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## City of Newton Expenditures on City Owned Conservation Land

*By Alderman Ruthanne Fuller*

The City of Newton covers 18.33 square miles. Open space comprises 19.6% of the City's total land area, of which 55% is publicly owned.

Newton has approximately 590 acres of park, recreation and conservation land. Seventeen properties are "Conservation Commission Properties." They range in size from the Martin Conservation Area, which is a mere half acre on a wooded slope off Circuit Street to our largest, the 100 acre Webster Conservation Area next to Hammond Pond. (The next two largest ones are the Charles River Pathway at Wells Avenue (30 acres) and the Saw Mill Brook Conservation area (20 acres). Altogether, these Conservation Commission properties total approximately 440 acres. (This estimate of acreage may be high since the Department of Conservation and Recreation may control some portion of it.)

Looking specifically at these City owned Conservation Commission properties, how much are we investing annually in their maintenance? Not much.

In the last five years, there have been only three sources of funding for maintenance done by the City of Newton owned conservation land.

- First, the City of Newton invests in conservation properties. The Planning Department pays for a Senior Environmental Planner (currently Anne Phelps). Approximately 15% of her time is dedicated to Conservation Commission properties. The City occasionally pays for environmental consulting. The City also spent some money on the Deer Park. (Some of the Deer Park funds can now be reallocated to other conservation properties as there are no longer any deer in the

**City of Newton Conservation Expenditures Fiscal Years 2007-2011**

Expenditures	FY2011	FY2010	FY2009	FY2008	FY2007
15% of Salaries & Benefits of Senior Environmental Planner (SEP)	\$10,782	\$10,468	\$9,994	\$9,445	\$11,236
15% of Office Expenses for SEP	\$309	\$235	\$237	\$222	\$396
Environmental Consulting	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,926
Deer Park	\$2,106	\$1,712	\$2,057	\$2,416	\$2,017
Public Works & Parks and Rec	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Total City of Newton Expenditures from General Fund	\$13,697	\$12,915	\$12,788	\$12,583	\$25,075
Conservation Land Maintenance Funded by Newton Commonwealth Golf Foundation	\$11,822	\$26,831	\$23,452	\$23,050	\$35,104
Fireman Conservation Permanent Fund	\$0	\$2,556	\$0	\$157	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,519</b>	<b>\$42,302</b>	<b>\$36,240</b>	<b>\$35,790</b>	<b>\$60,179</b>

park.) Finally, in times of dire need, the Department of Public Works has removed materials dumped in the conservation areas and the Department of Parks and Recreation has sent its tree contractor in to remove trees when it was absolutely necessary and no conservation funds were available.

- Second, the City also spends money on a landscape contractor for conservation land maintenance. The sole funding source for this is a \$25,000 annual contribution from the Newton Commonwealth Golf Foundation. (When the City bought the golf course from the Chestnut Hill Country Club in 1981, the Commonwealth Golf Course agreed to pay the City \$25,000 annually to maintain conservation land and another \$25,000 for support of recreation.) If the full \$25,000 is not spent in one fiscal year, the remainder carries forward to the next year.
- Third, the City also has access to the income from a \$25,000 gift from the Fireman Family. In this economic environment with low interest rates, the income may be as little as \$200 a year.

What does this add up to? Looking back over the past five fiscal years, the most we ever have invested in maintenance in one year has been a mere \$60,179 (in FY2007). On average in the last five years, we have spent \$40,006. In FY2011, the City of Newton only spent \$25,519 on city owned conservation land. ■

*Data Supplied by David Wilkinson, Comptroller, City of Newton and Anne Phelps, Senior Environmental Planner, City of Newton*

## President's Message



As 2011, our 50th anniversary year, comes to a close, we wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season and happy New Year. This year flew by but was busy and productive for us.

