



The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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Volume 29 Issue 2

Spring 2020

Friends of McNabs Island Society 2019 Annual Report presented at AGM June 10th 2020

by Cathy McCarthy

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, our AGM was held virtually, via Zoom.

In 2019, the Friends of McNabs Island Society celebrated our 29th year as a society! We organized many activities and events including beach cleanups, guided tours and work parties to restore the Teahouse. We continued to answer inquiries from around the world and to work with government to improve the park facilities on the island.

Beach Clean Ups

The 28th annual McNabs Island Cleanup was June 9th last year. 200 volunteers collected 350 bags of garbage and recyclables from the island's beaches plus over 50 lobster traps. Collecting these traps required a second trip to the island to pick them up.

The reoccurring items found are Tim Horton's cups and plastics of all kinds such as fishing rope, large and small Styrofoam pieces and plastic tampon applicators. The 2019 cleanup recovered someone's expensive dental work stored in a retainer case and parts for a 1940's era coffee percolator. Once again, we participated in Oceans Week activities at the Maritime Museum.

Since 1991, the Friends have collected over 13,900 bags of garbage from the beaches of McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park - making the cleanup effort the largest and longest-running beach cleanup in the Maritimes. These cleanups are expensive costing about \$3,000 each year! In 2019, we were fortunate to receive donations from Develop Nova Scotia, McInnes Cooper, Halifax Water, and Oceans North to help cover our costs. (con't ►)



photo credit: Rochelle Owen

Friends of McNabs Island Society

The Rucksack

Included with membership

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We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

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Content is for members' interest only.

Friends of McNabs Island Board 2020

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- Dachia Joudrey (2nd VP)

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- Cathy McKenzie

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- Jackie Halsey
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Island Projects & Activities

In 2019, we began renovations to the abandoned Teahouse transforming it into an Outdoor Education Centre. Thanks to Royce Walker for leading the group of volunteers to get the project underway. We were successful with some of our funding applications and have the basis to continue this work in 2020. As well, with the help of Brian and Cathy Phelan, we continued the restoration work on the Victorian Gardens trying to keep the Japanese Knotweed under control.



photo credit: Rochelle Owen

The Friends 29th Annual General Meeting was held on May 1, 2019 at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. Guest speaker, historian Dan Conlin, spoke about the shipwrecks around McNabs Island to an enthusiastic audience of over 100 people. Our Special Friend of the Island Award was given to Lands and Forestry biologist Amy Marsters who has helped us with biology orientation sessions and our on-island displays.

Last summer we hired two students, David Jones and Manuel Moncayo-Adams, through the Canada Summer Jobs program. The students provided guided tours and Manuel started work on a recreational model for the Outdoor Education Centre. (con't ►)

In 2019, we further increased the number of guided tours offered on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the summer plus provided tours for groups such as Pathfinders, ESL schools, the CNIB, and for conference field trips. In total we provided 32 separate guided tours of McNabs Island last year. As well, eleven separate tours were held on October 20th as part of our Fall Foliage Tours with 200 people taking part.

In addition to the island tours, the Friends of McNabs met with government officials to push for better funding for McNabs Island's deteriorating historical resources, and eroding and storm damaged trails.



photo credit: Rochelle Owen

In 2019, we continued to push for funds from HRM for recreational trails through the Halifax Regional Trails Association. This funding was set to be approved for the 2020 budget but McNabs Island has been left out because HRM says the island trails don't connect to the mainland trails and that the island trails are not on HRM lands.

In 2019, we were hopeful when we learned that Develop Nova Scotia (formerly Waterfront Development) was preparing a Visitor Strategy for the Harbour Islands. They hired consultants to prepare a report which was supposed to be released in March 2019. Royce Walker assembled a team of knowledgeable volunteers from our membership and from the Park Advisory Committee to meet with the consultants. We provided many historical documents including the Trail Plan and Management Plan on McNabs Island that clearly state that McNabs Island is to be a natural environment park with a potential for nature tourism and outdoor education. In mid March our volunteers met with the consultants to review their consultant's report and were surprised that it didn't comply with the principles of the Management Plan and ignored half of the island. To date this report has not been released and there has been no further discussion.

