

The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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Volume 34, Issue 1

Spring 2025

McNabs Island: An Island Ringed by Wrecks Annual General Meeting Presentation - April 9th, 2025

You are invited to the Friends of McNabs Island Society's 34th Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, April 9th in the **Auditorium of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History** at 1747 Summer Street in Halifax. Doors open at 6:30 and the meeting starts at 7:00.

Join historian **Dan Conlin** for a fascinating illustrated talk about the shipwrecks that encircle McNabs Island. Many of these wrecks are still visible at low tide. "McNabs Island has been the final destination for countless vessels for centuries. Their evocative timbers and rusty fittings still have secrets to reveal and stories to tell." –Dan Conlin.

Dan Conlin is a historian, author and retired museum curator in Halifax. Born in Berwick Nova Scotia, Dan studied journalism and history at Carleton University in Ottawa and then worked as a producer for CBC Radio in Ontario. He returned home to pursue a Master's in History at Saint Mary's University. One of his first steps in reconnecting with the province was to join the Friends of McNabs Island Society. He wrote the chapter on lighthouses and shipwrecks for the Friends' **Discover McNabs Island** guidebook.



Dan Conlin Explores McNabs Island from Halifax Harbour.
Photo credit: Colin Timm, Pier 21

Dan was curator at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic for 19 years where he was responsible for many successful exhibits including the Titanic display. He was also curator for a Pirates exhibit which led to his first book **Pirates of the Atlantic: Robbery, Murder and Mayhem off Canada's East Coast**. His second book, **War through the Lens: the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit** was based on personal interviews and research that Dan conducted for his undergraduate thesis. From 2014 until his retirement in November 2024, Dan was curator at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. His last show at Pier 21 was "A History Exposed", the first national exhibition on the history of slavery in Canada, including a profile of the McNabs Island merchant and slaveholder, Joshua Mauger.

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Leaving something behind

Just four months ago, showman Bill Lynch told this newspaper in one of his infrequent interviews that "if I am to be remembered I want to be thought well of for my gestures. You just can't take it with you so I figure you have to leave something behind in the way of goodwill." What Bill Lynch left behind this week in death was a legend far beyond his modest hopes.

The Bill Lynch Shows were more to their owner than a make-believe world of music and lights, games and sights, merry-go-rounds, ferris wheels, pink cotton candy, lions, fat ladies, sword swallows, red hots, soft drinks and high wires. The Bill Lynch Shows were his whole life, beginning as just a glint in his eye at childhood on McNab's Island where his father Matthew kept the lighthouse and where the young Lynch first feasted his eyes on an old steam-powered merry-go-round with its canopied top and glassy-eyed horses.

At 10, Bill Lynch drove a team of horses in summer for \$3 a week. He racked balls in a games booth on McNab's, his birthplace. Impatient to launch himself in his own business, he left school after the tenth grade, played banjo for a brief spell with a local orchestra, then returned to McNab's and to his first love operating the old merry-go-round. In 1926, he and a friend started a small carnival which Bill Lynch continued alone when the partnership was dissolved within a year. From that beginning, the show grew steadily through the years, until at the time of his death it employed more than 400, mostly Maritimers, and required 22 large tractor-trailers for transportation throughout the Atlantic provinces.

So quietly did he move around his amusement show wherever it played, few recognized the tall, tanned, trim, cigar-smoking Bill Lynch for the man whose name adorned the marquee. Just as quietly, he reached into his pocket time and again to make large donations to worthwhile children's organizations. And, as humbly, he helped crippled and disturbed youngsters both in the form of financial contributions and through the distribution of endless reams of tickets for rides. His personal satisfaction was enriched constantly by the sight of people who had come as children later bringing their own families to the show and enjoying it still.

By nature, through life, Bill Lynch scrupulously avoided hurting anyone's feelings "because it isn't worthwhile." He lived his days doing the things he enjoyed most, meeting new people and watching them have fun. He asked only to bring some happiness into the lives of everyday people, and to share with them some of the joys of make-believe. He figured that would make his life worthwhile. And he was absolutely right.

