

Newport Forest

November 12 2000

1:15 - 5:10 pm

Weather: cool 9C, wind from W, cloudy

Purpose: to work on bridge over Fleming's Creek

Participants: Kee, Nic

We stopped at Harvey's to pick up a log he had cut for me from an old telephone pole. We chatted briefly with Harvey, inviting him down to "supervise" the construction, then headed off for Newport Forest, just next door.

I parked the van by the old log at the top of the Fleming's Creek Trail and we proceeded to unload: seven 8' PT 2x3s, eight 6' rough pine 1x6s (barn boards), several PT stakes (from Mary Kerr's election campaign), a tool box, tool bag (hatchet, maul, hammer), swede saw, carpenter's saw, wood preservative with brushes & can, bag of 4" nails, field pack, rubber boots, car jack and a few other items.

It took two trips to carry half the lumber, all the tools and paraphernalia down to the old Ash log across the creek. We painted the upper surface of the trunk end of the log with preservative (nasty, toxic stuff), then proceeded to fit the 2x3 stringers to the sides of the log, shaving the log with hammer and chisel until the stringers fit very snugly to the bark of the log. We then nailed in the first set of stringers, shaving them with hammer and chisel until the upper surface of the log and the edges of the stringers (now shaved so as to present a surface for purchase by the planking). We began then to cut the barn boards into 18" pieces, nailing them in place with but one nail per side. We were short of nails because I had forgotten to bring the two recently purchased bags of nails with me.

We were nailing in the first few deck boards when we heard the sound of Harvey's tractor coming down the road. We could hear it coming down the meadow, then silence. Presently, Harvey appeared. He thought the bridge looked sound enough, but suggested that he could cut down a rather large Walnut just upstream. He pointed out it would make a better bridge. I had to agree, but made it clear that we'd just have to live with the Ash log for the present. After discussing the upcoming federal election and a few bits of gossip, Harvey departed. Nic went back to nailing on the boards and I used the swede saw to cut a shallow notch in the upper end of the post to receive the bridge log..

At this point, I put on my rubber boots and headed out to the middle of the creek with my shovel in hand. I wanted to dig a footing for the post, but found the bed

gravel liberally laced with river stones. It was tough going. Nic, meanwhile, walked across the raw log with the auto jack, placing it under the upper end of the log and proceeding to turn the small crank at one end. Slowly, millimetre by millimetre, the log before me rose as I continued to dig, until the shovel was a foot down into the gravel. I selected a very large, flat river stone as the base for the post, set it in the hole and swung the post into position under the log. Almost. Nic turned the crank a few more times and suddenly the post slipped easily under the log. He then lowered the jack until the log rested firmly on the post. At this point it seemed reasonable to stop for lunch (apple juice and half a beef sandwich each).

The upper end was now several inches above the bank, so we drove in two stakes and nailed in a cross-piece, with Nic standing on the end of the log to keep it down. Now the upper end of the log would go nowhere for a while.

We painted the deck boards with wood preservative, which turned them an attractive green colour. Then, since the light was beginning to fade, we stowed the few remaining pieces of lumber and preservative under the Ash roots, packed up the tools and other items, and made the long weary trek to the van, each of us carrying so many items that I could not fend off Hawthorns. Out of breath, we arrived at the van, congratulating ourselves on getting even this far in one afternoon. One more visit should do it.

On the way home, we stopped at Eva Newport's to drop off Lorne's plaque and to chat with Eva and her son Jim, with wife Elaine and two grandchildren, Carissa and Jordan. Eva was not entirely sure that she would hold the dedication ceremony this fall. I suggested next Easter.