

Meet Betty Mixter Morss

by Susan Gainley

Betty and her husband, Harry, lived in Boston on Beacon Hill, then in Marblehead before retiring to Hardwick in 1972. The land on which they built their house was given to Betty by her father as a wedding gift in 1950. At her death, Betty donated the house and land to EQLT. The following is a remembrance of Betty to illuminate the woman whose donation started the transformation of EQLT.

~~~~~  
"Glimpses are thought's patchwork."  
~~~~~

EWM

Come along with me on a little visit with Betty. We'll let ourselves in since she's expecting us.

We find her in the living room sitting by the window. Her gray hair is pulled back with an elastic and she's bent over her writing pad. A check has just been written to a young Hardwick man in his second year of college. Betty quickly finishes the note to go with it ... "I thought you might need some books. Blessings, Betty."

For her this is simply another investment in education, continuing a tradition she and Harry had begun years ago of providing means for many, many students to attend college.

She smiles pleasantly, and there is a little glint in her eyes as she greets us and bids us sit down. As we look around the room we see how the furnishings and decor reflect the person who lives there - modest and practical, with no airs.

Our eyes wander to the bookcases, and the titles there tell us of the many areas in which Betty is well versed - classics, history, earth science, art, poetry, gardening, needlework, field guides, and oh, yes, *Winine the Pooh*. "She is the most brilliant person I ever knew," Betty's sister-in-law, Ginny Galpin Crossley, once said of her. Seeing us eyeing the collection, Betty begins to tell of the many hours she spent as a child in the company of her grandmother who read to her incessantly, giving her an education beyond her years and of the hours she spent reading engi-



Betty Mixter Morss in front of her home in Hardwick

neering books and manuals to Harry whose eyesight was poor.

Next to us on the side table a grouping of stones and fossils attracts our attention. As we pick one up to take a closer look, Betty amuses us with a story: When she was just a young woman she was sent to Arizona to recover from ill health. While there she visited, with much prodding, a mine. She was so fascinated by what she saw that it gave birth to an intense interest in geology. As she prepared to board the train on her return trip home, the porter, as he picked up her bag, declared, "My, this bag must be full of rocks." Betty replied with a grin, "You're exactly right!" From that trip forward you could be sure her bags or the trunk of the car would be weighed down with rocks.¹

Soon she asks if we would like some lunch. We politely decline, not wanting to be an imposition, but she persists until we realize that to turn

her down would be a discourtesy. As Darcy Paquet would say, "Lunch was always part of the package." In the kitchen she goes about making a sandwich for each of us garnishing the top (on the outside) with a little dab of relish or maybe today it will be a piece of pimento. Lunch, as usual, will not be complete without coffee ice cream and Mrs. Richardson's chocolate or 'scutterbotch' topping.

The warm weather invites us outdoors. Spring is in the air, and signs of life are appearing in her gardens lining the driveway and bordering the house. They become the happy topic of conversation since gardening with herbs is one of Betty's passions and areas of expertise. Suddenly we hear her begin to recite a poem from her book *Herbs of a Rhyming Gardener*. "My gathering of herbs is just a simple, small affair - I'm learning and enjoying, and my rhymes would take you there."

Another talent of Betty's quickly comes to mind and sets our imaginations afire. One of her exquisite paper cuttings depicts a cluster of flowers with two little fairies standing on the leaves doing spring cleaning. For a moment we are tempted to bend

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

These words exemplify the main work of the East Quabbin Land Trust as envisioned by the Board of Directors. The most visible mark of our efforts is the growing number of properties that are forever dedicated to conservation in our region; land such as the field and wetland recently added to the Winnimuset Wildlife Management Area in New Braintree, or the butterfly haven near Coy Brook in West Brookfield, or woods along the Dougal range in Hardwick and Ware. These areas and many others are dedicated for the conservation and open space values that are vital for our very existence.

The land also holds many clues to our heritage. The stone-walls running through the woods, the open fields and the stone foundations of old mill sites are all reminders of the agricultural and industrial activities of past generations. These monuments remain from a time when the natural resources sustained local communities and allowed them to thrive. For many retaining these symbols of the past is important and conserving the land is a critical step in doing that.

