



# *The Rucksack*

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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## *Thank you Royce Walker*

By Ian Smith

As the Friends of McNabs Island Society (FOMIS) wraps up our 30th anniversary season, we'd like to give a special thank you to Royce Walker, a member who has been there since the beginning, and has been instrumental in growing the organization into what it is today. This year Royce has decided to step down from the board, but promises to continue his support of a number of the society's initiatives.

Royce first fell in love with McNabs Island as a boy, when his parents would bring him over from Dartmouth on their boat. As they visited the Conrads, he would explore the island, where like so many of us he became struck by the unique blend of human history and natural beauty.

When the call came in 1990 to gather in opposition to a proposed sewage treatment plant at Ives Cove, Royce made sure he attended. That meeting led to a Memorandum of Association that ultimately led to the creation of FOMIS. The sewage plant proposal died but Friends continued with Royce later becoming President. The organization began outdoor education projects right away, which has remained Royce's passion to this day. The first organized tours and beach cleanups were carried out in 1991, but by 1992 Royce's family was growing at such that he needed a break.

When his kids were older Royce came back to serve on the FOMIS board of directors for many years. Along with Cathy McCarthy he attended countless planning meetings with government, as they worked out exactly what the new park should be. It was important to Royce that McNabs be preserved as a "natural environment park", with an appropriate amount of development that would not take away from what makes the place so special. The province's official Park Management Plan was completed in 2005; the Trail Plan was finally completed in 2015.

In recent years Royce has refocused on the outdoor education aspect of FOMIS. He's continued to be a very active tour guide, and has worked hard to increase the number of other guides through recruitment and training. As part of that effort he compiled guidebooks for tour guides to use. (*con't ►*)



Royce Walker at Teahouse door  
photo credit: Cathy McCarthy

## *Friends of McNabs Island Society*

### **The Rucksack**

Included with membership

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

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

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## *Friends of McNabs Island Board 2020*

### **President**

- Cathy McCarthy

### **Vice President**

- Brian Phelan
- Dachia Joudrey (2nd VP)

### **Secretary**

- Denyse Contrasy

### **Treasurer**

- Cathy Phelan

### **Membership Secretary**

- Cathy McKenzie

### **Newsletter Editor**

- Marilyn Forrest

### **Trails Committee Chair**

- Ian Smith

### **Tours Coordinator**

- Steve Conrod

### **Board Members at Large**

- Faye Power
- Jackie Halsey
- Tricia Stewart

From the early days Royce hoped that FOMIS would be able to create an “outdoor education centre” on the island, which could be used by a variety of groups as a home base for interpreting the wonders of the park. To that end he took on the leadership role for the former Teahouse restoration project, which is nearing the end of its major work, and will soon be helping to inspire the next generation of advocates for and friends of McNabs Island.

So thank you again to Royce for your years of hard work and dedication. Hopefully 2021 will provide you the opportunity to spend some more leisurely time on the island!

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## ***Bench Installation Crew***

Hard work got all 5 new benches installed.

(L to R) Cassandra Curtis, John Thompson, Steve Conrod, Bethany Porter, Peter Landry, and Iain Crowell. Not pictured is LAF staff member Stewart Ferguson, whose assistance made the day possible.



Photo taken by lead crew member Ian Smith

## *2020 McNabs Island Heritage Tours*

Compiled By Jackie Halsey

By dividing our tours into smaller groups, and wearing masks on the boat we were able to safely host our Sunday Heritage tours again this year. Sizzling July and August weather and enthusiastic summer interpreters made the season a great success. Tour guides, Jackie Halsey and Cassandra Curtis, share some of their summer experiences.

### *Cassandra* - August 23

We had a beautiful day today, hot and sunny but with a light breeze. Tide was high around noon. Everyone was there by 9:15 so we were able to get things going nice and early. We were extremely fortunate to have Faye Power, a former resident of the Island, along with us as a caboose...making it the "Deluxe Tour", which the guests loved.

