



The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society
The society is a registered charity: CCRA number 88847 4194 RR 0001

Volume Seventeen, Issue 1

Winter 08/09

11th Annual Friends of McNabs Island Dinner and Silent Auction

Enjoy the ambiance of the Officers Mess
At Royal Artillery Park, Halifax
On Saturday February 28, 2009

Doors open at 5:30pm, Dinner at 6:30pm

Full Service Meal
(for vegetarian plate, specify when
you purchase your ticket)

Get your tickets now!

Early Bird price \$40 until February 10th, 2009
\$45 Regular Price after February 10th, 2009

Tickets on sale until February 19th – only 80 seats!

For details call Faye Power at 443-1749 or
email fayepower@hotmail.com

Two Hours is Enough!

Maybe the minimum, but two hours is enough time to make a trip to McNabs Island and back worthwhile.

On a November 5th, with the rain falling heavily on the fog shrouded back deck of the Sea Tiger, 19 Recreation Nova Scotia members, two guides and three sailors, set out from Bishops Landing at 3:15 pm for a trip to McNabs. Carolyn Mont accompanied one group to the Tea House & Hugonin-Perrin Estate while I headed up Garrison Road to Fort Ives, and back along the Old Military Road with the more ambitious, or at least those with better rain gear and waterproof footwear.

This trip to the island was one of many workshop choices offered during Recreation Nova Scotia's annual conference held in Halifax this year.

We were skeptical of the value of such a short time on the island under adverse conditions but from the feedback received, even an hour on the island was well worthwhile. by Eve Burns



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**Friends of McNabs Island Society
Rucksack**

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

Published 4 times each year: Spring, Summer, Fall & Winter

MEMBERSHIPS: Individual Membership or Newsletter Only is \$15 per year, Family Membership is \$20 per year, Supporting Membership is \$50 per year and Sustaining Membership is \$100 per year. We are a registered charity and accept donations.

Contact address: **Friends of McNabs Island**

PO Box 31240

Gladstone RPO

Halifax, NS

B3K 5Y1

DEADLINES: 1 February for the Spring issue, 1 June for the Summer issue, 1 September for the Fall issue and 1 November for the Winter issue.

We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

DISCLAIMER: The articles contained in this newsletter are the property of the authors. No portion of the publication may be duplicated without permission from the author/editor. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Society. We cannot vouch for groups, businesses or activities described in this newsletter. Information is provided for members' interest and readers are to use their own discretion.

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Volunteer Opportunity

by Carolyn Mont

Are you looking for a way to be more involved with the Friends of McNabs Island Society?



I am not leaving the Board but have been membership secretary for the past eight years and it is time for someone else to step up. I would like to spend my McNabs time working on guiding and education. The work of the membership secretary is not onerous, but becomes busy several times a year when *The Rucksack* goes out.

My duties as membership secretary include: picking up the mail at the Gladstone Post Office in Halifax, sending out receipts for membership dues, recording the data and giving the cheques to the treasurer for deposit.

I also pick up *The Rucksack* from the printer and include membership renewal and overdue notices when I mail it out to the membership.

This work could certainly be done with very little contact with the board, but I found it gave me an opportunity to get to know some great people and become involved with the organization. I would be available to assist anyone who is interested in taking over the membership secretarial duties and newsletter mailout. Please contact me at 477-0187 or by email at carolynmont@ns.sympatico.ca if you can help out.

McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park Advisory Committee Update...

by Catherine McCarthy

In the summer of 2000, the Province asked a group of individuals, representing different McNabs Island interests, to come together as an Advisory Committee and provide advice on the direction for the soon-to-be McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park. Over the next eight years, the Park Advisory Committee met on a regular basis to discuss various issues related to the island park and to draft a comprehensive management plan.

The Management Plan was approved by the government in September 2005 and can be found by following the link from the Friends of McNabs Island homepage www.mcnabsisland.ca. If you look through the Implementation Strategy for the park (pp 55-58 of the plan), you might think that not much has been done since the Plan was approved, and you would be right. The Plan called for a four-phased process to implement 28 recommendations to get the park up and running as an operational provincial park. It was supposed to take three years to get the work done, but lack of funding has stalled most of it.

