



# *The Rucksack*

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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## *Remembering Barry Edwards*

By Catherine McCarthy

We lost a passionate McNabs Islander in September. Barry Edwards, amateur island historian extraordinaire, died on September 7th after years of deteriorating health. Barry was 70 years old.

I first met Barry at the founding meeting of the Friends of McNabs Island Society on March 20, 1990. He and John Jenkins, the former owner of the Island Teahouse and the McNabs Island Ferry, along with the late Colin Stewart, had called an information meeting at the Dartmouth Library with the intention of forming a new society to preserve and protect the harbour islands. At the time, McNabs Island was under threat from the proposed oil from sludge sewage plant. From that time onward, Barry was the guy that everyone called if they had an historical island question or if they wanted to find out something about their ancestors who lived on the island. He knew all things "McNabs."

Brian Kinsman, retired park planner with the Nova Scotia government, has many memories of Barry. He recalled,

"First and foremost, Barry was so passionate about McNabs. As such, he was an incredible protector of the island's natural and cultural heritage values. His passion for McNabs led him to undertake a great deal of original research and uncover many forgotten facts about the island. What impressed me was that he was so willing to share that information with others."

I later learned that it was Barry who took people to the island in search for their old homestead. The Timmins family recalled going with Barry through the woods looking for their farm and the Farrants related a similar story. Faye Power remembers going with Barry when the Cleveland clan were on the island in search of their lighthouse in 1985.

A few years ago Barry gave us boxes of his research material that Royce Walker has used to pull together his stories for our tour guides. We also used much of Barry's research to put together our book *Discover McNabs Island*.

We've asked the Nova Scotia government about naming a trail on the island after Barry. It would be a fitting tribute to him for all the work he did to preserve and protect McNabs Island.



Barry leads a tour of the AJ Davis Pop Bottle Plant site on McNabs Island

## **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>

Contact address: **The Friends of McNabs Island**  
PO Box 31240, Gladstone RPO  
Halifax, NS B3K 5Y1

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

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## ***Lands and Forestry Ives Cove Jetty Repaired***

By Royce Walker

The winter of 2018 saw a number of severe storms impact McNabs Island, most notably, significant changes to Maugers Beach, damage to Garrison Road and the power poles along the beach.

Not as well known is the damage to the Lands and Forestry jetty at Ives Cove, which provides island access for park staff - so a vital link for park operations. The storms caused significant damage to the timber and stone cribs that supported the walkway out to the end of the jetty and the floating dock.



**Caption: Ives Cove Jetty after repairs**

The Ives Cove jetty repair work was significant, with piling supports installed to replace the old cribwork. This upgrade should keep the jetty in good condition for many years of future service for the park.

# *Friends of McNabs Island Guided Tours 2018*

By Royce Walker

The Friends of McNabs Island has provided guided island tours for years - everything from supporting school class trips, cadets, boy scouts and girl guides and university classes, to organizing our own guided tours for the public. With the help of our summer students and volunteer guides, we provide an island walk that includes interpreting the island's many natural and historical features.



Historical interpreters Liam Caswell and Kelsey Walker, dressed in WWI and WWII costume, in front of the 6" gun at Fort McNab during the Fall Foliage Tours.

The summer of 2018 saw the highest demand for guided tours in our society's 28 years of service. In total we hosted 31 guided tours and four events on the island! Our events started in April when we partnered with Ecology Action Centre to do an Earth Day Beach Cleanup, and wrapped up in November with a Heritage Trust - Friends of McNabs - Forts of McNabs tour.

This year, we hosted 16 of our own Summer Heritage Tours (2 per day) on eight Sundays in July, August and September. One of these tours was an Herb Walk, led by Sarah d'Apollonia, which was featured in an episode of CBC's Land and Sea in December. These tours are extremely popular and sold out quickly.

As in past years, a number of schools requested class field trips. One school from the Cobequid District chose October for their trip, which I think is another first. We supported six school-related trips this year including an International Language class, Duke of Edinburgh students and an Oceans 11 class.

Similar to schools - girl guides, boy scouts and other youth groups have a long history of visiting McNabs Island. In 2018, the Friends of McNabs provided guided tours to four such groups; Falmouth Scouts, Navy Cadets, HRM Parks and Recreation, and the Ward 5 Neighbourhood Centre in north-end Halifax, which was perhaps my favorite tour of the year, given that the Ward 5 Centre spent several years fundraising to make the McNabs Island trip happen.

The Friends of McNabs hosted three private tours and two 'special focus' tours that included the fort tour and a cycling tour coordinated with Cyclesmith – the local business that provides bicycles for our summer students.

In addition to the 31 tours described above, Friends of McNabs also organized four other events; the Beach Cleanup on Earth Day, our annual Friends of McNabs Beach Cleanup in June, a day on the island with Natural Resources (now called Lands and Forestry) Minister Margaret Miller, and of course our Fall Foliage Tours in October.

I want to thank all our volunteer guides; welcome our new guides Amy, Mary Elizabeth and Rena and give a shout-out especially to Jackie Halsey, Ian Smith and Dachia Joudrey, who volunteered the most this summer, and mentored the new guides and our summer students, Kayla Silver and Piper Langille.

