

The year of 2025: birthing of land and ending of dog

I begin writing from the cabin, fire on, shortly after my 68th year on this earth. I end on the shortest day. Here I am. 2025.

It has been the year of the birth of the land, and death of a dog called Kali. Among other things. It is at times painful to reflect this year, as I keep seeing Kali in moments and photographs, but it is my habit, even as I find less and less the need to record, this time of long dark evenings as solstice arrives. I look back the four seasons, find gratitude for friends, moments of stopping and seeing. I see a pattern of the year and this year more than others, of a life. I begin to prepare for succession, do less, move less, dwell more in the land. But in order to dig succession in, I see that more action is still necessary.

In last years letter, I read I had just heard my EWCO application had been accepted at the end of year. With EWCO (Forestry Commission) funding, the practical work by Maidencroft, 6,000 trees were planted on the 15 acres, 5,000 by 3 men from Swaffham, and 1,000 by the local community. Sam planned out the rows for the 1,000, friends and strangers arrived to plant: Marion, Andrew and his family, Lesley, Emily, to mention a few. 15 acres of

trees, linking the Blyth valley, via Holton Pits, to my woodland and Holton Hall park, creating a natural north south corridor. For the remaining two acres a more ambitious plan: a miniature Waklyns inspired agroforestry system with 4 alleys: 2 hazel, 1 willow and 1 vine (yet to be planted). In the alleys eventually we can grow crops/food. The agroforestry alleys lead down to what will become the Forest Garden (next year), which in turn links to the community garden. (full map here <https://kaliwood.wordpress.com/land/>)



We had no idea how this community garden would grow, the land being sand and poor quality. But with a layer of good pig shit and a cover layer of wood chip, it has given us this year a magnificent crop of potatoes and squash. Both these inspired and planted by Marion, supplied by Janine both linking the land with Wakelyns, which is also linked through Sam, who, released from HMP, lodged there this summer. Sam built the rabbit and deer the fence around the garden as well as what is called Armors Bridge which links the land with the wood. Kinda Forest School children planted and harvested. The food has been used by the



Elders and forest family as well as an abundance going to the Community Larder in town. Michael's dining club gathered in the garden for an aperitif one warm summer evening. Kali's paw print is in the concrete under the magnificent donated gates. We are just short of water, but have just heard of funding to build a shed in the new year, with a roof to harvest water.

This was a drought year, the worst year to plant trees and we were late in planting. At the end of the dry summer, with George and then kids and adults peering down the tubes (Dead/Alive they shouted) we count a 40-50% failure. MJ and Tom with Kim and some of the home educated children have recently replaced the community 1,000 section with live trees from the tree nursery. Some trees have enthusiastically emerged from their tunnels - a Mountain Ash, Lime and Pride of India. Through visits this year to arboretums, I have gathered some specimen trees, such as Swamp Oak, Red and Lebanon oaks, which with Richards help, we planted on the natural regenerative area.

Immediately after the great planting, the land and all on it was blessed on the March equinox. Led by Suzanne, with an unexpected Tibetan chant from Aiden. It was a perfect day. The cold east wind had dropped, the sky clear and lapis blue, the air still, and the sun the warmest it had been this year. As Suzanne walked walked out onto the land, she stopped. "My heart is cracking" she said. At the end around the fire Virginia and Emily, and my girlfriend from the 1980's Sarah Touquet, chewing the cud from our starter and autumn lives and looking up at the stars.



Don donated a sturdy bench which overlooked the Pits. Destroyed by some mischievous youth and thrown down the pit ledge, it was rescued by Jamie, repaired by Don, and so far continues to survive and give much pleasure for the view it affords.

Peter Hobson (Professor) my hero from the various climate conferences visited the wood and land, and unexpectedly gave a coppice challenged. After 11 years of working a wood, discovering and loving the 2-3 thousand year tradition and process of coppicing, Peter asked 'Why do it?' His argument is fair. it is not a natural system, but man made, good for human utility but it bears little resemblance to the natural wood ancient wood system, in which time moves far more slower, trees birth grow, live and die in hundreds of years. A shifting moment in this year, as I see my view as that of an Anthropocene. (<https://kalikellett.com/2025/07/31/ph/>)

