



# ***The Rucksack***

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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Volume 30 Issue 1

Spring 2021

## ***What shaped McNabs Island and what does the future hold?***

*2021 AGM presentation by Don Forbes*

McNabs Island is a product of the last ice age, when ice about a kilometre thick flowing southward out of what today is Halifax Harbour, created the elongated egg-shaped hills (known as drumlins) that form the core of the island today. When the ice melted away about 12-14 thousand years ago, our islands were not islands at all, but hills on the side of the Sackville River valley. Over time the sea rose, flooding the harbour and eventually surrounding the land that became McNabs and Lawlor islands. Like many other drumlin headlands along the Eastern Shore, McNabs Island is constantly changing, losing ground in some places, and gaining it in others.

When we visit the island, we are struck by the changes created by human activity (from roadways and the lighthouse to the fortifications). The large changes occurring naturally are less obvious at first sight, but very clear from a study of old maps, such as Cook's navigation chart of 1766 or Bayfield's of 1853. How many people enjoying the sandy beach in McNabs Cove or walking MacCormacks Beach in Eastern Passage are aware that both beaches are less than 100

years old? The glacial till cliffs surrounding much of the island are slowly worn back by waves, groundwater seepage, rain wash, freeze-thaw, and slope failure. Gravel from the till is washed along the shore, forming the high shingle beach running out toward the lighthouse (the original Maugers Beach). Over time, fines have accumulated behind that beach and closed off the cove that led to the McNab homestead, forming the sandy beach and dunes we see there today.

As sea-level rise accelerates and storms batter the island, more changes are occurring. Since 2018, the gravel beach near Garrison Pier has been pushed back over the road and into the trees. In the talk, we will look at past changes recorded in maps, paintings, photographs, and surveys and consider what the future holds for the island shoreline.



*Don Forbes*

*cont'd* ➞

## ***Friends of McNabs Island Society***

### **The Rucksack**

Included with membership

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

#### **Contact Address:**

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Halifax, NS B3K 5Y1

***We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.***

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Content is for members' interest only.

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### **Vice President**

- Brian Phelan
- Dachia Joudrey (2nd VP)

### **Secretary**

- Denyse Contrasy

### **Treasurer**

- Cathy Phelan

### **Membership Secretary**

- Cathy McKenzie

### **Newsletter Editor**

- Marilyn Forrest

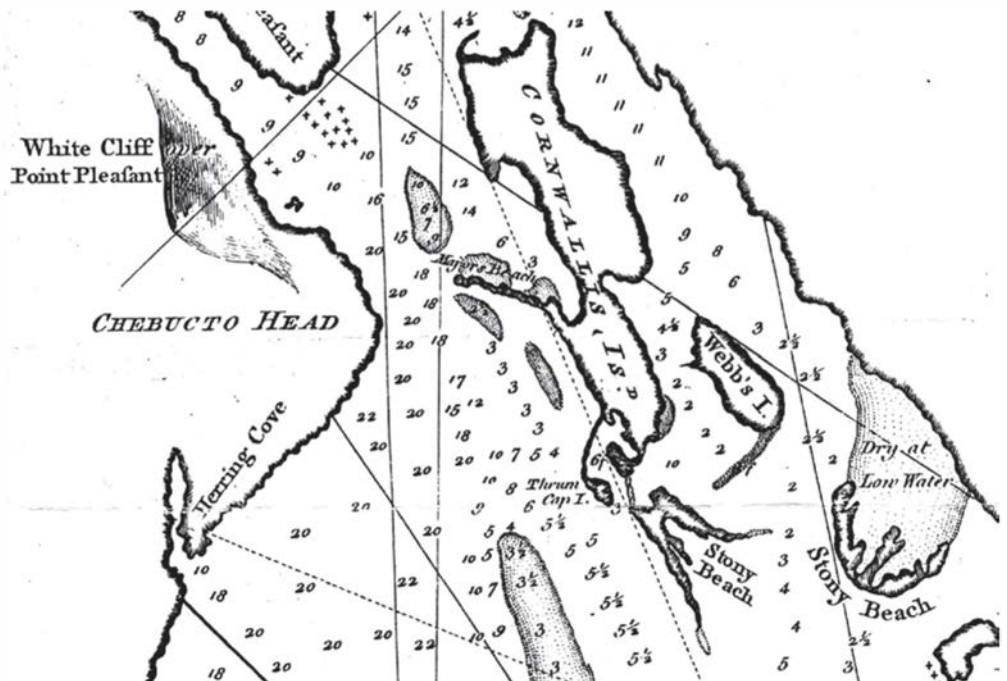
### **Tours Coordinator**

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### **Board Members at Large**