Friends of McNabs Island Society The Rucksack

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We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

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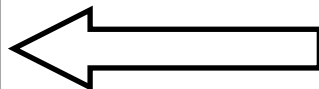
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Editorial from the Halifax Chronicle Herald published on October 25, 1972 following Bill Lynch's death.



Fall Foliage Tours 2024

Compiled by Jacqueline Halsey

The perfect weather and stunning colours made this year's Fall Foliage Tours one of the best ever. One hundred and thirty people participated and there was something for every fitness level and interest in the choice of tours offered. Heritage tours hiked to the forts, one tour explored the setting of Thomas Raddall's famous novel "Hangman's Beach." The Nature and Coastal tours interpreted the natural world and showed visitors some dramatic examples of coastal erosion. The more adventurous participants took "the road less travelled" across the island while the Family tour explored the wonders on Maugher Beach. There were interesting stationary presentations too like the one at the English Gardens and at Fort McNab. Enjoy the snapshots of this spectacular day.



We were welcomed to Mniku'j, McNabs Island, the ancestral island of the Mi'kmaq people, with an evocative ceremony from members of the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre.

Photo credit: Jackie Halsey

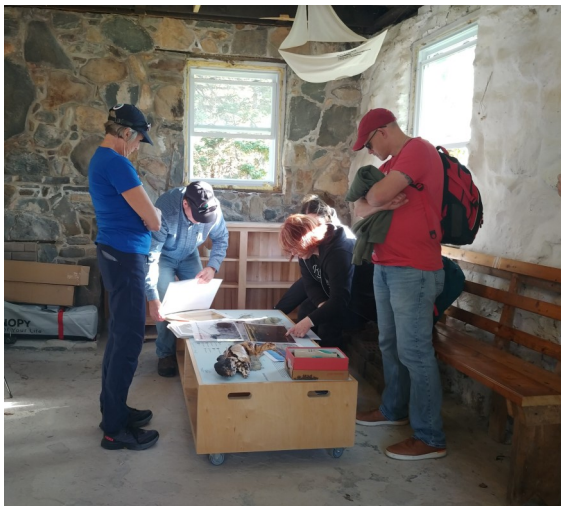


The Fall Foliage Tours started with a forty-minute voyage on the Harbour Queen to Garrison Pier on McNabs Island.

Photo credit: Ian Smith



Amelia Kennedy from NS Dept. of Natural Resources set up a wildlife interpretation table at our Visitor Kiosk. Here she speaks to members of the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre. Photo credit: Cathy McCarthy



Everyone who went inside the Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre was wowed by its uniqueness and atmosphere. The recently installed interpretive panels told the story of how dedicated volunteers turned an abandoned old teahouse into a living breathing facility to showcase the Island. The collection of artifacts, including a monster-sized lobster claw and a bug board, generated a lot of interest. Photo credit Dachia Joudrey

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Mike Crowell was kind enough to lead the Nature Tour on this gorgeous day.

Photo Credit: Cathy McCarthy



When hiking the beautiful, wooded trails on a stunning October afternoon, there's no knowing what you'll discover. This toad made a cameo appearance on the Nature Tour.

Photo credit: Ed Fowler



The breathtaking view from Fort McNab National Historic Site was well worth the hike. Volunteers Liam Caswell and Tom Tullock were joined by Halifax Citadel Society staff, Nick Drake and Eddie Waller. Their animated presentations made the history of the Fort come alive.

Photo credit: Don Forbes.



Outside the Teahouse, guests and tour guides picnicked in the sunshine on the deck constructed by Friends of McNabs Island volunteers.

Photo credit: Ian Smith

Thank you to the thirty-three Friends of McNabs Island volunteer guides and organizers, and to Nova Scotia Natural Resources and Parks Canada for helping to make this an amazing day.

Home School Adventures

by Jacqueline Halsey

McNabs Island was chosen by Home School Adventures for this year's kick-off event for home educated students. They requested six guided tours over a three-day event and we were happy to oblige. The weather was perfect and the following email from Marysa Osman, the organiser of Home School Adventures, sums up the success of the event.

