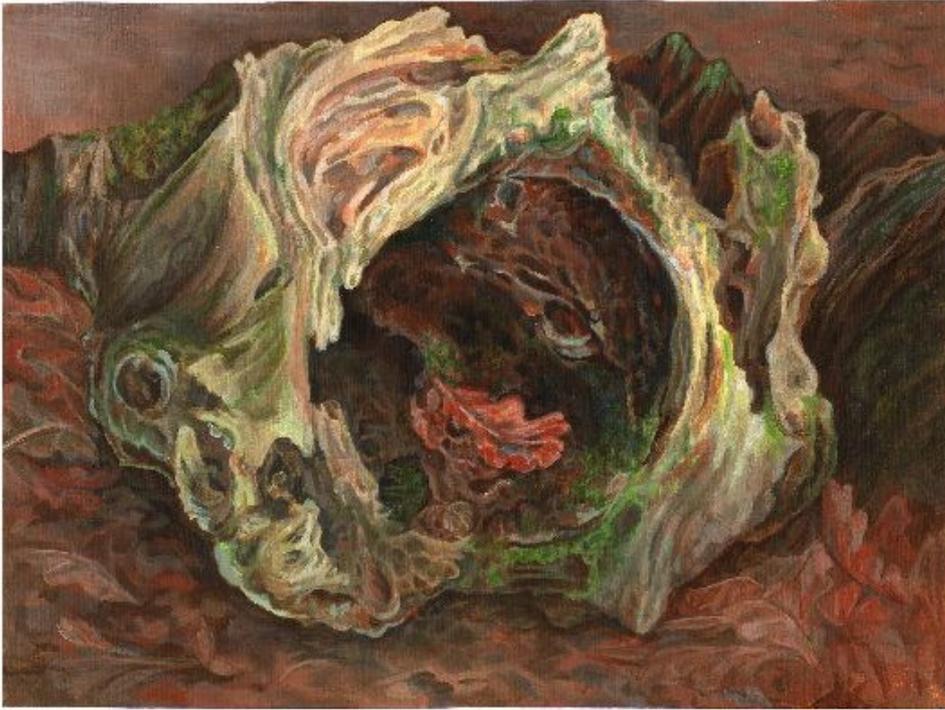


He is now on guard outside our log shelter surrounded by a small stumpery, one leg wedged inside a steel tube for stability. From here he casts a glance down the main ride towards the west, awaiting our approach.

My forays for usable materials have made me aware that my root sculpture is not alone; I have merely added an exhibit to a collection already in

place. Constantly evolving and being augmented, the trees and life forces within Long Wood have over many decades been happily fashioning an exhibition of their own. All that is needed to appreciate the works is the time to stand and ponder, the correct light and a little imagination. But, be warned, once you have entered into the spirit of this alternative world it becomes increasingly difficult to view anything with the same certainty and conviction.





Root – acrylic on paper

I photographed, sketched or painted the most distinctive fragments and creations to provide me with a record of their state at a particular moment in time. They will continue to transmute.



Rotting log – oil pastel on paper