Winter in Paradise 2026

Does our woodland look like a battleground?! Sadly, the **Ash** trees which formed a large part of the woodland have been badly affected by **Ash Dieback** disease or **Chalara** (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus)*. The ones near to the paths had to be felled because of danger to pedestrians. The ones in the middle are left and will eventually fall. In the meantime, it looks an awful mess to us, but nice and wild for birds and beasts.

Originally from Asia, Chalara arrived in the UK via mainland Europe about 30 years ago and is devastating woodlands and hedgerows across the UK. While 1-5% of trees may show reasonable tolerance, none display complete resistance. However, unlike elm (similarly devastated in the past) ash has more natural variation, so hopefully fully resistant strains will emerge.



If you look carefully at the cut logs, you will see that while many are apparently healthy, there are always some with black staining indicating fungal colonisation. Together with the felling of mature poplar trees along the boundary with Queens', we have suffered a massive loss of tall trees here.

Dead logs are good for fungi. A report of a most unusual fungus by Philippa led to the recording of **Crown-topped or Candelabra Coral Fungus** (***Artomyces pyxidatus***) growing on a log near the back path. It is a neat little clump with very fancy turreted top to each branch. There are only a handful of UK records and at one point it was thought extinct here.



Besides this special, there are lots of other log-loving fungi, including **Turkey tail, Jelly Ear, Brain fungus, Orange Jelly fungus, Dryad's Saddle, Candle Snuff** and some tiny **Mycenae and Parasols.**



The **Little Grebes** appear to be fully resident here now. Fish eaters, they spend a lot of time underwater – delightful characters. **Great Spotted Woodpecker** drumming in late November was also special. And **Tawny Owls** have been heard here recently. What will winter bring?