This newsletter covers a variety of issues relating to Newton's parks and conservation areas. Alderman Ruthanne Fuller sets the stage, writing about the dismally small amount of money the City spends to maintain its conservation land. Gloria Gavis writes about the proposal to spend significant money to build a floating boardwalk and other structures at Hammond Pond so that people can enjoy the beauty of the Pond while *putting on the back burner* the fact that the Pond is, in fact, significantly stressed by storm-water runoff, a condition which could be mitigated by an expenditure of some of that money. Mike Clarke writes about the Community Preservation Committee's first ten years, its important role in protecting land, and its upcoming neighborhood meetings. I have written about the Nahanton Park management study and our plans for working on issues at that beautiful park.

These articles shed light on the challenges we face in protecting and expanding the precious and beautiful spots that people enjoy throughout Newton and that provide important wildlife habitats. More time, effort, and funds are needed to ensure that what looks beautiful actually is as healthy and protected from environmental stresses as it can be. We will be working hard in the coming months to focus on these issues and to solve some of the problems we face.

We hope you have received our membership renewal letter and will support us as you have done in the past. We very much look forward to seeing and working with you in 2012! ■

*Jane Sender, President*

## Nahanton Park—Study done, now it's time to Work

Last year the Conservators, along with the Friends of Nahanton Park and the City of Newton Parks & Recreation Department, formed a joint committee and hired Massachusetts Audubon's Ecological Extension Service (EES) to do a natural-resources inventory and management plan for Nahanton Park. We did this in part as a way to respond thoughtfully to Newton Community Farm's proposal to expand their farming into the park. The report, just published last month, gives us a rich blueprint for understanding the needs of this beautiful fifty-five-acre parcel and can be read on our website, [www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org). We are very appreciative of the efforts of the Parks & Recreation Department, particularly the support of Commissioner DeRubeis and the work of Carol Schein, who led the committee. Now the real challenge is to make sure the recommendations are implemented.

Lots of activities go on at Nahanton Park, from community gardening to soccer, birding to dog walking, canoeing to children's programs at the Nature Center. The goal of the study was to gain knowledge of how various activities affect the park. We wanted to know how to balance all the activities, as well as the proposed farming, and still to maintain a high-quality wildlife habitat and a pleasant overall park experience. Happily, the report tells us how, answering our questions and giving us expert guidance and recommendations about specifically what needs to be done.

These detailed and specific recommendations broadly involve (1) improving community gardening management and continuing to discuss farming at the Park along with wildlife habitat protection; (2) improving the Winchester Street entrance to improve the overall feel of the park; (3) maintaining and expanding wildlife habitat through removal of invasive species, pruning vegetation, investigating storm-

water discharge, and curtailing snow dumping; and (4) supporting passive recreation by renovating trails, continuing the canoe and kayak rental, managing dog walking and improving the overflow parking lot off Nahanton street.

There's a lot of work to be done here. In the coming months, the committee will be recommending next steps to the Parks & Recreation Commission. We will need volunteer help and some financial support to clear invasive plants, to restore some habitat and to renovate the Winchester Street entrance and some trails. It is immensely gratifying and exciting that we are thinking about the park as a whole, not simply as a list of activities supported by different interested groups, and working to ensure its health. We hope you share this excitement and that we can count on your support! ■

✂ Jane Sender, President

## Chestnut Hill Association requests that work on Hammond Pond proceed more slowly



DCR image of "preferred design".

The Hammond Pond and the adjacent conservation area is an extremely valuable and unique natural resource to the City of Newton and particularly to the Village of Chestnut Hill. Our neighborhood sits in the midst of housing, shopping malls and major commuter routes. As such, Hammond Pond is a lovely spot for walking trails, hiking, rock climbing and reflection. It is a peaceful oasis easily accessible to our neighborhood and is treasured by the residents of Chestnut Hill.

We were made aware of the Rudyak's family's generous contribution to the City of Newton and their desire to memorialize their son at such a lovely location several months ago through the local press. We sympathize with

their loss and are confident that we can come together to find a mutually beneficial solution for all of our goals.

