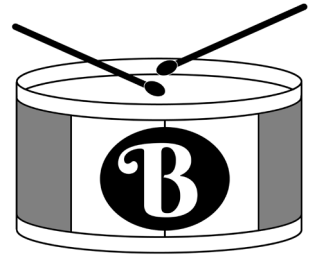


# Becket Beat

Keeping neighbors connected

Vol. 2, No. 1 - February 2023



## Our Highway Dept. in Action: Tackling Snow, Ice, and Whiteouts

by Ann Krawet

“They’re out there” [the snow plows] said former Highway Superintendent, Bill Elovirta, years ago when he responded to a caller concerned that Becket’s snow-covered roads would not be plowed. Today, Ed Pickert, our current Highway Superintendent, responds with “Be patient, we’ll get there.” He checks out the roads before calling in the crew. Then he makes sure that all roads get equal treatment.

The town owns seven trucks that plow, salt, and sand to get the job done. Four are six-wheelers of 40,000 lbs gross vehicle weight (GVW) and three are one-ton GVW. All have been upgraded to use front sanders instead of old-style rear sanders. Everything is automated and computerized, including how much material is spread per lane mile. A new truck costing \$294,000 is now being built to replace a truck that is 14 years old. In general, the life of a truck is 10 years but it can be extended through good maintenance at a cost of about \$150,000 throughout the years. Becket now employs a mechanic full time. He oversees all maintenance except parts replacement and major repairs.

Which roads are cleared first? Generally the major/asphalt roads that connect the town — Wade Inn, Bonny Rigg, Bancroft, Benton Hill, Algeria, County, Yokum Pond, Wells, McNerney, and others — are plowed first. Then the dirt roads, which are definitely more difficult, are plowed. Of those, the dirt roads that are known to be the most problematic get checked out first. Private community roads are not cleared by the town, except in cases of a medical or fire emergency, when town trucks are sent immediately so an emergency vehicle can get access. The State handles Routes 8 and 20. During a storm Becket trucks make one pass to make the road passable and then a second pass to completely clear it. Hard surfaces are salted first, to avoid snow sticking, and then plowing follows. On average, depending on the storm and assuming there are no breakdowns, it takes four hours to get all town roads cleared after the storm is over. In an ice storm it takes twice as much salt material to clear the roads compared with only clearing snow. Depending on conditions, salt could be dropped six to eight times.

There are 58.7 miles of town roads! Our six full-time highwaymen work year round and are joined by a part-time worker during the summer. Different licenses are required for different jobs. All must have a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) recertified annually. Those hoisting heavy equipment, excavators, and backhoes must have a 2A license recertified every two years. Enrollment in “Baystate Roads” workshops and in-house training are also part of job preparation.



One of the town’s plow trucks  
Photo courtesy of Al Alpert

The job is fulfilling but challenging — “Not a walk in the park,” according to Jeff Waite, a retiree. Trucks can slide backwards going up an icy hill. They are difficult to stop when a passing car cuts in too closely. A drop in temperature from one spot to the next can require immediate readjustment. At night strong winds during whiteouts require trucks to pull over until conditions improve. Deer eating the salt must be avoided. Stuck cars must be moved out of the way. To have better traction, roads are “flat graded” during winter before the snow hits and motors must be kept warm 24/7 to ensure quick start-ups.

Those who know Becket but live elsewhere are known to admire the quality of Becket roads after a snowfall. Hats off to our highwaymen for keeping Becket’s equipment in good order and our roads clear of snow and ice 24/7. Contact information: 413-623-8988 from 6:00 am to 2:30 pm.

# Beneath the Surface

by Marilyn Fish

Drive past Greenwater Pond on a winter day and you're likely to see a few folks trying to snag fish through holes in the ice. While the practice of ice fishing originated around 2,000 years ago among indigenous people using handmade clubs and spears, these days you'll find anglers equipped with everything from simple fishing poles to advanced electronic detection gear. The only must-have in Massachusetts is a fishing license for those aged 15 or older.



