

Crow Wood



Morning Rising. (Over Crow Wood).

A sort of visual journal.

John Hodgkinson

This is a story of my personal experience, which is largely in my daily walk in Crow Wood with Teinis, our dog. This is a small area of mossy woodland near to our home which has been called this by people living in our house since it was first built in 1906.

Whilst I think a focus is good, it perhaps should be remembered that moss lives through moisture, it comes close to death when it becomes too dry! Maybe this is also metaphorically true of recollection? I don't claim to be a biologist, I'm actually an artist, and the wonder of what I see makes me want to share what I find, sometimes tangentially when the spirit speaks! This is particularly the case during this pandemic, when most of the news is depressing, and there is so much misery in the air.

I have always considered that travel can be pleasant, but you don't need it for enlightenment. There are incredible delights for contemplation beneath ones feet at all times. You just need to look! The distance of a journey is measured not in miles or kilometres, but in the mind.

I didn't get a camera until I was in my thirties, I preferred drawing & note making. When I eventually got one I thought for a long time that it was too much like cheating. I was also very dissatisfied with the shortfall between what I actually saw, and what the camera recorded which was always far too bland. I gradually & reluctantly started tweaking the pictures a little to get closer to the truth of my experience.

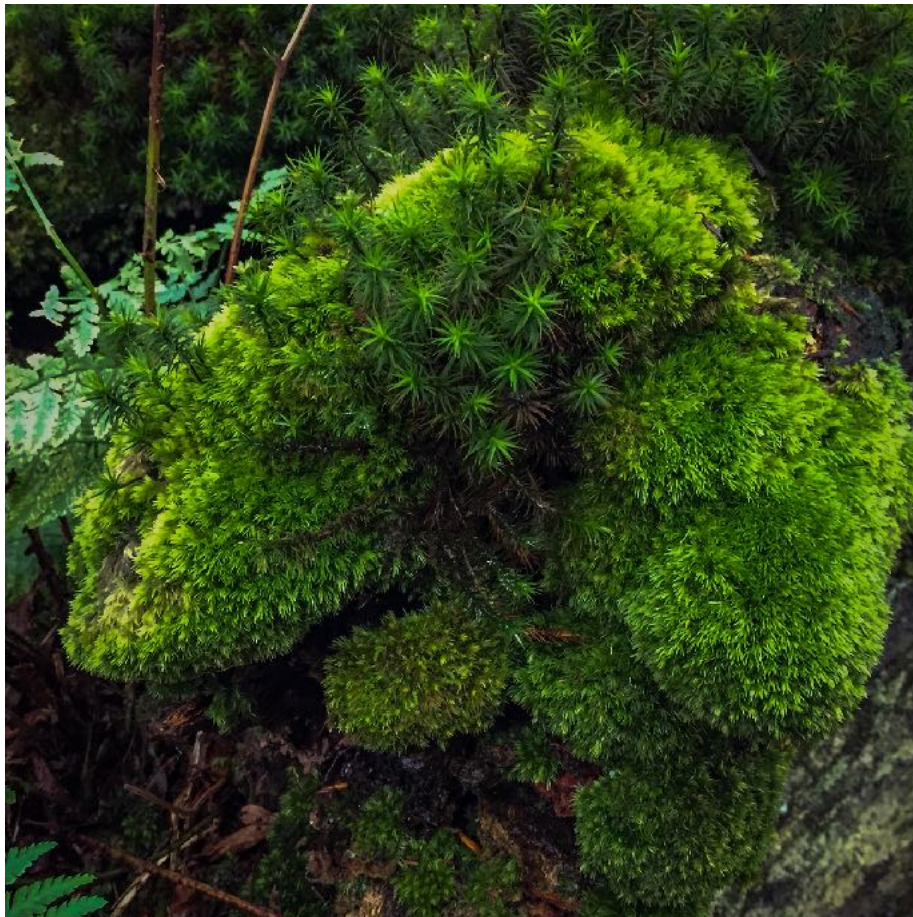
I don't edit for effect, but to get the image closer to what I actually saw & felt, rather than the somewhat bland result which the camera settings usually automatically deliver.

I use an iPhone, mostly because it is easy to slip into my pocket as I go out. It's usually too much of a self conscious ritual to get out the 'proper' camera, and this would also involve a certain degree of artifice and perhaps suggest an expectation of the intention to get a serious result. The iPhone is casual. It carries no expectations. If something strikes me as interesting in some way (and it depends on mood and how my mind takes me at the time) then it is saved as a specimen. Sometimes a single picture, sometimes nothing at all. Often, one thing will lead to another and a whole string of observations end up in the phone.

Back home, as soon as possible, I transfer these specimens to the iPad and edit them while the experience is fresh and the memory is vivid. I usually reduce exposure because the camera setting is averaged (typically for faces). I might increase contrast a little, darken or lighten highlights as appropriate, slightly increase vibrancy and only very slightly increase saturation. Slight changes. Intensity and sharpening also just a slight amount. I use Photoshop express on the iPad, but the built in edit controls are ok. I try to avoid overdosing on the edits unless the half-light shade colours in the wood are extraordinary and worth bringing to attention.

Another tip from good painters is to include a small patch of complementary colour, (for example a dead beech leaf) in the shot. It gives something to reference the mass of green against.

March 2017
Moss World, Crow Wood.



19 August 2018
The rain has brought
out wonders on a dried
out path.



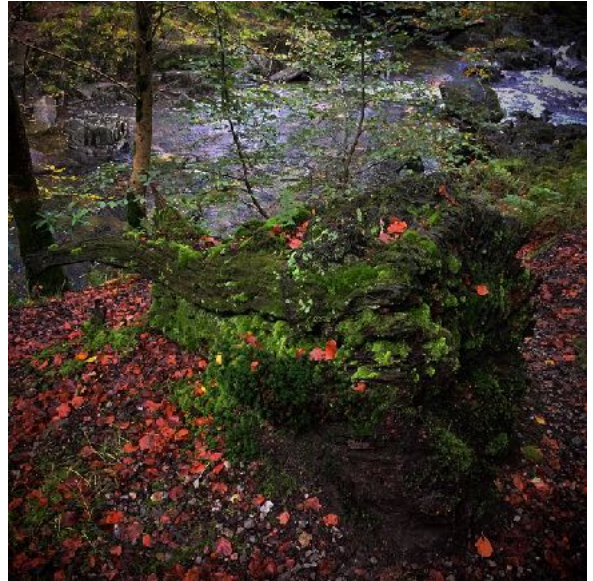
20 September 2018
Down in the forest
something stirred.
Crow Wood, Rydal,
UK.



A lichen tree. (Crow
Wood, Rydal, UK).

4 October 2019

I love this time of year, when the gentle autumn rain makes my daily walk bloom with astonishing colour.





27 November 2019

There's something about a dull, overcast day when the light starts to fail. Things fade into twilight, but the quiet mosses around my home become infused with luminescence and dominate. The camera never does justice to this experience, you have to work on it a bit to attempt to convey something of the experience.

Just a bit of wall down the hill from the house.



Draped like an old blanket



Roots feeling their way into a much more transient timespan.

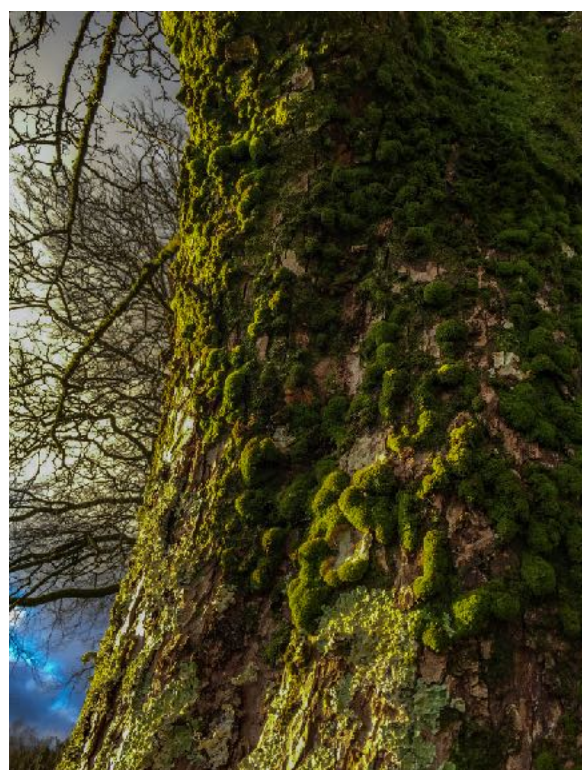


3rd January 2020

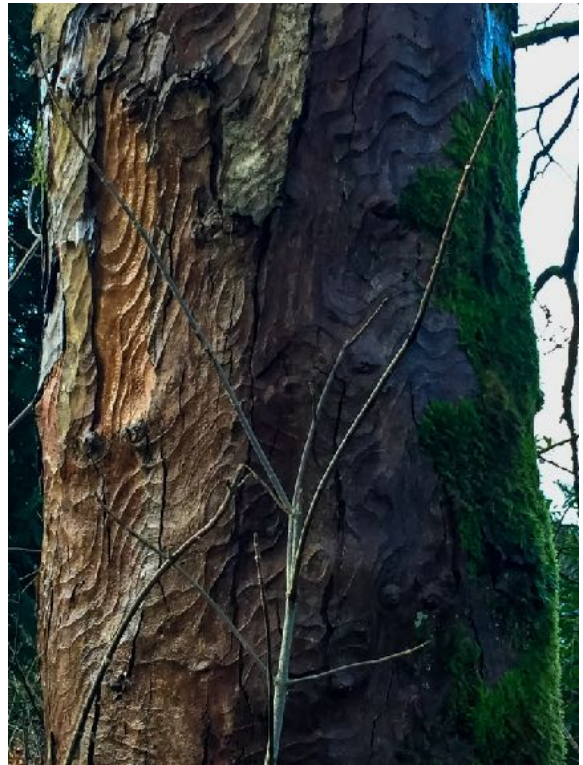
Moss hunt round Crow Wood & the beck.

“Only farmers and summer guests walk on the moss. What they don't know - and it cannot be repeated too often - is that moss is terribly frail. Step on it once and it rises the next time it rains. The second time, it doesn't rise back up. And the third time you step on moss, it dies.”

— Tove Jansson, *The Summer Book*.



12 January 2020
Down in Crow Wood, this afternoon.

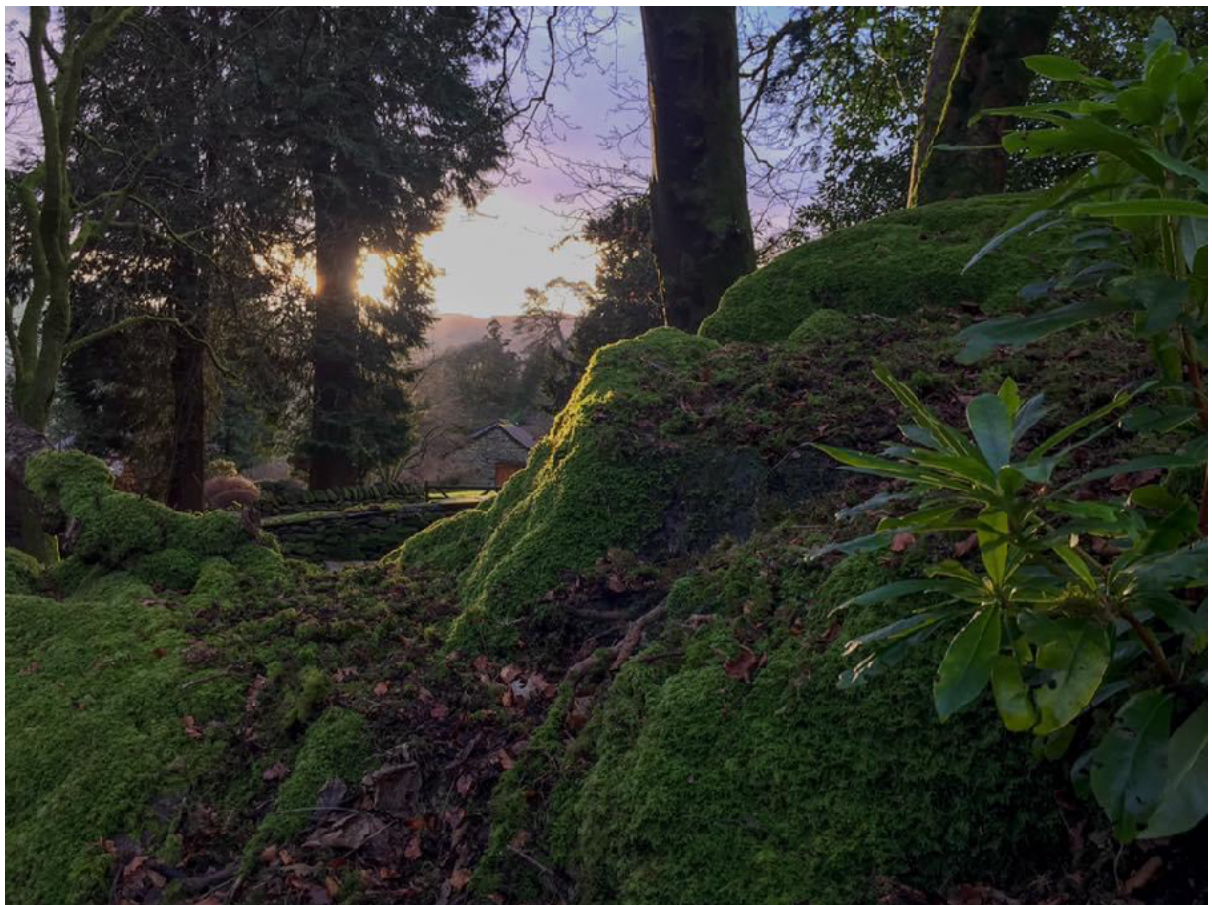




18 January 2020
The usual stroll this afternoon through Crow Wood. Every time there is something to be astonished by. (Usually I forget my phone).