We docked at Ives. We headed straight for Fort Ives where Joel told his wonderful introduction, and then spent a lot of time exploring the Fort. We went over to the houses and Faye was able to tell us all about her old community. Naturally our next stop was her old lighthouse and the entire group went with her to the foundation where she told us stories about the house and her family. After that we continued down Old Military Road where we hooked up with Carriage Lane and went up to the Pop Factory and then the gardens and the Teahouse, then down to the kiosk for lunch. After lunch everyone was keen to see Fort McNab so we all headed up that way with a few stops along Garrison Road, we spent a good amount of time at Fort McNab, and then backtracked to the Lighthouse Loop to hook up with the beach and wait for the boat.

This group was fantastic; everyone was engaged and eager to walk. We had one dog with us, Monte, a large black lab who was very well behaved. There were some beach-goers but not as many as I expected on such a nice day, as well as a few big groups of hikers and even a few people on bikes.

Overall everyone seemed to have a really great day, and they appreciated how special it was to be there with Faye

### *Jackie:* October 18

McNabs put on a spectacular show for us this year and just being on the island in the crisp sunlight seemed to put a smile on everyone's face. The "slow tour" of twelve awesome visitors bushwhacked to Faye's lighthouse, then made its way past the houses and up to Fort Ives for lunch. With social distancing in mind we went straight up the hill to the teahouse. Everyone enjoyed Brian's presentation and after visiting the Bottle Factory we were able to go back down and take in the kiosk. There was one dear little 6-year old in our group. I gave him an I-spy sheet which he and his family enjoyed. One of the items was: A tree you could name." He made us all laugh by choosing a tree and naming it "Jack"!! I'm going to have re word that item... The only disappointment was Maugher's beach which was covered in smelly seaweed probably the result of a succession of Fall storms.

### *Guest Comments:*

"Thank you to the fabulous guides Eva and Cathy it was a great day and we appreciated the knowledge and friendliness of the guides. especially when Eva helped me up the hill and up the gang plank...very kind. I would recommend the tour for sure thank you!" – Audrey

"My friend and I took the nature walk tour with Mike and Ian today and had wonderful time. They both were so knowledgeable and fun. It was indeed a pleasure... Keep up the amazing work!" – Lisa`



## *Summer Staff Summaries*

Cassandra Curtis, Iain Crowell, Tineke Weld

The Friends were thrilled with the energy and abilities of the 2020 summer staff. They were a pleasure to work with. Enjoy their own words...

### *Iain:*

When I was given the opportunity to work with the Friends of McNabs Island Society this summer I was thrilled, to say the least. The opportunity to explore, learn, and contribute to such a beautiful island was a fantastic opportunity, and it made this summer one to remember.

Leading into the summer, my experience laid mainly in environmental science and botany, and as such, my summer projects were mainly nature based. I had the pleasure of working with horticulturalists Brian and Cathy Phelan in creating interpretive materials for the old English gardens of McNabs. I created plant profiles of the many trees and shrubs of the gardens, and staked out their locations as well. This information will be available on the Friends website in the near future as part of an interactive map.

Throughout the summer, myself and my fellow summer interpreters had many chances to explore some of the less visited areas of the island. During these visits, I compiled a plant inventory of many undocumented plants, and compiled this data into a number of species lists. With plants ranging from yellow birch to spotted water hemlock, and from orchard grass to reindeer lichen, there is now a comprehensive list of everything that is growing on McNabs Island! These species lists will soon be found on <https://mcnabsisland.ca>

Finally, I had the wonderful opportunity to lead 25 eager outdoors people on a nature tour on August 9th! We explored many parts of the island, and covered topics such as salt marsh dynamics, barn swallow behaviour, native pollinator species, and the value of the Acadian forest. The tour was a great success and I look forward to talking more about the nature of McNabs during the Fall Foliage Tours on October 18th!