Betty Mixter Morss ensured that her family heritage and the agricultural history of Hardwick is preserved. Betty believed in the importance of conserving land for the future and took proactive steps to make that happen (see cover story). The EQLT is a direct beneficiary of her actions. In 2008, we are celebrating our fifth year at the Morss estate. Please join EQLT in honoring Betty during our Annual Meeting on Sunday June 1st at Mandell Hill (weather permitting). The recent expansion of the agricultural fields, removal of invasive plants and grass-fed beef cattle at Mandell Hill are all extensions of Betty's conservation and stewardship ethic. Those that knew Betty Morss, all agree that she would be happy to see the changes.

The Morss bequest has spurred on many changes at EQLT, including expanded land stewardship, more land conservation, hiring a full-time Executive Director, active committees, and a recently completed strategic plan. Beginning with this newsletter edition, the details of the three-year strategic plan will be outlined (see pages 4 & 5). The Board of Directors has established a firm path forward to expand land conservation, ensure sound stewardship, function efficiently and sustain the EQLT activities. Our vision is to promote a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come. We hope you continue to support the EQLT as our activities continue to make life better for the future. ■

THE 2008 ENVIRONMENTAL BOND BILL *Good for Massachusetts Farmers, Consumers and the Environment*

Members of the Commonwealth Conservation Council are working with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on what will be the most important environmental legislation of the next five years, the Environmental Bond. The bond funds programs and policy initiatives ranging from land protection, aquatic and wetland restoration, rare species recovery, and MassGIS, to renewable energy initiatives. State environmental agencies have scheduled five-year capital spending plans to guide project delivery. Legislative inaction on the Environmental Bond would disrupt the capital spending plans, and constrain agencies' abilities to respond to the environmental needs of the Commonwealth.

If you know of land that has been conserved in your town, chances are good it was funded at least partially with money from past Environmental Bonds.

Let Your State Legislators Know that the Environmental Bond is Important to You! Being able to close on projects for the next fiscal year for Land Protection all hinges on the bond bill.

Join the Coalition for the Environmental Bond. Information about the newest version of the Environmental Bond (H4561) as well as fact sheets and more can be seen at www.environmentalbond.org.

Contact your state legislators and encourage them to enact an Environmental Bond that supports farms and farming in the Commonwealth. To find your legislators, go to: www.where-doivotema.com

EQLT BOARD & STAFF

- Terry Briggs.....HARDWICK
- Chris Buelow.....GILBERTVILLE
- Judith Jones.....NEW BRAINTREE, Vice President
- Martha Klassanos.....WARE, Clerk
- Jerry ReillyHARDWICK, Treasurer
- Rick Romano.....HARDWICK
- Jeff SchaafWHEELWRIGHT
- Stan WhiteHARDWICK, President
- Magi Ziff.....NEW BRAINTREE
- Cynthia Henshaw.....Executive Director
- Marion Cooper.....Staff

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Cynthia Henshaw, Executive Director
P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road • Hardwick, MA 01037
TEL: (413) 477-8229 • EMAIL: eqlt@comcast.net

VOLUNTEER PROFILE... A Word with John Goodrich

by Charles Kittredge

Outside the March rain is streaming down, but I'm cozied up next to the Jotul in a deep chair in the sitting room. John's lovely wife Linda has whisked my coat away to somewhere cedar-paneled and warm and come running back with a plate of cookies, which I completely forget to eat. I'm too busy listening to John's animated, erudite speech, watching his sparkling blue eyes roam around the beautifully restored Colonial farmhouse. I feel like I'm at my grandparents' house – my hip, funny grandparents' house - and as I settle back in the armchair, I open my notebook and take a look the sheaf of papers John has given me.

EQLT: So John – wait, are these typed notes?

John Goodrich: Yes. Just the basics, though.

EQLT: Sweet Mother Machree, I could hug you.

John (winks): Not a problem.

EQLT: So, anyways, lessee. 63 years old, Princeton undergrad, Harvard grad school, started the first air quality consulting firm in the country, dealt with hazardous waste, environmental management, cleaning up PCBs. *(Reading)* Major permitting of federal lands in the 1970s and 1980s, consulted with Jersey on their new state environmental law and the widening of the Turnpike...

EQLT: You guys were the ones that put the Vince Lombardi in the middle of a swamp?

John (laughs): No, we were able to move it out away from certain parts of the swamp.

EQLT: So, didja find Hoffa's body?

John (recollecting): Actually, no, no, that's in Pennsylvania – upstate, near Scranton...

---awkward silence---

EQLT: Hmm. *(Reading again)* Anyways, environmental compliance consulting, Housatonic/Hudson cleanup of PCBs, left in 1990; private consulting since. Post-grad coursework at Tufts in negotiation and mediation, mediated during the central artery project, which was at an impasse...