22 January 2020
Afternoon walk on an unremarkable day down the lane and Crow Wood.

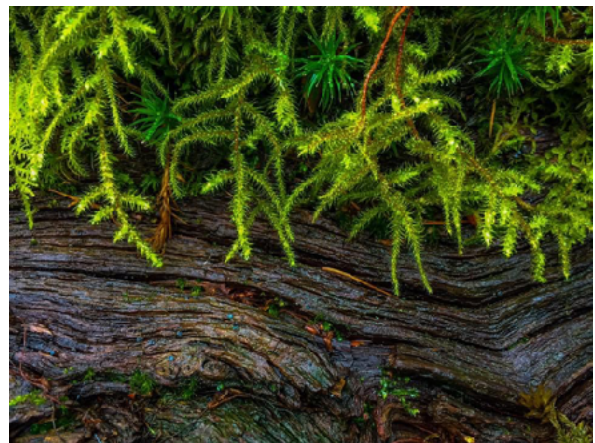
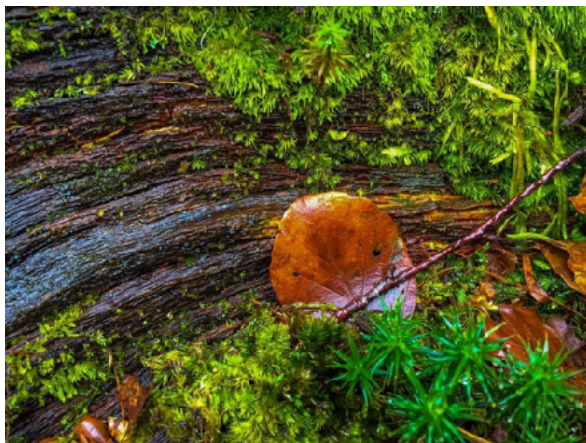


25 January 2020

An unpromising damp grey & gloomy day of mizzle. Light fading. Ideal for moss hunting. The light brings out the luminance in the moss, and the wet covers all like a varnish brings out the qualities in an old and dusty painting.



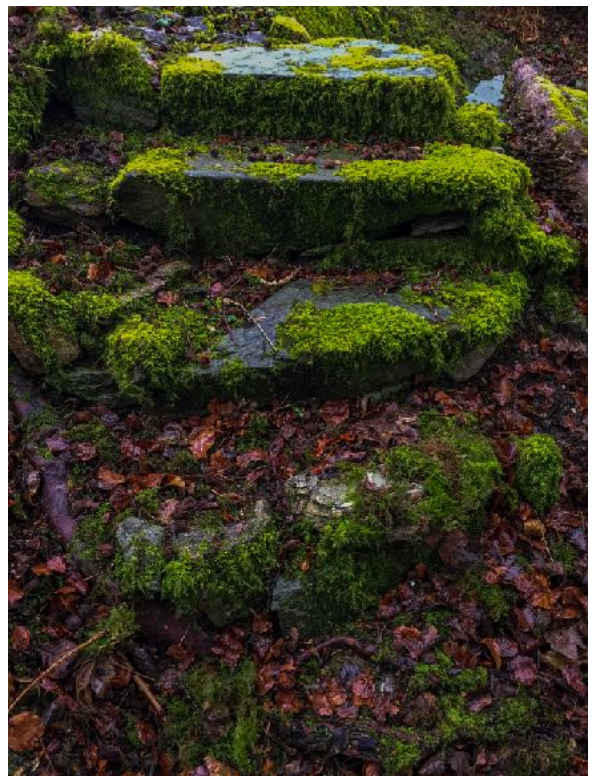
My old familiar stroll in Crow Wood, to let familiarity dispel contempt.



An old fallen tree.

26 January 2020

Today's stroll, the usual Crow Wood in dull guise. I let Teinis the dog take me off the path so see something different.



28 January 2020

Mental Moss on a cold grey dull drizzly day. The usual over-familiar stroll, so easy to hunker down into the coat and pass everything by in order to get back soon into the cozy house. (The captions tell the tale).



You need to get your eye in. Just below the house gate, looking carefully at something commonplace, unregarded. Let the shapes and transient detail seep in. Enjoy the trip. Let the mind unfold and let go of its sense of purpose. In a place of great picturesque beauty this can be hard (I am lucky to live here), so focussing on the little things beneath is a good way to start.



Close in, let the colours burn into the mind, they get brighter and deeper as you look, you can taste them.

Under your feet, on the concrete road there are always wonders to revel in. Once your eye is engaged and the grip of the conscious mind loosened, you can't avoid astonishment.



After a while, you can look more around, and the 'big picture' can be seen through the 'less obvious' filter.



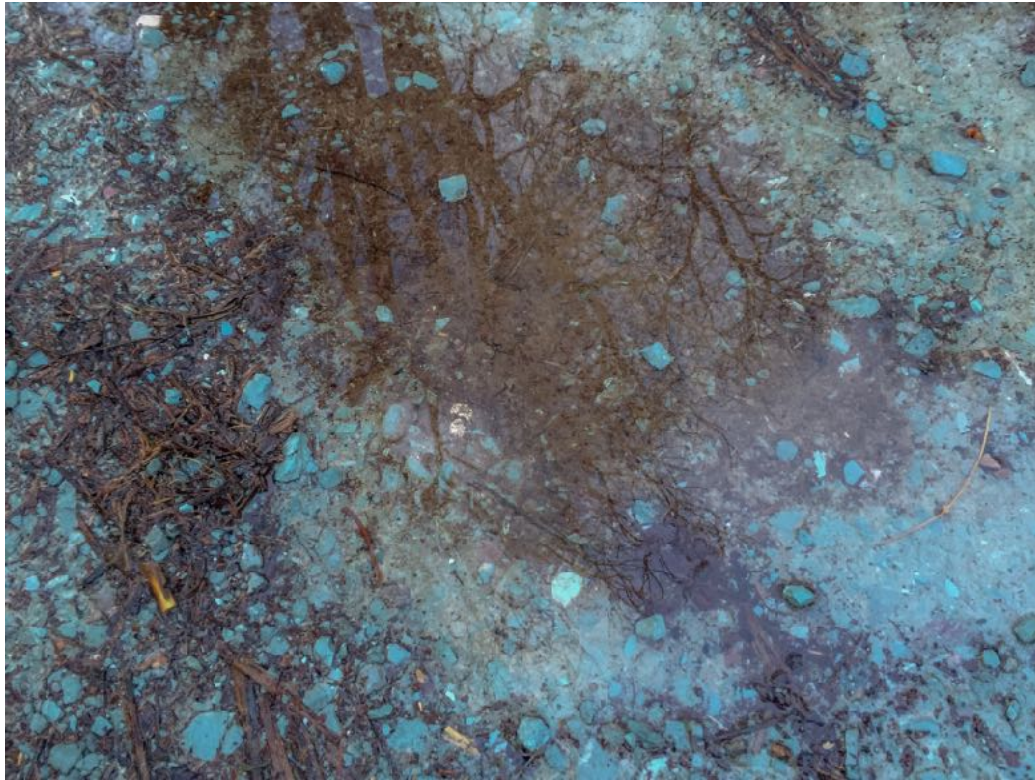


Back to the ground beneath, and quick glances at passing things.



Where the cars park, below the attention level, a boundary stone.





Letting the
Neolithic in,
hidden
worlds on
the other
side of the
ground.



A camera
can frame
other
landscapes,
other worlds.
Wilder,
unexplored.



By the cars
in the Hall
grounds,
ciphers and
arabesques
from the real
world.



Returning
through the
wood, the
path
underfoot
glows bright
with
epiphanies
of colour.

And back up the lane where we started. Half an hour of adventures in wonderland!



12 February 2020
Ahead, a vast country never
seen before,
no matter how often you have
passed this way:
flowers unpicked, fields
rearranged, mysterious lore
chipped by the chaffinch from
the elder spray —

Behind, the known world's
bustle and its glare
fade into nothingness. The
rusty catch
holds back the breathing of
enchanted air —
Step forward, then, and lift the
latch —



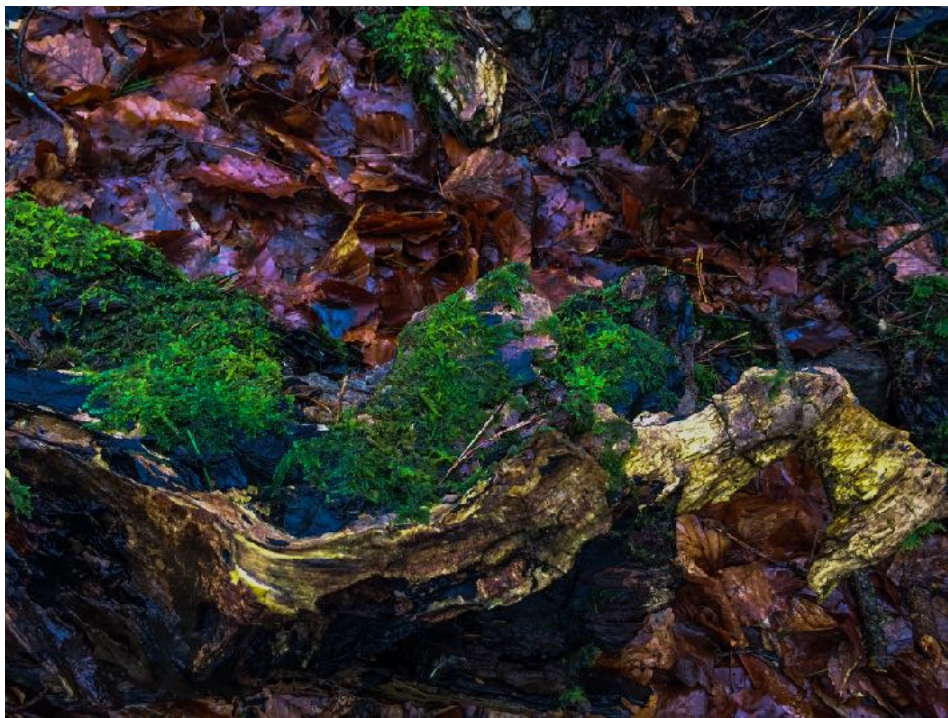
Bunyan: Pilgrims Progress, section 1



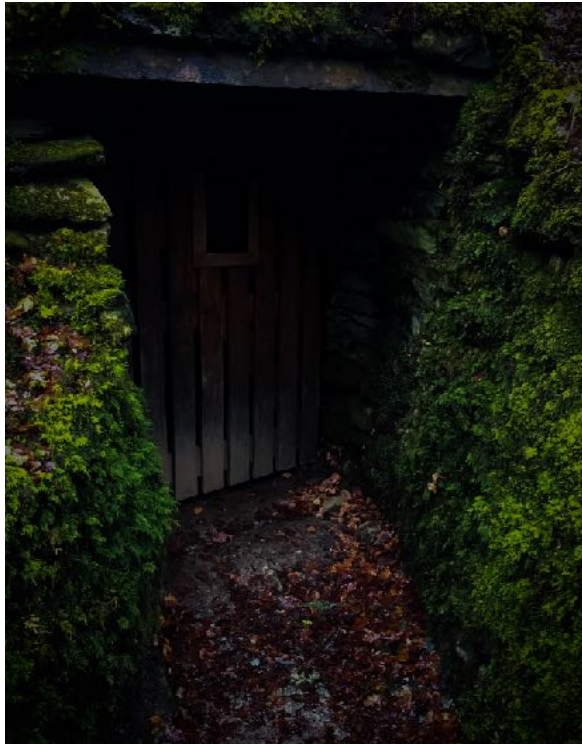
14 February 2020
Once more, Crow
Wood in the
mizzling mists.

“What you look
hard at seems to
look hard at you”
Gerard Manley
Hopkins

18 February 2020
“We talk too much.
We ought to talk
less and draw more.
For my part, I
should like to lose
the habit of
conversation and,
like nature, express
myself entirely in
drawings. That fig
tree, this little snake,
the cysalis lying
there in front of the
window quietly
awaiting the future
– all these are
pregnant with
meaning. Indeed,
anyone who knew
how to decipher
them properly
would soon be able
to do without all
writing and speech!
The more I think
about it, the more
speech seems to be
useless, idle, I might
almost say effete, so
that we are terrified
in the face of the
quiet earnestness of
nature, and her
silence, whenever
we encounter it
concentrated into a
solitary rockface or
in the desolation of
the ancient hills!”



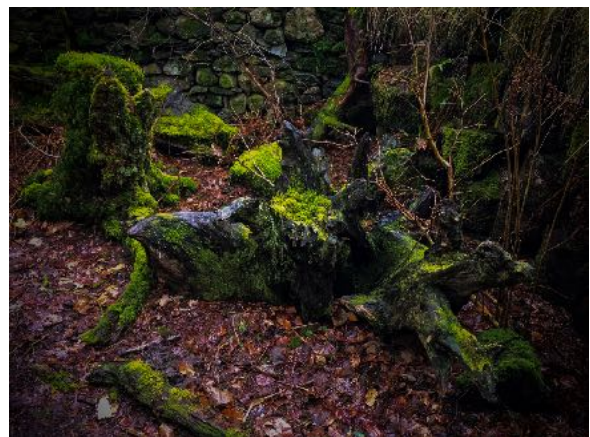
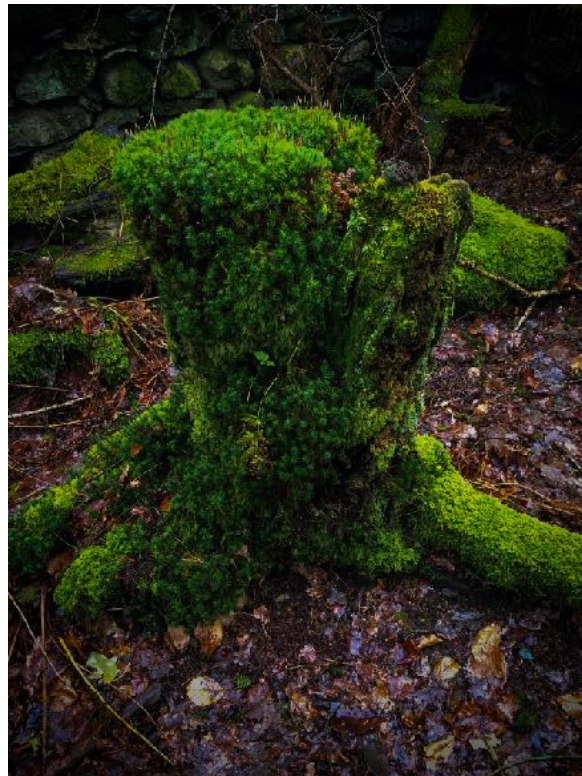
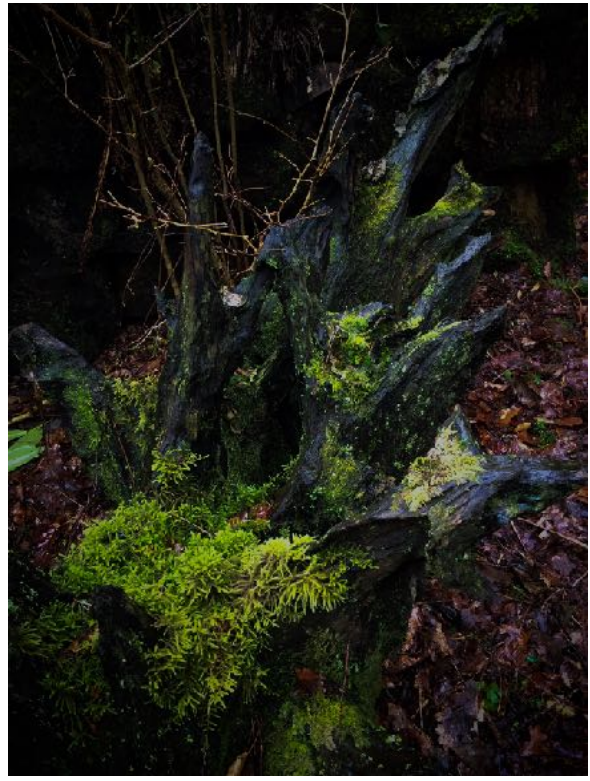
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



19 February 2020

Says my Lord to my Lady as he mounted his horse,
"Beware of Long Lankin that lives in the moss."
(Old English Ballad)

Our climate was once compared with Lapland rather than the rest of England! It's been very wet during the last month or two, but this gives our moss a neon aspect. A dry summer makes it hibernate into desiccated dullness in comparison. 'Bad weather' is better weather, for the landscape needs variety.