The society published two newsletters in 2019 (Vol. 28:1 and 28:2). We have 240 members. We are active on Facebook with 4,100 followers, our Twitter account has 2,800 followers and our Instagram account, used mostly by our summer interpreters, has 800 followers.

For the past 30 years the Friends have been the voice of McNabs Island – answering numerous requests for information from local residents and people around the world – fundraising to improve the trails, park facilities and to transform the island teahouse into an outdoor education centre – all of this to make McNabs Island a welcoming natural environment park for everyone.

We want to acknowledge of the work of Royce Walker who is stepping down from the Board of Directors this year after 30 years of dedicated service to the Friends of McNabs Island. Royce was President back in the early days, has organized and trained our tour guides, coordinated beach cleanups, made many presentations to outside groups, led many meetings with government and chaired the Park Advisory Committee. Royce will continue to lead the volunteer effort to transform the Teahouse into an Outdoor Education Centre and plans to help out in many other ways. We all thank Royce for his leadership and helping hand all these years!

Helen Freeman, Great-granddaughter of Harriet McNab, shares her Adventure

Helen Freeman

When my husband, Richard, first suggested a cruise from Montreal to New York stopping off at Halifax, I immediately wondered if I could get to McNabs Island. My brother, with the help of a friend, had done much research into our family history, so I knew that one of our great grandmothers, Harriet McNab, was born and married on McNabs Island.

Harriet, youngest daughter of James McNab, met Lt. Roderick Hugonin who arrived there with the British army. He retired from the army when they were recalled back to Britain and married Harriet in January 1851. He inherited a third of his father-in-law's estate and built a spacious Georgian style house for the family on the Island, with wonderful views across the harbour to Halifax. They had eleven children in all; but, after the deaths of two young sons, James and Roderick, they left McNabs Island in 1865 and went to live in Torquay, Devonshire, England where they remained for eight years. My grandmother, Helen Sophia, was their seventh child and fourth daughter, born in December 1886, the year after the family had left Nova Scotia.



Helen Freeman visits the graves of her great uncles,
James and Roderick Hugonin
photo credit: Cathy McCarthy

So imagine my excitement when I found the 'Friends of McNabs Island Society' on my iPad and got in touch with them. This lovely lady Cathy McCarthy, offered to take me across to explore the Island if she could arrange for a little boat to take us across.

What an amazing experience it was. So much work is going on. I stood on the footings of my great grandparents' front door and admired the wonderful views across the harbour to Halifax. There was even the broken remains of a large, very rusty safe!! And two beautiful Japanese red maple trees standing either side of the missing door!

I understand, the volunteers are gradually clearing the weeds and hoping to reconstruct the English terraced gardens. However, they have already brought the Teahouse back to life which we saw just below the remains of the Hugonin House. I was so impressed with the idea of an educational centre in the Teahouse.

We walked on over some of this beautiful Island, by the lighthouse and on to Fort McNab with Cathy giving me so much history and information. I was impressed with the giant guns that protected the harbour into Halifax at Fort McNab. After that, we visited the well-protected graveyard within Fort McNab, and tombstones of the McNab family members and the two little Hugonin boys, who were my great Uncles.

What an amazing experience, and all thanks to Cathy, who I gather was one of the original members of the Society nearly thirty years ago. I definitely want to become a supporting member once I know how to from England!! Well done to all you volunteers, you are doing a fabulous job.

