



# *The Rucksack*

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

The society is a registered charity: CCRA number 88847 4194 RR 0001

Volume Twenty Six Issue 2

December 2017 Updates

## *McNabs Island Guided Tours in Demand*



Tour guides learn more about the McNab Family Homestead during one of our training sessions. Photo credit: M.E. Donovan



Catherine Robar, originally from Nova Scotia and now living in Johannesburg, South Africa, and her family came to McNabs Island for one of our Heritage Tours last summer. Photo credit: Diann Robar

This year, the Friends of McNabs Island hosted more guided tours than ever. They are extremely popular and tickets sold out in no time at all. We don't raise any money from these tours – just enough to pay for the transportation - because we want visitors to Discover McNabs Island at an affordable price. We also offer significant discounts for children and youth, and for our loyal members. These tours are a lot of work and require significant commitment from our volunteer guides and organizers.

If you have an interest in McNabs Island history or the island's flora and fauna, and would like to train as a tour guide, please contact us at [info@mcnabsisland.ca](mailto:info@mcnabsisland.ca) or 902-434-2254.



Liam Caswell (in uniform) explains the important role that Fort McNab played during the war years at the Fall Foliage Tours. Photo credit: Ian Smith



## Friends of McNabs Island Society The Rucksack

**MEMBERSHIPS:** Individual Membership or Newsletter Only is \$20 per year, Family Membership is \$25 per year, Supporting Membership is \$75 per year and Sustaining Membership is \$150 per year. We are a registered charity and accept donations.

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

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PO Box 31240, Gladstone RPO  
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**We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.**

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### *Members of Parliament visit McNabs!*

At the end of July, three of our Halifax area Members of Parliament visited McNabs Island - the Hon. Geoff Regan, MP for Halifax West and Speaker of the House of Commons, Andy Fillmore, MP for Halifax, and Darren Fisher, MP for Dartmouth-Cole Harbour, got to learn about the unique and extensive history of the island, as well as meet members of the Friends of McNabs Island Society. Video clips of the day can be found through our Facebook page at [facebook.com/McNabsIsland](https://facebook.com/McNabsIsland).



From L-R: Darren Fisher, Cathy McCarthy, Andy Fillmore, Geoff Regan and Royce Walker at Fort McNab National Historic Site

## Friends of McNabs Island Executive 2017

### **President**

≈ Cathy McCarthy

### **Vice President**

≈ Royce Walker

### **Secretary**

≈ Denyse Contrasty

### **Treasurer**

≈ Cathy Phelan

### **Membership Secretary**

≈ Cathy McKenzie

### **Newsletter Editor**

≈ Jessica Bradford

### **Newsletter Layout**

≈ Jessica Bradford

### **Trails Committee Chair**

≈ Joe Shea

### **Board Members at Large**

≈ Dachia Joudrey

≈ Jackie Halsey

≈ Greg Noddin

≈ Brian Phelan

≈ Faye Power

≈ Ian Smith



Our Halifax area MPs learn more about Fort McNab's pivotal role in defending Halifax during wartime.



# *Annual Beach Cleanup*

By Catherine McCarthy

In June, 200 volunteers travelled to McNabs Island in Halifax Harbour for the annual cleanup of the Provincial Park and Fort McNab National Historic Site. Volunteers took part in Oceans Week and Environment Week activities cleaning up the shore.

In total, volunteers collected 500 bags of garbage and recyclables. Since 1991, volunteers have collected nearly 13,000 bags of garbage and recyclables from the beaches of this 400 ha “green jewel” in Halifax Harbour.

Divers from the Seawolves Scuba Club hauled up old broken bottles from the waters near Maugers Beach, and a 50-year old intact Sussex Ginger Beer bottle, and then pulled up a toilet from under Garrison Pier. Other unusual items included a toy rocking horse, a tiny plastic rhinoceros, a cross-country ski and a mini Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle. Clothing items found included a Ville de Quebec ball cap and a high-heeled shoe.

Youth groups including 2nd Colby Pathfinders and Ecole Secondaire du Sommet participated, as well as, staff from McInnes Cooper, CBCL and Bend Beauty Skin Care.

The McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park cleanup is the longest running and largest cleanup in the Maritimes. Thanks to all the volunteers who cleaned up the beaches and to McInnes Cooper, Waterfront Development and the Halifax Dump and Run for supporting the volunteers; Clean Nova Scotia for providing garbage bags; Source Atlantic for providing gloves; Murphy's Cable Wharf and A & M Sea Charters for transporting volunteers; Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources staff for getting the garbage to the main wharf and A&M Sea Charters and Waterfront Development for hauling the garbage back to Eastern Passage where it was picked up by city garbage trucks for final disposal and recycling.



## *McNabs Island Summer Interpreters*

Thank you to our summer interpreters, Flavie and Gabrielle, who did a fantastic job leading tours and helping out on the island. Flavie, who is a student from Sherbrooke in Quebec, also translated our brochure and McNabs Island Kit for Schools providing us with much-needed French resources. Links to the French brochure can be found [http://mcnabsisland.ca/getting\\_here](http://mcnabsisland.ca/getting_here) and the Kit, available in English and French, is on our education page <http://mcnabsisland.ca/education>



Special thanks to Cyclesmith for provided bikes for our students this summer. This was a huge help for us - making it a lot easier for our students to patrol the 18 kms of island trails each time they were on the island.

**cyclesmith**



## *Adventures on McNabs Island Part 1*

By Doris E. Schrader (member since 1991)

My first trip to McNabs Island was in July 1988 on a glorious Saturday. After leaving the wharf, I turned right and fell in love with McNabs! It was SO quiet, the air SO sweet and birds WERE singing.

There was a very wide strip of land between road and rocky shore containing medium high trees, bushes and wild flowers. That road was wide enough for two vehicles and there was a deep ditch on the inland side. The Tea House was in operation and had a large roofed deck with screened walls and benches along the walls. As you ate, you could see part of the harbour, some of the beach and the lighthouse.



**Doris Schrader on a hike, 2013. Photo: Tim Lekhy**

Behind the Tea House was a prominent path to the top of Jenkins Hill from which were views of the harbour, parts of Halifax and a bit of Dartmouth, this path long overgrown and no views. When descending Detention Barrack Road, there were views across the harbour and of beach and lighthouse. Going down Garrison Road into Wreck Cove gave you a lovely view up into the head of the cove and a part of Eastern Passage. Hurricane Juan in September 2003 destroyed some lovely woodland trails, demolished lovely trees, altered parts of the shoreline, opened McNabs Pond to salt water, not to mention access to the lighthouse.

The lasting memories I have are of my encounters with wildlife on McNabs, as I usually traveled alone and very quietly too. I had many close encounters with deer. In 1990, I was eating my lunch while sitting on a log at Green Hill Cove, which then had a large and lush marsh. A Great Blue Heron



**Tea House, 1988, Photo: Doris E. Schrader**

settled on a rather small spruce tree, its weight causing the branches bend down towards the ground, but they didn't break! He watched so very intently at every bite I was eating that I got up and sat down under trees, as I was SURE he would suddenly fly by to snatch my food. That beak looked dangerous!



## *Adventures on McNabs Island Part 1 (continued)*

By Doris E. Schrader (member since 1991)

That same year, on the last trip in late September, I stopped on the same log for a snack, but at first I hadn't noticed a large buck, partly hidden by trees, wearing an immense "hat rack" browsing in the marsh. When he began to notice me and slowly turned towards me, at the next time he bent down for more grasses, I quickly went into the tree cover and left that area asap. I had forgotten about rutting season. Too close to that buck!

In 1991, when walking on the Timmins Cove Trail I noticed large boulders were turned over. Also, to begin that trail you had to walk through a tunnel in the very tall and dense patch of Japanese Knotweed, which grew near the Tea House grounds. I noticed a narrow long bed within this Knotweed and every night another branch was broken off and put on top of the previous ones, thus making a soft mattress - WHO? In Nova Scotia, only a bear could do that!