EQLT: Wait, are we talking about the Big Dig?

John: Yes, although the actual construction was further down the road. No pun intended.

EQLT: The Big Dig was happening in 1990? What did you do?

John: I helped mediate an agreement for how the area on the Charles would be constructed. I helped set aside \$100 million for land use. It included the whole area along the Charles - river access and new park lands.

Otherwise I have stayed involved predominantly with Massachusetts towns on a wide range of projects: sewers, schools, budgets, public projects, sometimes individually and sometimes formally through the state. In parallel, I have done strategic planning and consulting for non-profits as an outgrowth of some responsibilities from my previous environmental consulting company.

EQLT: So how did you wind up in Hardwick, of all places?

John: We really liked the idea of the slower-paced style of life. We've always wanted to live in a farmland area, and here we're close to our family. Linda has always had an interest in farming. She grew up on the far end of long Island, which has now mostly gone over to high value vineyards.

EQLT: And the Land Trust?

John: I had an interest in land use, and in conservation issues.



John Goodrich enjoying life in Hardwick

Jerry Reilly asked me would I help with strategic planning: Where you're going – and how to get there. The EQLT is going in a great direction; it went through a wonderful and critical change, and did it much better than most organizations.

I think that a land trust like the EQLT is a far more valuable partner to a community than many are aware. The ability of a land trust to maintain a wonderful way of life – by helping people maintain the way they would like life to be – is unparalleled.

EQLT: I take it this is a little more rewarding than working on the Jersey Turnpike.

John (smiles): It's a lot more enjoyable to work with people on great ideas for the future, than on arguments they're having about the present.

EQLT: And what do you see in the future, for both the region and the land trust?

John: In the time that I've been here I've seen a pretty good balance. There's conservation of land, maintaining of occupations, a way of life that's good with the land. At the same time, a steady flow of new housing and new residents. It seems like a pretty good balance. If we're able to continue investing in families and infrastructure, preserve the land, forests, and occupations, this will be a good place well into the future. EQLT went through a wonderful and critical change when Cynthia came on as Executive Director, and did it much better than most organizations. I have been particularly impressed with how well all the board members, staff, and committee members work together, even though they bring quite diverse experiences and ideas to EQLT.

EQLT: John, thank you for your time. I love this place.

John (smiling again): Anytime. *(Gestures out the window)* Being off the beaten path protects us from too many well-wishing people.

Moving Forward...

The East Quabbin Land Trust embarked upon a strategic planning process nearly a year and a half ago. The Strategic Planning process was designed to identify the key strategic decisions needed for success over the next 3 years, and to guide the EQLT to learn to think more strategically about their goals, priorities, and resources. The Staff, Board and Committees looked at the long term vision for our region and EQLT's role in meeting that vision, and also at all the month to month activities of the staff, the role of the Committees, and how these activities should fit into the EQLT's mission. Below you will find the results of the strategic planning process.

Our Vision

The East Quabbin Land Trust envisions a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

Our Mission

The East Quabbin Land Trust works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts.

Goal 1: Conserve the lands that represent the best farmlands, woodlands, and waters in the East Quabbin region.

Goal 2: Manage all EQLT owned land and CR stewardship responsibilities effectively to manage natural resources, promote biodiversity and educate visitors.

Goal 3: Manage EQLT's resources and assets in an efficient and responsible way to maximize the input from volunteers, staff and financial capital.

Goal 4: Expand support for the EQLT through effective communications and solicitations to our membership, community members and others interested in the east Quabbin region.

This is the first in a series of four detailed discussions of the EQLT goals and strategies for moving forward to meet our mission and reach our vision for the region; specifically describing our strategies to conserve the best farmland, woodland and waters in the East Quabbin region.

It's not difficult to find reasons to protect most land from development; whether the property is particularly beautiful or is close to other open spaces or is the last working farm in the area. However, the reality of land conservation is that limited financial resources and time available make it impossible to conserve all the remaining open spaces. It's much more efficient to look strategically at the landscape and prioritize where to devote limited resources to get the "biggest bang for the buck".