As this summer ends and I move on to other things, McNabs Island will always have a special meaning for me, and I can't wait to return again.

Iain Crowell



My favourite hike resting place at Ives Cove  
photo credit: Cassandra Curtis

### *Tineke:*

While we had a bit of a “different” summer with regards to COVID-19, the summer staff were able to work within restrictions and guidelines to give our guests the same exciting tours as previous years. It was such a great experience learning from the volunteer tour guides, who each had their own area of Island expertise and amazing stories to tell. We also made connections with guests young and old (and four-legged), who were enchanted by the island, whether it was their first time on McNabs or their hundredth! (con't ►)

When we weren't on the island, the summer staff were lucky to have our own office space, where we met regularly to work on our individual projects. My focus for this summer was on developing a plan for recreation on the island.

With guidance from Cathy McCarthy, and fantastic input from Royce Walker and Dachia Joudrey, I was able to draft an Island Recreation Plan and the 2020 Teahouse Operational Plan. These plans will help guide decision making with regards to building recreational infrastructure and events on the island, especially at the newly renovated Teahouse, which will become the island's recreation hub.

Another fantastic part of the summer was the work parties to rejuvenate the Teahouse, which the summer staff attended. We had the opportunity to meet the volunteers who donate their time and expertise to restoring this beautiful space, and I, for one, learned lots of new carpentry skills! Huge thanks to all of the volunteers, especially project lead Royce Walker, for the important work that you are doing on this beautiful building.

This summer was certainly one for the books, and I'm excited to turn the page— I look forward to returning to the island and volunteering with the Friends of McNabs, including at this fall's Beach Cleanup and Fall Foliage Tours!

Tineke Weld

### *Cassandra:*

Working for the Friends of McNabs Island Society made for a fantastic summer. The job turned out to be fun, challenging, and multifaceted.

Because I have a background in Museum Studies, I was thrilled to be offered the opportunity to do some archive work as well. A former society member, Barry Edwards, was an avid researcher and had donated a huge collection of research, documents, and pictures to the society before his passing a few years ago. I was asked to try and figure out something useful to do with it all. Over the course of the summer, I realized how valuable this collection of information really was. Barry was trying to meticulously piece together the history of McNabs Island, researching birth dates, genealogy, maps, folklore, and collecting countless stories from living people and from local archives. I began to feel like this collection should really be cared for on a professional level, and so I reached out to local archival organizations for advice and support. In my last weeks of work, I was able to get in touch with the head archivist for the HRM Archives, and to my happy surprise, she seemed very interested in acquiring Barry's collection. I've decided to stick with the project on a volunteer basis to see where this all leads, but it has been a huge and wonderful learning experience for me. I was also lucky enough to do a little oral history interview with Faye Power, and I hope to do more in the future to add to the archive as well.

Of course, a big part of the job was the Sunday tours, and those were overwhelmingly enjoyable. It's fun to watch people fall in love with the island and hear them say over and over again that they couldn't believe they'd never been there before even though they'd lived in Halifax their whole lives. And some of my favourite days were the days that Iain, Tineke, and I spent exploring on our own, going for long hikes down the less-traveled paths.

Overall, I couldn't have asked for a better way to spend the summer. The people I've met through the FOMIS have all been exceptionally kind. I have been successfully roped-in by McNabs, and I'm looking forward to getting back over there for the Fall Foliage tours in October.

Cassandra Curtis

## *Doris, a McNabs Island Adventurer*

By Catherine McCarthy

In June, one of our long-time members died. Doris Evelyn Schrader was 87 and had last visited McNabs Island in the summer of 2015 to see the Tall Ships sail by during the Parade of Sail. She was an adventurer and loved to hike to Thrumcap and other out of the way places on McNabs. Doris didn't own a car so McNabs Island was her escape to the coastal wilderness.