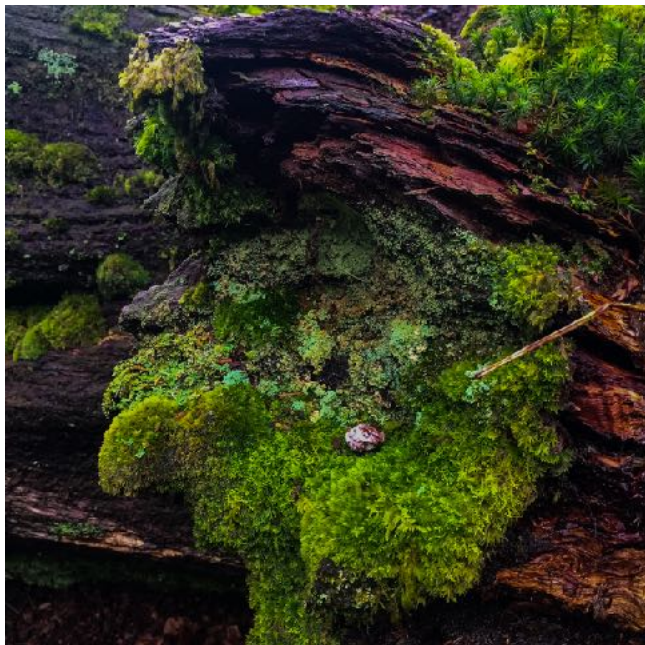


24 February 2020

I didn't expect to see much when I set out to Crow Wood this afternoon. The day had been gloomy, starting with snow which settled, but turned to sleety rain and the snow-line had shifted to above our house. Nearly didn't bother to take my phone with me. Inevitably, I drifted off path and became lost and out of time and space as my eye kicked in. Maybe it's worth posting all the photos (except for two or three accidental and off focus ones). In sequence, and with something of the thoughts that came to mind as I walked.



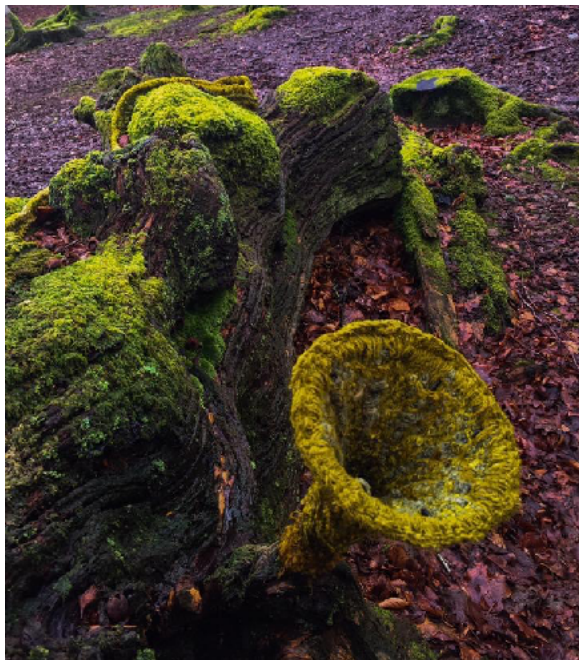
The log by the ice house steps which I pass each time.



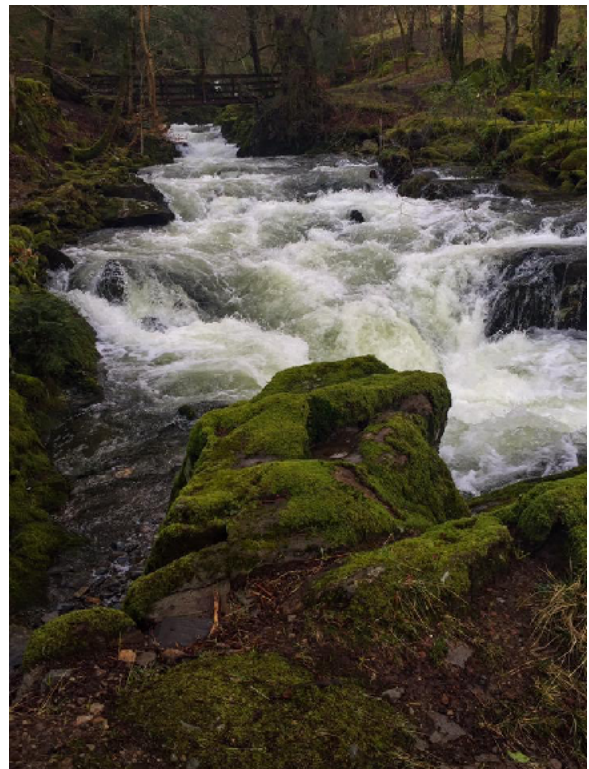
The stump next to it (I added the beech husk because it was lonely on the ground and needed it's sense of importance restoring).



By the path above the Beck, this is also becoming a pandemic. It's something of a growing tradition on popular walks. There's a story of a pub in the West Country, where the boys of the village who volunteered in WW1 knocked a coin into the roof beam over the bar. After armistice, the survivors returned and took down their coins for their first pint back. The rest stay there to this day. Maybe this is an echo, although I doubt if many who leave coins know the story. In turn, it's maybe an echo of the story of King Dunmail's cairn on Dunmail Raise, between Grasmere and Thirlmere, where the Iron Age warriors who went to battle left a stone, and collected a stone on their return. The cairn (now a listed ancient monument) is still there, a monument to the number killed.

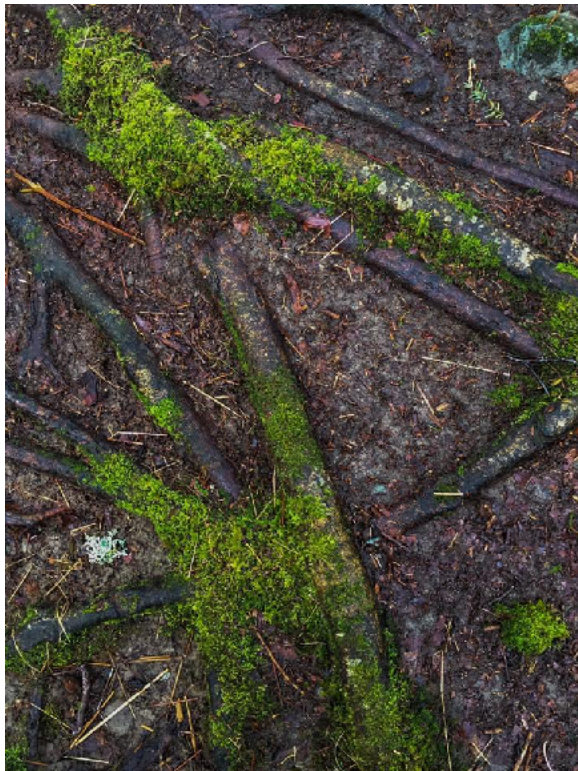
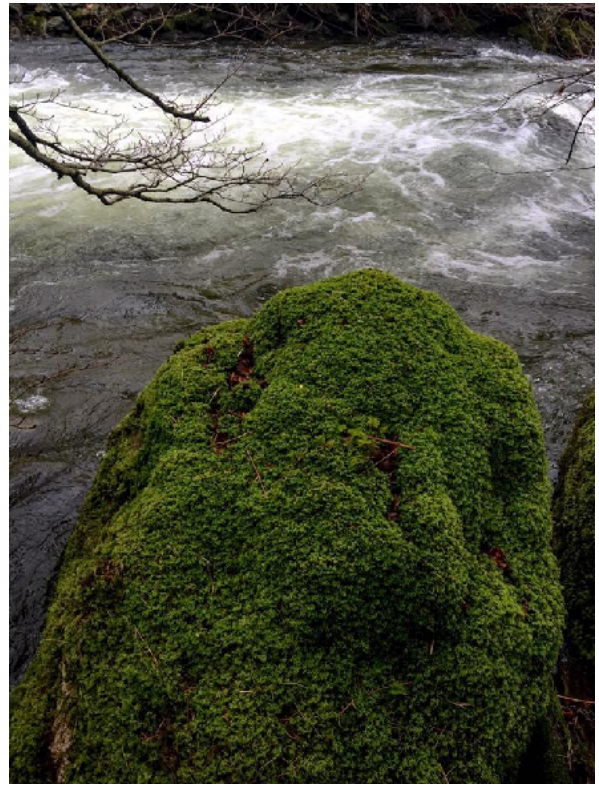
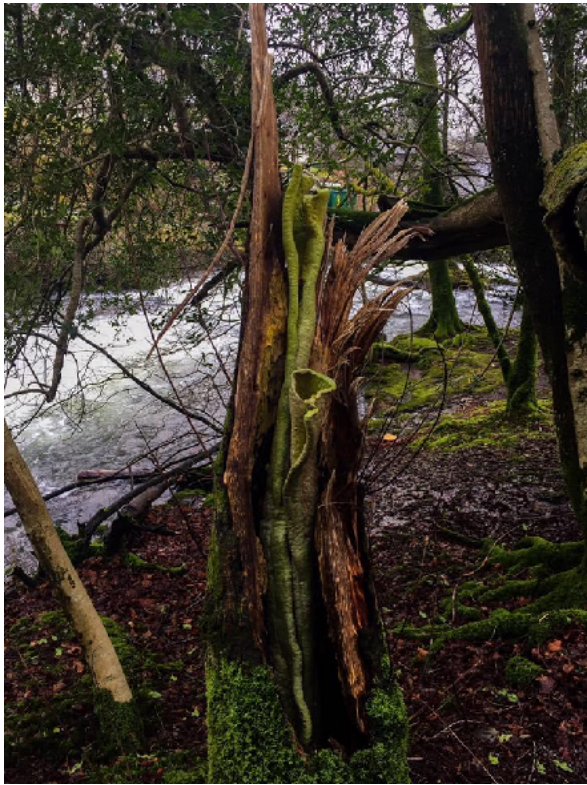


The colours in the wood trumpet praises for the lichens.



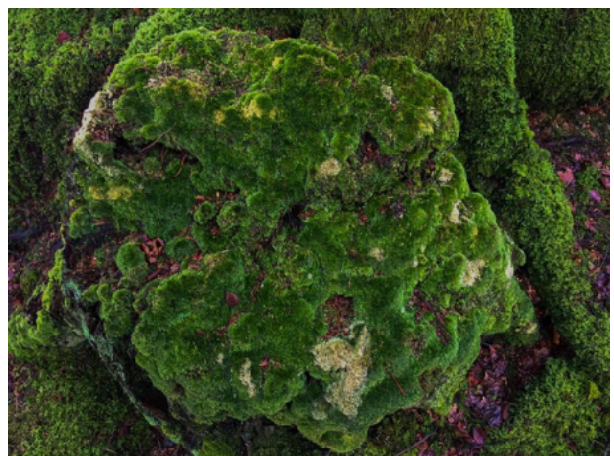
The Beck, flow and velvet.
More flow, more power,
more velvet.

Curious growths. & branches are antennae for the flow of the beck by velvet rocks.

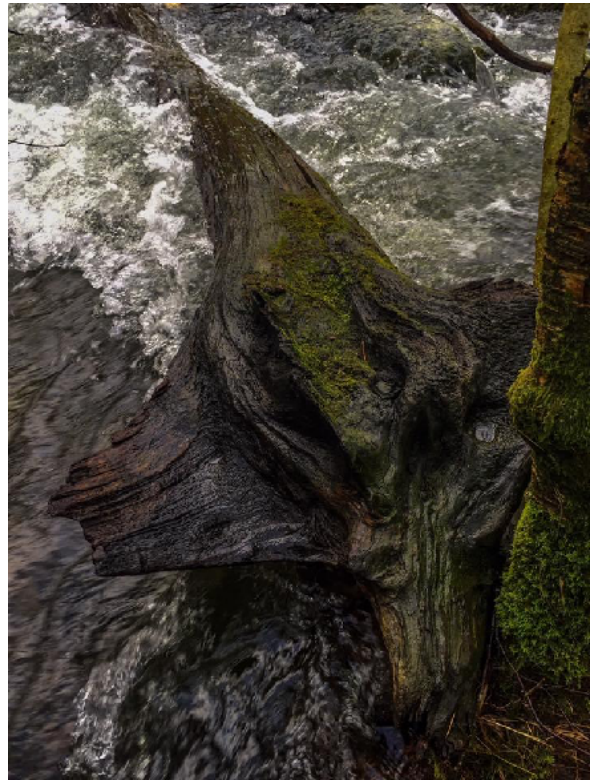
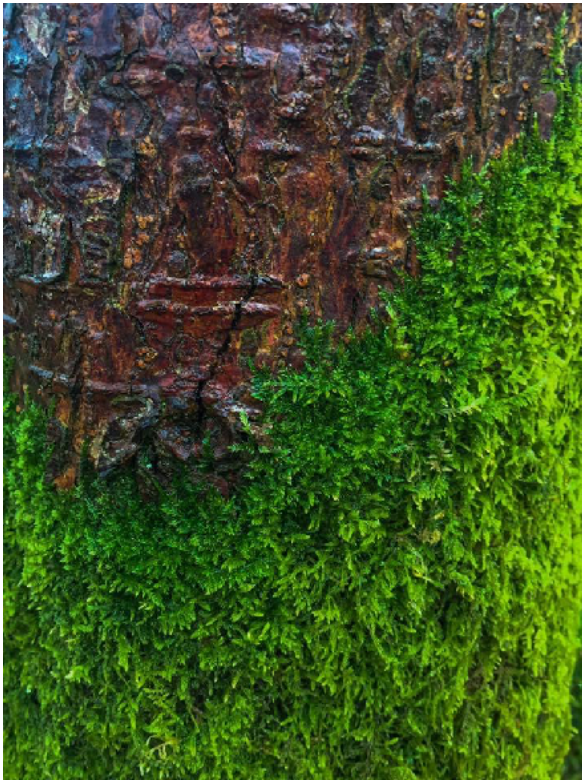


So distracting are the waters that it's easy to miss the glory underfoot. I hit the shutter by accident but then found this whilst getting rid of the resulting blur.

