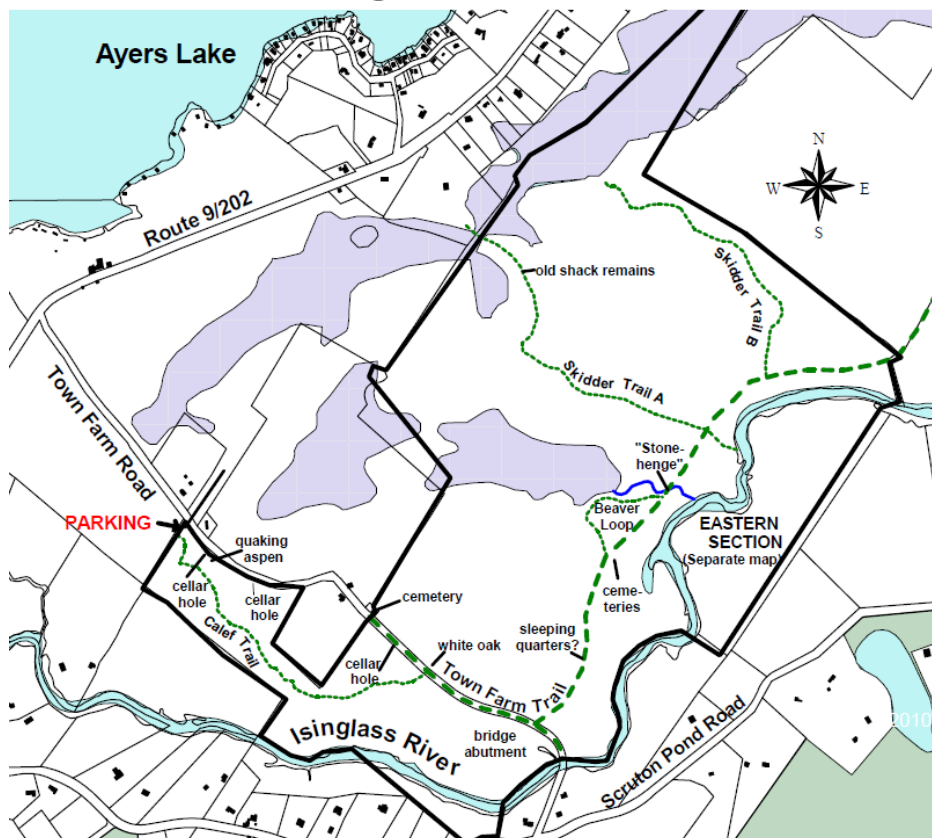








A Harlan Calef Isinglass Preserve



-  Calef Property
-  Trails
-  Tax Map 2016
-  Buildings
-  Swamp/wetland
-  Other Conserved Lands

0.2 0 0.2 Miles



“Walking: the most ancient exercise and still the best modern exercise” - Carrie Latet

A Harlan Calef Isinglass Preserve



- Trail length:** One mile or more
Difficulty: Easy to moderate
Location: Town Farm Road
Activities: Hiking, XC skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, and hunting. mountain biking and horseback riding except on signed trails;
Parking: Parking area is along the left side of an unnamed road that goes right off of Town Farm Road about 0.4 miles from Route 202
DO NOT PARK ANY FURTHER ON THE UNNAMED ROAD OR ON TOWN FARM RD ANYWHERE NEAR THE HOUSE AT THE END,
Acreage: 300

The 300-acre town-owned A Harlan Calef Isinglass Preserve is protected via a conservation easement held by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. It was acquired in 2014. In addition to funding from the town's conservation fund, the project was supported by grants from many government agencies and private foundations*. The property was owned by the Calefs for nearly a century. Harlan Calef (1910 – 2005) was especially fond of the property, and he managed it sustainably and resisted offers to develop it over that long period. It is named in his honor.