Strategy 1: Focus on farmland conservation

The EQLT has placed the conservation of the region's agricultural lands as a high priority for many reasons. The open fields and active barns reflect the historical use of large parts of our landscape when milk, cheese and wool were the economic engines of the region. The changes in land use brought on by industrialization and the more recent service economy makes it surprising to see so many fields and working farms remain in our communities, especially since Massachusetts is the fourth most densely populated state in the nation (based on 1999 figures). However Worcester County ranks fourth among all counties in the nation for the value of direct sales of agricultural products to consumers at nearly \$5 million or 25% of the state's total. Being able to maintain our capacity to raise food is important with ris-

ing oil prices, spread of disease and increased demand for healthy food. Retaining the land and prime agricultural soils is a key ingredient for our future. Also, maintaining a core threshold of farmland is essential to attracting young farmers that want to live in a farming community. The EQLT is part of a network of agricultural and land conservation organizations engaging with farmers to assist with farmland tenure and transfer when appropriate. In addition, it is imperative that funding be expanded to facilitate the purchase of conservation restrictions on agricultural lands. Many farmers are not in a position to donate the development rights or the land. The EQLT will strive to expand current funding sources and encourage support from donors, such as the anonymous donor that contributed over \$160,000 towards farmland conservation in the past few months.

Strategy 2: Identify focus areas for pro-active conservation

In addition to farmland, there are other priority landscapes worthy of directed conservation. Rare species habitat, connectivity with other conservation lands, and scenic resources are all part of the analysis when identifying priority landscapes. The EQLT board has identified three focus areas, including the Moose Brook valley of Barre and Hardwick, the Dougal range of Hardwick and Ware, and the northern woodlands of Petersham. Over time, additional focus areas will be adopted. Within identified focus areas, the EQLT is proactively contacting landowners about land stewardship issues and land conservation options. For instance, an ecological assessment is underway in the Moose Brook valley and the EQLT is in the midst of active land conservation discussions with a half-dozen landowners on the Dougal range. Working proactively is one way to ensure that the financial resources and limited time are used effectively.



Overlook, Dougal Range

Strategy 3: Facilitate land conservation initiatives

The meat and potatoes of EQLT's mission is assisting interested landowners in conserving their lands. This can happen by referring a landowner to one of the state agencies or by being actively involved in the steps towards permanent conservation. Either way, the EQLT will be more active in conservation in the coming years. A key role that EQLT needs to play is to inform landowners of their conservation options. This will happen through periodic workshops, articles on successful land conservation, and one-on-one meetings. It is true that most landowners will learn about land conservation by talking with their neighbors. It is essential that EQLT and supporters of conservation take every opportunity to discuss conservation options with landowners and your neighbors.

Strategy 4: Increase partnerships with town governments

Acknowledging that there are limited financial resources and time available to conserve all the critical lands in our region, it is imperative to work with town government to augment direct conservation with town-wide and region-wide planning. Key opportunities exist when communities are engaged in developing open space plans, master plans, and zoning plans. Over the years EQLT was involved with open space planning in Barre, Hardwick, New Braintree, Oakham and Ware. The EQLT will continue to seek ways to proactively engage with towns to encourage and facilitate conservation of their priority lands.

Finding the necessary funding for conservation acquisitions will always be a challenge and an opportunity. To date, EQLT has successfully met project-funding goals, most recently with the acquisition of the 87-acre Gould woodlot in Petersham (more to come in the summer newsletter). A combination of state funding, five foundations and over fifty individuals supported the conservation of the woodlot. It is this type of partnership that is essential for continued conservation successes and the EQLT is committed to fostering partnerships in the coming years.

On the Land: Moose Brook Preserve Trails

by Chris Buelow

Getting there: From Barre Common, go south on School Street to the intersection of route 32. Follow route 32 south into Wheelwright and turn west onto Shunpike Road. Turn north at the end of Shunpike Road onto Prouty Road. Brook Road is ½ mile on west off of Prouty Road. Parking is one mile from this intersection on the left.

Route Description: The trail system of the East Quabbin Land Trust's Moose Brook Preserve winds through the rich forest and steep hillsides on the western ridges of the Moose Brook Valley. This is one of the best habitats in the region to see forest interior species such as Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Veery, Scarlet Tanager and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Spring ephemerals are also relatively common here with rich blooms of Blood Root, Trout Lily, Purple Trillium and Hepatica in April.



Rock outcrop on Moose Brook Preserve Trail

From the landing the trail is blazed Yellow, marking the ½ mile loop trail.

