

Replacement of a much used Footbridge

By Marlis Butcher, TBTC Trail Director

The old wooden footbridge was sagging. For about 20 years it had been patched, propped up, repaired, and cared for. A precious butternut tree, likely not more than a mere nut when the bridge was originally built, had grown up tall and thrown its shade over the bridge. The 32' long bridge, in the 1st kilometer of the Toronto Section of the Bruce Trail, had allowed hikers to safely cross a stream running from the Hilton Falls Reservoir to Kelso Lake. Unfortunately, after so many years of service the old wooden footbridge could no longer be restored. It had to be replaced.

The Toronto Club's Trail Development and Maintenance (TD&M) team started procedures to replace the bridge in 2014. The health of the butternut tree had to be assessed, Conservation Halton (CH) contacted, specifications for a replacement bridge developed, a work plan created, a budget approved, and a permit from the Niagara Escarpment Commission obtained. Changes in the TD&M directorship and in CH management delayed the process. Late in 2019 everything was finally ready to go.

Volunteers Pete Pritchard and Paul Vanhanen lead the bridge work: Two 32' wooden beams were sourced from a company in Quebec, sent by train to Campbellville Ontario, and then trucked to the trail head. More lumber was ordered and cut to size for the base and the top of the bridge. The butternut tree was wrapped with protective hoarding. Trail Maintenance volunteers were called upon. The first kilometer of the Bruce Trail in the Toronto section was temporarily closed for the duration of the construction.

On a beautiful sunny Saturday in the middle of November, 11 volunteers* dismantled the old snow-covered bridge and built the base for the new bridge.

The following Saturday 21 volunteers**, including 7 from neighbouring Iroquoia Club, hauled the 2 heavy beams from the roadside to the creek, and set them into place. Then they built up the new bridge.

3 volunteers and Conservation Halton spent another day installing the finishing touches to the bridge and taking the remains of the old bridge to the dump. The new bridge was ready for hikers.

With many thanks to all the volunteers who helped on these work parties, the section of trail was officially reopened on November 28th 2019.

Next spring the leaves of the butternut tree will shade hikers as they safely cross the creek again.



Old bridge (BW)



New bridge (MB)

* Lois Bastell, Chris Bint, Marlis Butcher, John Cunningham, Byron Guptil, Rose Mary Mitter, Dave Paape, Pete Pritchard, David Rowney, André Rudnicky, and Paul Vanhanen.

** Lois Bastell, Brad Bennett, Chris Bint, John Borley, John Cunningham, John Farquharson, Paul Ford, Ron Hagedorn, Peter Kahn, Jude Keast, Daryl Keays, Ken Lawday, Sara Maedel, Janet McColeman, Rose Mary Mitter, Dave Paape, Richard Pomeroy, Pete Pritchard, Andre Rudnicky, Klaus Truderung, and Paul Vanhanen.



Sizing Up (LB)



Dismantling Old Bridge (LB)



Hauling Stringers (LB)



Placing Stringers (JC)



Setting Braces (JC)



Installing Decking (JC)

Pictures by Lois Bastell (LB), Marlis Butcher (MB), John Cunningham (JC), and Barry Westhouse (BW).