“The tours went perfectly. Everyone had rave reviews. So many happy families!! Not one complaint!! Please send our Thanks to all the guides that joined us for all 6 charters. It was an amazing experience to start off everyone's school year!! Over the 3 days, we brought 60 adults and 73 children. A total of 133 who got to experience the beauty of McNabs Island. From my calculations we collected \$377.55 to support all the work that Friends of McNabs does to help maintain the island. Thank you to the kind Friends of McNabs for the wonderful guides. We will most likely be in touch again in the near future.”

Ives Point Battery and its Damaged Wall

By Catherine McCarthy

Ives Point Battery, which was constructed in the 1860s, was once considered the linchpin of the fortifications defending the Port of Halifax. Parks Canada spent a considerable amount of money stabilizing Fort Ives before transferring the fort to the Province in the late 1990s. The Province agreed to maintain Fort Ives. In the years since, vandals have broken into several of the casemates and buildings at the fort.

The Province did not repair this damage and now the main wall supporting the heavy Victorian 9” Rifled-Muzzle-Loading guns seems to be giving way in some places. After the Friends of McNabs Island Society alerted the Province to the deteriorating condition of the granite wall at Fort Ives, the



Fort Ives Wall - Granite Transom Door
Collapse Oct 2024
Photo credit: Cathy McCarthy



Fence blocking access to Fort Ives Wall
Photo Credit: Cathy McCarthy

Province installed signage and fencing blocking off access to the stairs and two RML guns above the wall.

The Province also agreed to conduct a “structural condition assessment” of the damaged wall. The Province is reviewing this assessment report but we have no information on what the report says or what the Province plans to do to repair the wall at Fort Ives.

The Good Apple Tour

by Jacqueline Halsey



McNabs Island Good Apple Visitors arrive on Oct 23, 2024
Photo credit: Cathy McCarthy

Good Apple is an American communications and marketing company based in New Jersey. Most of their employees work from home in many locations across the United States. The work model is to meet up every three months to conference and explore different venues around the world. This year's location was Canada, with Halifax being their last destination of the year.

Chelsea Hanoun, a local tour agent contracted by JSB's Journeys, which handles Good Apple's conferences and field trips, contacted Friends of McNabs Island requesting an activity-based day on McNabs Island. It was to be late in October and only a few days after our annual Fall Foliage Tours. Our volunteer tour guides stepped up to help with this unique event.

A lot of pre-planning was required with only a short time to pull everything together.

After a scouting trip to the island with Chelsea, Fredrico, the JSB's Journey's scout, Wil Brunner from Soft Pines Wellness, and Sea Halifax, a half day of five experiences were planned for the day. They were: two heritage tours to Fort McNab, one coastal tour, one nature/forest bathing tour and finally, kayaking in Wreck Cove.

The day arrived and on a soft sunny October afternoon a small group from Friends of McNabs met the one hundred Good Apple participants at the Lord Nelson Hotel. Together they walked down the hill to Cable Wharf, picked up ice cream from Cows, and boarded the Harbour Queen for the forty-minute voyage to the Island. Once they had disembarked, they were guided up to the Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre, for hot drinks, a warm welcome from Cathy and a land acknowledgement from Tineke. The group then split into their pre-decided tours and departed for different parts of the island.

At the end of the day, everyone reconvened in the clearing by Garrison Pier where a table had been set up with hot drinks and snacks. These were very welcome as the day was cooling off fast and the kayaking folks were a bit damp. On the boat home participants were given McNabs Island crests and copies of the latest Rucksack. It was nearly dark when we arrived back in Halifax. Everyone onboard had clearly had a wonderful time.

A huge thank you to all the volunteers, particularly Cathy McCarthy who did the lion's share of the pre-tour planning for this very successful event. We were generously compensated by the company. The money will go towards subsidizing the Boys and Girls Club field trips this summer.