Follow the Yellow Trail from the landing along an old logging road, making your way first through the narrow path past dense Highbush Blueberry and American Hazelnut, then turning up a long steep section that parallels a small, cold perennial stream that is a good spot to find Winter Wren and Canada Warbler. Soon you will be at eye level with the canopy below and still climbing upward. Near the highpoint of the trail there is a small set of stone steps in the trail: there are plans here for a future spur trail leading to Mandell Hill, but for now continue on as the trail wraps around this plateau, coming to a high foot bridge over a flowing seep where Marsh Marigold blooms in the Spring. Past the seep the trail comes to the intersection with the Green Trail (see below) and ultimately begins to descend back down the slope through an open oak forest. Near the base of the slope the trail wraps around a vernal pool and then along a rich, dramatic boulder field that supports such interesting species as Maidenhair Fern and White Baneberry. In a short ways the Yellow Trail intersects with itself, and a turn left will bring you back to the landing.

The Green Trail is an additional two-mile section of trail and dirt road that provides an excellent overview of the Valley's western slope. From the intersection of the Yellow Trail, follow the green blazes west, up the gentle slope through oak forest until the grade turns steep and rocky. From here the blazes will lead you through a large

forested boulder field of stone deposited by glaciation. Along with the dramatic appearance of this section, the forest here is also quite rich, supporting many specialized plant species. Soon you'll be at the intersection with the outlet of Ridge Road: a rough, unimproved town road. The trail follows Ridge Road down slope another mile, providing great views of the steep woodlands until meeting up with Brook Road. Turn south (right) at this intersection, following Brook Road about ¾ mile back to the landing, listening in spring for the song of Louisiana Waterthrush and Winter Wren from the hemlock hollows of Moose Brook.

OUR MISSION

The East Quabbin Land Trust works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts.

Betty Mixer Morss

Continued from Cover

down close to the little blossoms to see if fairies really do live among them.

We meander down the driveway, Betty's steps slow but measured. Taking in the beauty around us we walk toward "Boulder Field"² once the site of her parent's summer home. This land (now known as Mandell Hill), Betty explains, was her brother's inheritance. She, however, bought it from him in 1983 as an 'insurance policy' - that it never be developed. "In my childhood," she recalls, "all the top of the ridge from Cousin Annie Louise Ruggles"³ house to the fields just beyond and adjoining 'Boulder Field' was farmed or open pasture, with the exception of a strip leading to 'the Craggs'. Little interrupted a panorama of the valley from woods lower on the slopes into the valley." Then pointing to the vines entangling the trees she laments, "You can thank my mother for introducing bittersweet to Hardwick."

1. Jack Huntress writes, "When asked what I might like from the house, I immediately asked for two metamorphic rocks she had collected in her travels I keep them near my door on a little table to remind me of Betty, her generosity and her love of the earth.
2. This is the circle at the end of the road through the Mandell Hill Property.
3. The present home of Tremaine and Marion Cooper.

The Mixer name first appeared in Hardwick in 1788, she tells us, and the acres all around us have been Mixer land for over a century. It is a poignant moment when it dawns on us that as Betty speaks of the Mixer history in connection with Hardwick she does so as the last Mixer to live here.

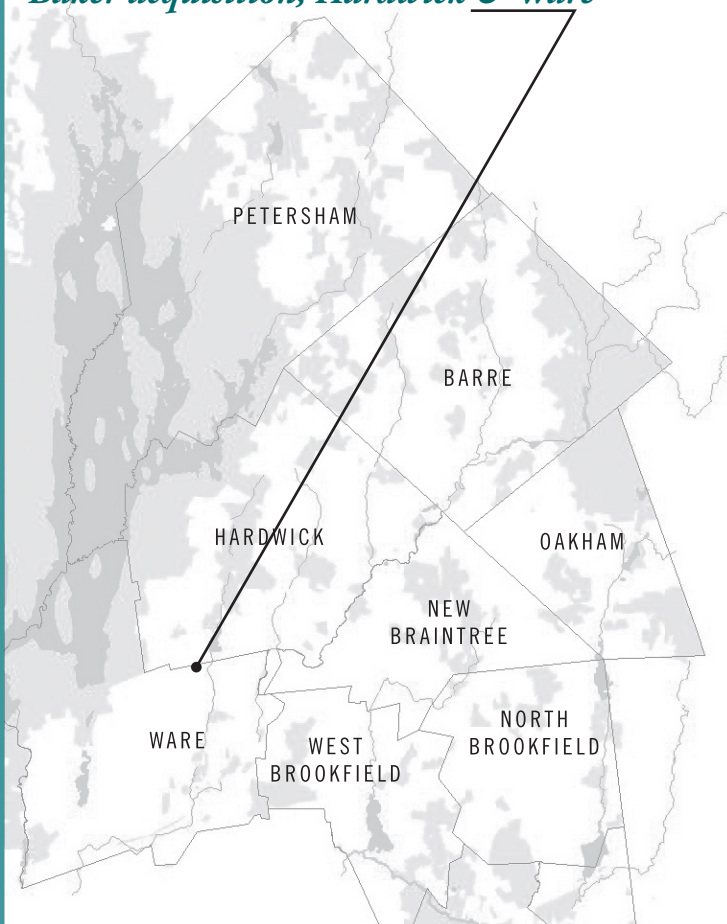
After a stroll through the freshly plowed fields to 'harvest' stones, we head back to the ridge and the house which appears before us as unpretentious as the one who designed it.

