

# The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society  
The society is a registered charity: CCRA number 88847 4194 RR 0001



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## Hugonin Battery

The Hugonin Battery is located one half mile south of Fort Ives on the northern end of McNab's Island. It is situated on a 60 ft high bluff and had overlooked the harbour channel approach to Halifax Harbour inner defenses of that day. It provided a tight fire point arch, in conjunction with shore batteries on the Halifax Peninsula. The necessity for such a shore battery came about because of the invention of the high speed torpedo boats, which the German Imperial Navy were producing in the early 1890's. The torpedo boats were capable at high speeds to rush in under slow elevating enemy fire and hit targets with impunity.

The British and Canadian War Departments became alarmed at this rapidly developing threat and began developing their own answer for defense against it. The Canadian War Department began equipping its shore defenses with rapid fire breech loading heavy guns. The War Department chose the high 60 ft bluff at the Hugonin Point as the most advantageous location. They began assembling the land from private owners between 1894 and 1912. By 1897 construction began culminating with gun placement in late 1900. The gun battery consisted of four 12 pounder quick fire, breech loader type weapons. These were mounted in concrete embrasures, complete with subterranean shell magazines, work sheds, barracks and officer's quarters. The guns were placed so that they could be rapidly lowered to cover the inshore approaches right up to the foot of the cliff. This provided the

guarantee that no enemy craft could slip through without being hit.

When war was declared against Germany in 1914, Halifax Harbour was near impregnable against attack. Hugonin Battery was ready, it was garrisoned by sixty enlisted men and officers, fully trained and stayed so until peace was declared.

After the war the battery was stood down and gradually fell into



Barrack Building, Officer's Quarters at Fort Hugonin

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**Friends of McNabs Island Society  
Rucksack**

**Web address:** <http://www.mcnabsisland.ca>

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**MEMBERSHIPS:** Individual Membership or Newsletter Only is \$15 per year, Family Membership is \$20 per year, Supporting Membership is \$50 per year and Sustaining Membership is \$100 per year. We are a registered charity and also accept donations.

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**DEADLINES:** 1 February for the Spring issue, 1 June for the Summer issue, 1 September for the Fall issue and 1 November for the Winter issue. We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

**DISCLAIMER:** The articles contained in this newsletter are the property of the authors. No portion of the publication may be duplicated without permission from the author/editor. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Society. We cannot vouch for groups, businesses or activities described in this newsletter. Information is provided for members' interest and readers are to use their own discretion.

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## How can YOU help?

The Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on volunteer power, please consider giving a few hours of your time.

Do you have an interesting story about the Island? Submit it to the newsletter! Not all jobs take a lot of time, some can be one-time-only help with an event, doing call backs or mailing out the newsletter. Please contact the executive through our email address: [mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca](mailto:mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca)

## Goodbye Dorothy

Given the size of the Society's membership, the Friends rely on their members, families and friends to keep them informed of any news concerning fellow members. It is with great sadness that the Friends heard about the death of Dorothy MacLeod from injuries sustained in a car accident this past August. Dorothy was a long time member of the Society and a familiar face at AGMs and McNabs Island walkabouts. The Friends of McNabs would like to extend their deepest sympathy to Dorothy's family.



12 pounder Quick Firing Gun Circa 1914

*(Continued from page 1)*

disrepair. During the 1920 to 1938 period it was manned by a skeleton crew and a civilian caretaker on site. It was only used for sporadic gunnery practice by the local militia. In 1922, two of the 12 pounder guns were removed and relocated across the harbour at Sandwich Point, just south of York Redoubt Battery, thus leaving the battery with only two guns.

When hostilities broke out in 1939, the battery was remanned for a short time until in early 1940 when the remaining two guns were relocated further out toward the harbour entrance at Strawberry Batter, recently constructed. It was located just north of Fort McNab on McNab's Island.

After the removal of the last two guns, the battery buildings were turned into workshops and one was turned over to the local school house for island children. The officers quarters were turned into a generating station, in 1942 to provide power to the degaussing station. Degaussing (cathodic protection) was an electrical process of demagnetizing the hulls of metal warships to remove static electricity which naturally builds up over a short time from the workings of internal machinery. With too much magnetism, the ship's hulls were an easy target for magnetic mines sown in the Atlantic by the German enemy submarines. From the old battery site a number of large cables were led out to Hugonin Point, Then offshore underwater to McNab's Cove and connected up to large floating buoys. They would run the current through the ships hulls and remove the built up static charge. The degaussing station remained operational after World War II with a civilian DND caretaker until the late 1990's, when it was removed to York Redoubt. The battery was mothballed, boarded up and remains so to this day.