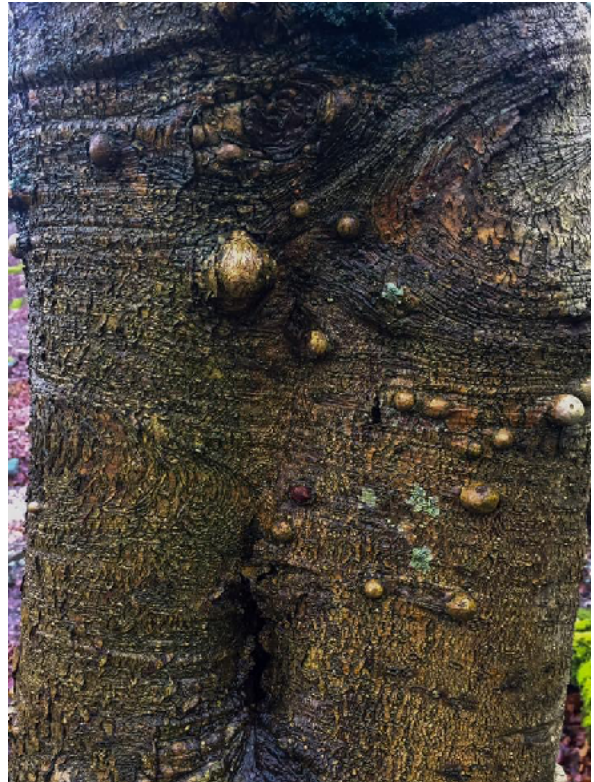
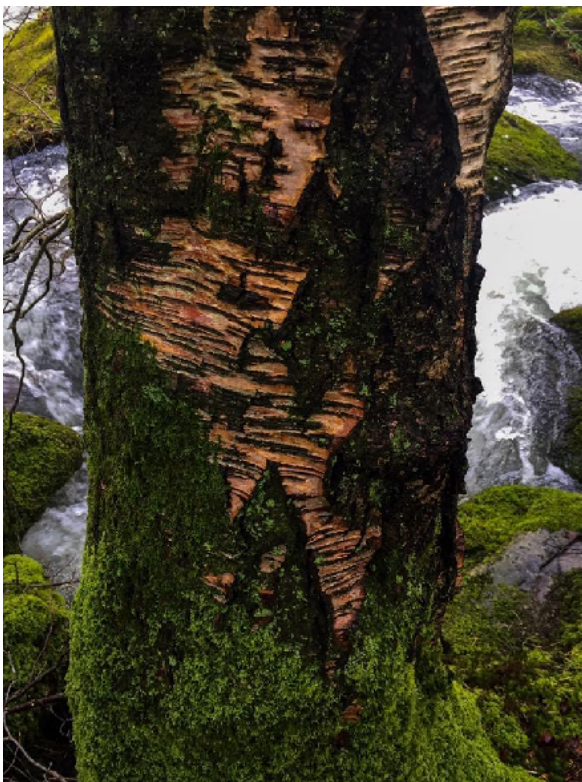
Utter and lurid lushness.



I am just below the snow-line but this is the moss-line. Water dragons lunge out as you pass.

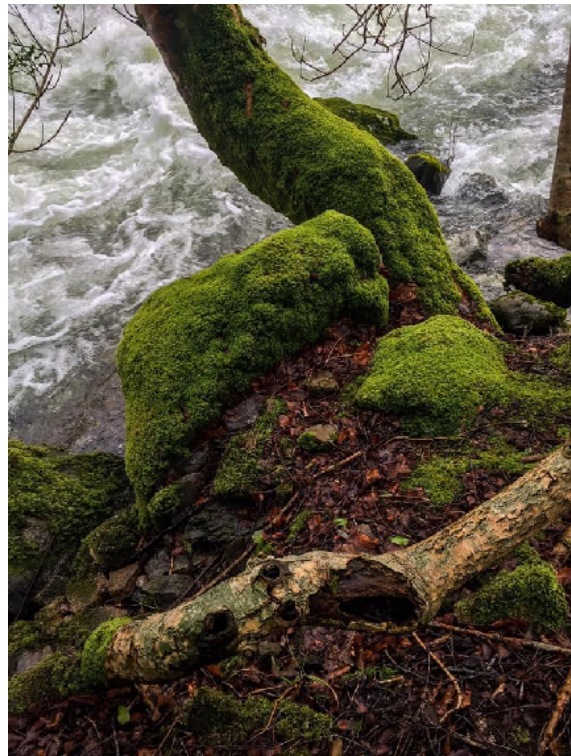
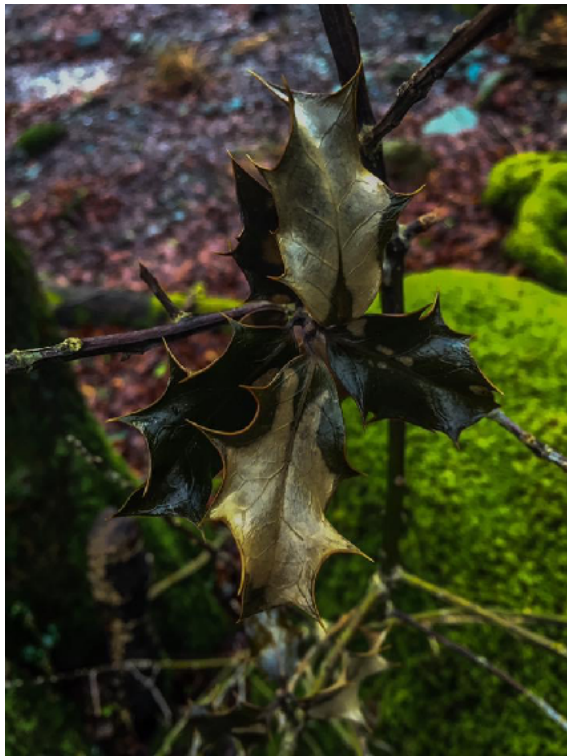


The twist of a tree.

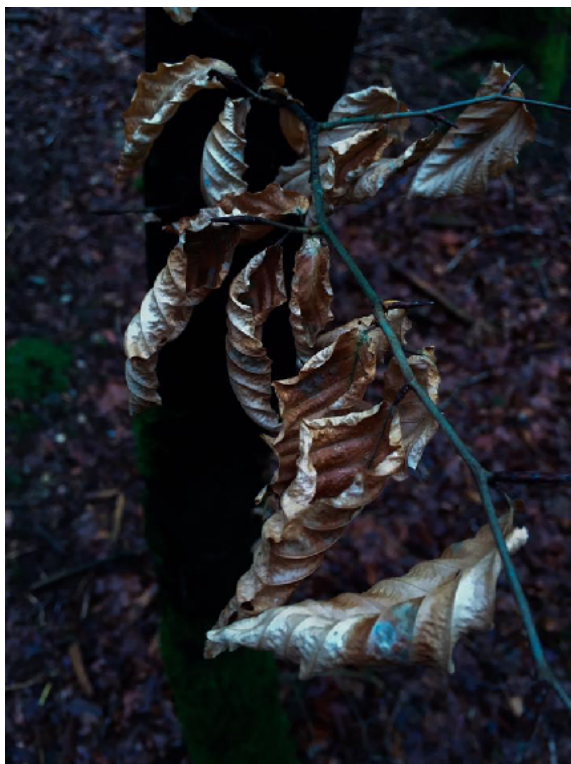


It's galling

Withering holly in a shadowed place.



The waters energy, the comparative slowness of tree and moss, and the discarded limbs of past life. Sometimes it's almost too much, it makes you see with the focus of hallucination, but the experience is all too real if you reach out and grasp it.



A numinous bright pathway between greens and browns splits into inner darkness & a darkness of dead leaves not yet cast in a secret place.



An enigma near the gate, a ogham message from the crow shaman of the wood?

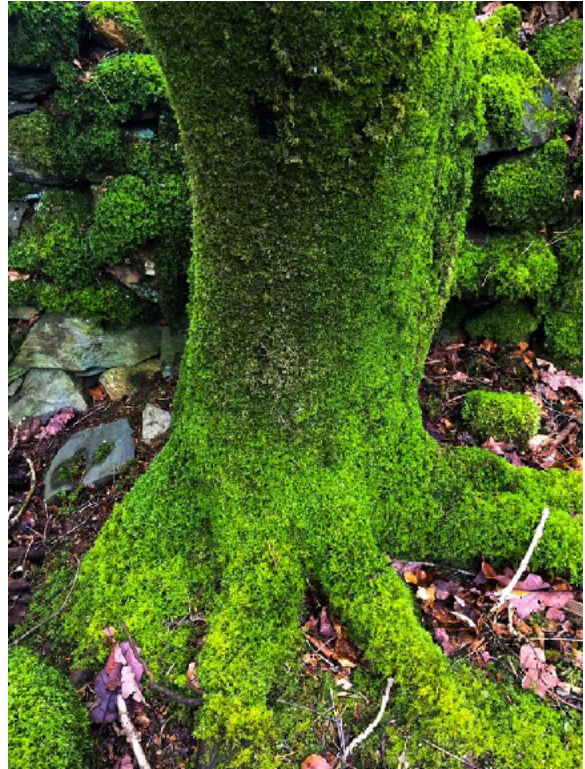


The dog bounds through the gate on the way home.

1 March 2020
Today's stroll through Crow Wood.



A Perfect garden in a stump.



Up the wall.

Blowin' in the wind.



The electrifying beauty when nature blows a fuse.

3 March 2020

Whistle, and I'll come to you. (A vision in the mossy wood).



11th March

Crow Wood, this afternoon. The recent rains have made everything so lush.



15 March 2020

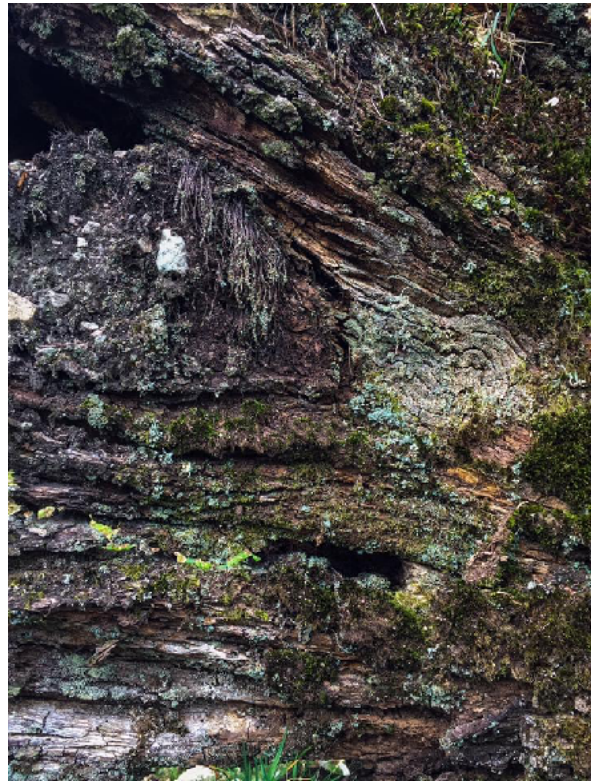
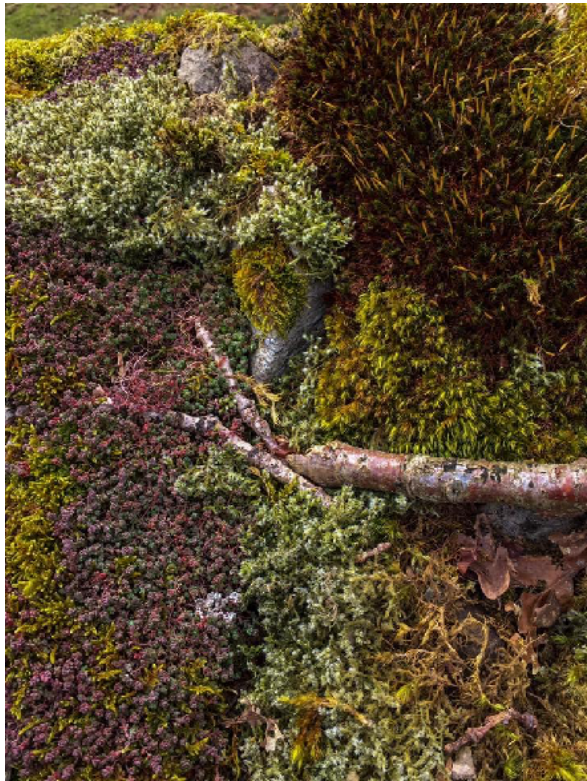
Just because I am 'socially isolating' doesn't mean I have to deny the beauty in our world. This little wonder, found on moss beneath my feet as I walked back down the hill is here visually isolated from its environment. It's beauty and wonder are amplified. So it is with social isolation, there is still so much to enjoy and enrich - and perhaps more time to spend in attendance to that. Don't forget that an apparently half empty cup is really half full.



"In visual perception a colour is almost never seen as it really is - as it physically is. This fact makes colour the most relative medium in art." Joseph Albers

4 April 2020

I didn't go out looking for mossy type things, or indeed anything in particular, but sometimes life decides these things for you. Determinism or free will?