We say our 'goodbyes' and come away knowing that we have just spent a day with an extraordinary woman.

~~~~~
 These glimpses into Betty's life are from those who knew her in her 'twilight years' when life's pace and busyness slowed down - years meant for reflection and reminiscing. Much of what is shared came from countless hours spent in her company, listening to her tell stories of her life, from childhood memories of family celebrations in Hardwick, to dancing at the White House during the Roosevelt years to the unique marriage proposal made by Harry "with a sheepish voice." Betty Morss left a deep and lasting impression on those "Hardwickians" who had the pleasure and privilege of knowing her.

PURCHASE

Baker acquisition, Hardwick & Ware



In the spring of 2007, the EQLT land acquisition priorities focused on the Dougal range. This spring we are pleased to announce that the first piece of the Dougal Range Conservation Initiative was completed.

The Dougal range stretches from Hardwick Center to downtown Ware, including more than 2,000 contiguous acres of upland forest, which is quite rare east of the Berkshires. The strong association between the Dougal Range and our community is a logical one. Its slopes supported the cycle of first sustenance hunting, then fueled the Village's mills and extensive grazing. Now its slopes are forested once again providing a green backdrop for the residents of Hardwick, Gilbertville and Ware.

Edwin F. (Ted) and Jantje S. Baker owned a 57-acre parcel including a log home on Turkey Street in Hardwick directly across from the Music Camp. A small portion, about 4 acres is in Ware, including the driveway access to the home. This parcel is within the core Dougal Range focus area and abuts the Gilbertville Water District lands (315 acres). Conservation of the back land and a trail right of way will provide recreational access to the Dougal Range. Currently there are no trail connectors on the west side of Dougal. This purchase was made possible by grants received from Fields Pond Foundation, The Greater Worcester Community Foundation, and the Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grant program.

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

P.O. Box 5
120 Ridge Road
Hardwick, MA 01037
Phone/Fax 413.477.8229
www.eqlt.org

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 5
Hardwick, MA

EQLT News | INSIDE...



Moving Forward

SPRING 2008 | VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 1

POSTAL CUSTOMER
Hardwick, MA 01037

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL:

Mandell Hill Work Day, Saturday, April 19th 9:00am to Noon. Please join us whatever the weather! Bring your work gloves, clippers and rakes. Projects include burning brush, preparing flower beds and picking rocks. Park at the white gates at the entrance of Mandell Hill. Contact EQLT if you have any questions: 413-477-8229.

MAY:

Baker Trail / Dougal Range Mother's Day Walk, Sunday, May 11th 3pm. Join the East Quabbin Land Trust as we explore the newly protected Baker parcel, a critical forested landscape at the heart of the Dougal Range that links several other large and ecologically important properties, including the 300+-acre Gilbertville Water District. Our hike will begin on the steep west slope of the Baker parcel on Turkey Street and end at the dramatic ledges of the Water District overlooking the village of Gilbertville below and the greater Ware River Valley beyond.

JUNE:

Annual Meeting, Saturday, June 1, 4:30pm. Celebrate five years at the Morss estate and take a guided tour of the recent field expansion at Mandell Hill. Bring a dish to share and catch up with other conservation enthusiasts! Meet at the entrance to Mandell Hill at Barre and Ridge Roads, Hardwick.

Benefit Garden Tour, Saturday and Sunday, June 7 & 8, 10am to 3pm. Explore area gardens in their glorious spring colors. Tickets are \$15.00 and box lunch is \$15.00 and can be purchased by calling (508) 867-6679.