It is now owned by the provincial government, which acquired it to add to the provincial park. Hopefully it will soon be cleaned up and preserved as a Heritage Site as it should be.

B.Edwards  
April 2006

Photos courtesy Parks Canada, Citadel Archives, Halifax

## Paddle and Clean-up 2006

This year's Paddle/Cleanup on September 9<sup>th</sup> went very smoothly again, as usual. A total of sixteen hard-working humans and one dog collected a lot of trash for a small flotilla of garbage pickers. Geocachers along with reps from Canoe/Kayak Nova Scotia, Paddlenovascotia/wwns, and the Friends of McNabs Island Society managed to collect an incredible ninety bags of Styrofoam, plastic bags, bottles and other debris from the shoreline. Thanks to the Shearwater Yacht Club, the group was able to use their facilities for this year's paddle/cleanup event. The weather was perfect as we pushed off from the Shearwater Yacht Club's launch that morning and paddled over to Ives Point on McNabs Island. From here, we worked our way to the



Garbage collection point at Timmin's Cove

DNR service wharf at Ives Cove where we deposited the first half of our pickings. After



Garbage collected at Ives Cove

picking up more debris, we paddled towards the nice spacious Timmins Cove area where we had lunch, did a quick geocache find and continued picking up bags of garbage.

I would like to thank the ever resourceful geocacher Scott Guthrie, Dusan Soudek from Canoe/Kayak Nova Scotia, the Shearwater Yacht Club, Clean Nova Scotia for providing the supplies and handling the logistics, HRM Public Works for garbage Pick Up, and of course Captain Mike Tilly's Crew for retrieving the bagged garbage and debris and bringing it to the mainland. A Bravo Zulu to all the paddlers and canoeists

who came out for the event, their outstanding effort and help truly made a difference to McNabs Island.

## Walkabout with Carolyn Mont



Boat run aground in Back Cove

On August 13, fourteen people and Pilot, a Portuguese water spaniel, gathered at Fisherman's Cove to go to McNabs Island. That was the day we had scheduled a Walk and Talk on the island.

This was intended to be a small group hike on McNabs led by members of the Friends of McNabs Island Society. The Friends organize two large events annually, the Beach Clean-up in June and the Fall Foliage Tour in October. We know that those dates don't suit everyone so we wanted to host a number of smaller events. Barry Edwards, a long time member of the Society, had planned a hike

with a dozen people earlier in the summer but that, like the Beach Clean-up, had been rained out.

In the group were several people who had never been to the island but had joined the Society hoping to finally make it to McNabs. When we arrived at Back Cove, we were treated with a wonderful view of the osprey that live there. They nest on top of a power pole and can often be seen coming and going. It is always exciting to get so close to them.

When we were at Fort McNab, we paused at the McNab family graveyard. This is just a small fenced grave site that is inside the walls of the fort. From there, we made our way through an overgrown path to the Colin Stewart Trail. This was formerly the Pond Trail, renamed in honour of former Friends of McNabs Island board member Colin Stewart.

We walked north along Garrison Rd. toward the Tea House where we had a picnic lunch on the grounds. In the 1980's there had actually been a Tea House operating out of that building but it is now boarded up. It is on the grounds of the former Perrin estate, which in the late 1800's had a beautiful private garden, rivaling the Halifax Public Gardens. There are still remnants of that garden to be seen today. It is on this site that the Department of Natural Resources has chosen to open 10 campsites.

Throughout the day, there were lots of times when we appeared to be alone on the island. Then we would come upon a group of people, each with their own story to tell about why they were there on that day. One group was celebrating a birthday by returning to a spot they had visited many times as children. They were grandchildren, and their friends, of Joe Brown who had been the caretaker of Fort Hugonin in the 1980's. We met them at Fort Ives where we watched sail boats racing at the mouth of the Arm.