The government has completed a few of the long list of recommendations, but most are still outstanding. There has been a detailed assessment of the condition of the Conrad and Lynch houses and Fort Ives, all of which need extensive and costly stabilization work. And there was an assessment of the Hurricane Juan damage. As well, the Park Advisory Committee has drafted new Terms of Reference that are now awaiting government approval.

The recommendation to replace the dilapidated Range Pier is partially complete. The old wharf was torn down a year ago, but at the moment, there is no funding available for its replacement. None of the Implementation Strategy's Phase III or IV recommendations have been addressed.

However, there is still promise in the air. This past summer Carolyn Mont and I led provincial deputy ministers and senior government officials with NS Tourism, the Waterfront Development Corporation and Economic Development on an island tour. Just like all visitors to our favourite island, these government officials were most impressed with all that McNabs Island has to offer.

Hopefully NS Natural Resources, the provincial caretaker of parks, will be able to interest other government departments in making McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park an operational park. Who knows, with the government's new emphasis on improving infrastructure in the province, badly needed park infrastructure might get some attention.



Strawberry Hill
the view from McNabs Pond, October 2008



Submarine nets across Halifax Harbour during WWII

My Interest in McNabs Island

by John Sinclair, Fredericton,
New Brunswick

In 2002, I came upon my dad's Royal Canadian Artillery service discharge certificate from WWII. I requested his service record from the Canadian Archives and it arrived in due time.

On the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII and the Year of the Veteran, I decided to research the events of my father's service

record. I can recall McNabs Island from the time when my dad was posted at York Redoubt in 1943. That summer, we had a cottage at Ferguson Cove Road that was located near the protective gates of Halifax Harbour. We had a daily view of the convoys coming and going into Bedford Basin.

I learned later, from the book *Gray Seas Under* by Farley Mowat, that the gates were constructed by Foundation Company of Canada Maritime Limited. It brought back memories for me when I was able to see an old photo of the gates.

McNabs again came to my attention when I received war diaries from the Archives of Canada. Dad was the Officer in Charge of the 107th heavy battery that was being mustered Feb 6th, 1942 to defend against Nazi submarines at Lewisport, Newfoundland. They were deployed on May 28th, 1942 from Ives Point on McNabs Island.

Movement from the island to Kings Wharf was aboard the motor vessel Jill or the SS *Alfreda*. The advance party to Lewisport sailed aboard the SS *Caribou* from North Sydney to Port-aux-Basques. The remainder of the battery sailed from Halifax to St. John's aboard the SS *Fort Amherst*.

As time went on, I reached Cathy McCarthy of the friends of McNabs Island Society inquiring about Ives Point and McNabs Island. Through this contact I met Carolyn Mont. It turns out Carolyn's parents also left McNabs on their way to Lewisport during the war.

After some discussion with Carolyn, a tour of the island was arranged. I joined the group at Purcell's Cove and sailed with New Dawn Charters to the Cable Wharf where we picked up more passengers. It was my first harbour tour. We sailed for McNabs Island with a group of tour guides on a training session.

The hike on the island roads left no doubt in my mind the trials members of the 107th battery must have faced. While the roadsides were overgrown with brush, the roads were quite clear. We visited Fort Ives and Ives Point then circled around to Fort Hugonin. This fort is a very controversial topic at this time, however the war diary mentions it was a much needed area for storage of materials.

The tour group included Bob Guscott, a biologist with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources. Bob pointed out many things occurring in the island's environment. Most interesting for me was the damage sustained by Hurricane Juan. The trees blown down by winds were hung up in branches and will take generations to fall to the ground and decay. New growth is visible everywhere, but it only camouflages the real damage that took place.

Our spirit was not dampened by the showers after lunch. We returned to Purcell's Cove by boat and were able to see a flock of cormorants having a feeding frenzy on the water. A whale was noticed to be feeding near the flock and the crew said it was likely mackerel or herring that the whale was eating. They also identified it as a Minke whale.

For me, this was to bring to life the reality of my research into my father's service 66 years earlier. I was fortunate to be able to share these stories with the Friends of McNabs Island Society.