Helen Freeman
Surrey, England

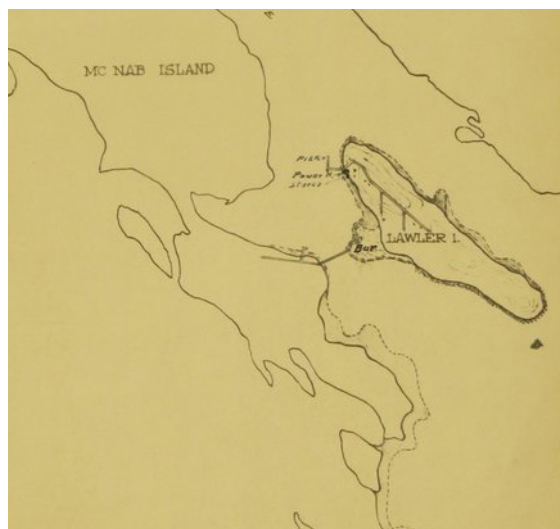
UPDATE:

Helen is now a member!

Footbridges to McNabs Island

Jacqueline Halsey

Looking across from Fisherman's Cove to Lawlor Island and then from Lawlor to McNabs, it's hard to believe there are no footbridges across these very narrow stretches of water. Records show that on more than one occasion the idea of a footbridge was considered. But while underwater pilings can still be seen from MacCormacks Beach across to Lawlor, there is very little information or photographs of an actual bridge between Lawlor and the mainland. Maps do show a causeway and bridge across Drakes Gut.



McNabs Island has always been a key player in the defense of Halifax. But across the years limited military resources meant troop deployment was frequently stretched thin. Personnel and guns were therefore focused on the main channel leaving the shallow Eastern Passage minimally defended. However, in light of the Tallahassee incident, Vice-Admiral E. A. Inglefield, Commander-in-Chief commented in 1878 that: “The escape of the Tallahassee in 1864 suggested that nasty surprises had to be guarded against.” If a large ship could exit down the narrow, shallow passage then a large ship could come in that way.

Through the years, different defense strategies were put in place to secure the Passage but it was decided that only in time of war would it be completely blocked. In 1908 defense plans were modified and a detachment of troops plus a machine gun were allotted to Lawlor Island. In the event of war, engineers would erect a footbridge to facilitate the movement of troops between the islands. The bridge was built in 1914 when war with Germany was imminent.

At this time two heavily ballasted schooners were moored on the shallows between Lawlor and the mainland to block the entrance to Eastern Passage. They frequently broke loose in rough weather and were replaced by a double line of pilings laced together with chains. In 1917 a gap was made at the Lawlor end of the barrier to allow small fishing craft to pass. Sentries examined the craft from a gangway strung above the gap. (Infantry and Naval Fixed Defenses at McNab and Lawlor Islands, 1887 – 1939)

The footbridge between Lawlor and McNabs was mentioned in January 1936, when W. Herbert George wrote to Deputy Minister Dr. H. E. Wodehouse complaining about the amount of gravel being taken from the bar between McNabs and Lawlor. He said: “Up until a few year ago this bar extended a considerable distance between the islands....In fact a footbridge formally extended from McNabs Island to said bar.” He included in his letter a map showing the bar and the footbridge.

The idea of a footbridge was still alive in 1973, when A. Garnet Brown, then the Minister of Recreation, said in an announcement referring to McNabs and Lawlor Island. “To date this virgin land has been relatively inaccessible because of its location in the middle of Halifax harbor. From studies presently underway, we find that bridge/causeway ferry combinations can make it readily available to many thousands of local residents and tourists.” (Dartmouth Free press Wed. July 18 1973.) Nothing was to become of this idea.

With Lawlor Island now a Provincial park and designated nature reserve, the building of a footbridge is very unlikely. The Friends of McNabs Society would be very interested in any photographs, written information or anecdotal evidence on the intriguing mystery of footbridges to the islands.

Quantitative Analyses of Microplastic Pollution

A Study by Rebecca Teddiman on McNabs Island and Lake Banook Beaches

by Jacqueline Halsey

“Microplastic pollution is a wide-spread problem for which little data currently exists,”

states Rebecca Teddiman in her recent study, conducted to determine the scope of the problem here in Nova Scotia and to ascertain possible remediation.