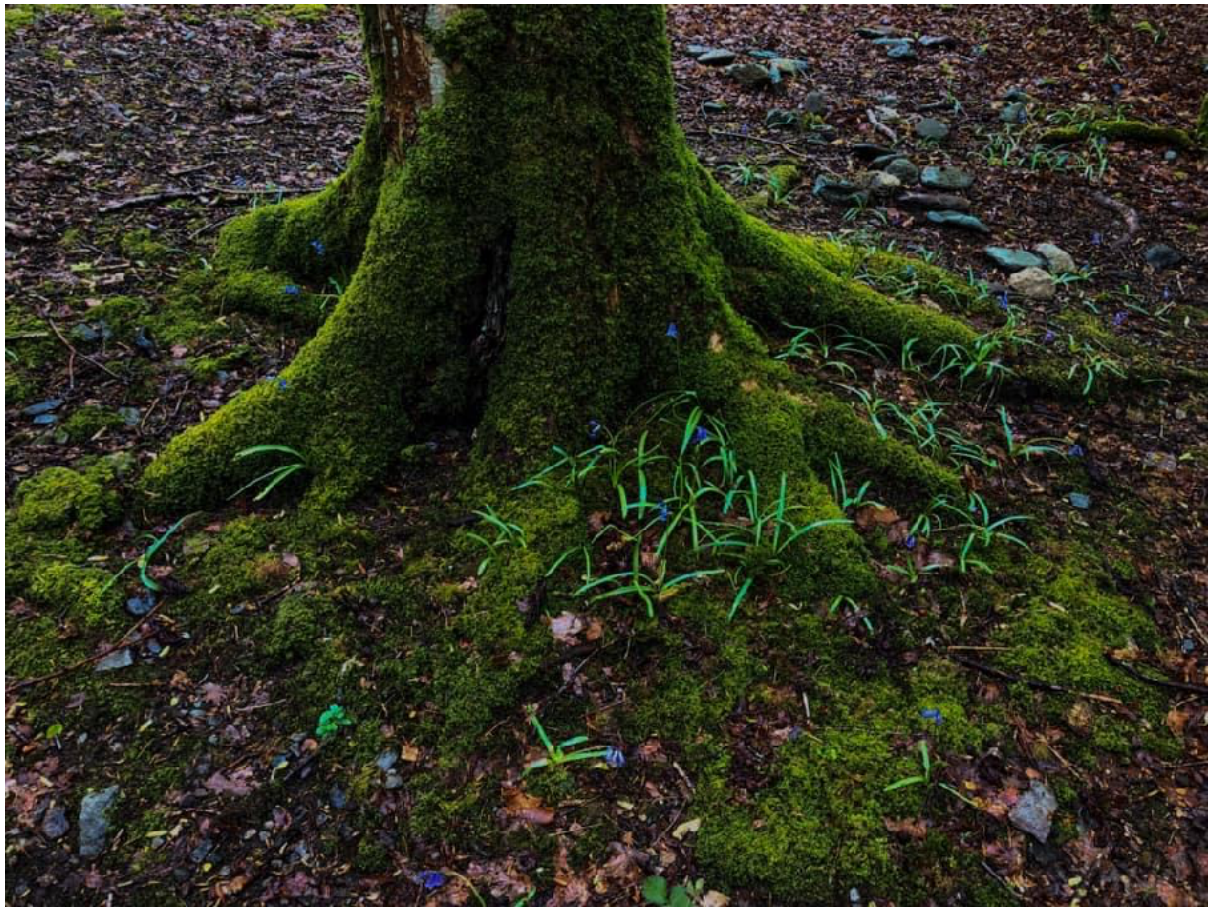
30 April 2020

Down in Crow wood, five weeks with no rain have left the moss dried and desiccated. We had a little light rain today so it's reawakening into a green luminosity which must come soon. How appropriate, because it will be May Day tomorrow, to welcome in the May, with a soft green booming in the twilight liminal wood.



4th May

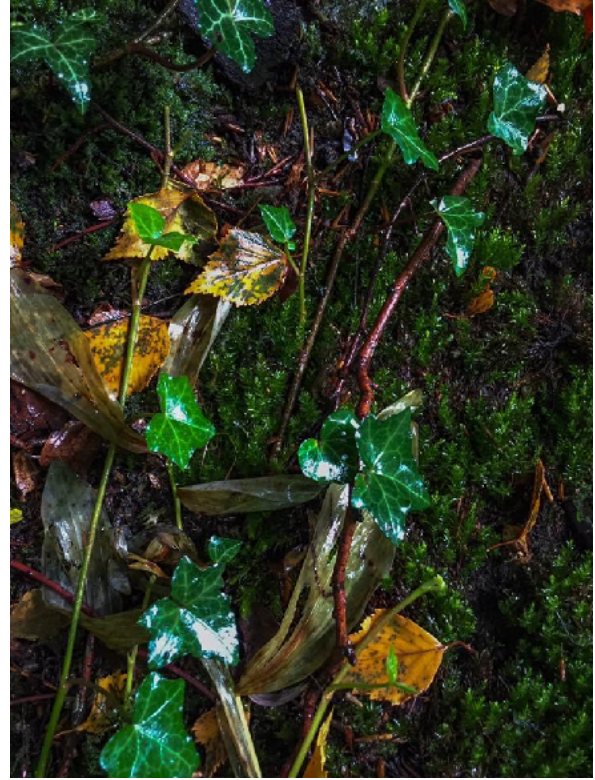
Crow Wood. 'Varnishing day at the Academy'. After a long and cold dry spell, everything was desiccated and dried out, colour reduced to ghost pastels of what can be. Twenty four hours of decisive rain and the air is washed clean and everything restored to sheer luminous opulence.





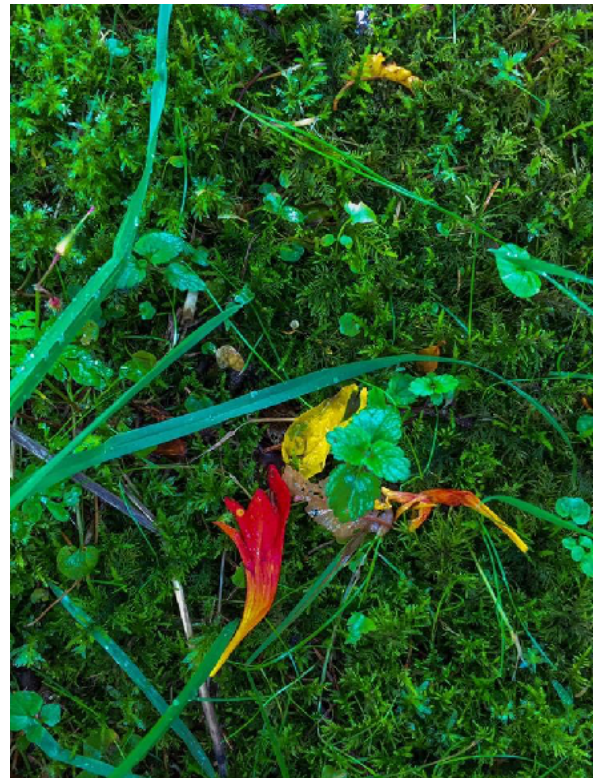
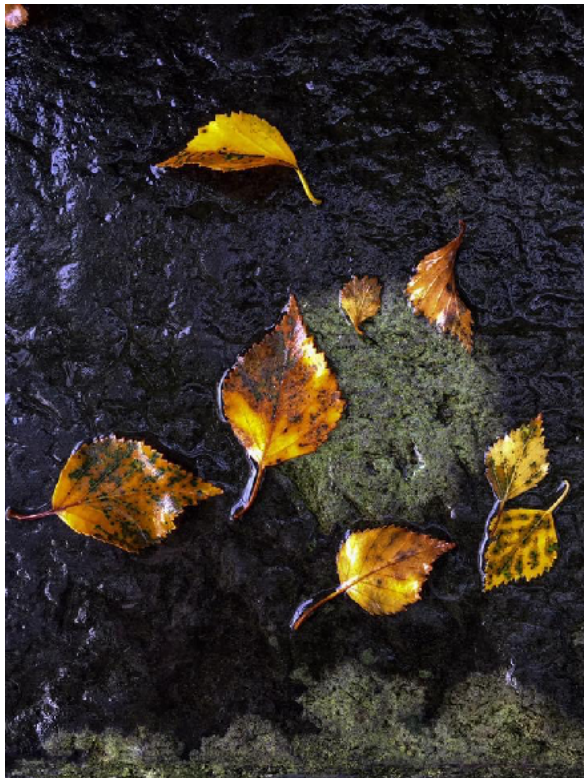
18th May 2020

We really needed this, our first gentle twelve hours of drizzly rain since lockdown. Moss begins to recover.



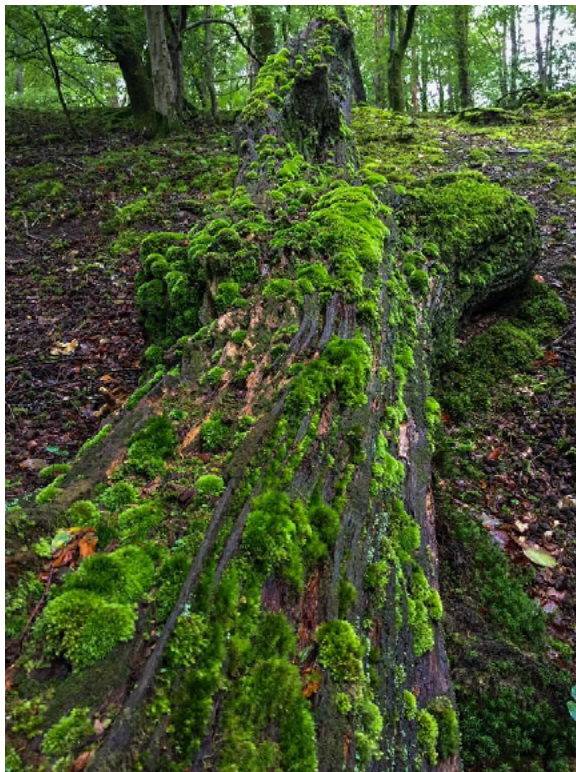
23 July 2020

Varnishing Day at the Academy. Or Crow Wood to be precise. After a morning of soft rain I took Teinis round the wood with the shade of Turner there, in a frenzy working into each desiccated patch of ground, & bringing out the superlatives invisible within.



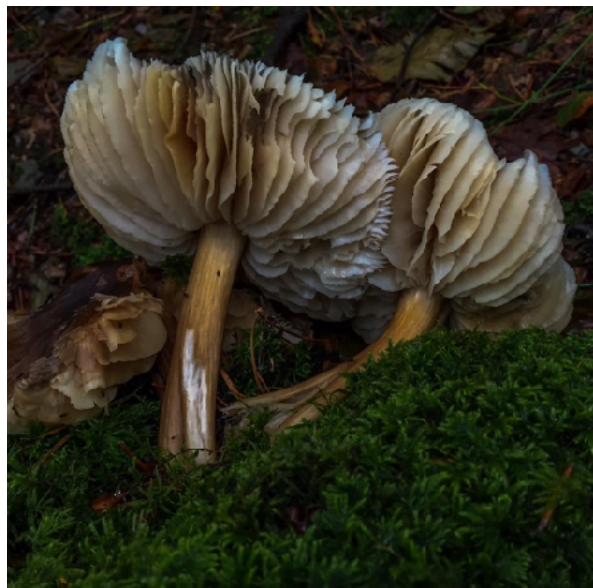


I hadn't taken my phone, and perhaps that was as well because if I had, I would have been out for hours! The rain had reached all parts, and each patch of moss was ignited with green fire, jumping like lightning along wires of grass and reed strands and each patch of ground beneath my feet inflamed with colours deeper than imagination. Beads of rain jewelizing the settings of moss, stumps and tree trunks. Rain running down the trees making striations of luminous tiger-stripes. Single leaves, glued to stones by rain-varnish each seemed to be portentous with stories in a language unknown whispered from beneath the skin of nature but communicating perfectly through the filaments of instinct tingling inside my skin. Ciphers of charms and spells straight from the great Shaman in control. Every detail connected to the whole, and quivering with life itself.



26 July 2020
Varnishing Day at the Academy.
Or Crow Wood to be precise.

Down in Crow Wood this afternoon, moist drizzle making beacons of illumination in the gloomier parts.



1 August 2020
More than moss today!

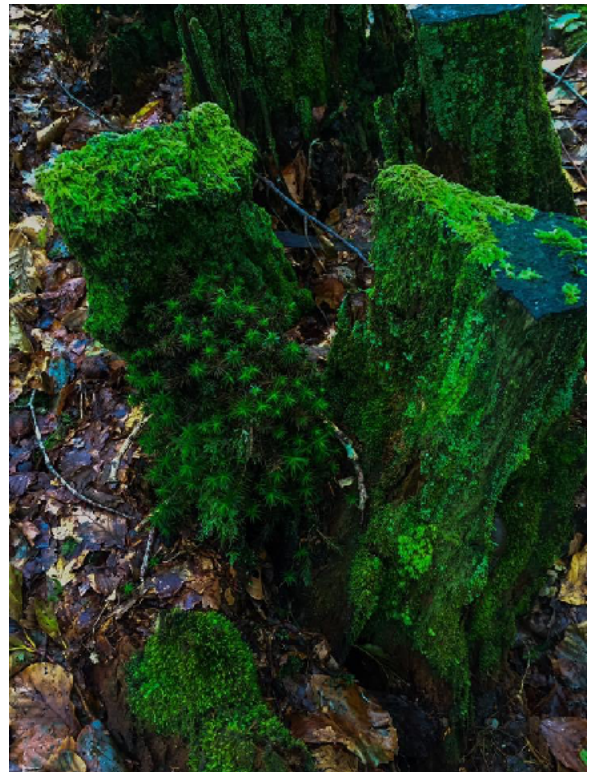
4 feet on a ledge below the path.
Nevertheless, when I passed this afternoon
someone has taken the trouble
to take a long stick
and swipe it off.

26 August 2020

Just back from Crow Wood. A lesson from history?



Two circles, once joined as one, but now divided by a stony path running between, but each evolving into a new world - related but different.

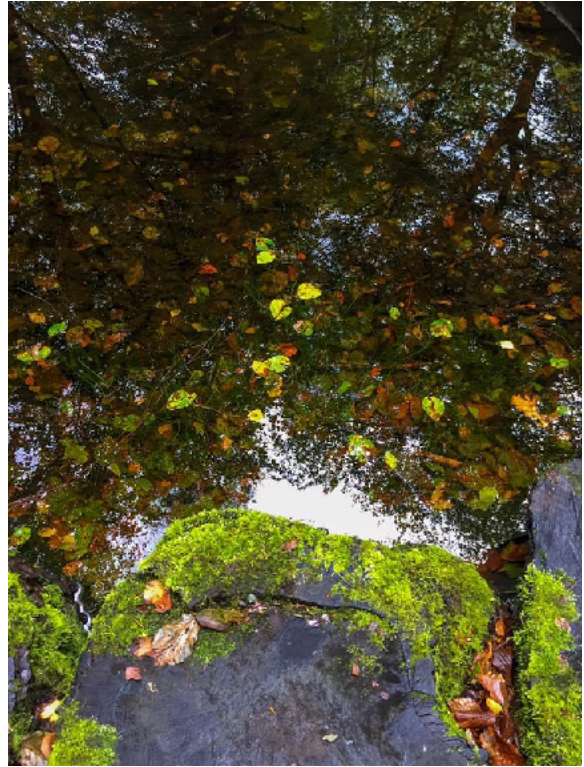
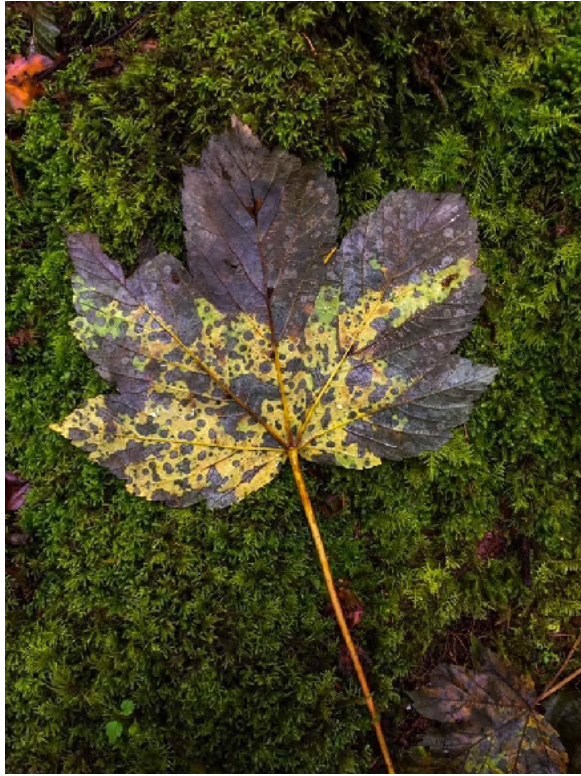


26 August 2020

More from Crow Wood this lunchtime.