We are always looking for people interested in becoming tour guides. Interest in our tours is growing each year. All in all, 2018 proved to be a very busy year for 'on island' Friends of McNabs Island Society activities.



# *McNabs Island Earth Day Beach Clean Up*

## *with Minister Catherine McKenna*

by Royce Walker

In early 2018, Friends of McNabs President Cathy McCarthy met with Suzanne Fuller (formerly of Ecology Action Centre) to brainstorm ideas for organizing an event on McNabs Island on Earth Day which happened to coincide with the Liberal convention to be held in Halifax in April. We hoped that Catherine McKenna, the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and other Liberal MPs would take part in a beach cleanup to highlight the worldwide problem of plastics in our oceans.

The event concept was easy; take Minister McKenna and other members of the Liberal caucus, along with local volunteers, to Maugers Beach to do an Earth Day cleanup. Media interest would draw attention to this pollution issue that we volunteers have been seeing for years.

Since Cathy was away, I joined the organizing committee working with Rebecca Brushett of EAC, and Louie Porta of Oceans North, with support from Oceans Conservancy, an international oceans cleanup organization.

The planning team quickly realized the logistical challenges of holding a cleanup event in April on the island. The plan evolved so that a meeting room in Fishermans Cove, Eastern Passage could be used for a 'meet and greet.' Displays that support ocean cleanup awareness would be set up, and Minister McKenna had a location to make an announcement regarding the federal government's launch of a website portal on ocean pollution issues. Our plan now included McCormacks Beach as a second beach cleanup location, in case access to McNabs Island was not possible due to the unpredictable April weather.

Our trusted partner A&M Sea Charters was to provide transport to McNabs Island and Boondocks Restaurant would provide breakfast and lunch for event participants. A lot of detailed planning went into this Earth Day Cleanup event. The Minister's advance team reviewed our plans; our plans held up and we were ready to go.

Sunday April 22, 2018 turned out to be a glorious sunny spring day, with calm winds - perfect for our outdoor announcement and beach cleanup events on the island and in Eastern Passage. Minister McKenna joined the 'meet and greet' where she spent time with Friends of McNabs board member Alexandra Vance and artist Jennifer MacLatchy discussing art installations created from rope and other materials collected during beach cleanups.

The Minister's announcement of the ocean plastics public input portal took place outdoors on the boardwalk at Fishermans Cove in beautiful spring sunshine with McCormacks Beach and Lawlor Island in the background. After the announcement, there was a short media scrum before we took the boat ride to McNabs Island. Some volunteers offered to stay behind and clean up McCormacks Beach. ►



MP Fillmore, Minister McKenna, MP Samson and Minister Rankin on Earth Day



Minister McKenna and MP Samson helping clean up Maugers Beach

## ***McNabs Island Earth Day Beach Clean Up with Minister Catherine McKenna (cont.)***

by Royce Walker

Accompanying Minister McKenna to the island were Darrell Samson, MP for Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook, which includes Eastern Passage and McNabs Island, Andy Fillmore MP for Halifax and Iain Rankin, Nova Scotia Minister of the Environment, now Minister of Lands and Forestry, which is responsible for Provincial Parks like McNabs and Lawlor Islands.

On the island, Minister McKenna was greeted by a beach cleanup in progress. Our volunteers had arrived earlier to get started cleaning up some of the garbage washed up on Maugers Beach following severe winter storms.

Our longtime member of the Friends of McNabs and volunteer tour guide, Mary Ellen Donovan, walked on Maugers Beach with Minister McKenna and MP Darrell Samson collecting litter from the beach and discussing the issues, possible actions and solutions the government and local residents could take to begin to solve the ocean plastics challenge.

While on the island, Minister McKenna took the opportunity to film several short videos on Maugers Beach. These videos would become part of her campaign, and international message to other nations asking them to mobilize their constituents to take action against ocean plastic pollution. By providing the location for the Minister's campaign videos, McNabs Island has played a role in the international effort to address ocean plastics.

Before Minister McKenna had to leave the island, I had time to thank her for taking part in the cleanup event and shining the international spotlight the problem of shoreline litter that the Friends of McNabs see up close every year during our annual Beach Cleanup.

After the Minister's departure, the cleanup continued. Our haul from Maugers Beach was fairly typical of our other beach cleanups. We removed 34 bags of litter, plus large items such as a big block of Styrofoam, a 3' x 4' plastic picnic table, a 10' piece of an oil spill boom, and a pink hard hat. Volunteers removed 65 bags of litter from McCormacks Beach with the most curious item being a kitchen blender! The ever-present Tim Hortons coffee cups and tampon applicators were found in high numbers as usual. No surprise there!

Overall the day was a great success, the weather could not have been better (a few of us got our first sunburn of the year) and everything went off without a hitch. Thanks to our Friends of McNabs volunteers along with other group volunteers. And thanks to A&M Sea Charters, the staff at Boondocks and Fishermans Cove, and also the support of Lands and Forestry, Develop Nova Scotia, Parks Canada, Clean Foundation, and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

With the help of all involved we were able to bring national attention to the significant issues related to ocean plastic and its serious impact on our oceans and shoreline.