Dressing in layers, and bundling up with a hat, scarf, gloves, and boots are the obvious first steps to comfort. For safety, always wear a personal flotation device (a vest, known as a PFD), a pair of ice safety picks worn on a cord around the neck and cleats that slip over your boots. If you fall into the water, you must have the upper body strength to pull yourself out using the safety picks. It's a good idea to also carry 100 feet of rope, a cell phone in a plastic bag, and a whistle. Try to go fishing with a friend.

Look for a still body of water such as a small lake, with newly frozen ice formed during steady sub-freezing temperatures. Be aware that warm spells and precipitation can cause the formation of extremely dangerous "rotten ice." If you are new to the area, try to connect with local ice anglers to get an idea of recent weather conditions and known currents and springs that can cause thin spots in otherwise safe areas.

Although the presence of other fishermen is a sign that conditions are favorable, always conduct your own ice thickness tests. Venture about a foot from shore, where the water is shallow and the ice is thickest. Jump up and down. If you feel any movement, the ice is too thin. But if the ice seems stable, gradually move farther out and test again. When you reach your desired position, use an auger to drill a hole about eight inches in diameter, scoop out the slush and estimate the thickness with a measuring device. Four inches is enough to support an average person. Motorized vehicles can require as much as 14 inches.

The simplest method of fishing requires only a short, light fishing rod, brightly colored lures or jigs, and live bait. The angler sits at the hole in the ice and lifts the pole every now and then to check for action. The next approach employs tip-ups, devices made of wood or plastic with a spool of line and an attached flag (see picture below). The baited hook is placed into the water and the tip-up is left until the flag pops up, indicating a catch. Becoming increasingly popular is the use of a sonar system that provides depth information, as well as indicating the presence of fish or other objects. They display the movement of fish and other objects almost instantaneously. Underwater cameras are also now available.

A shelter of any type will make longer fishing expeditions possible. Simpler ice huts are often made of a heavy, water-resistant material; sturdier ice houses are made of wood or metal and usually have wheels for easy transport. An angler may drag or tow the structure into position using a heavy vehicle. The most extravagant shelters resemble mobile homes and have reportedly been equipped with satellite television, a bathroom, stove, and full-size bed.

Remember, whatever your level of experience or investment, the goal of ice-fishing is to enjoy the day and come home safely with a bucket full of lake trout, perch, or crappies. After you clean them, dust off your cookbook and unearth your cast iron pan, you can begin preparing your hard-won winter feast.

Beginners should go to [www.mass.gov/info-details/get-started-ice-fishing](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-started-ice-fishing) for texts and videos that tell you all you need to know about the sport and applicable restrictions.



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## Weight

Average person

Sleds, snowmobiles, most ATVs

Light cars, large ATVs

Full-sized trucks

## Thickness of Ice Required for Safety

4 inches

5-6 inches

7-12 inches

14 inches (minimum)



Ice fishing images source: [www.mass.gov/info-details/get-started-ice-fishing#ice-fishing-safety-](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-started-ice-fishing#ice-fishing-safety-)

# Memorial Bench for Bruce Garlow in Becket

by Tommie Hutto-Blake



*Bruce Garlow Memorial Bench / Photo courtesy of Al Alpert*

Long-time Becket resident and consummate town volunteer Bruce Garlow will soon have a memorial seat where others can come to read, recite poetry, or just have a few moments of solitude at the end of a hike at Esau's Heel Trail on Route 20 at Jacob's Well. On April 3, 2023 (rain date April 4), Bruce's Bench will be installed at the trailhead for easy access but will ultimately be relocated to the juncture of the Greenagers' Loop and the end of the trail's straightaway, a perfect spot to simply rest and reflect.

Bruce Garlow, father of Eric and brother of Tamarack, left us on April 23, 2021. But his voice is still strong for those who knew his ability to lead a Becket Town Meeting — with charm and astute command. Bruce had a way with words, whether in writing or explaining ground rules as the town moderator. He wrote for local publications and edited Becket's 250th anniversary history. He also performed his own poetry at the *Word X Word Festival* based in Pittsfield and at Housatonic's *In Words — Out Words*.

Bruce rarely said no when asked to take on a task for his hometown of Becket and he also took on many other responsibilities in the wider Berkshire County community. "I was not shy about my opinions," he told me. "I had a love affair with words."

