

BRUCE TRAIL

TREADWAY

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UPDATES
EVENTS
IDEAS
NEWS

EDITOR

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1229 RUSHBROOKE DRIVE

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TWO HOURS AND FIFTEEN MINUTES, 21 VOLUNTEERS, TWO SAWYERS AND 100 FEET OF HEAVY-DUTY ROPE AND THE TREE WAS DOWN.



That's after Conservation Halton contacted the BTC to advise them that a 60 foot tree with a 18

inch diameter was broken off at the base and leaning over the trail. To add to the dilemma, the tree's top branches were entangled with another nearby tree. All that Conservation Halton's 2-man cutting crew could do was to place caution tape around the area forcing hikers to re-route around the danger zone. The call for help went out stressing the urgency of the task and the need for many volunteers. Experience has taught this work crew that a tree of this magnitude and complexity demands many hands to safely complete the task.

Guards were placed at both ends of the trail where the tree was situated alerting hikers to the potential danger. A spotter was assigned to watch for overhead debris - loose branches that could tumble down. A rope was secured in the crotch of the tree about 20 feet up in the hope that the pull-gang could spin the tree free of its entanglement. But to no avail, all the king's men couldn't budge the tree. A second option was to cut the trunk of the tree in 3-foot sections in the hope that as the tree dropped, the sudden movement might jar the tree loose. The tree defied 2 cuts. A third option was to fasten a rope at the base of the tree and pull the tree down. The tree finally yielded to the brute power of the pull-gang and down it came. After a well deserved lunch break, enjoyed while sitting on a newly-acquired lunch log, the crew went on to remove other dead trees that had been identified as hazardous by the Conservation Authorities. A good days' work and the trail is safer.

Picture by Richard Pomeroy

GIVE ME YOUR HAND !!!

The BTC Land Acquisition Program is the foundation of the future of the organization; the “dream” is a conservation corridor along the Escarpment, with an access trail, protected in perpetuity.

But as the 2011 Annual Report makes clear, it will be a long time before that dream is realized. Only 48% of the current Trail is secure, and we cross the lands of more than 1000 landowners. We are proud of the acquisition of six properties in the past year, but to achieve the trail route we wish, even in the long term, will require more emphasis on obtaining new handshake agreements.

This point was made clear to me when Trail Director John Grandy presented the 2011 Tom East Award at the AGM. There were three reroutes which highlighted the nominations, and each was a direct result of a new handshake.

The Dufferin nominee tells an interesting story. The Oliver property on which is located “Walker’s Woods” had been purchased by the BTC, and the neighbouring landowner to the south saw the value of a hiking trail in the area. Indeed, he joined us on the work party which opened up Walker’s Woods. Because of his generosity to share with us his own land, 1.3 km of optimum route/main Trail was achieved.

The Peninsula reroute resulted from the generosity of Ron Gatis, one of the initial pioneers of the Bruce Trail. As his land uses changed (the bull was removed from the fields), Ron gave us a handshake for 1.8 additional km of optimum route with its gorgeous views across Colpoy’s Bay.

The Tom East Award winner (Sydenham) is an interesting story. Several years ago the BTC had purchased the Crevice Springs property at Woodford, but two private owners to the south necessitated two km of road walking. Credit for the club’s success must go to Sydenham volunteers under the leadership of their Trail Director, Ron Savage. The most southerly property had initially been resistant to BTC overtures. One of Ron’s regular trail volunteers, however, heard the story and mentioned that he was a friend of the landowner. He assisted Ron with his next visit, and the result was a new handshake agreement.

But there was a further problem. One of the landowners (because of his logging activities) would allow us only below the escarpment; the other (because he hunted on his property) would let us build trail only on top. I remember the team that scouted the land for a solution, and we discovered a beautiful ascent of the escarpment almost exactly on the property line! The Trail change had begun with one acquisition, but it was realized only because of the work of club volunteers and two new handshakes.

To summarize: the three “best” reroutes in 2011 on the main Trail were all the result of new handshake agreements.

Many clubs today no longer pursue aggressively additional handshakes. I can understand why: frequently you are met with opposition, even initial hostility. It can take a long time to build a positive relationship. But the rewards can be immense.

Landowner contact is a role which many members can play. I especially like the story of that Sydenham success when the club executive member was unsuccessful but an “old friend” of the landowner obtained consent. Among our members and supporters, there must be many such possible contacts.

One final story: An effort to achieve additional handshakes does not detract from the BTC’s acquisition efforts. One of my favourite memories is a Peninsula property where the landowner had initially refused permission for the Trail to cross her land. She was contacted annually (with a phone call, club newsletter and the gift of a calendar), and after seven years without even being directly asked offered us trail permission. She had learned about our values and had come to trust us. Then three years later she offered us her property for sale, an action necessitated by personal circumstances. I still remember her phone call: “I would sell it only to you, because only the Bruce Trail would value it as much as we do.” Another key piece of land was thus acquired.

Various clubs have different approaches to new landowner contacts. In some cases, it is the Landowner Relations Director, but frequently that volunteer approaches only current property owners. Perhaps the most successful example I know is the work of Jack Morgan in Beaver Valley who assumed a new executive role with his club as Trail Development Director. Because of Jack’s work, the Falling Water extension was completed. It did include about five acquisitions, but it also was built on about fifteen new handshakes. Without those handshakes, that major addition to the Bruce Trail would never have occurred.

The dream can be realized, but a renewed emphasis on handshake agreements among all of our clubs can expedite the process. Get to know the optimum route location in your club, and if you personally know any of the landowners, offer to approach them for the BTC. Every new handshake is another step forward to achieving our goal.

Ross McLean