Doris knew the island very well and could recall incidents and places with great accuracy. She wrote of her island experiences in our Rucksack newsletter spanning two issues - December 2017 and March 2018. This was no easy task for Doris to write these newsletter stories. Her old typewriter ribbon couldn't be replaced so Doris ordered a new electric typewriter just to write her island stories. Then we scanned and retyped them for our newsletter.

Doris was the daughter of Harvey and Amy Schrader, and born in the small coastal community of Bayport in Lunenburg County. When she was young, Doris excelled at learning and skipped several grades. To further her education, she went to live with an aunt in New England where she finished high school and took secretarial vocational training.

Doris returned to Canada but moved to Montreal where she worked at McGill University in the Physics Department, a job that she very much enjoyed. She became engaged to a French Canadian pilot and was making plans to marry when he was tragically killed in an accident. In the late 1970s, Doris came home to Nova Scotia to look after her mother and settled in the Fairview area. She worked for the federal government until her retirement.

Doris was the last surviving member of her family. Her brother Eugene had passed away in 2001. She left behind the much pampered Miss Fluffy, who now lives with me.



Doris Schrader ready for another McNabs Island Adventure - September 1994

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### *Correction*

A sharp-eyed reader, Alan Ruffman, pointed out an inconsistency in our last edition, in the Freeman article about her island ancestors, Roderick Hugonin and Harriet McNab:

“My grandmother, Helen Sophia, was their seventh child and fourth daughter born in December 1886, the year after the family had left Nova Scotia.”

Ms. Freeman has confirmed date should read 1866, and also sent us a photograph of Helen Sophia's gravestone.





## *English Garden Update*

By Brian Phelan

Two work days were scheduled in the English Gardens this past summer. The work focused on cutting the Japanese Knotweed along the pathways and the slope and terraced lawn area immediately in front of the remains of the Hugonin - Perrin home. The Knotweed has been cut back several times per season for the last several years and some success at keeping it in check on the terraced lawn area is starting to show positive results. Other work within the English Gardens included cutting back some of the introduced shrubs (ex. Japanese Barberry) that has escaped its original planting location and is starting to dominate the rest of the landscape.

The three summer staff / ambassadors, also worked on reviewing the 2011 Department of Natural Resources plant survey of the Hugonin-Perrin English Garden. Many of the original stakes from the 2011 survey have gone missing. In some instances, plants have died and the stake remained. New stakes were installed throughout the Gardens labeling approximately 25 plants along with plant fact sheets that will be linked with the soon to be rolled out interactive map project.

On our third work day, I also feel that the outdoor crew working in the English Gardens achieved a bit of a milestone as well thanks to Karen and Peter. All the “escapee” Japanese Barberry and Black Locust plants have now been removed from the slopes and terraced lawn areas.

With the Knotweed gone for the season due to frost, the terraced lawns and slopes of the English Garden are clearly evident. Some of the “significant bones” of the Gardens have been revealed. It can be glimpsed in John van Gorp’s drone footage which is posted on <https://mcnabsisland.ca/teahouse>.

Thank you again to all the volunteers.

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## *Lawlor Island Cleanup*

By Catherine McCarthy

On September 27th, we held a successful cleanup of Lawlor Island! There was a LOT of garbage!!!

We estimated that we collected about 400 bags or equivalent - around the same as what we collect at the McNabs cleanups.

Most of it was fisheries related debris or ghost gear as it’s called. We found lobster traps full of dead lobster and even found a dead rare blue lobster on the beach.

The island was littered with lots of Styrofoam, plus municipal garbage and blue bags plastics too.

About 50 people helped with this event - some paddlers, some from Shearwater Yacht Club, our members, and an energetic team from McInnes Cooper who help us every year at our McNabs Island cleanups.

Thanks to everyone who helped out!”



Some of the garbage and recyclables collected from the Lawlor Island Cleanup  
Photo by Catherine McCarthy

***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

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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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