One might ask — 'Who would write their own obituary?' Bruce did, two years before his death, leaving it up to Tamarack to do the final edits. Google 'Bruce Garlow obit in Becket, MA' and read for yourself just how Bruce described his life journey. No one could have done a better job! If you knew the man, his obit will bring you to both tears and chuckles. If you did not, after reading his obit you will wish he had been your friend.

Fortunately, he was my friend and it gave me great pleasure to organize the memorial bench project for Becket hikers. I felt his encouragement all the way through the process, and you may feel his presence too when you sit on Bruce's Bench. Who knows, perhaps you might write a poem as you enjoy Bruce's Bench — no doubt this would give Bruce great joy.

Again, the installation and ribbon cutting is scheduled for **Monday, April 3, 2023 at 2 p.m.** Please join Bruce's family and friends as we remember one of Becket's finest. A couple of surprise guests are planning on joining us during this special celebration of a life well-lived. Mark your calendar now.

## To acknowledge the sponsors of the Bruce's Bench Project, we would like to thank:

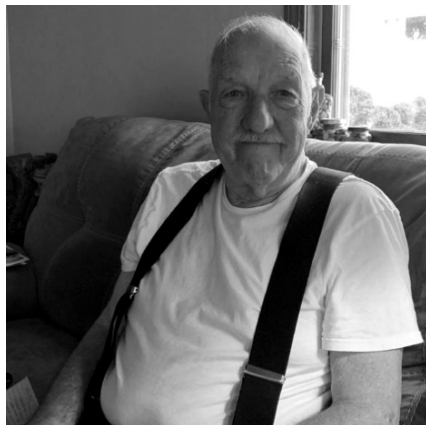
Jeanne and Richie Pryor, Al Blake and TL Hutto-Blake, Barbara Roberts, Ethan Klepetar, Michael Lavery, Robin Mathiesen, Nancy Chassman, Amy and Art Alpert, Barbara Craft-Reiss and Steven Reiss, Ann and Dave Krawet, Marcia and Dan Parnell, Adele Levine, Shelley and Bert Berat, and Bob Gross.



*Bruce and Tamarack Garlow at Hancock Shaker Village / Photo courtesy of Al Alpert*

# Town-Supported Ambulance Service Wasn't Always the Case

by Marcia Parnell



Bernie Robinson, long-time Becket resident, who with his wife, Irene, was among a group of about 20 EMTs who formed the first all-volunteer ambulance service in Becket / Photo courtesy of Marcia Parnell

In the last issue we reported on the recent improvements in the Becket Ambulance Department. While today the service is an appreciated and valued service as demonstrated by the passage of its budget each year at Town Meeting, newer residents may not be aware that Becket didn't have its own town-supported ambulance until 1997. Less-than-ideal response times were a concern, but the desire to improve them was outweighed by potential cost worries. Determined that the need was critical, a group of about 20 volunteers (some existing fire department EMTs and others residents who attained EMT certification at their own expense), formed an independent ambulance service. While most were already working full-time jobs, the volunteers raised funds to buy a used ambulance and with financial and professional resources contributed by friends and local businesses built the first ambulance garage on Main Street.

Want to know more? A great resource for details on departments, government, history, schools, culture and outdoor life here in town is [Becket Massachusetts: From Colonial Township to Modern Town 1765-2015](#). Compiled by the Becket 250th Anniversary Committee, it's a timeless volume — and great coffee-table book — available for purchase at the Becket Athenaeum and Town Hall for \$20. The story of the Becket Ambulance Department was written by Ann Spadafora, who was among the group of early ambulance volunteers.

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## BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

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### Becket Arts Center

With spring right around the corner, the Becket Arts Center is hard at work planning a number of exciting programs and events for the local community. And, now that Seminary Hall, the town-owned building that the BAC occupies, has heat, we'll be able to offer things in the remaining winter months. Keep an eye on our website — [becketartscenter.org](http://becketartscenter.org) — for the latest news, events, and more. Plus, look for an announcement about the reopening of our popular gift shop on Saturdays. We can't wait to see you back at the BAC.