It is a biologically diverse property, with lots of topography, small streams, large beaver ponds, and over 1 ½ miles of frontage on the Isinglass River. Most of the preserve is west of the river, but there are about 29 acres, with hiking trails, on the east side as well. Trails on the eastern section are described later in this chapter.

The property also contains many cellar holes and foundations from the old town farm, and several cemeteries. The Town Farm was owned by the town and used to house indigents in the 1840s and 50s. Those otherwise homeless people worked the farm for their room and board. The Town Farm was discontinued when the County Farm opened in Dover.

There are several trails on the property, which will be expanded and improved over time. Most of them are woods road and trails that existed when the property was conserved. The Town Farm Trail used to be the class 6 (unmaintained) section of Town Farm Road; it was redesignated as a class A trail by town vote in 2015. There are other, mostly overgrown, logging skid roads on the property as well. *It is easy to get lost on these, so be cautious should you want to explore!*

From the parking area, follow the Calef Trail through the woods, roughly parallel to Town Farm Road. It mostly follows an old skid road but leaves that at times in order to avoid especially wet areas. It

*The project was spearheaded by the Trust for Public Land, and financially supported by: The NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), The NH Dept. of Environmental Services, The NH State Conservation Committee (via its Moose Plate program), NH Fish and Game, The Samuel P. Hunt Foundation, The Fields Pond Foundation, The Thomas A Haas fund at New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Carden and Ann Welsh, The Penates Foundation, and the A Harlan Calef Trust.

goes up and down over small hills quite a bit. Eventually a stone wall appears on your left, and soon you will see a large white oak tree where the trail connects with the ‘backbone’ of the trails on the property, the Town Farm Trail.



White oak at intersection with Town Farm Trail

One remarkable feature of the Town Farm Trail is the abundance of stone walls that run, sometimes on both sides, along its entire length. One assumes that most of these walls, some of which are very carefully crafted, were built by the residents of the Town Farm in the 1840s. It is a testament to their skills that they still look good nearly two centuries later!

Another feature of the Town Farm Trail and its environs is the abundance of shagbark hickory trees along it. If you don't know what a shagbark hickory tree looks like, just look at the name, look around you, and you'll figure it out! The hickory nuts that the tree produces are important to wildlife, and were also popular with Native Americans and Henry David Thoreau.

If you turn left on the Town Farm Trail, in a short distance you will come to a clearing that was used as a staging area for loggers the last time that there was a forestry operation on the property. On the far side of the clearing on the left is an unusual ‘above ground’ cellar hole. Was it a barn? A root cellar? A house?



Cellar Hole

Head back the way you came on the trail, and in about a quarter mile there is a fork in the road. The right fork takes you down to an old bridge abutment and the Isinglass River. No doubt this bridge was important in its day for transport of the produce from the Town Farm and for access to the mills along the river.



Bridge Abutment

Return to the Town Farm Trail and go right. On your left you will soon see stone walls running perpendicular as well as parallel to the road, outlining large rectangles. Were these the sleeping quarters for the town farmers? Holding pens for cattle and sheep? The mystery remains.

Further, on the right, you'll come to a large cemetery.



Babcock-Cate Cemetery

The Barrington Historical Society has classified this cemetery as three separate plots: the Babcock-Cate (fenced in), Blake, and Town Farm. This is from their book *Graveyards of Barrington, New Hampshire*:

Altogether this wonderful graveyard, peacefully situated beside an old abandoned road among tall pines, boasts no less than 86 marked graves. Unquestionably there are still more among these whose stones have disappeared or which had no stones...

In 1839 Simon Blake sold this property to the Town of Barrington for a town farm, and thus this area that once was private became a common burying ground for those who worked or lived at the town farm.

Many soldiers are buried here (with their wives), and their flags placed annually by the local chapter of the V.F.W. make a poignant and beautiful sight all year long, as the pines sigh overhead and the sparkling Isinglass River sings merrily in the background.

Details about the engravings on all the stones in all cemeteries in town can be found in this book.