- Faye Power
- Jackie Halsey
- Tricia Stewart
- Ian Smith

Don Forbes is an Emeritus Research Scientist with the Geological Survey of Canada at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, and an Adjunct Professor at Memorial and Dalhousie universities. His research experience ranges from seabed mapping and remote sensing to coastal hazard reduction, climate-change adaptation, and promoting sustainable practices in coastal communities. He has worked extensively across the Canadian Arctic, Ireland, the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the Atlantic Provinces, including the Scotian Shelf and Halifax Harbour. Don served twice as a lead author with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and is former Vice Chair of Future Earth Coasts. He believes passionately in the importance of environmental research that promotes understanding and engages local knowledge and ways of knowing as a basis for informed decision-making.



*Detail showing McNabs Island, from navigation chart produced by James Cook, Master of HMS Mars, and published in 1766 (from the William Inglis Morse Collection, Dalhousie University).*

## ***New Tour This Summer!***

*By Dachia Joudrey*

We will be offering a Hangman's Beach tour starting this summer. This slower paced tour, based on the novel of the same name (which you do not have to have read to enjoy the tour) by Nova Scotia author, Thomas Raddall, will blend history of the island with the setting and storyline of the book.

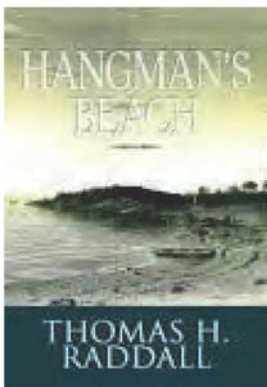
Get to know the exciting characters depicted in this novel set in the early 1800s; learn about Halifax during the Napoleonic Wars; and find out the gruesome origin of the beach's name.



*Strawberry Battery with Hangman's Beach on the left.  
photo credit: Rochelle Owens*

Tour leaders, Dachia Joudrey and Tricia Stewart, will take you to places mentioned in the novel as well as other points of interest along the way such as Fort McNab, the McNab family cemetery, Back/Wreck Cove and Maugers Beach.

This tour can be booked via Eventbrite the same as the Heritage Tours. We're sure visitors will enjoy this new tour as we take a step back in time!



*Via Internet*

I camped on McNab's Island for a couple of weeks in the summers of 1914 and 1915, and heard old tales of the McNab family and of the hanged men on the beach. Although I sailed past the island many times in my sea-going years I never set foot on it again until the summer of 1959. I found the forts abandoned and the old camp ground a tangle of young trees and bushes. The old McNab family graveyard, in which Peter and Joanna were buried, with some of their children and grandchildren and several of their tenants and servants, is still carefully preserved. The notion of a novel about the McNabs began to stir in my head, and "Hangman's Beach" went on from there, although I didn't begin the actual writing until 1963.

*Excerpt of letter from Thomas Raddall in response to Charles Mont, February 2, 1967.  
Credit: Thomas Head Raddall Fonds MS-2-202 held by Dalhousie University Archives*

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## ***Membership Appreciation***

*Submitted by Cathy McKenzie*

Friends of McNabs Island Society truly appreciates the support of our members. We are especially grateful for those members that continue to support us over time. Since 2015, we have been acknowledging our loyal supporters by awarding a lovely 10 Year pin to show our gratitude. Wearing of the pin reflects the pride in, and concern for, the harbour gem we call McNabs Island.

***Recipients of the 10 year pin this year are:***

Suellen and Michael Bradfield  
Holly and Phil Brown  
Anne Curran  
Francoise Dardanne  
Regine Maass

John Van Gorp  
Ken and Donna Walsh  
Edith Ward  
Peter Landry





## ***Friends of McNabs Island Events 2021***

All Nova Scotia Public Health guidelines are followed for all our events. Details on the number of participants and public health restrictions will be announced as our events draw closer.

### ***2021 Annual General Meeting***

The 31<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting will be held via ZOOM on APRIL 14, 7:00p.m.  
All members will be sent the link to register. You can join the meeting by computer or on the phone.

