

## Andy Goldsworthy – Tatton Park – Winter Diary



### November 2005.

I arrived late yesterday afternoon with the intention of looking around the park before starting work today. Normally I like to make my first day and work of a new project to be made at the same time. On this occasion, however I wanted to take advantage of the recent drop in temperature to make an ice work. This meant starting work before dawn when it would be colder and it is helpful to at least have some idea of the place in daylight first and have some possible pieces in mind. There was also the issue of access.

I met with a ranger who gave me a map of the grounds. I told him what I wanted and he suggested the mere. This large lake had only a small amount of thin ice at one end. I noticed a much smaller lake called the ice pond marked on the map and went to have a look.

I presume this lake provided ice for storage in the ice house, I will see if the ice house is still here.

The ice pond was frozen over and it was useful to get a feel for the lie of the land before I began work today. Working with the cold is always tense and pressured, it rarely remains below freezing all day and reading a place is necessary to order to extract as much cold working time as possible.

Knowing where the sun rises and sets is important as is exploiting any shade – especially at midday.

A large oak tree had fallen next to the pond and it was to this tree that I went to today. Dawn was just breaking as I began work. It was just below freezing. Decided to make an ice wall around a woven ball of branches collected from the fallen tree.

The sun came and shone on the work for a short time around midday after which the temperature dropped again to below freezing. The thin ice meant that it took a long time to build the wall and it began to look as if I would not finish the work today. This might not have been a problem except that towards the end of the day the temperature began unexpectedly rise and the ice began to melt. I began to run out of nearby ice, and was having to walk further away from the work to collect more. I was only able to collect from around the end as I didn't have waders. Steve Chettle, who was helping me, went off to get a hoe which we used to break the ice further out in to the pond. When that ran out I had no choice but to walk out into the pond above the limit of my boots and continued work with soaking wet trousers and feet.

I managed to finish in time to photograph the work and although tired after the long day and feeling very cold was pleased with the result.

It was only a few days ago that I was working in relatively mild temperatures with leaves – today with ice. I don't remember such an abrupt change from autumn into winter.

21 November

Returned to the pond early this morning hoping for sub zero temperatures but although cold was not cold enough to finish an ice cairn that I attempted to make, I wanted to make the cairn part ice and part branches – something I have not done before.

Gave up around mid morning when the cairn collapsed. Felt tired after the rigours of yesterday and deflated after failing today. Lifted two large piece of ice and set into the ground on the edge of the lake, laid dark leaves on the ice and made two "drawings". It was interesting but felt too tired to push the idea. I liked the proximity to the ice covered lake which turned the negative space between leaves white with light. Another time with a larger piece of ice and a more energetic hand and the results could be a really good work.

Went back to where I am staying to have a rest before returning to work in the (hopefully) plummeting temperatures as the sun went down. The predicted drop never materialised but restarted the cairn I began this morning and before it went dark left the beginning (and most precarious part of a cairn) to freeze overnight before returning tomorrow morning to add more ice.

I already have a backlog of ideas that would like to try out here. This is generally the case with snow and ice work in Britain – it is very rare for it to remain below freezing long enough to do all that I want – which is frustrating but at the same time a great lesson which adds a tension to any work that I manage to realise, They are hard won and precarious.



22 November

Out early but no frost. Surprised to find yesterday's beginnings of the cairn solid and frozen together even though it felt as if there had been no overnight freeze. The pond had not refrozen where I had taken ice yesterday.

The only explanation could be that the mass of ice had caused it to freeze which is a great thing in a climate such as Britain has and where I have been so limited in what I can do with ice because of rising temperatures.

I only made about 6" of the cairn yesterday so I had to add considerable weight of ice and branches today. This would have caused it to collapse were it not continuing to freeze today, even though the temperature was above freezing. That is a beautiful idea.

I did not expect today's work to succeed so was delighted when it reached completion. It made loud creaks as I worked and always felt on the verge of collapse.

I finished around midday but returned late afternoon to find it still standing with the ice thoroughly welded together but reduced in diameter. It may be frozen on the inside but continued to melt on the outside. The branches now overhung the ice which could become really interesting as it continues to melt. The simultaneous freezing and thawing of an ice work is far more interesting than a collapse. The form whilst becoming reduced in size appears to be growing as each piece becomes part of the whole.





23 November 2005

After succeeding yesterday to work ice on when it was not freezing I arrived in the dark this morning hopeful that I could once more stack the ice.

I have found two curved branches amongst the fallen oak that I hoped to embed in as a single line in a wall of ice.

To my surprise I found that although my previous works had not thawed at all over night and that the pond had frozen slightly overnight, the thickness of ice was much reduced and would be impossible to work into a wall – being too thin, fragile and in not enough quantity.

I was very disappointed and I wandered around in the fog carrying one of the curved branches like a yoke hoping to find some way of working with it but failed and gave up. The branch was not a light thing to haul around.

It was a bad start to the day. If it were not for the limited time I have here I wouldn't have struggled for so long with something so hopeless. I was driven on by the idea which I can see so clearly in my mind. It is always like this in winter – ideas let loose but not realised.

Had to scale down my ideas and carried a single thin sheet of ice to a nearby oak tree and placed it in the cleft between two trunks. Tore leaves into thin strips which I laid as lines on the ice. It was an interesting work that not only drew the space between the trunks but also picked out some of the growth patterns and rhythm of the tree itself. It was a small work but had a strong relationship to the tree – similar to the one that exists between leaf and wood.

In the afternoon I took another piece of ice, which had by then become extremely fragile and difficult to lift out of the water, and took it to a hawthorn tree, apparently a remnant of the original Tatton planting. The tree was struck by lightening but continued to grow despite being split in two.

I suspended the ice between the two trunks which I covered in leaves into which I tore a line that I felt might be reminiscent of the split that had occurred to the tree.

These were good works to make which were primed by the ones made a couple of days earlier.

Despite the frustrations of the disappearing ice I have extended my understanding of the material which will I hope have repercussions for work in the future.



24 November

What a change in the weather. Strong cold winds and rain.

Worked in the same cleft of the oak tree. Collected soil from fresh molehills and worked it into the tree making a curved edge. I don't think it was as good as previous works but I enjoyed making it – or at least to the point at which my hands remained warm – after which it was difficult working the wet soil – especially when the wind began to blow,



A sheep skull was hanging from the tree which I climbed up to remove, a piece of rotten wood gave way and I slipped and banged against a hollow limb and out of which a large barn owl emerged and flew off. I am not normally superstitious but I will probably return the skull to where it hung before I leave!

The first days work is melting beautifully and despite the cold thawed rapidly today. It has grown together and it looks as if it is growing old which is again different to collapse – the rain and wind eroding the layers of ice as it would stone.



25 November

Cold wind. Slight overnight freeze. Worked on the oak tree again using a semi circular branch to help form a suspended circle where the trunk split in two. Used two branches to complete the ring – cut with a saw to achieve an accurate fit. Smoothed mud in to join to give a sense of continuity.



I am travelling back to Scotland today so this was a perfect work to end on. It has been a good week and although I have only worked within one small area of the park feel that I have established a strong connection.

The entire project will involve a week's visit in each season. This visit was intended to be winter but I was concerned before I came that it could have appeared to be autumn. Fortunately the weather most certainly made it a week in winter.

The oak stack has dropped out of the ice wall. The wall has become even more interesting and would have liked to have stayed longer to see it melt away completely.