Good Apple Tour leaves McNabs Island at sunset Oct 23, 2024
Photo credit: Cathy McCarthy

The Salt Marsh at Culliton Point: A Tragic Case of Coastal Pollution

By Ian Smith

Salt marshes are a type of tidal wetland which provide a rich habitat for many species of animals and plants. They act as a nursery for fish, and are also the natural habitat of the herb sweetgrass (*Hierochloa odorata*), which has long been valued by the Mi'kmaq for its aromatic and spiritual properties. In addition, salt marshes help regulate global climate by removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it. In 2022 it was estimated that Canada's salt marshes could be sequestering as much as 785 kilotonnes of carbon per year. They also play an important role in slowing coastline erosion, which is becoming all the more important in the face of rising sea levels.

Many of Canada's salt marshes were dyked and drained for agricultural purposes, and it's estimated that Nova Scotia lost more than 50% of its salt marshes that way. Those which remain are on the front



Volunteers with the garbage they collected from Culliton Point.
Photo credit: Ian Smith

line of climate change and human pollution, none more so than the marsh at Culliton Point, which is situated facing the mouth of Halifax Harbour. There it takes the full brunt of storms, which bring in fresh loads of plastic garbage and broken fishing gear. A mysterious silvery chemical has been observed leaching out of one area of sand in Culliton Point. This is not typical of a salt marsh which likely means that this silvery chemical is human in origin.

But all is not lost. Since 1991 the Friends of McNabs Island Society has organized an annual Beach Cleanup of the island, in which volunteers have collected more than 17,000 bags of garbage (enough to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools). Culliton Point is one of the more difficult parts of the island to get to, but last year a sturdy group of FOMIS volunteers paid a visit to remove as much garbage as we could. Most of the broken lobster traps had to remain where they were, but many bags of mostly plastic garbage including hundreds of rubber bands used to secure lobster claws were removed. Hopefully humanity will eventually find a way to move beyond our addiction to plastic, but in the meantime FOMIS volunteers will do our best to ameliorate the problem.

Seeing so much degradation to such a rich ecosystem can be disheartening. It might sometimes feel like our work to restore places like the Culliton Point salt marsh is in vain, but on the other hand, it is also satisfying to know that our efforts make a small dent in preserving nature. As we were leaving, a Great Blue Heron flew over our heads and landed in the marsh to feed, reminding us what this is all about.

McNabs Island 2025 Events

Our 34th Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, April 9, 2025. Doors open at 6:30 and the meeting starts at 7:00.

NS Museum of Natural History on Summer St, Halifax. Historian Dan Conlin will recount stories about the shipwrecks that encircle the waters around McNabs Island. Everyone is welcome!



Wil Brunner leading his Forest Bathing session.
Photo Credit: Jackie Halsey

McNabs Island 35th Anniversary Beach Cleanup

Sun, June 1 (rain date: June 8). Registration opens in April.

Sunday Summer Tours—Heritage, Coastal and Nature Tours

Departure from Eastern Passage

July 6, 13, 20, 27 and August 3, 10, 17 and 24. Tickets go on sale in April.

The **Coastal Shoreline Tours** are July 6 and August 10.

We have a NEW TOUR! The **Forest Bathing Nature Tour** is scheduled for July 27..

McNabs Island Fall Foliage Tours—Sun, Oct. 19 (rain date Oct.26). Tickets go on sale in Aug.

Saturday Island Work Days - A great volunteer opportunity!

Scheduled monthly work days throughout the summer for our volunteers who are interested in maintaining the trails and working around the English Gardens. Contact us if you'd like to get involved.

Dates are May 24, June 21, July 19, August 23 and September 20.

Renew Your Membership and/or Make a Donation Now!

Thank you for your much needed continued support.

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e-transfer: info@mcnabsisland.ca

directly via our website:

<http://mcnabsisland.ca/join-friends-mcnabs-island-society>

send a cheque payable to:

The Friends of McNabs Island Society

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The Society is a registered charity:

CCRA Number 88 474 194 RR0001

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YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_8aqFE1xfI2VJR0uJbz9Gg

This issue went to print in March 2025.

Annual membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on the calendar year. Your membership includes a year's subscription to the Rucksack newsletter and discount fares to our island events. Members support the ongoing care and development of the "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.

