

Newport Forest

October 16 2000

3:30 - 5:40 pm

**Weather:** cloudy, warmish 15C, no breeze

**Purpose:** to inspect property and search for Black Cherry, Witch Hazel

**Participants:** Kee

I gave a slide show at Beattie Haven, down the road, to-day. The subject was, "A Walk through A'Nowaghi." I had arranged with Darren Jacobs to meet him ("maybe") on the property, but he never showed up.

On Edgar's Road, I heard some birds, so started "pishing," succeeding in attracting several Chickadees. It's interesting to watch them flit from tree to tree, closer and closer. I counted about five chickadees and what appeared to be a very small sparrow. But when it flew to a bush next to me, I realized it was a warbler. It was olive gray, with a single yellow bar on its wings, but that is not a sufficient description. Both along this trail and elsewhere in the area, I heard squirrels scolding, as if there is some kind of social change in their seasonal routine.

At the River Landing, I could see that the Thames was well, down, exposing "Nina's Chair" once again. I took the River Trail along the Bluffs and into the RSF, following the trail to the bench at the far end. I sat there to sip on my coke and reflect. A walnut thudded nearby, then another. "The theatre is always open." I'm not sure what it means, but the phrase that came to me seemed appropriate. I left the audience of one and wandered east along the shoulder of the Hogsback. Would there be any Black Cherry or Witch Hazel there? Evidently not.

I went west again, passing the bench, and following the trail to where it began to ascend. Here I found a strange Ash. The leaves resembled those of a White Ash, but the bark was strongly reminiscent of Ironwood. Here also, well north of the trail, I found an immense Basswood. I measured its girth at breast height to be 304.5 cm, which translates into 97 cm dbh, a new member for the one-metre club!

Up on the Hogsback, I sat for a while on the second bench, sipping on my coke and listening to the occasional calls of a Spring Peeper (or a very good imitation). Here also, I explored to the east (actually SE), passing the Prickly Ash and then coming across many, many saplings of Blue Ash. Near the cutting margin, where the scrub begins, I found a very pretty Chinquapin Oak. I also found my first growth of Black Knot in Newport Forest. I'm not sure what the bush or sapling was (hoped it was Black Cherry), but it was obviously a Prunus of some kind, possibly a Chokecherry.

From the Hogsback I followed the trail down into the BCF where, by and by, I encountered the third bench. Here I finished my coke, then noticed a very bright green tree, about 20' high, in the middle distance. I wandered over, finding it to be a Blue Ash, well advanced. Returning to the bench, I startled a Wood Frog into flight. I see these frogs more frequently than Leopards or Green Frogs.

I made my way out of the BCF. About 90 metres short of the entrance, I found the largest walnut-fall I had ever seen, with about 100 walnuts clearly visible and scattered all about. At the "parking lot" there was no jeep. Darren apparently could not make it.

I drove up to Newberry for supper at the Southside restaurant because I had to return to the area at 7 to interview Harvey Newport. (See below

### **An Interview with Harvey Newport**

We discussed some of the trees I had found in Newport Forest, as well as some of the trees I had been searching for. Harvey said that adjacent woodlots had lots of Black Cherry on them, but he had never heard of Witch Hazel, being more of a tree man than a shrub guy. He surprised me by asserting that there had been lots of Tamarack in the early days, but it had all been cut for some purpose. Butternut can be found growing plentifully throughout the area. Nina had already told me about a little grove right across from Harvey's place.

### **Cutting History**

As far as Harvey can recall, there were only two episodes of cutting since Lorne purchased the farm from his grandfather, Russell Newport\*, in 1965. In 1991, they made a "light cut," taking out Walnuts, Ashes, Bitternut Hickory, a "few" White Oaks, Willows, and Sycamores. The last two species were used to make industrial pallets but were otherwise considered as "junk trees." They limbed the trees, cutting them up for firewood, and transported the trunks on a flatbed trailer to the sawmill. In the earlier cut, about 1986, they took out nothing but Red Oak, Ash, and Walnut.

We briefly discussed the hydro lines. An Ontario Hydro worker told Harvey two years ago that the power had been cut off for six or seven years prior to that. I mentioned that Edgar Hurdle had said that the power was back on and Harvey said that might be so, he didn't know. He said that Nina could give me all the dates

connected with the towers. Earlier I had mentioned how the SE end of the Hogsback looked like it had been completely cut about 10 years before 1987. "That was your hydro, again," said Harvey. But there was no line going through there, I said. He mentioned that they had previously acquired another right-of-way. I said that this did not come up during the search of title for Lorne's farm, but Harvey just shrugged.

We turned from trees to other topics. In an earlier conversation, Harvey had mentioned handling a team of horses to haul stones, or even to plow. "Everybody had a team or two on their farm until well into the 1960s," he said. His father sold their last team in the late 1960s. No team was ever used on Lorne's property.

We talked about animals. What about Southern Flying Squirrels? "Oh, Christ," said Harvey. "They're all over the place." He then thought of another animal that might interest me, Badgers. "We saw two in one day, once. "It wasn't on your place, exactly, but just past your line to the west. We saw them cross the road." Could they have been anything else? "Oh, hell. You can't mistake a badger for anything else," he said. "Did you know that for all of North America, *this* is their home range? Right here in southwestern Ontario!" What about that cougar sighting. "My son Kurt\*\* was with me. We were out on the nine (referring to a patch of nine acres on Eva's property near the river) at the time." He reiterated the details already recorded in an earlier report (see Cougar file). Harvey also saw coyotes on or near the nine, just past the "green gate" on the corner of Furnival Road. This gate leads to Eva's property.

The conversation then moved to land. Mentioning to Harvey's wife, Ruth Ann, that I wanted to talk to Harvey, she piped up: "We're not selling that land!" I said that was fine, but I wanted to talk to Harvey about conservation, nevertheless. Harvey explained that his lot of 40 acres had resulted from a severance many years earlier when the 100 acre lot had been divided into his and Eva's properties. That lot had been, much earlier, part of an even bigger farm. In any case, Harvey surprised me by stating that Eva's lot would be reattached to his on her demise. His ears nevertheless perked up when I mentioned that he might be entitled to a large tax break if he was willing to put an easement on his land. He thought that perhaps because his lot was zoned "residential" that he wouldn't qualify. I agreed to ask Michelle Kanter about it. We also discussed the next lot to the west of mine. He thought someone in Windsor owned it. I told him that sometime this winter, we might go to St. Thomas to search the title -- or have it done, at any rate.

The final part of the discussion wandered into Harvey's work for Sloan's Tree Nursery. This is a fairly large operation, with literally thousands of acres, most of it about six miles distant. He mentioned that the soil there is fairly sandy and that people find Indian artifacts "all the time." Two men, in particular, have acquired large collections of arrowheads, axes, and scrapers: Scott Hamilton and Dave Reed.

\* Nina Hurdle's father, William Dell, rented the property from Russell Newport prior to 1965.

\*\* Kurt Newport now lives on the "other side of Bothwell on 79 Highway, about eight or nine miles along."