After we left Fort McNab and headed back toward Wreck Cove to meet the ferry, we came

upon another group of people who had volunteered at the Beach Clean-ups several times. They were enjoying the day at Maugher's Beach. We walked the Wambolt Trail to the beach and were not happy to see a large boat, "Taylor Made" which had been scuttled and left on the beach. Sadly, it has been there for over a year.

The Walk and Talk was a great success and we look forward to more of them next year. It was an opportunity to connect with new people and have a wonderful day hiking on our favourite island.



Taylor Made, over a year run aground on McNabs

## Thank you MARLANT!

*The Friends of McNabs were unable to hold their annual Beach Cleanup in June after being rained out three weekends in a row. To the rescue came the Navy in organizing a massive one day cleanup on Lawlor Island. The following TRIDENT article written by Becky Anne Brydon was sent to the Friends by Carol Lee Giffin, Formation Safety and Environment Officer at MARLANT:*

On June 7, 2006, MARLANT invaded Lawlor Island. With the help of approximately 70 volunteers, 15 volunteers from SuperNOVA, Dalhousie University's Science, Engineering and Technology program, the island was cleared of debris.

"We were pleased to have SuperNOVA participate with in the Beach Sweep of Lawlor Island," said MARLANT's Formation Safety and Environment Officer, Carol Lee Giffin. "This gave the students hands on experience in preserving the natural environment and we appreciated their assistance with this worthwhile initiative."

While on the island, DND and SuperNOVA volunteers gathered 75 bags of garbage, 10 tires, one 45-gallon drum, and enough wood to fill two triwalls. Volunteers spotted a seal playing in the harbour and deer grazing in the woods. By the end of the day, volunteers were pleased with the success of the operation.

"Cleaning Lawlor Island improved the habitat for the island's native species and enhanced its natural beauty", said Giffin. The event was wrapped up in the afternoon at FDU(A) Shearwater with a barbeque.

## McNabs Island Fall Foliage Tour

Guided Nature & History Tours of McNabs Island  
(including a tour of the Historic Island Homes)

**WHEN:** Sunday, October 15, 2006 (Rain date) Sunday October 22, 2006

Depart Halifax for the Island at 10:00 a.m.

Return to Halifax to McNabs at 4:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** McNabs Island via Murphy's on the Water , Cable Wharf, Halifax

Groups of more than ten persons must pre-register with the Friends of McNabs.

Space on the boat is limited and is available on a **First Come, First Served basis.**

**BOAT FARE:** \$7.00 plus tax for Members & Children, \$9.00 plus tax for Non-Members

For travel from Eastern Passage, contact Captain Mike at 465-4563

For more information contact: Carolyn Mont (477-0187)

Bring your lunch & plenty of drinking water; wear sturdy footwear & warm clothing

## Mark your calendars!

**The Annual Dinner and Auction for 2007 will be held on Saturday, February 24th. More information will be coming to you via the winter newsletter and email updates.**

### McNabs Island Merchandise

For a unique souvenir or gift consider supporting the Friends of McNabs Island.

- ◆ **Discover McNabs Island** books are available for \$10.00
- ◆ Panoramic harbour view **POSTERS of McNabs Island** available for \$5.00
- ◆ **Brochures and Maps** are available for FREE.

Contact Carolyn Mont, 477-0187 to get yours today!



## Email Updates

- If you wish to receive updates about the status of McNabs Island by email, please send your contact information to: ***mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca***

**THE FRIENDS OF McNABS ISLAND SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION and RENEWAL FORM**

NEW MEMBERSHIP

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

RENEWAL

Ad-  
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I AM ENCLOSING \$ \_\_\_\_\_ FOR

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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Willing to help out? \_\_\_\_\_

Annual membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society starts on the date of payment of dues and includes a year's subscription to the society's quarterly newsletter, *The Rucksack*. We thank you for your continued support and welcome your interest!

Send money or cheque, payable to:  
**The Friends of McNabs Island Society**

PO Box 31240  
Gladstone RPO  
Halifax, NS  
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or phone Carolyn Mont at 477-0187 for membership inquiries.



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***The Rucksack*** is published by the **Friends of McNabs Island Society**.

Contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome.

Visit our website at: [www.mcnabsisland.ca](http://www.mcnabsisland.ca)

Phone: Cathy (902) 434-2254 evenings or Carolyn (902) 477-0187

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