The foremost concern of the Chestnut Hill Association (CHA) is that the process of implementing a floating walkway slow down until a plan for improving the health of the pond is created. More specifically, we hope that the following issues are studied in depth and potential solutions developed:

- Enhancing the ecological function of the pond and shoreline
- Remediating the water quality
- Identifying options for stormwater management
- Reducing sediment accumulation
- Reversing eutrophication
- Developing fore bays with berms
- Removing selectively water lilies
- Increasing water depth by dredging
- Enhancing ground water and surface water influxes

Moving ahead with a floating walkway and interior trails before having a plan to deal with the health of the pond is premature. We are disappointed that the focus and energy has been on the design and construction of the Floating Walkway instead of on the health of this special and unique natural resource in our City. We are concerned that installing a walkway may even limit the potential solutions to the pond's health. The CHA believes that the Rudyak donation (and those monies contributed by the DCR Partnership Matching Fund and the \$150,000 in reserve from WS Development, Inc.) be used in part or in full to restore and to ensure the health of the pond, its water quality, ecosystems and the maintenance of such. We understand the jurisdictional complications with Hammond Pond and implore the City of Newton, the MA Conservation Commission, the DCR and WS Development, Inc., to make this natural resource one of its top priorities.

Snow removal and storage, storm drainage, runoff from Rt. 9 and parking lots, and pedestrian debris all threaten the health of this unique kettle pond. We understand it is not a simple task to coordinate all of the entities that have a vested interest, abut or have title to land surrounding Hammond Pond. We know these issues are complicated and require more time to address in a comprehensive and coordinated plan and implemented in a cohesive fashion with all concerned parties.

It is our understanding that there was a feasibility study commissioned by the Rudyak Family by their consultant Kathy Bradford. In Ms. Bradford's own words, "*the ecosystem of Hammond Pond is in slow decline, and the water quality needs improvement,*" Bradford said. "*Any design here needs to*

have sustainability in mind and encourage repairs to the ecosystem.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it seems premature to make any decisions as to a memorial structure, floating walkway and interior trails of any kind until this study is fully understood.

In summary, the CHA respectfully requests that the process *slow down* until a rigorous environmental review of and potential solutions to Hammond Pond’s water quality and ecosystems is complete to the satisfaction of all interested and vested parties. The Floating Walkway and interior trails proposed in two phases appears quite large in scope. The Chestnut Hill Association hopes that no final decision be made about the floating walkway until the design specifications are confirmed; its impact on the environment and water quality are understood; and a future maintenance plan is addressed. ■

1 (boston.com/yourtown/news/brookline/2011/03/Newton\_nature\_lovers\_debate\_me.html)

## 10 Years of Community Preservation in Newton



PHOTO: DAN BRODY

Newton was one of the first communities in the Commonwealth to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA), and this year marks its 10th anniversary. Newton has used CPA funds to acquire about thirty acres of open space and recreation land. Without the CPA, Newton’s high land costs would make it impossible to acquire and improve open space for both recreation and conservation, to create affordable housing and to save historic structures and landscapes, such as the 1732 Durant Homestead. Open-space acquisitions alone include Kessler Woods, the Angino Farm, parkland on Crystal Lake, and conservation land around Dolan Pond—all for only about \$60/year for a midrange single-family house in Newton.

The CPC wants to know what residents feel is important to their villages in terms of open space, historic preservation and affordable housing in the future. Are there important green spaces near your home that might be preserved either by acquisition or a conservation restriction?



PHOTO: DAN BRODY

Are there historic landscapes that could be preserved? Is the place where you take your contemplative walks possibly threatened by loss of access or development? The CPC needs to hear from you, either at one of the neighborhood meetings or through their online survey site at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/NYFZCDH](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NYFZCDH)

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is celebrating the CPA’s 10th anniversary by holding neighborhood meetings to provide input for determining funding priorities for the next 10 years. The first meeting for Wards 1-2 was held on November 15 at Newton North High. Times and places for the gatherings for other wards are given below.

