

# February

## Weather Report

A mild, much calmer but very wet month. The rainfall total of just in excess of 120mm falling on already saturated ground resulted in standing water on the main ride and the stream flowing furiously.



There were only five frosty nights recorded and although snow fell during the night of the 7<sup>th</sup>, it had melted by mid-morning the following day.

Daytime temperatures regularly reached a maximum of 11 - 12 C.

## Extracts from Rodney's Diary

### *11<sup>th</sup> February*

*Trailer delivered to wood in truck.*

*Rolled across field track and dropped off just inside gate.*

*Tractor collected from Horam and squeezed into garage.*

*A real bargain and reliable*

*workhorse. A second hand Kubota compact 4WD, chosen because small enough to transport in the back of a*



*Ford Pick-up, and manoeuvre between closely growing trees. Along with a 4ft X7ft homemade box trailer it will hopefully save hours of manually moving wood and materials by hand.*

### ***13<sup>th</sup> February***

*First dry day for a while. Stream running strongly and track across the field boggy. Eight Hemlocks brought down at the edge of the new clearing. All about 100 feet tall and various diameters to around 16 inches at ground level, one large one with dead centre.*

### ***24<sup>th</sup> February***

*Prolonged wet spell continued and everything generally soggy and running with water. Eight more Hemlocks felled, half medium sized and the remainder small, but all around 100 feet tall.*

### ***26<sup>th</sup> February***

*Kubota to the wood for the first time! Trailer in use with no problems with wheel spin or slipping. Large volume of brash from felled Hemlocks taken to fire site and burnt. One 22 foot Hemlock log dragged to picnic site, with chain arrangement and locking gear working like a dream.*





## February

The absence of leaves on the deciduous trees focuses attention on the trunks and branches. Intricate, complicated patterns encircle, interlink, twist and turn and ascend until out of focus. Old wounds that have attempted to heal, forming irregular shapes with lumpy, ridged perimeters, interrupt the repetition.

Using the fingertips, surfaces varying from deeply fissured and rugged to smooth, satin – polished or with the texture of fine sandpaper, can be read like Braille. Reaching down the soft, almost furry, vaguely damp moss can be traced creeping up over the bark from the base, obscuring the individual characteristics of the tree.

On the moribund trunks and spongy rotting, fallen logs, fungal formations give rise to protrusions, encrustations and random splodges of white, yellow, cinnamon and chocolate brown, further enhancing the sensory experience.

## Bracket and Crust Fungi



*Ganoderma applanatum*

Fungi in woodland play a very important role in helping to process dead plant matter through decay, turning it into humus that can be re-used by living plants. Fungi are not able to produce their own food but must absorb nutrients from their surroundings.

Fungi are made up of minute hair-like threads called hyphae, which penetrate trunks, stumps, and logs and proceed to break down the cellulose and lignum content of wood.

Many wood-rotting fungi produce large bracket-shaped fruit bodies that look like shelves growing out of the sides of trees. Belonging to the Phylum Basidiomycota, their spores develop externally on the end of specialised cells - basidia. They form in layers lining tubes inside the brackets and are released through pores on the underside.

Some brackets like the *Ganoderma applanatum* found growing on standing dead wood at the edge of the pond are perennial, with the annual layers of tubes clearly visible inside the fruit body when it is sliced through.

Others are annual, such as the attractive *Trametes versicolor* discovered on a fallen log near the stream in the south-eastern section. These tough, leathery, concentrically zoned brackets are much



*Trametes versicolor*

smaller and thinner than the *Ganoderma applanatum*. The sample that I measured was only 2.5mm thick. The younger specimens felt velvety on the upper surface.

Both examples are known as white rot fungus because the rotting wood remains white as it decays.

At the edge of the path along the stream in the south-eastern section of Long Wood there is another fallen, decaying tree trunk with *Antrodia serialis* spreading along its length.

*Antrodia serialis*



Partly encrusting, partly hoof-like, this white fungus grows in overlapping tiers with the pore-bearing surface exposed vertically, looking like a series of cross sections through tiny organ pipes.



*Dichomitus campestris*

on the small cushions found growing on a branch on the ground near the picnic site.

It is impossible to see, without magnification, the pores in the resupinate *Peniophora quercina* encrusting a dead branch at the edge of the entrance track.



*Peniophora quercina*



## Jelly fungi

are a small group of fungi with gelatinous textured fruit bodies that belong to the class of Heterobasidiomycetes within the phylum Basidiomycota. Their basidia - the cells on which spores are produced, are either divided internally by longitudinal or transverse crosswalls called septa or split into prongs like a tuning fork. They form in a hymenium or layer on the outer surface of the fruiting bodies. In dry conditions jelly fungi can shrivel and become brittle, but will expand again after it rains.