When: Apr 14, 2021 07:00 PM Halifax - Register in advance for this meeting:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZEqfu6tqliHtf-Vn1-92exfc9VxWz59sYS>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

This year we have Don Forbes, an Emeritus Research Scientist with the Geological Survey of Canada at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, and an Adjunct Professor at Memorial and Dalhousie universities, as our Guest speaker talking about the past and future of McNabs Island.

### ***McNabs Island Beach Cleanup***

McNabs Island Beach Cleanup is SUNDAY JUNE 6th with a rain date of JUNE 13th.  
Times 9:30-4:00

Two Departure Locations: Departure from Murphy's Cable Wharf on the Halifax Waterfront and from 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove, Eastern Passage with A&M Sea Charters.  
Registration for the Annual Beach Cleanup will take place via Eventbrite later this spring. The number of participants will depend on Nova Scotia Public Health regulations at the time.

### ***McNabs Island Heritage Tours***

Heritage Tours will begin in June and run every Sunday throughout the summer. Departure is from 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove, Eastern Passage with A&M Sea Charters.  
Tickets for the Heritage Tours will go on sale via Eventbrite in May.

***NEW!!! Hangman's Beach Tour*** (see article in this edition of the Rucksack)

This new tour will launch this summer. Dates to be announced.

### ***McNabs Island Fall Foliage Tours***

Much anticipated Fall Foliage Tours are happening SUNDAY OCTOBER 17th with a rain date of OCTOBER 24th. Times: 9:30-4:00.

Two Departure Locations: Departure from Murphy's Cable Wharf on the Halifax Waterfront and from 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove, Eastern Passage with A&M Sea Charters.

Tickets for the Fall Foliage Tours will go on sale via Eventbrite in September.

For updates on our 2021 events, visit: [www.mcnabsisland.ca](http://www.mcnabsisland.ca) and follow us on social media!

Twitter: @mcnabsisland; Facebook: [mcnabsisland](https://www.facebook.com/mcnabsisland/); [Instagram.com/friendsofmcnabsisland/](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofmcnabsisland/)

## *Thoughts Of a Young Island Visitor*

*By Noah Phelan*



*Noah helping to clear trail.  
photo credit: Cathy Phelan*

My name is Noah Phelan. I am 14 years old. I have been going over to McNabs since I was 8 years old. I have participated in the spring clean ups {you could say it is an island wide spring cleaning!} and the fall tours. During the clean ups I enjoy the little “contest” of who can find the most unusual item! Once I found a wallet and a set of keys.

I have also been on the island with my grandparents to watch the tall ships, and most recently to help clear a path to the remains of a lighthouse foundation. I enjoy going to McNabs to step away from 21<sup>st</sup> century everyday life, to imagine what it would be like in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I really enjoy exploring both forts and learning

the history about them. I think Fort McNab is my favourite out of the two, because the view to the harbour is awesome.

Since I have been on the island quite a few times I have found a few spots that no one else really explores. Including the barracks where soldiers went when they disobeyed orders. I also enjoy looking for all the different wildlife on the Island. I have seen an otter by the Ives Cove dock and an eagle flying over Fort Ives.

These are some of the reasons I enjoy going to McNabs. I hope more people who enjoy these types of things will explore the island.



*Noah with McNabs Island in the background.  
photo credit: Jennifer Phelan*

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## *Greg Haverstock Remembered...*

*By Brian Kinsman*

Greg joined the Parks and Recreation Division of the Department of Natural Resources (now Lands and Forestry) in the 1990s as Manager of Park Development and later Director of Parks and Recreation. His training and extensive work experience as an engineer proved invaluable in this role. As director, he was responsible for overseeing a system of 130 operating provincial parks and 180 park reserves which welcomed over one million visitors annually.

Greg was extremely passionate and supportive of all things McNabs during his years with DNR. His experience as a sailor gave him a unique perspective on the island's natural and cultural history and its value for outdoor recreation, education and tourism. During his tenure with DNR, the department completed a park management plan and gave legislative protection to McNabs and Lawlor islands as a designated park under the Provincial Parks Act.