For the marine part of this study, Teddiman took samples from three sites along Maugers Beach on McNabs Island. Wearing clothing made of natural fibers, to reduce contamination, she collected samples in glass or stainless steel containers at the high tide line. The samples were then processed using the “density separation” method at Nova Scotia Community College, Ivany Campus water resources laboratory.

She states that, while beach clean ups, like McNabs annual beach clean up, remove large pieces of plastic debris from beaches, microplastics often smaller than a grain of sand remain. These are ingested by all manner of marine life. Some species are so sensitive to microplastics that even a small amount can be fatal. Others pass the toxic material up the food chain.

Teddiman’s conclusions recommend the continuation of data collection in order to assess the amount, and concentration of microplastic pollution in Nova Scotia.

“This research will help protect biodiversity and ensure a healthy environment for all species.”

She suggests that the most effective way to keep microplastics out of our waterways is to universally reduce the amount of plastics we use as a society. She also recommends increasing awareness of the problem by engaging the public in community science initiatives. Also by reaching youth through hands-on projects in schools like the one that was successfully piloted at Dartmouth South Academy. Her report is to be published in The Nova Scotia Institute of Science Journal in the Fall.

Rebecca Teddiman is a recent Environmental Engineering Technology graduate. After spending twenty years as an Early Childhood Educator, the sense of responsibility she felt toward protecting the environment for future generations was the motivation for her studies.



Mussels on Chunk of Styrofoam
photo credit: Jacqueline Halsey

***Dates are re-booked for our 2020 McNabs Island events
Mark your calendar!***

Annual General Meeting

Held via ZOOM on June 10th, 2020.

***McNabs Island Beach Cleanup 2020
Free Event for volunteers willing to help
clean up the Island***

RESCHEDULED due to COVID-19 restrictions

September 27

Rain date of October 4th.

Times: 9:30 - 4:30

Two Departure Points: A&M Sea Charters, 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove and Murphy's on the Water, Cable Wharf, Halifax.

Wear clothing appropriate for ever-changing Nova Scotia weather and for, at times, challenging terrain. The past 30 years have resulted in well over 13,000 bags of garbage removed from the shores of McNabs.

Registration via Eventbrite.ca begins in late August

***Discover McNabs Island
Summer Heritage Tours 2020***

July 5, 12, 26

August 2, 9, 16, 23

Hike through Canadian history on McNabs Island! Learn about the important role the Island played for the Mi'kmaw First Nations, the early French settlers, and the British, who built several fortifications overlooking Halifax Harbour to protect the Port of Halifax. Note: In the event of heavy rain or gale force winds, the tours will be cancelled and tickets will be refunded. Wear clothing appropriate for ever-changing Nova Scotia weather and for, at times, challenging terrain. COVID-19 rules apply

Departure Points: A&M Sea Charters 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove.

Cost: \$25 members of Friends of McNabs Society; \$20 children/youth under 16; \$30 non-members.

Tickets on sale via Eventbrite.ca.

***Celebrate Friends' 30th Anniversary
Picnic 2020***

CANCELLED due to COVID-19 Stay in touch to see what happens next year!

***Fall Foliage Tours of
McNabs Island 2020***

Sunday October 18th

Rain date October 25th

Times: 9:30 – 4:00

Join the Friends of McNabs Island Society for the annual Fall Foliage Tour of McNabs Island Provincial Park. See the island in its autumn splendour and participate in guided history and nature tours. Wear clothing appropriate for ever-changing Nova Scotia weather and for, at times, challenging terrain.

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

Cost: \$25 members of Friends of McNabs Society; \$20 children/youth under 16; \$30 non-members.

Tickets on sale via Eventbrite.ca in September.



photo credit: BJ Burgess

***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**

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 Now!

Thank you for your much needed continued support

Renew you membership directly via our website:

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 or mcnabsisland.ca/contact
Cathy (902-434-2254).**

For updates, follow us on facebook.com/McNabsIsland,
Twitter [@mcnabsisland](https://twitter.com/mcnabsisland) and Instagram [@friendsofmcnabsisland](https://instagram.com/friendsofmcnabsisland)

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.