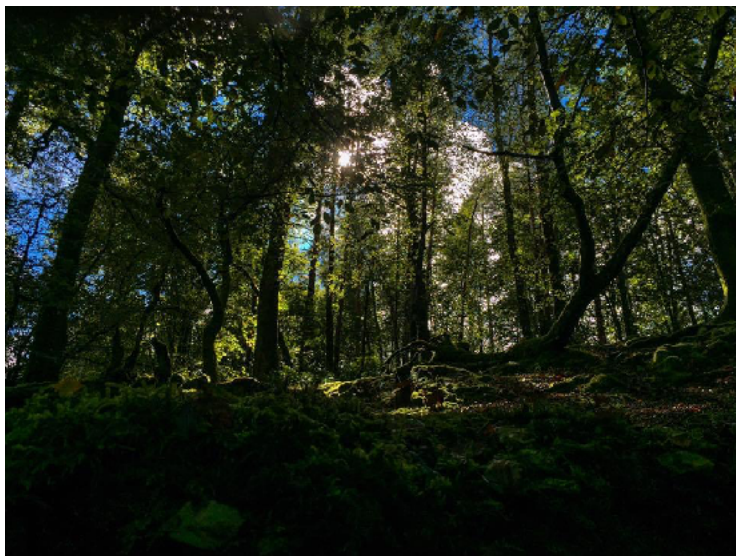
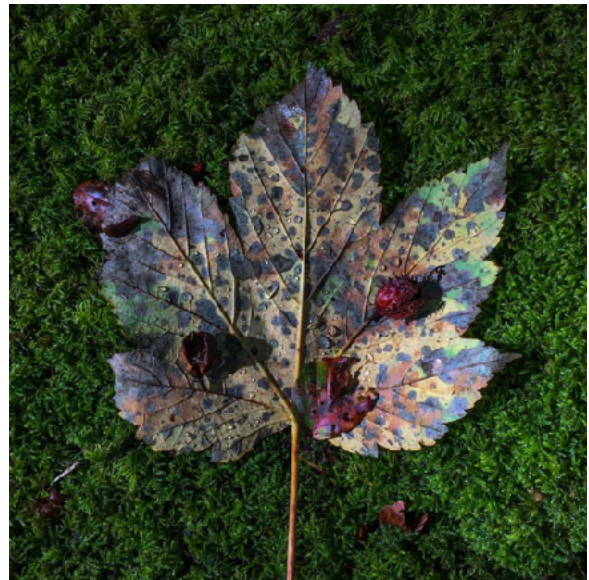
The economy engulfed by the force that drives the green fuse, which also drives my green age (to borrow from Dylan Thomas!)

3 September 2020
Crow Wood. After the rain.



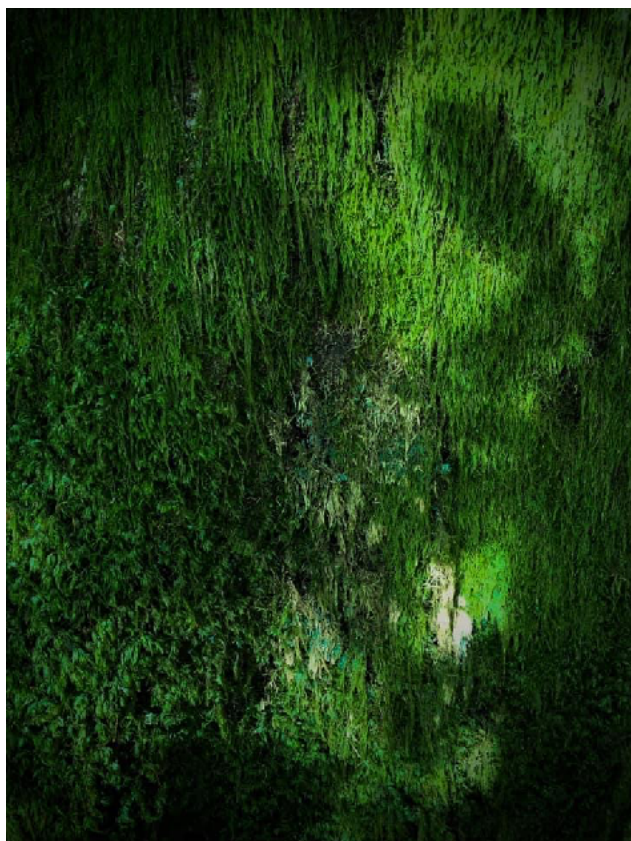
6 September 2020

Crow wood, this afternoons communion. "Numen inest" has been translated as 'There is a spirit here'.



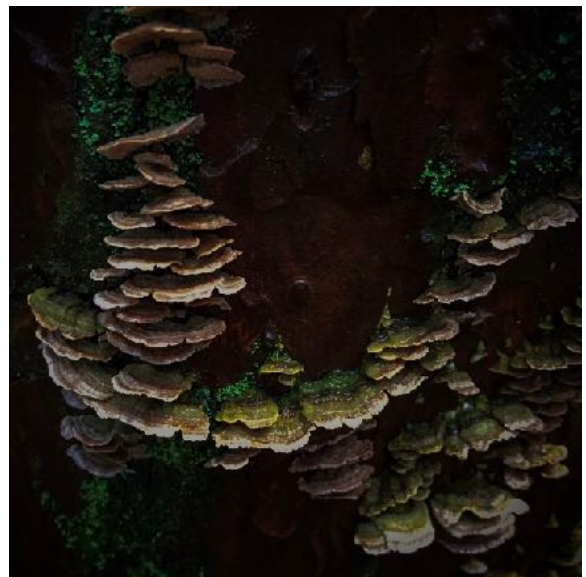
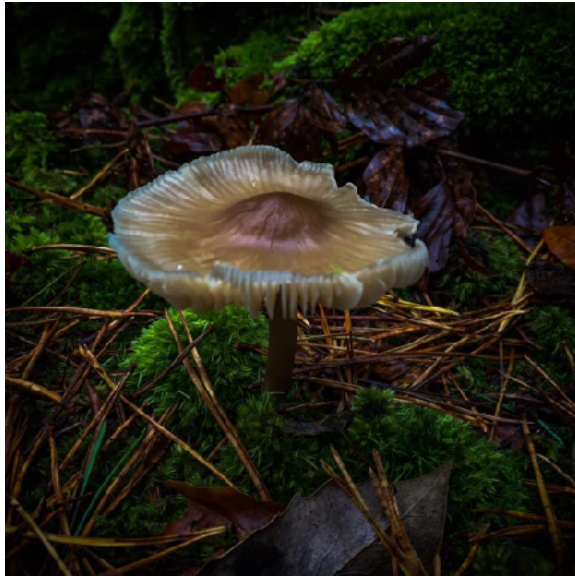
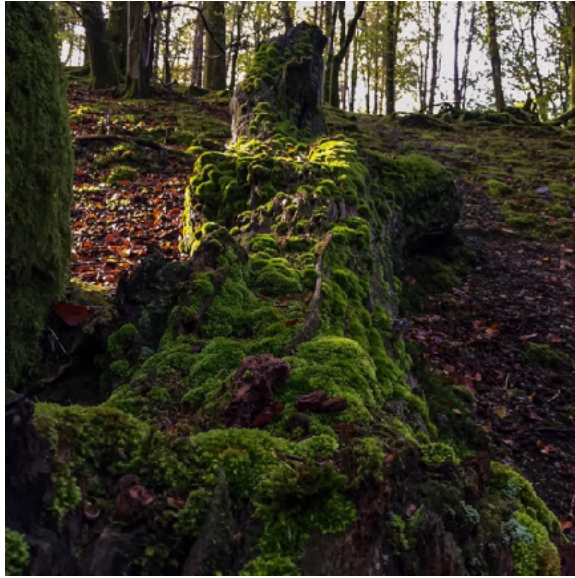


7 September 2020
Down in the wood. A mossy seat.



5 October 2020
The forest within a single trunk.

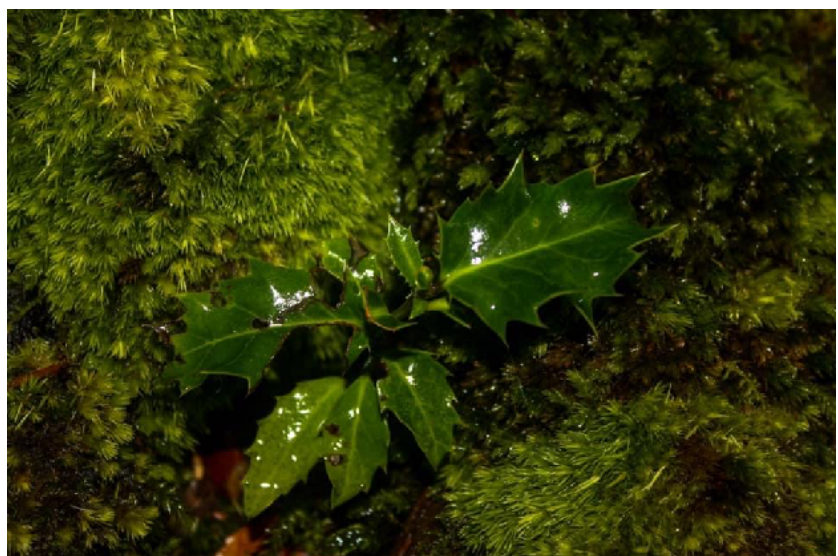
9 October 2020
Going down deep in Crow Wood.