The unknowns of the preserve's history in the early 19th century pale in comparison to the next item along the Town Farm Trail: **Barrington's Stonehenge**. (*Note: place tongue firmly in cheek as you read this section*).

LEGEND HAS IT THAT THE DRUIDS WERE IN WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS BARRINGTON IN ABOUT 200 BC. IN FACT THE NAME BARRINGTON MAY STEM FROM THE DRUID "BAR ENDT DUIN," PART OF THE RITUAL OF HUMAN SACRIFICE PRACTICED BY THIS CLAN, IN WHICH VICTIMS WERE MADE TO SIT NAKED ON THE SACRIFICIAL ALTAR. WAS IT ON THESE STONES THAT THEY PERFORMED THESE RITES DURING THE SOLSTICE? IT IS SAID THAT AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT ON THE WINTER SOLSTICE ONE CAN STILL HEAR THE CRIES OF THE VICTIMS OF THIS BARBARISM.



BARRINGTON'S STONEHENGE

THE 'ALL SEEING EYE' FOUND IN THE WHITE OAK TREE MENTIONED EARLIER LENDS CREDENCE TO THE LEGEND OF THE DRUIDS IN BARRINGTON. OAK AND MISTLETOE WERE SACRED TO THE DRUIDS.



BEWARE THE ALL SEEING EYE!

A brief walk past the henge takes you to a trail intersection. The trail to the left (marked on the map as Skidder Trail A) takes you about a half mile over some rugged terrain to the property boundary, which is on a very skinny isthmus between two large marshes. The trail is on logging skid roads, and can be confusing – when there are intersections, follow the route that is marked with survey flagging. Don't go past the isthmus, or you'll find yourself in someone's backyard.

Shortly before you get to the boundary you'll see the remains of a wooden shack that was on the property prior to its ownership by the town. In 2017 the local Boy Scout Troop helped knock it down and pile its pieces in an orderly stack.

After working your way back to the Town Farm Trail, don't miss the little spur that goes down to the river, just a bit to the left, almost opposite the Skidder Trail A. It affords a lovely view of the river (photo below). When you hike on the eastern section of the Calef Preserve, you'll find yourself on the other side of the river at this point.