### Tuesday, January 24, 2012, 7-9 pm

For West Newton, Auburndale, Lower Falls (Wards 3 & 4)  
*Warren House, 1600 Washington Street, West Newton*

### Tuesday, March 20, 2012

For Waban, Newton Upper Falls, & Newton Highlands (Ward 5)

*Location TBA*

### Tuesday, May 15, 2012

For Newton Centre, Thompsonville, Chestnut Hill (Wards 6 & 7)

*Location TBA*

### Tuesday, September 11, 2012

For the South Side, including Oak Hill & Oak Hill Park (Ward 8)

*Location TBA*

### Online survey site:

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/NYFZCDH](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NYFZCDH)

✉ Mike Clarke

## Tree Walk—and other updates from Newton Tree Conservancy

It's been quite a season for our trees. Mother Nature seems to be conspiring with Mankind (whose contributions have been deferred maintenance, introduced pests, and an almost non-existent budget for planting...) against our trees. Newton continues to lose about 650 street trees per year. We need to care for the trees we have and keep on planting!

Newton Tree Conservancy had another successful year, planting 60 trees in five neighborhoods in Spring 2011 (Fessenden, Manet, Morton, Rotherwood/Centre, and Bowen). The neighborhoods look wonderful with their new trees. Many participants from the first year came back to help other neighborhoods in the second year.

We are now planning the 2012 program and plan to double our planting goal to 100 trees—50 in the Spring and another 50 in the Fall. We have requested continued financial support from Newton Community Pride's Leo and Stella Levi Tree Fund and will kick off a fundraising effort this Fall to enable the expanded planting effort. We hope to have enough funds by the time we need to order the trees this spring.



PHOTO: BETH WILKINSON

Marc Welch again did his tree steward training classes in the Spring, and on October 29th he led a terrific Tree Walk through Newton Cemetery. (*Photo above*) This year we did the Tree Walk differently and used it as an opportunity to practice our tree identification skills with the native species on the grounds in addition to studying the exotic specimens on the cemetery's traditional tree list. For example, we viewed American elms and learned that we still have beautiful specimens around Newton because they were sufficiently isolated that the disease-carrying beetles could not easily jump to them. (It has been a pleasure to include disease-resistant American elms among our new tree plantings). We enjoyed the huge silver maple and learned that because of its fast-growing

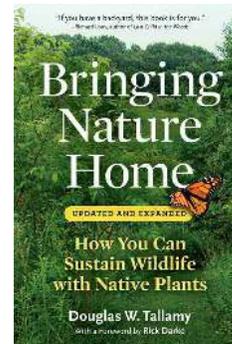
but weak wood you may not want to plant one in your front yard unless there is a professional arborist in the immediate family. We learned why people confuse red maples, Japanese maples, and Crimson King Norway maples and how to tell them all apart. We studied dogwood, magnolia, stewartia, sweetgum, ginkgo, London plane tree, Katsura. We compared spruce, Norway spruce, pine, hemlock. We compared red oaks and white oaks. We were able to enjoy the bark and branch structure of the majestic sugar maples. Marc did a wonderful job for an enthusiastic crowd and then proceeded to deal nonstop with the terrible storm that arrived later that day.

We welcome your involvement in our programs and planning efforts (see [www.newtontreeconservancy.org](http://www.newtontreeconservancy.org)). We thank Newton Conservators for its continued sponsorship as we grow the membership of the Newton Tree Conservancy and the many Conservators who also support the Tree Conservancy. ■

✉ Katherine Howard

### Recommended Winter Reading...

Now that it's dark by 4:30 and the nights are cold, are you stocking up on books to read by the fire over the long winter? The Executive Board of the Conservators has a recommendation for you:



**Bringing Nature Home:  
How Native Plants Sustain  
Wildlife in Our Gardens**  
by Douglas W. Tallamy

“The book evolved out of a set of principles. So the message is loud and clear: gardeners could slow the rate of extinction by planting natives in their yards.