*Greg Haverstock 1948-2020*

Greg was a firm believer in the need to build strong partnerships with groups like the Friends of McNabs Island. In retirement he continued to pursue his interest in McNabs Island by becoming an active Board member with the Friends of McNabs Island. In this capacity, he oversaw the updating and reprinting of the bestselling ***Discover McNabs Island*** guidebook.

(Editor's note): After *Discover McNabs Island* was published in 2008; Greg continued to provide valuable park management advice and encouragement to the Friends for many years. Sadly, Greg passed away in August 2020. He is deeply missed by his wife Cathy and their family, and leaves behind many friends.



## ***McNabs Island Genealogy Project***

*Peggy Homans Chapman*

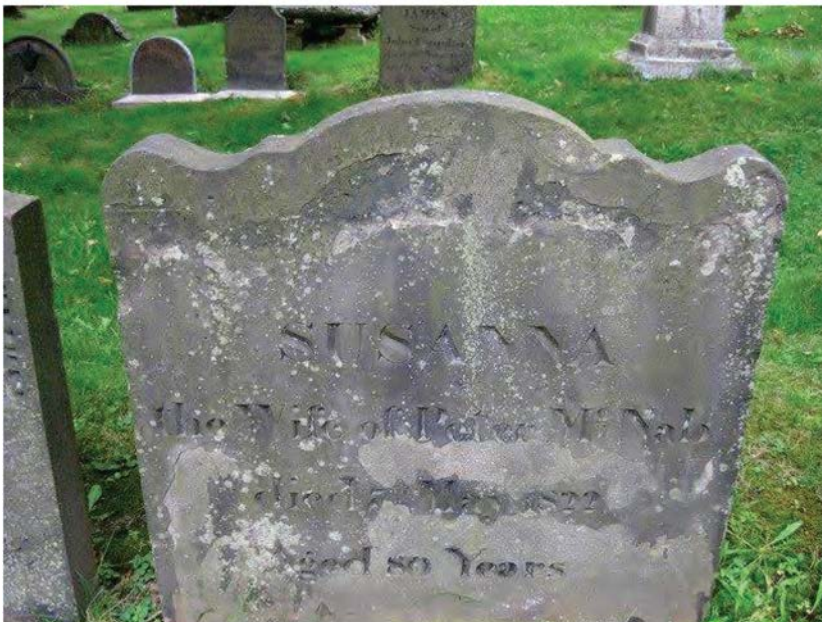
Family history research has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years and those with McNab family lines or other European settlers on McNabs Island are curious. The genealogy project complements the diverse programmes of the Friends of McNabs Island Society. A dedicated website will display the research. We are in Phase I, that is, tracking specific McNab and associated lines and ensuring evidence exists to accompany each entry. This is always a challenge for early Nova Scotia, renowned for lack of official records! We are further constrained by the year of COVID: access to onsite resources in the Nova Scotia Archives is not easy. Phase II will comprise the European settler families before and after McNab.

Peter McNab I is likely the most challenging of all the individuals in Phase I. If you have ever explored his history, you will know it is full of myths and misinformation. It is a classic example of Genealogical Proof Standard (or the other GPS), that is, conducting exhaustive (or exhausting!) research and drawing conclusions based on evidence. Thus, the entry for Peter McNab I will be accompanied by a document with rationale for conclusions, or not.

Genealogy is far more than a collection of dates and events: it has merged with family history research where stories and social history are part of the package. When time allows, we will add "histories" of people to their record. Finding and writing these histories is a longer-term project and hopefully, descendants of individuals tracked may have stories to add!



**Peter McNab c.1735 - 1799**



**Susannah Kuhn McNab 1742 - 1822**

This brings me to the collaborative nature of genealogy, once again proven by the sharing of information and thoughts by many people before we have even gone public: from the Clan McNab Society historian, to McNab and Kuhn descendants, to those who have studied the island and its inhabitants. Every contribution becomes a clue to be researched and validated. Even better if the information has been previously validated by evidence!

When can you expect to see the genealogy website? Hopefully in late spring or early summer it will be ready to go live with Phase I. As anyone who has done family history research knows, genealogy is never finished and the website will be

dynamic to reflect new evidence found. Finally, a word about the volunteer project team: in addition to myself (researcher), we have Sandi Corbin (researcher), Allan Wands (research assistant), and Iain McLeod (website tech). And last but not least, Cathy McKenzie who facilitates the progress of the project.