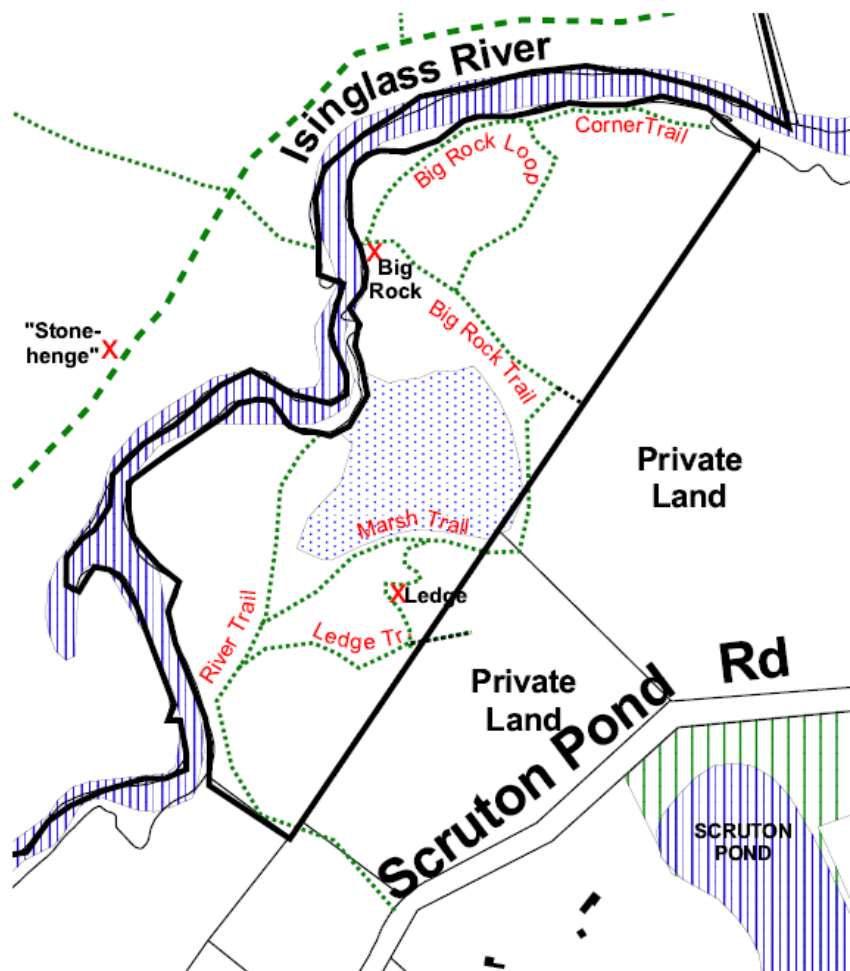


Isinglass River

Further east on the Town Farm Trail, on your left there's another trail, again a confused one that follows skid roads (marked on map as Skidder Trail B). Beyond that, near the end of the property, you will get to a gate erected to keep unauthorized vehicles away. The trail continues past that, across private property, and eventually links up with Brooks Road.

Should you choose to return to the parking area via Town Farm Road rather than the Calef Trail, be especially cautious and respectful after you exit past the gate at the west end of the Town Farm Trail. The road goes right between an abutter's house and his barn, so leash your dogs and don't wander off the road in that area. Once you're past the private property, there are a couple more cellar holes and the Strafford County big tree champion quaking aspen tree on your left.

Calef Property East



-  Calef property
-  Town Farm Trail Trails
-  Tax Map 2016
-  Buildings
-  Swamp/wetland
-  Other Conserved Lands (Private)

300 0 300 Feet



Calef, Eastern section

- Trail length:** Up to ~1.5 miles
Difficulty: Easy to moderate
Location: Scruton Pond Rd.
Activities: Hiking, XC skiing, snowshoeing, fishing,
Parking: There is no formal parking area. The trail head is directly across from 447 Scruton Pond Road, approximately 2.2 miles from Rt. 125 and 1.4 miles from Rt. 202. There is a small sign at the entrance.



Entrance to Calef East, from Scruton Pond Rd.

The eastern section of the A Harlan Calef Isinglass Preserve is across the river from the main section, and only connects to it if you feel like swimming or wading. It contains about 2 ½ miles of trails and is well worth a visit. Some of the trails connect with others (in black on the map) that leave the property and go on to private land. Please do not take these.

Described below is a nice hike of ~1 1/2 miles that takes you through most of the trails.

There is a wire chain across the trail entrance. Go around it and proceed a short distance along the River Trail (an old logging road) until you reach the Isinglass River. Stop and take in the view.

Take the trail to the right and walk another hundred feet or so. Bear slightly right on to the Ledge Trail. It goes uphill until it reaches the property boundary, at which point going straight would take you onto private land. Turn left at the sign and proceed down an embankment. There is a short spur trail on the left to a ledge with a view of the marsh below.

Follow the blazes down to the Marsh Trail. Turn right and admire the big marsh, the relic of an old oxbow on the Isinglass. There's also a sign for a "Boat Launch," apparently placed in the past by someone with a sense of humor!

Before long you will be directed to go left onto the Big Rock Trail. Go straight until you reach the river once again, and climb the rocky outcrop there for another gorgeous view. At this point you are directly across from the spur trail on the opposite shore. Descending from both the rock and your reverie, follow the trail downstream along the river. When you reach another junction, the Big Rock Loop turns right and loops back on itself. Don't hurry back just yet: instead enjoy a few hundred feet more of the Corner Trail along the river to a stone wall that marks the property boundary, then reverse direction and return to that junction and go left.

Head back the way you came, but pass the Ledge Trail and stay on the Marsh Trail for a milder ascent. When you get to the River Trail, take it to the right for yet another pretty river view. Finally, take the River Trail back to your car.