This simple revelation about the food web—and it is an intricate web, not a chain—is the driving force in *Bringing Nature Home*.” (*Anne Raver, New York Times*)

This book should be of particular interest to members of the Newton Conservators. Why is that? **We are delighted to announce that Dr. Tallamy, Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware at Newark, will be the speaker at our annual meeting on May 2, 2012.** Save the date! More details will appear in the next edition of the newsletter. Copies of the book are available at the Newton Free Library.

# Crystal Lake Conservancy's Second Annual Forum Reports Water Sampling & Survey Results



This summer, with the help of many volunteers, the Crystal Lake Conservancy (CLC) carried out three major activities for Crystal Lake. We conducted a survey of the Crystal Lake watershed, collected multiple water samples during both wet and dry periods, and monitored weekly water visibility and temperature readings.

## Watershed Survey

Volunteers noted storm water drainage, vegetation, erosion, land use and any sources of pesticide or herbicide use for all 34 streets in the Crystal Lake watershed. This survey created a baseline understanding of how storm water moves through the watershed, including identifying potential pollution problems. A summary of the watershed survey is as follows:

- Other than some minor erosion, there is nothing visibly egregious occurring on properties in the watershed
- Lake-side observations revealed no visible water quality issues
- Invasive plant species appear to be reasonably under control with minor pockets observed
- Lawn fertilizers and pesticide use could not be accurately assessed via visual observations

## Water Sampling

Volunteers assisted with a very involved water sampling program. The goal was to obtain general information regarding Crystal Lake's water quality in order to highlight and address areas that might be affecting the overall health of the lake. CLC's intent was not to test for "swim-ability" of the lake. Water samples, taken from land and by boat by trained volunteers, were collected from eleven different locations around the lake at six different time periods, utilizing techniques. The Locations included eight near storm water drain outfalls, the deepest part of Crystal Lake, the Bathhouse, and an area adjacent the railroad tracks. Samples were analyzed by a State Certified G&L Laboratory, a state-certified lab in Quincy MA. The comprehensive water sampling of Crystal Lake included bacterial analysis and counts (E. coli and Enterococcus); herbicides and pesticides; fertilizer components such as nitrite, nitrate, ammonia and phosphorus, and arsenic.

The results of CLC's sampling generally were as follows:

- Bacterial test results were variable;
- Nitrogen test results were comparatively low and typically below detection limits;

- Phosphorus test results were variable and were elevated in some areas;
- Pesticides and Herbicides were not detected;
- Arsenic was not detected (leaching concerns from the railroad tracks).

Early August sampling showed no detection of phosphorus and acceptable levels of nitrate, and E.coli below the State EPA requirements of Maximum Contamination Levels (MCL) throughout the lake except at Levingston Cove, where all three were present. Levingston Cove has three outfalls for storm water pipes that lie very close to old underground sewer lines that may be affected by exfiltration and may be one of several potential sources contributing pollution to this area. The City did perform some repair work during the summer that seemed to improve subsequent sample readings. Enterococci were present throughout the lake except near a broken outfall pipe by the condominiums, where no direct runoff appears to enter the lake. The volunteers gathered samples again in late August, when the E. coli levels were now acceptable everywhere except at Levingston Cove. Enterococci continued to be high at Levingston, Cronin's and Lake Terrace. Cronin's Cove has two outfall pipes, and Lake Terrace has one. Phosphorus and nitrate were also detected at Cronin's Cove with some phosphorus at the Bathhouse.

Samples were taken twice in September. E. coli levels were acceptable throughout the entire lake. Enterococci exceed limits once near the condominiums and once at Levingston Cove. No nitrogen was detected any where, but some phosphorus continued to be detected at Cronin's Cove and the Bathhouse. The last set of samples was taken in early October, when E. coli levels were acceptable throughout the entire lake. Enterococci levels had decreased and were acceptable throughout the lake except at Lake Terrace, where only a small amount was detected.