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### Becket Athenaeum - Pamela Means & the Power of the Protest Song: Our Shared History & Present Day (February 2, 7-8:30pm)

Join us on February 2, 7-8:30pm for this part-performance/part-presentation family-friendly event. Pamela will explore the origin stories and lineages of protest songs, how their meanings and impacts continue to transform through time and space, and how they have inspired — and continue to inspire — movements and cultural shifts within the realms of racial and social justice. In addition, Pamela will share her own experiences with becoming an artist and using her voice. A curated assortment of original songs and select, recognizable covers will be integrated into the presentation as a powerful demonstration of how grounding, unifying, and mobilizing protest songs can be. RSVP appreciated: [bit.ly/BA-protest](http://bit.ly/BA-protest)



## Becket Beat

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*The Becket Beat* is published monthly. Submission guidelines and more at: [www.BecketBeat.org](http://www.BecketBeat.org)

# Community Calendar February 2023

see other side  
for more >>



Full listing & details: [www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar](http://www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar)

## ARTS, CULTURE & MUSIC

### PAPA BOB'S

Thursdays, Feb 2, 9, 16, 23: Open Mic / 7pm

### ROUTE 8 PUB

Saturday, Feb 4: Dos Mattoes / 6:30pm

Saturday, Feb 11: Misty Blues / 6:30pm

Wednesdays, Feb 1, 8, 15, 22: Open Jam / 6pm

Saturdays, Feb 18, 25: Karaoke / 7pm



Photo courtesy of Aaron Beatty

## MORE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Wednesdays, Feb 1, 8, 15, 22: Yoga /  
Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3

Thursday, Feb 2: Pamela Means & the Power of  
Protest Song / Becket Athenaeum / 7-8:30pm

Friday, Feb 3: Free Dinner @ Federated Church / 5-7pm

Saturdays, Feb 4, 18: Food Pantry / Becket Federated  
Church / 9-11am

Saturdays, Feb 4, 11, 18, 25: Storytime & craft /  
Becket Athenaeum / 10:30-11am

Saturday, Feb 4: Movie Night for Adults / Becket  
Athenaeum / 6:30-9:30pm

Mondays, Feb 6, 13, 20, 27: Chair Yoga /  
Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free

Tuesdays, Feb 7, 14, 21, 28: Yoga for Seniors  
with Rima Sala / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free

Tuesday, Feb 7: Book Club-*The Warmth of Other Suns*  
@ 1:30-2:30pm / Becket Athenaeum / Free

Tuesdays, Feb 7, 14, 28: Preschool STEAM / Becket  
Athenaeum / 10:30-11:30am / Registration required

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Call Pastor Bill Mulholland  
Becket Federated Church  
413-770-1897

# Community Calendar February 2023

see other side  
for more >>



Full listing & details: [www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar](http://www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar)

## TOWN GOVERNMENT

- Wednesday, Feb 1: Board of Health / 5pm
- Wednesdays, Feb 8, 22: Select Board / 7pm
- Wednesday, Feb 8: Planning Board / 6pm
- Tuesday, Feb 14: Historical Commission / 5pm
- Tuesday, Feb 28: Conservation Commission / 6pm

## MORE COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Saturday, Feb 11: Valentine's Day Cookie Sale to benefit Food Pantry / 9am-3pm / Guild Hall / \$5 per dozen or \$1 for a drink and a cookie / Sponsored by the Ladies' Guild of the First Congregational Church of Becket / 413-623-6455 for more information
- Monday, Feb 13: Cookbook Club-Jerusalem: A Cookbook/ Becket Athenaeum / 6pm
- Saturday, Feb 18: Teen Movie Night / Becket Athenaeum / 6:30-9:00pm
- Wednesday, Feb 22: Chess for Beginners on Zoom / Becket Athenaeum / 6-7pm
- Saturday, Feb 25: All You Can Eat Breakfast @ Becket Federated Church / 8-10:30am / \$8
- Weekdays after school (2:55-5:30pm): Kids Club After-School Care at BWS. Contact Jon Yetto at the Dalton CRA (413-684-0260 or [jyetto@daltoncra.org](mailto:jyetto@daltoncra.org)) for information and to sign up.

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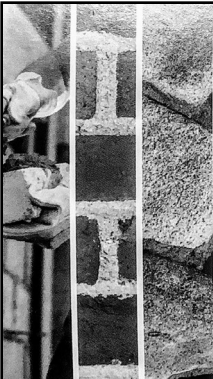
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