The tribes of Kinda have enjoyed the expansion to the land. Elders, this year, became scientists. We measured the growth of Black Poplar, Pride of India, Walnut trees from their tubes, we specialised in grasses, a plant we had just

walked on before, which became named, drawn, examined: Wild oats, Colonial Bent Grass, Mouse Barley, Yorkshire Fog, Timothy, False Oat Grass, Rye grass, Poverty Broom, Hairy Oat, Land Plantane. We created a cloth of hapazone, and scarfs of eco printed leaves, all led by Kally, with Gina, Nicky and Lesley. Greg came to Elders and found fossils on the land, Meg had her baby. Nicky lost her husband.



walked the Sandlings together - at aged 88, averaging 15k a day). From the old school two stalwarts, Tre Lenahan unexpectedly, and SM Stephen, over 90 untouched by dementia. Inspiring testaments to Jane Goodall. I found myself watching again some Robert Redford films remembering my adolescent crush on the film star, and recalled my first LP by Black Sabbath when Ozzy Osbourne died.

Near mid summers day, Kali died. All 16 years on this earth, he taught me so much. I miss him greatly. He had a fine burial, with 8 dogs and as many people, who were alerted that day. MJ and Jo dug his hole, among tree roots beside the stumpery made after Bob died. With a wood named after him, Kali he lives on in name, and in my heart. Caroline wrote a poem here: <https://kaliwood.wordpress.com/2025/12/16/kalisong/>

Yes, there have been a few deaths this year, whose ghosts still appear. People whose lives passed around me died, Tessa Harding, John Bainer, and people who walked with me like John Macrea, (we'd

I found myself cleaning, dusting, brushing old dust and Kali's long dog hairs caught in corners of rooms. It's called Nordic clean - Fe gave me this name. It was a natural progression to turn to stuff, move unused on, getting my house in order so that it is clear and clean, ready for when I am no longer here. The turning of the wheel. Nothing in storage, or hidden in a box just in case. Now or never!!

Politically all has turned on its head. Seismic as Rory and Alister agree. January it began. Remember Bishop Mariann Budde? "In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now. There are gay, lesbian and transgender children in

Democratic, Republican and independent families who fear for their lives.” How prescient, as ICE aggressively expel citizens, as Venezuelan boats are bombed, as America supports all far right movements in other countries including ours. (Farage has just received 10 million) The phrase Flood the zone, became the theme of blogs I recorded, feeling a need to catch these times as they were - and continue to be - so extraordinary. I see the the BBC, which is being sued by Trump today, has invited Bishop Mariann Budde to deliver a Christmas message on Radio 4.

I find some solace in the perspective given by the historian Rutger Bregman (Reith lectures radio 4): “The old world is dying the new world is struggling to begin. Now is the time of monsters”

‘Does Truth Matter?’ was a natural question to explore at the annual socratic dialogue in the wood. With synchrononous timing, the news that the best seller book and block buster film 'The Salt Path' may be a lie. Socratic Dialogue in Kaliwoods – Why does truth matter?

Back at home, the politics is much friendlier. I’ve continued to enjoy the usefulness of being a councillor, championing trees, with a greenlight to make a dataset of heritage trees and overlay with new planting. Owning our assetts gives us an opportunity to marry the needs of people and nature in our open spaces. We have an excellent team of clerks and a good and very active chair, as well as a Green Party district council and local Green County Councillor - indeed we go against the tide of other places with Reform at the help such as

Durham, which I understand has had all of it’s climate migration funding removed.

Energy was our Climate Action weekend, a 3rd year of a successful gathering. This year based with practical workshops. Katie once again came to sing. Halesworth ASH have constituted with a creative and intelligent team. With the best funding yet, we have new web pages as a shop window for our services, and an paid Energy champion to help see through our communities migration to non carbon based systems. His first task is to help those with F and G EPCs to access the now finite government funding for insulation, solar, heat pumps. I find it hard to support Labour policies these days, who have suspended all ECO4 funding. Solar on Farmland was the theme of the event jointly arranged with Halesworth ASH at Rydal Mount. A tough subject, strong feelings, but we did get the conversation going and the councillors faced the landowners with honesty and intelligence.

I found an unusual friendship this year, connected through the storm of 1987 and 14 Earls Court Square, I found Richard and his beloved dog Mimi - the story here Robert Booth to Richard Haggis. Richard and I share a love of trees. We met first in Glastonbury, then up here in Suffolk where I naturally took him to Staverton Thicks, and a sweet circling when he joined our East Anglian Coppice Network at their annual gathering NCFed Gathering at Weald & Downland, South Downs, Sussex. Highlight was finding Kingley Vale Yews, said to be some of the oldest living things in Britain, officially 500 years old, some estimate them to be much, much older, possibly 2,000 years old. Through Philip Carr Gomm and Stephanie I met another

yew, the Wilmington yew, as well as the Long Man and Bewick church.