**Jenkins Hill View June'91, Photo: Doris E. Schrader**

On Sunday afternoon in early August, I went to Findlay farm field (then mainly overgrown grass) to pick raspberries growing wild and found all the top berries had been eaten. A while later the bear came out of the forest below and started up the hill. As I grabbed another handful of berries, the bear stood up on his hind legs to see me and when I stood up he sank down. I think we did this four times when the bear went under a nearby clump of bushes out of the hot sun. Shortly afterwards I left that field (we could easily hear the children playing near the Tea House), but when I told the Tea House owner - NO - it HAD to be a large DOG - in a few days he indeed discovered THE truth.

In July 1992, I was going out to the houses near Ives Cove and decided to turn off Garrison onto Lynch Road and had gone a short distance when not far ahead I heard the loud agonizing cries of bear possibly being attacked by bees or wasps. I quickly turned around and used the roadbed to continue. Later that day, I followed a group who used the Old Military Road but broke off on the Lynch Road. I easily saw all the broken bushes and a battered hive with some buzzing angry bees. I heard nothing about bear, but that year, once again, few berries and rosehips for people.



**Ives Cove, Photo: Doris E. Schrader**



## ***Adventures on McNabs Island Part 1 (continued)***

By Doris E. Schrader (member since 1991)

The Tea House did not open in 1993. In August, when going along Garrison Road to Fort McNab, I stopped to examine the very large rose bush, which was then growing at the corner of Garrison and Lighthouse Roads. I was behind this bush (fortunately) when I heard a loud snuffle-like sound with soft clink-clink sounds (hind claws on road stones?) which continued for a few TOO many seconds before fading off! PHEW! After a minute, I rushed very quietly along the grassy side of Garrison and saw the derriere of bear climbing up Detention Barrick Road for, we hoped, the rest of the day.



**Matthew Lynch House, Photo: Doris E. Schrader**

In 1994, there were lots of berries, and rose hips for us mere mortals to pick and to eat. I had also learned that at four years, the urgent call of romance comes, so no bear worth his weight in salt would spend his precious time on an isolated island!

***...Adventures from 1997 to 2014 to be continued in the next issue.***



**Fall Foliage Tour, Early 90s, Photo: Doris E. Schrader**



## *Tall Ships 2017*

### *Picnic - July 29*

The Friends of McNabs Island took part in two events for Tall Ships 2017. Our volunteers helped out on Saturday, July 29 with a picnic organized by Waterfront Development as part of the Rdv2017 Tall Ships. Most of the 363 visitors were on the island for the first time. They didn't have much time to explore the island because of the tight scheduling of the Murphy's boats chartered to take the visitors to McNabs but we're sure many of them will be back.



Visitors arriving at Garrison Pier, Photo: Jessica Bradford



Friends of McNabs Island volunteers, Photo: Jessica Bradford

### *Parade of Sail - Aug. 1*

On Tuesday, August 1, the Friends of McNabs Island said goodbye to the Tall Ships from the best vantage point in the Harbour – Fort Ives.



Our very own Bluenose II, Photo: Cathy McCarthy



El Galeón, a replica Spanish galleon, Photo: Cathy McCarthy

## ***Letter to the editor***

Hello Friends of McNabs,

I read your story about the Descendants of Dutch Immigrants and the 1866 SS England tragedy with interest. My great-great grandfather, Aris Eelman, was a Dutchman on the SS England and wrote about some of his experiences. He wrote that there were 110 Dutchmen on the ship and that 43 of them died. The last one to die was his cousin Klaas Vlaaming. According to Aris, Klaas was one of ten or eleven Dutchmen left behind when the SS England left for New York. Klaas was found dead the morning of April 23, and had been robbed of his possessions.

I have done a thorough search regarding all the Dutch passengers and have been able to identify who lived and who died to a large degree. I have a number human interest type stories that have been recorded by Aris or passed down by other Dutch passengers. If you are interested I could compile this in an organized fashion for you. I have always thought it would be nice to have a marker of some sort and would pay to see it happen.

Sincerely,

Loren Lemmen  
Lansing, Michigan



**Aris Eelman, survivor of the cholera epidemic on the SS England in 1866.**

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

### ***Renew Your Membership Now!***

We thank you for your continued support and welcome your interest!

**Renew you 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 at: [www.mcnabsisland.ca](http://www.mcnabsisland.ca) and follow us on Facebook and Twitter**  
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