10 October 2020
Today's dark legends from Crow Wood.

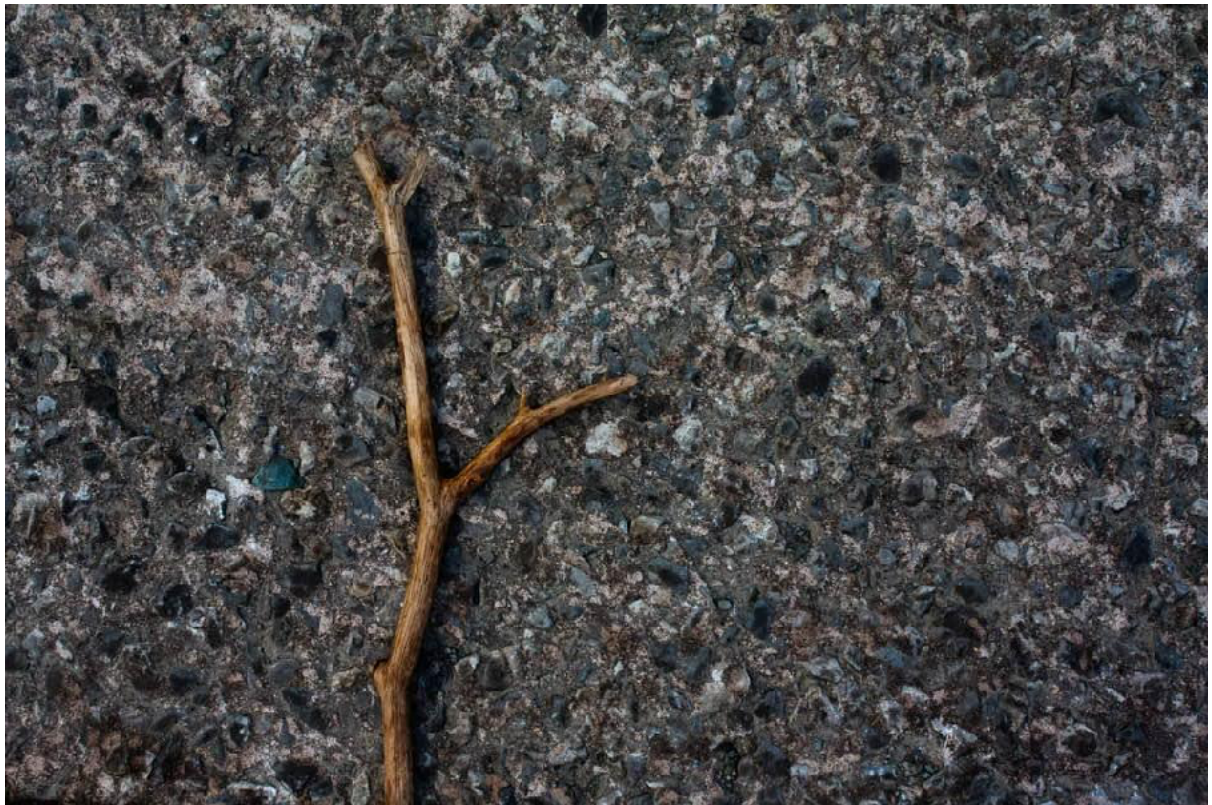


12 October 2020
Crow Wood in the rain.

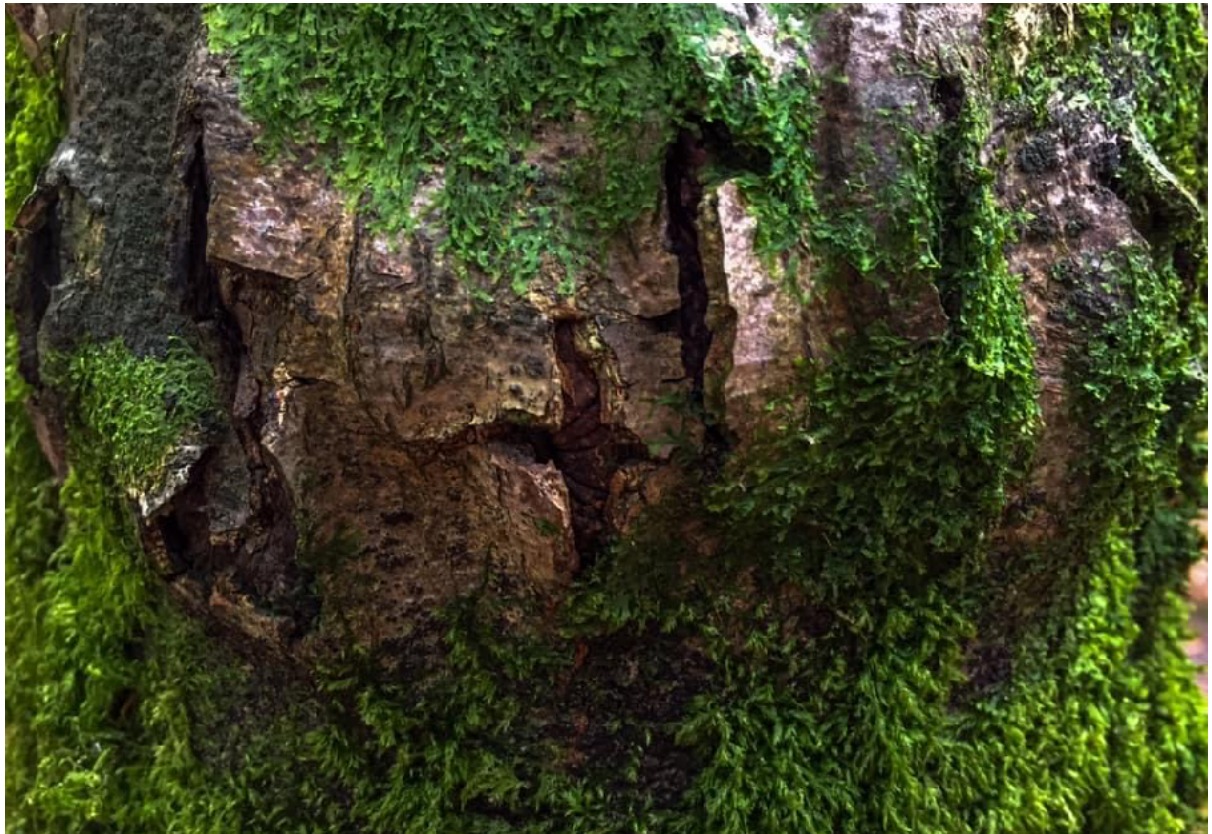


14 October 2020
Yesterday in Crow Wood.

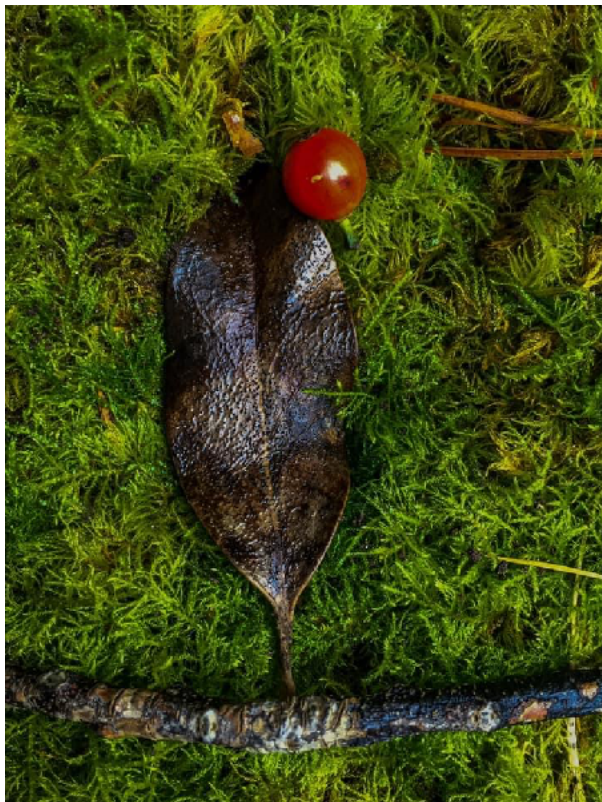




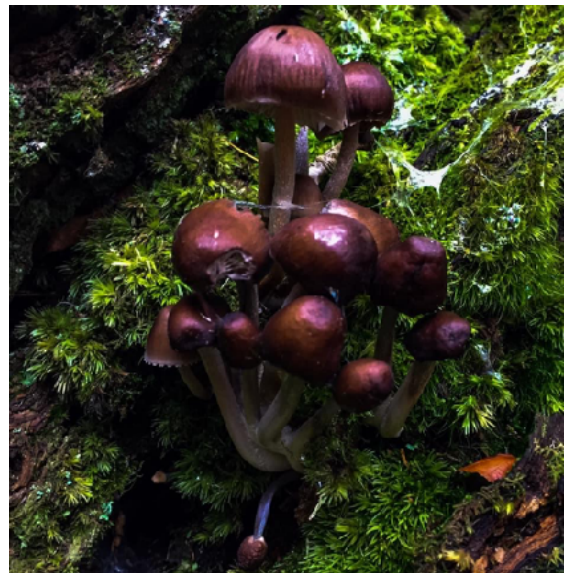
17 October 2020
More murmurs from Crow Wood.



18 October 2020
Drawings in Crow Wood.



19 October 2020
Crow Wood, a dull day and back in my old stump.



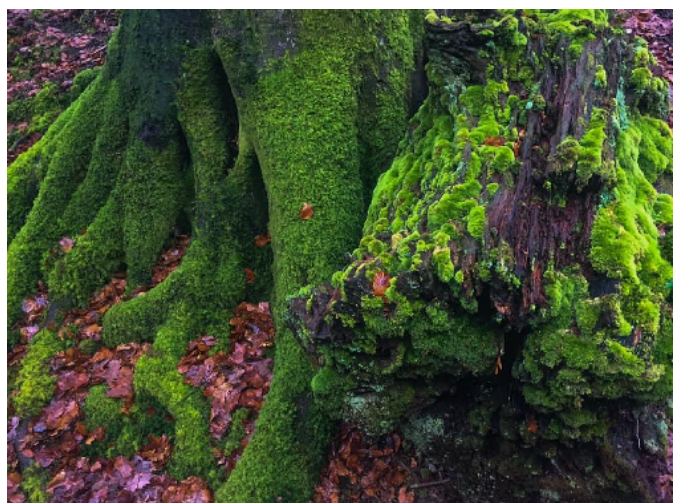
9 November 2020

Crow Wood. In an unwalked corner, unregarded and magnificent.



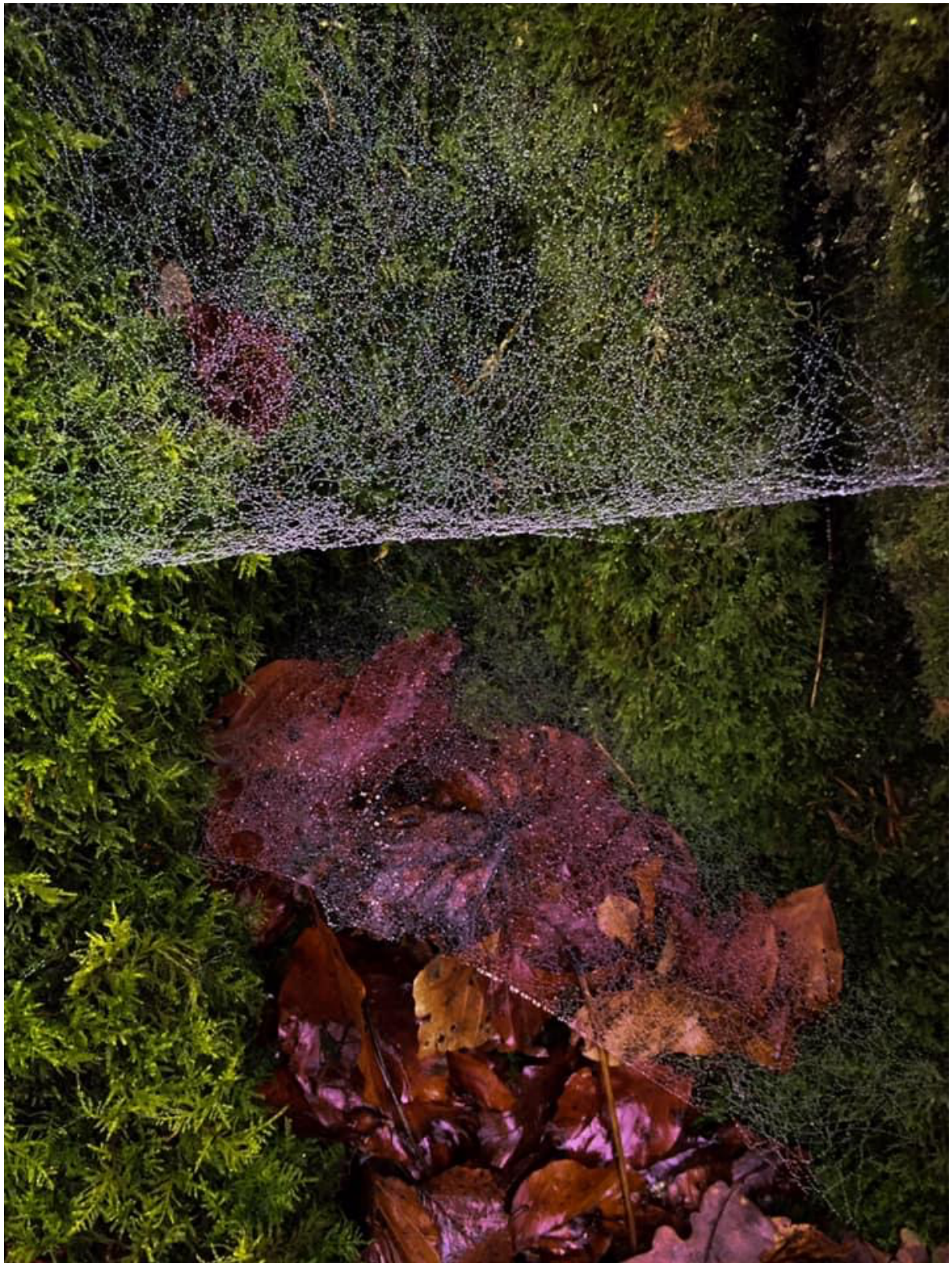
26 December 2020

Each time I walk past here there is another story.



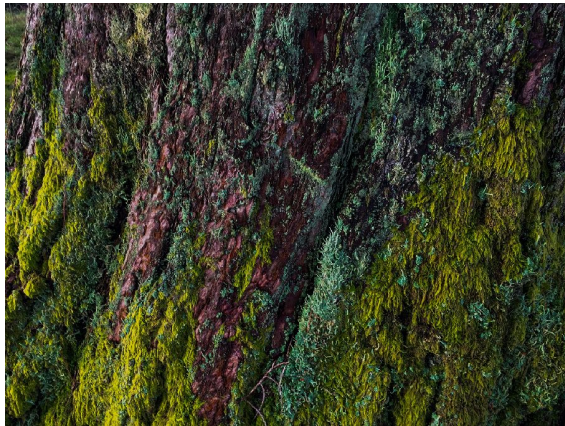
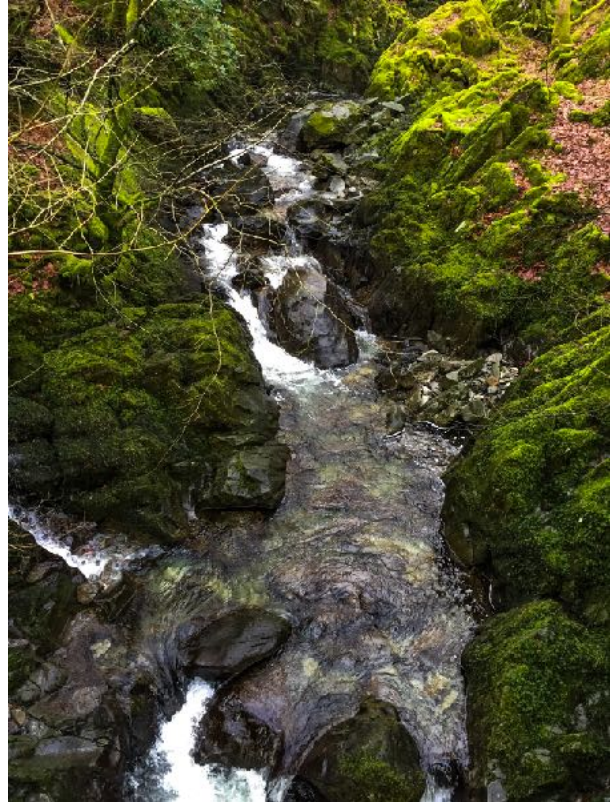
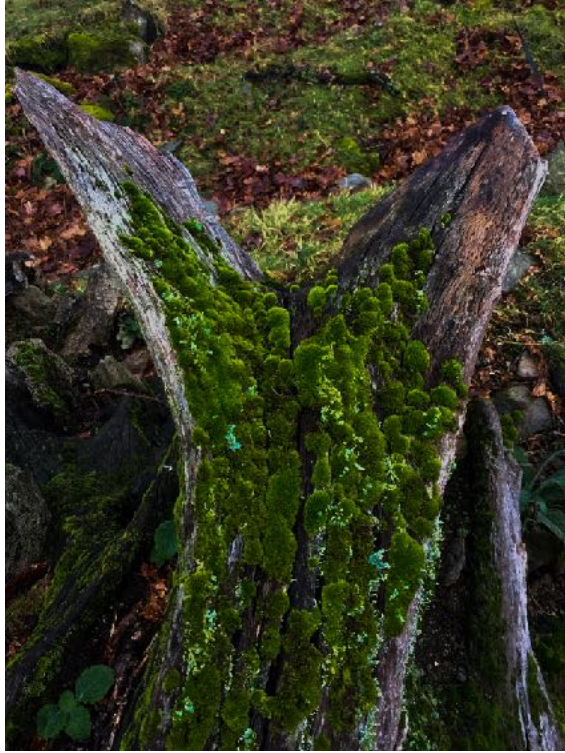
29 November 2020

Crow Wood. A dim and murky day, drawing a veil over the moss.