## Water Testing/Monitoring Program:

For the second year running, a group of volunteers conducted weekly monitoring of the Lake. Both temperature and visibility readings, at three different depths, were recorded at six different sites around Crystal Lake. The testing began in late July and continues into November. Water visibility was excellent and there were no unusual temperature changes, especially in the lower, cooler levels of the lake. No algae blooms were detected during the summer and early fall; however, a potential bloom appears to be underway in November.

## Recommendations for the Future for Crystal Lake and its Watershed

The Crystal Lake Conservancy is committed to being an active steward of Crystal Lake. CLC's initial water sampling

and watershed evaluation is the first step in a long-term effort to protect and improve the water quality. It is clear that additional data are necessary to obtain a more complete picture of Crystal Lake.

With that in mind, CLC is considering implementation of the following actions:

- Continue monitoring the Lake especially before and during storm events;
- Begin an education program to help residents understand ways to reduce their impact on the lake;
- Develop programs in collaboration with the City to reduce pollutant loads entering the lake;
- Search for grants and funding to implement recommendations.

Crystal Lake is a beautiful asset within Newton. It is within the community's interest and power to insure its long term health and enjoyment. ■

*Janice Bourque, Co-President, CLC*

## Website Update and Electronic Newsletter

On our website ([www.Newtonconservators.org](http://www.Newtonconservators.org)), members now can use the Membership Options to "Update Profile" in addition to "Join" and to "Renew". Update Profile lets you update your email address, mailing address, email preferences, and it also addresses the following important issue:

**How do you want to read our newsletter?** You now have the option to save paper by reading your newsletter online. If you prefer not to receive the hard copy newsletter in the mail (we'll send you email when the newsletter is available on our website), you can unselect the "No" box and select the "Yes" box instead.

To Update Profile, you will be prompted to enter your email address on file and your password. (A "forgot password" link is available: a new password will be sent to the email address on file. You can use the new password to log in, then select the "Change Password" link on the profile page to change to a password that is easier to remember.) Make the applicable edits, and click the Save button.

Members who are Family, Sustaining, Donor, or Patron type members have one additional step if they want to update their mailing addresses. Follow the "Update Family Profile" prompt to update mailing address or other info for the family.

You can also renew your membership online (Renew option). This assumes you will remain at your current membership level: if you want to change it, you will need to contact us via the website. However, you can always choose the option "Support Our Work" to make a year-end additional tax-deductible gift to Newton Conservators. It would be much appreciated! ■

**If you haven't renewed your membership already, now is the time. And consider a gift for a conservation-minded friend.**



NEWTON CONSERVATORS  
PO BOX 590011  
NEWTON CENTRE  
MA 02459

### 2012 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

YES! Please renew my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Donor             | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual Member  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sustaining Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional contribution |

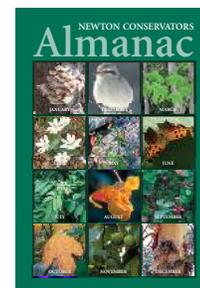
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Please make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.

Visit our website at [www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org) if you wish to renew your membership online.



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# NEWSLETTER

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*Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961*

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WINTER ISSUE

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## **MISSION** **Newton Conservators, Inc.**

The Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

*The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 50 years ago in June 1961.*

**The Newton Conservators Newsletter**® is published four times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc., in June, September, December, and April. Deadlines for these issues are the first Friday of each month in which an issue is scheduled to be published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to [bethwilkinson@mac.com](mailto:bethwilkinson@mac.com) Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Janice Bourque, Mike Clarke, Ruthanne Fuller, Katherine Howard, Jane Sender, and Beth Wilkinson. As always, thanks to Doug Leith for his excellent proofreading.