## ***Modern Touch Coming to the Historic English Garden***

*Story by: Brian Phelan, Friends of McNabs, Arborist and Gardens Volunteer*

World traveller, botanist, English gentleman and avid gardener Frederic Perrin retired to the colonies and purchased the Hugonin estate on McNabs Island in 1885. Perrin introduced many exotic plants and trees to create an English garden of great splendor and beauty. Perrin died in 1930 and is buried in Eastern Passage however many of the introduced plants can still be seen today. Over the years the non-tended English garden has been impacted by the forces of nature and the once splendid landscape and introduced plants have been slowly swallowed by natural forest regeneration.

The Nova Scotia Provincial Parks Management Plan (2005) for McNabs and Lawler Islands recognizes the importance of both natural and cultural heritage values that the Island offers. Protection of natural values is a high priority however in some instances special management strategies will be required to protect cultural heritage values. One such area of significant culture value is the Hugonin-Perrin estate and the remnants of the once extensive English garden.

In 2011 the Department of Natural Resources conducted a plant survey to locate and identify the remaining plants of Perrins' English garden. For the past decade the Friends of McNabs, many volunteers and members of the ISA Atlantic Chapter have held numerous work days on the Island with the focus on preserving and revealing the remaining plants and trees of the English gardens. The biggest challenge continues to be the extremely invasive Japanese knot-weed however efforts of the volunteers have succeeded to the point that once again the terraced lawn areas and many of the introduced trees and shrubs can be viewed and enjoyed by island visitors.

One of the special projects taken on by the Friends of McNabs summer ambassadors (students) last year was to review and update several existing plant inventories of the English gardens. Over the years several trees and shrubs have died, survey stakes have been removed or broken off and several of the exotic plants have started to naturalize beyond the English gardens. The summer ambassadors replaced the missing stakes with new stakes. Replacement stakes included the common name of the plant and whether the plant was native or introduced. To give the inventories a modern touch they also created a PDF fact sheet for many of the plants found in the English garden. The next phase is to install QR codes on the plant stakes that will allow island visitors to scan the code and bring up the plant fact sheet on their cell phones. The plan is to install the QR codes on the plant stakes this summer.



Volunteer work days within the English gardens will be ongoing. Thanks to our 2020 summer ambassadors, the historic English Gardens will soon have a modern touch.

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## ***Teahouse/Outdoor Education Centre Update***

*Information provided by Royce Walker*

Our last work day was February 7<sup>th</sup>. We are making good progress and will provide more details in our next edition!

Some recent progress:

- All new floor joists are now in place and fastened.
- The loft access ladder is installed.
- The window vandal shutters are in fabrication, and we plan to install in spring.
- The hemlock lumber for the deck is being milled.

When the ground dries we can get to work.

**A big thank you to all our great volunteers who make this project possible.**



*Mike and Bernie discuss the prototype hinge.*



***Support our work by buying  
Friends of McNabs Island merchandise as gifts.***

Our note cards feature a sketch of the Teahouse by artist Emma FitzGerald and our Discover McNabs Island book tells you nearly everything you need to know about the island. Our crests and pins are popular with youth and collectors.



**Friends of McNabs  
\$20.00**

**Notecards  
\$15.00 for 5-pack**

**Crest  
\$5.00**

**Pin  
\$2.00**

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**Annual Membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on the calendar year, includes a year's subscription to the Society's newsletter and discounts at our events.**

As a member, you will be supporting the ongoing care and appropriate development of this jewel in Halifax Harbour. The Friends advocate for funding to maintain the environment on the Island and participate in planning for the present and future well-being of the Island.

**Renew your membership directly via our website:**

[mcnabsisland.ca/membership-application](http://mcnabsisland.ca/membership-application)

**or send a cheque payable to:**

The Friends of McNabs Island Society

PO box 31240, Gladstone RPO

Halifax, NS B3K 5Y1

The Society is a registered charity:

CCRA Number 88 474 194 RR0001

Visit our website or contact us [info@mcnabsisland.ca](mailto:info@mcnabsisland.ca) or [mcnabsisland.ca/contact](http://mcnabsisland.ca/contact)

Cathy (902-434-2254)

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If you are already a member, invite your friends to join you. Talk to coworkers. As more people become aware of and support these gems, the better we will be able, together, to take care of them.

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