**Royce Walker presents Minister McKenna with a copy of *Discover McNabs Island* and a McNabs Island applewood pen.**



## *A Trip Down Memory Lane*

By Barb (Maxwell) Dean

In the summer of 2017, I took a trip down memory lane returning to the place of my birth, Halifax, Nova Scotia. My first home was located on McNabs Island. Prior to our visit Gary, my husband contacted The Friends of McNabs Island asking for help to locate the cottage in which my parents and I had lived. Cathy McCarthy was most helpful in providing us with details and also arranged for my family to have a guided tour of the Island.

My parents, Bill and Margaret Maxwell met and married in 1944 while serving in the Royal Canadian Navy. When the war was over Mum was decommissioned and returned to civilian life. My Dad chose to remain in the navy and was reassigned to a position in Halifax. In 1946 the housing shortage in Halifax was extreme. Mum and Dad were lucky to find a room in a boarding house on Oxford Street. Not for long however, because when the landlady found out that Mum was pregnant, they were evicted the very next day! Sometime in the fall of 1946, they were fortunate to find a “small” cottage on McNabs Island.



Bill Maxwell looks out the window of his little home, 1946



Laundry done; now Margaret Maxwell relaxes in front of her home, 1946

I heard many stories about the challenges of living in this small space. My parents were tall people. Dad was 6'4" and Mum was 5'11". As I learned later, this cottage is believed to be the Lynch Family's children's cottage. No wonder Dad and Mum wandered around bent over. I also heard about the lack of running water and plumbing. The story I heard is that Mum and Dad had invited friends to come and listen to the radio broadcast of the Joe Louis, 'Brown Bomber' boxing match against Tami Mauriello. This took place on September 18, 1946. Mum and another woman had to take a walk out to the outhouse shortly after the fight began. By the time they returned a few minutes later, they had missed the fight. The match was over. Louis had achieved another first round knock-out.

On August 5, 2017 Ian Smith, a volunteer with the Friends of McNabs Island, met us at the King's Wharf water taxi wharf in Dartmouth. Ian immediately launched into the history of the Island. His passion for McNabs and its history was palpable. His enthusiasm for the stories of my family and my beginnings were also evident. Before our trip, Ian had taken time to locate the cabin on the Island. ►



## *A Trip Down Memory Lane (cont.)*

By Barb (Maxwell) Dean

Ian warned us that it would be a very rough hike because of the extensive amount of blow down, brush and uneven ground. He was uncertain if this 70-year-old woman could negotiate the trail. We all managed just fine. Along with me, Gary and Ian were our son Bill, daughter-in-law Carol and our two granddaughters Claire & Maren. All of us live in Prince George, British Columbia.

We began our tour of McNabs at Fort Ives and took the path past the Conrad House. There were lots of blueberries along the way which we devoured. We continued along The Old Military Road to the Matthew Lynch House. From there we pushed our way through bush and fallen trees to my first home. I am deeply grateful for Ian's help in finding this hidden treasure which is such an important part of our Maxwell family history. We took lots of pictures including one of me sitting in the old sink in which, Ian suggested, I was probably bathed in as a baby.

We then continued along the Old Military Road. Ian provided lots of details about the changes to McNabs due to Hurricane Juan. We reached McNabs Cove and took a swim. I had forgotten the taste of salt in your mouth as you plunge into sea water and the sting of salt in one's eyes. Ian left us to enjoy the beach for awhile and returned offering to guide us to Fort McNab. Gary and I took him up on his generous offer, leaving Bill and his family to swim, make sand castles and soak up the very hot sun that was shining.

The view from Fort McNab was stunning and Ian added more historical data. The walk was hot and sweaty. I felt my age! The water taxi picked us up at Garrison Pier late in the afternoon and returned us to Dartmouth. This visit to McNabs Island was a highlight of our two-week trip to Nova Scotia. Thank you so much to Friends of McNabs Island for making our visit there so memorable.



Barb and the old sink



Barb & Gary Dean and family in front Barb's island home, August 2017

## ***Romance on McNabs Island***

By Cathy McKenzie

Two events this past summer showed that McNabs Island isn't just about history, flora and fauna; it's also about romance.

Hydie met Rob Richards, an avid sailor, six years ago. It took a while for Hydie to get her sea legs, but once she did, many happy days were spent sailing to McNabs Island. From the very beginning Rob said that one day they would get married on his boat at McNabs Island, which is exactly what happened on July 7, 2018.



Lynn and Steve



Hydie and Rob

The second romantic event of the summer began 5 years ago with a moonlight kiss on Garrison Pier. For Lynn and Steve Hunter, it was the start of many wonderful trips to the Island. Little did Lynn know that when Steve suggested a trip to McNabs on July 22 that he had more than their usual excursion in mind. As soon as they tied up at the wharf, Steve dropped down on one knee and proposed on the very spot of their first kiss five years earlier. They were married on November 22, 2018.

We wish both couples every happiness!

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Halifax, NS B3K 5Y1

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