<https://kaliwood.wordpress.com/2025/10/14/ncfed-gathering-at-weald-down-south-downs-sussex/>



It was finding out that another old friend had died - Robin Touquet - that spurred me to contact Sarah Touquet, my best friend and flat mate in London days 1980's, who was there for the blessing of the land. I briefly saw Ruth and Jerry in Exeter on the way down to Cornwall (sleeping in an Exeter street) and Malcolm on the way back, outside Falmouth Rupert came up three times in the year for marathon church exploration, including Barsham, Ringsfield, Blundestone, Lound, (Comper's wall painting of St Christopher is extraordinary) Mutford St Andrew. The third time a reward of a tour of Great Yarmouth with Judith, who was born and raised there.

<https://rupertschurches.home.blog/>

From the old school, Sylve came from Norwich and Martina from Berlin, to visit. From the south of France past, I saw Todd who came up for a concert in Snape, and

with his sister we recalled those heady St Paul de Vence days. Bryan came on his way to visit Christopher, and played music in the wood with Nicky. Michael and I had a much needed weekend by the sea for the Aldeburgh Doc fest. We are both of view that all the films are too long and we both sleep through moments and hoped they were not the same moments when at the end we tried to piece together the red line. Nr Nobody against Putin and Orwell are my favourites. I got to pose with the star of Power Station. I almost forgot, I saw Leslie in London briefly

A glorious early spring break with Tori and Charlie, this year to Cornwall, with some adventures sandwiched before and after. It turned out to be Kali's last road trip and his needs (rightly) dominated the journey. At Savernake forest however, we found a perfect camp site and easy footpaths for a blind deaf dog to follow, as well as the most magnificent oaks I have ever seen.



At Portholland, our base for a week, Tori Charlie and I watched lots of Poldark, visited the Poldark farm, ate oysters in St Maws, saw Charles Hemy in Falmouth, and walked loads across the coastal path.

Staying a few days on, I camped under the tin mine on the road to Zenor, exploring the tin mine past of this land, and a memorable swim in a sea pool at Cape Cornwall. On the journey back, a few more heritage trees located, including the largest lime, at Westonbirt, commented on by Oliver Rackham.

Cousin Berenice fulfilled her promise of coming up to stay, and cousin Richard bought a boat on which he lives in Milford Haven

<https://kalikellett.com/2025/04/28/spring-road-trip-with-tori-charlie-and-4-dogs/>

I began to draw again, first at Folk East where I camped at Sotterly close to my favourite Hornbeam, now in its retreating retrenching days. It's form muscular, twisted and glorious. Drawing everyday did me good, why did I stop it? Far too much time hunched over computer, checking up on Trump news. Next year more drawing, walking, dancing, community garden, agroforestry and forest garden.

I am settled. No longer that dream of Georgian house with a staircase, or of running a hotel (mainly for friends) or part of co-operative housing project. I am here, near the wood and the land. Unlikely I'll make it back to India. I notice I am no longer ambitious to travel to explore other parts of the world, although what remains is a yearning to go to Svalbard or the Antarctic to feel that tilt of the earth at those polar extremes. Perhaps a return to Russia. I am embedded in the community, a walk in the town I am surprised to see a strange face, as a town councillor I am known as TPO (Tree Preservation Order) or wood Rachel. Despite tennis, gym, dance fit (with the great Caroline Mummery -

discovered this year) walking dogs, I have become rounder in face, fatter in belly, slower, less good at balancing, not sure I have done a headstand this year. My breath, annoying for not smoking now for 5 years (I still miss it - I know its crazy - writing this) is shallow and short. Names are sometimes difficult to reach - just today I searched for the pen name Mount Blanc, as I prepare to put green ink into it to write a few late cards, to friends from a growing past. But I am also more grateful, perhaps kinder, for all that has and is happening. I am content to say I will not own/drive a Landrover 110 (once a definite dream), but such gratitude for Des the Landcruiser taking Barry and I to Timbuktoo and back. Being less restless, being more still feels comfortable for this time in life. It continues to amaze me what is under my nose. Bobji and Brow lay at the bottom of my bed as I finish this letter. Kali lays in Kali wood. The land awaits the turning of the earth to the light time. Time to end this reflection of these 4 passing seasons and look forward.