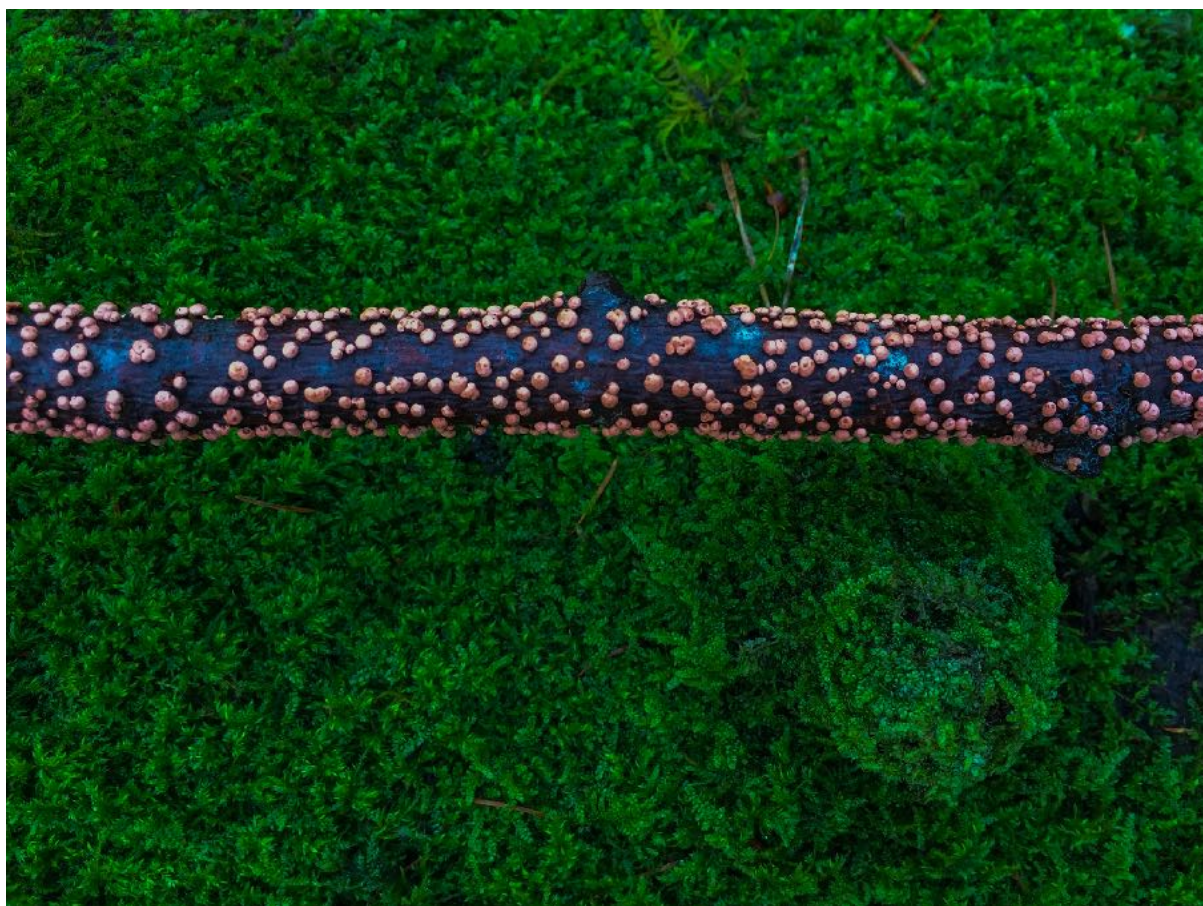
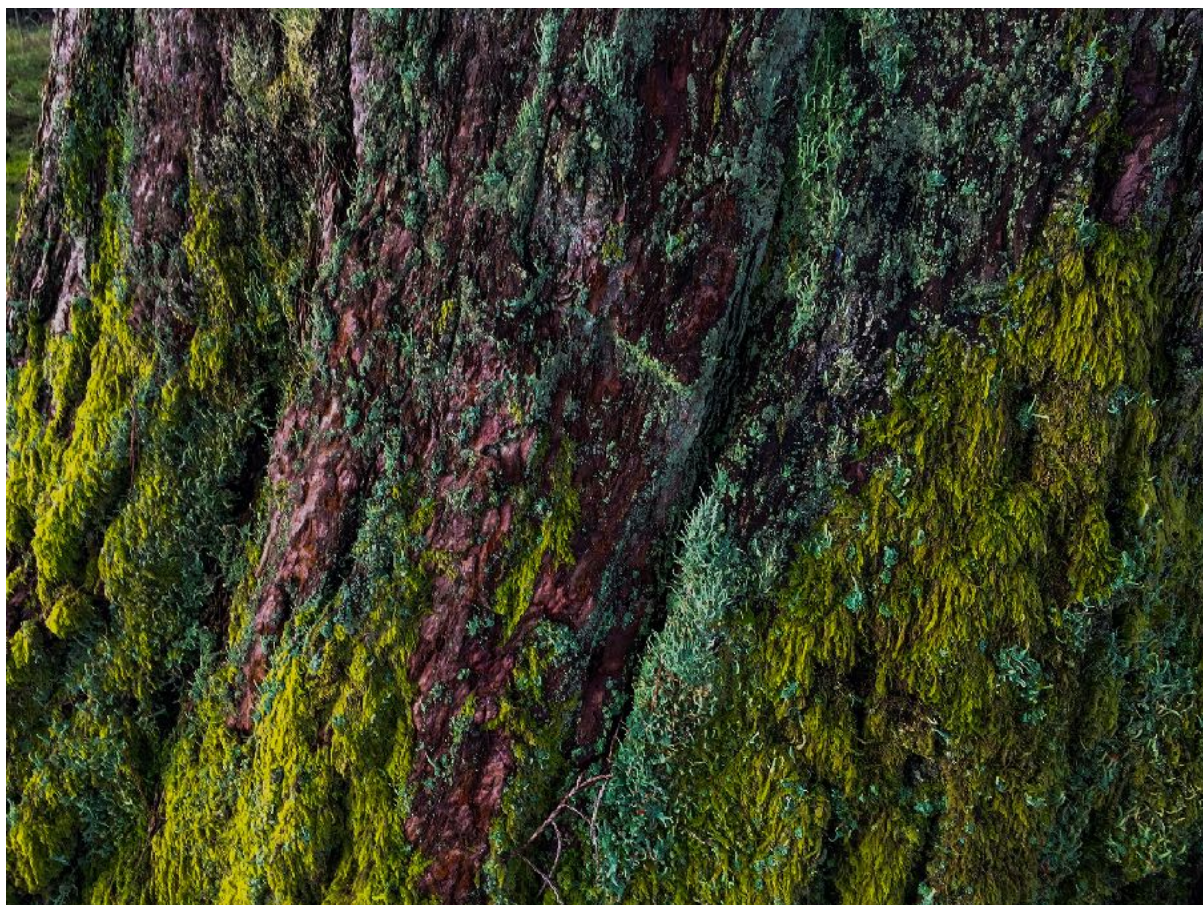
10 January 2021

This afternoon's stravaig round the unvisited quarter by our house. A gloomy dull day, but all the better for that!



27 January
Today's stravaig in Crow Wood





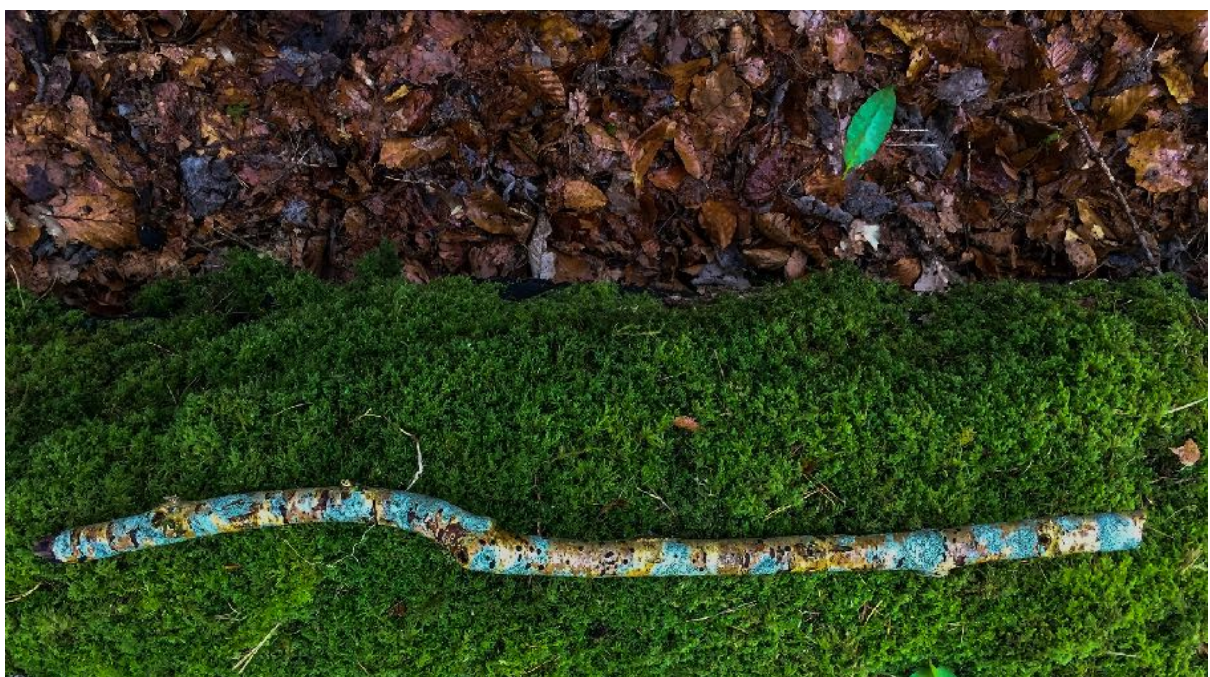
28 January
Between the house & Crow Wood.



24 February
Crow Wood again, this wet afternoon.



4 March
Colourstick in Crow Wood.





6 March 2021
Moved up to iPhone 8plus. Trying out the camera in Crow Wood on a dingy and drippy afternoon.





14 March
 “The force that through the green fuse”.
 (Dylan Thomas)



25 May
 Crow Wood, lush this afternoon.

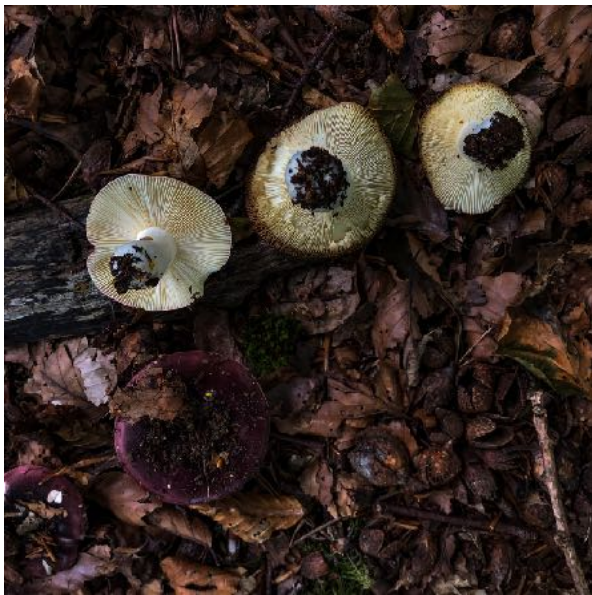
26 August 2021

This afternoon, down in Crow Wood, something sinister among the moss.





29 August
Crow Wood. Wonderful things in shady, mossy places.



10 September 2021

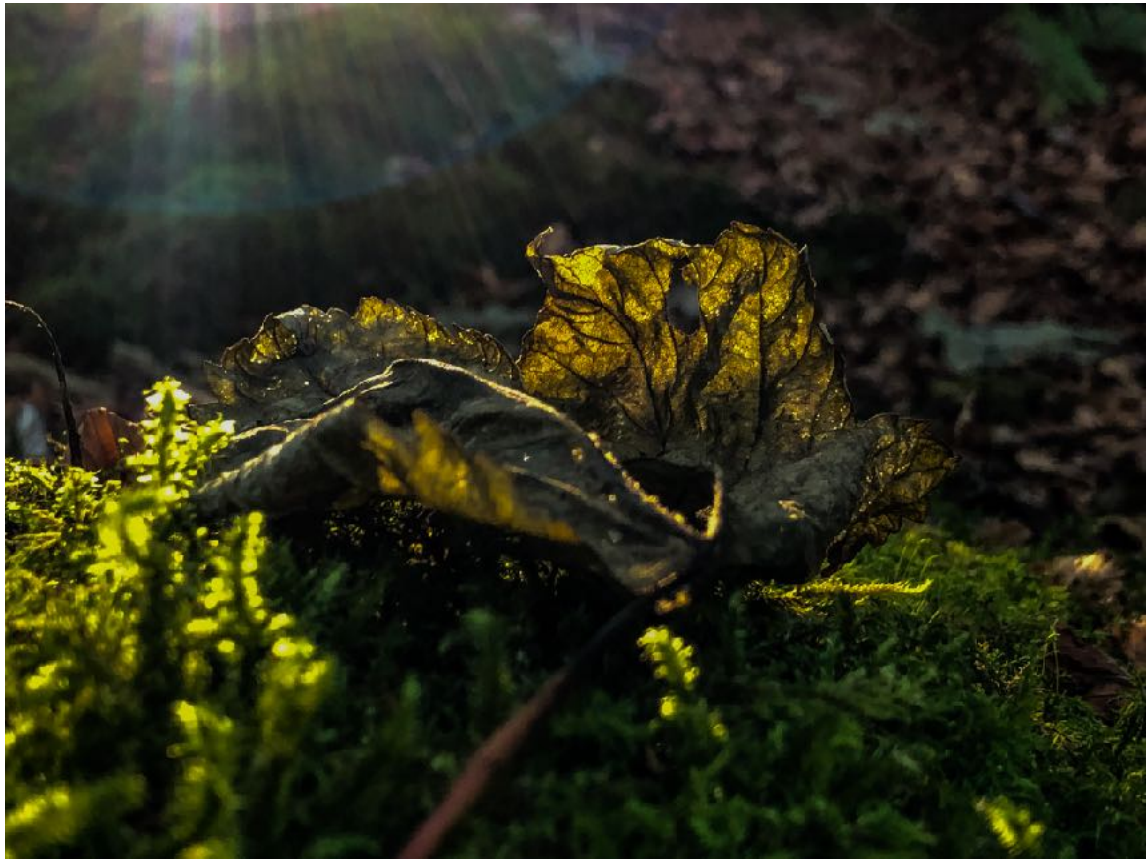
Crow Wood: colour in a secret spot. The other side of the stump, a small one. Also, a fungi on its back



on a bed of moss. 20 September 2021



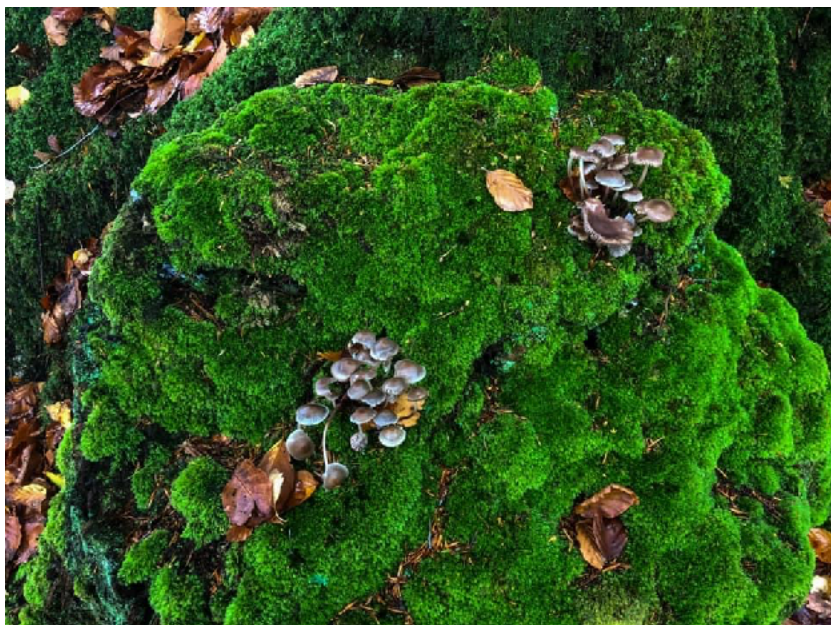
Crow Wood. Storm brewing. (And Bad Moon Rising).



20 October 2021
Forests within Crow Wood.



26 October 2021
This afternoon's jolt for the eyeballs near to the beck in Crow Wood.



Crow Wood, wet & wonderful.