A beautiful rich brown Tremella foliacea growing on a dead hazel branch close to the stream is my favourite example of a jelly fungus that I have discovered in Long Wood so far. It measured 18 centimetres long by 15 centimetres wide.



Tremella foliacea

I found two more of these soft, wrinkled, lobed fungi on dead and decaying wood in the 'wolf end' close to the western boundary. Half



Tremella foliacea

of a similarly brown coloured fruit body had fallen to the ground and the other specimen was much smaller in size and much paler in colour.



Tremella foliacea

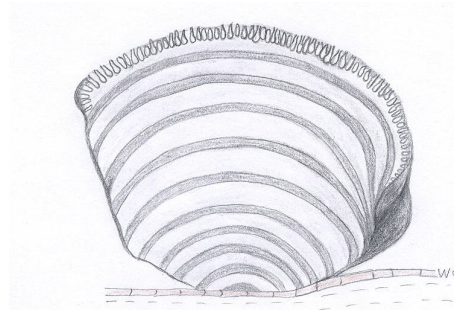
## **Ascomycota.**

Some of the fungi I have found on dead and decaying wood belong to the phylum Ascomycota within the kingdom of Fungi and are distinctly different from the species already described belonging to the phylum Basidiomycota.

The Ascomycetes develop fruiting bodies that are either open and cup-shaped - apothecia, or closed and more spherical - perithecia. The spores (or ascospores) are produced inside cylindrical, flask-shaped sacs or cells known as asci and when they are mature, they are forcibly ejected through an opening at the top of the ascus to be carried away in the air.

Sometimes a number of perithecia are combined within a larger structure. A cross-section through one of the *Daldinia concentrica* balls from the group in the photograph below shows how the perithecia are embedded in a communal structure called a stroma.

The *Daldinia* stroma is three-dimensional with the perithecia around the outer edge.



Between September 2006 and March 2007 I located and identified eighteen bracket and crust fungi, six species of jelly fungi and five examples of spore shooting fungi fruiting on dead or decaying wood, which together with others that I was unable to name were all recorded in my note book. *Daedalea quercina* is a sample from the pages of bracket and crust fungi, *Auricularia auricula-judae* a jelly and *Daldinia* a spore shooter.





Scientific name :-

*Daedalea quercina*  
Oak Maze gill

Location :-

Growing out of the end of an old stump (fallen). Wolf End on western boundary.

Description :-

A large, thick, corky greyish-brown bracket with an uneven upper surface. The pallid, creamy-grey pores on the under surface were large, irregular and maze-like in a radial arrangement.

Upper bracket: 17cm across

Date :- 11th October 06



Scientific name :-

*Auricularia auricula-judae*  
Jelly Ear

Location :-

On fallen decaying branch. Wolf End, ghyll bank.

Description :-

An ear-shaped gelatinous fruitbody. The outer surface covered with minute greyish downy hairs. The inner surface grey-brown and smooth.

This ear was the largest of the group. It measured 9cm x 6cm.

Date :- 9th February 07



Scientific name :-

*Daldinia concentrica*  
Cramp Balls

Location :-

On dead fallen wood at the western boundary

Description :-

A large group of very hard but surprisingly lightweight black and black-brown balls, 3 to 5.5 cm in diameter squashed up close together. Hard, brittle flesh in silvery-grey and blackish grey concentric zones.

Date :- 25th March 07

## The Caravan

Just past the top of the entrance slope in a space between towering conifer trunks, a dirty-white box with rounded corners sat on needle-coated ground. It must have originally been towed behind a vehicle but over time had settled into its resting place, the wheels no longer circular or functional, the carcass now immovable.

I peered through rectangular windows at a clean, neat interior coated and wrapped in gaudy, man-made materials. Rodney turned a key in the lock and pulled back the door to let stale vapours snake out into open air.

I would not enter this human nest box.

I could not provide a sensible reason.

Did I expect to be suddenly transported science-fiction style into another dimension? Would some alien force seep from behind the panelling to engulf me?



No.

Wouldn't I prefer to take refuge within on a cold, wet day and sit clasping my hands around a warming mug of liquid?

No.

It held no appeal whatsoever.

Like sensing anxiety and apprehension in chilled air on a particular spot in the Wolf End, or being conscious of a heavy melancholy surrounding the cant marker close by the stream, I instinctively knew nothing could persuade me to step over the threshold into that caravan.

We use it for storage. Various paraphernalia required during labouring and tools not valuable enough to be worth stealing are stacked inside cupboards; useless seating has been removed to accommodate bulkier items on the floor. Packing up at the end of the day it is possible to lay my plastic handled, grip-ended walking stick and grubby gloves across the draining board by reaching around the doorframe.

I have never set foot inside.

When I came to map our wood in the style of Christopher Robin's Hundred Acres, 'The Caravan' was the first reference point to be plotted and named. It is a very useful landmark.