Discover McNabs Island

Published by the Friends of McNabs Island Society

Discover McNabs Island is a collection of writings, photos and maps about McNabs Island, Lawlor and Devils Islands. Readers will find that **Discover McNabs Island** is more than just a guidebook. It is a history book and nature book wrapped under one cover.

Originally published in 1995, the second edition of **Discover McNabs Island** includes updated chapters, new photos and a new chapter on the islands' geology that shows how the island is ever changing.

Discover McNabs Island is self-published by the Friends of McNabs Island Society. The 116-page book is printed on 100% recycled paper by Halcraft Printing Inc. of Halifax and retails for \$19.95. The book is available in local book and gift shops or directly from the Friends of McNabs Island Society. For more information visit www.mcnabsisland.ca or contact Carolyn Gallagher at: 477-8624 or Faye Power at 443-1749.



Making Resources on McNabs Island more Available

by Eve Burns

A wet Sunday afternoon was spent meeting with Mary Ellen Beazley, an NSCC student designing a poster/pamphlet for us on the McNabs Island Kit, which is available at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History.

Carolyn Mont, Carolyn Gallagher and I shared our knowledge of the kit with Mary Ellen. The plan is to launch an early Spring campaign to inform teachers about the cross curriculum field trip awaiting them on McNabs Island. Along with this initiative the pages included in the kit

have been scanned and will be posted on our website. These pages do not replace the many pages of resources, specimens, games, etc. within the kit. They are intended to offer a preview of the kit and, as there is only one copy of the kit, provide an accessible copy when the kit is out on loan.



Mary Ellen Beazley and Carolyn Gallagher pose with the museum kit

The slide show contained within the kit, along with the Power Point presentation from the Web site, has been copied to a CD by Don Dine and is available from Board members to assist with presentations about McNabs Island that any of our members may have the opportunity to deliver.

Another Record Crowd at this year's Fall Foliage Tour!

by Denise Contrasty

On a cool, cloudy Sunday morning in October, 150 people travelled from Halifax and Eastern Passage to participate in the Friends of McNab's annual Fall Foliage tour. Volunteer guides, Royce Walker and Mike McDonald, showed places of historical and botanical interest on McNabs Island while Carolyn Mont, led the "Hangman's Beach" tour along paths taken by fictitious and historical characters in the Thomas Raddall novel.

All tours were well attended and participants were thrilled to learn many fascinating facts about the island. The Conrad-Davis and Lynch houses were opened for visitors.



Royce Walker's History Tour



Biologist Mike MacDonald discusses McNabs Island

Many thanks to local artist, Tony Publicover, who spruced up the houses and then spent the day answering questions about them.

This year the McNabs Family Cemetery located east of Fort McNab was opened to the public. Denise Contrasty and John McCallum provided background information on the people interred there using a large, detailed McNab family history booklet compiled by island historian Barry Edwards.

Thanks to all the volunteers who made this outing a success!

Raddall's Hangman's Beach Still a Popular Theme

A new tour was added to the Fall Foliage Tour this year. Carolyn Mont led an enthusiastic group of people on a walk tracing the steps of the novel Hangman's Beach by Thomas Raddall. Although a work of fiction, the historical novel merges the real life McNab family with fictitious characters. Raddall's research is excellent and readers could easily trace the path of the novel. We visited the site of the McNab home, the beach where Ellen and Rory met and walked on the path to Cascamond's hut. The McNab house itself was real, although no longer

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standing. Since both Rory and Cascamond were fictitious, we followed trails that the author had followed in creating the story.

Some of the people on the walk had not read the novel but vowed to get a copy and read it if they could track one down. Unfortunately, the book is no longer in print. In fact, many wondered why the movie industry hadn't picked up the story. Those who had read the book were delighted to end the tour at the McNab Family Graveyard which was open for the day. To see the graves of Peter and Joanna was a logical culmination of the event.



Visiting the McNabs Family Graveyard during Fall Foliage

by Carolyn Mont

McNabs Island Merchandise

For a unique souvenir or gift consider supporting the Friends of McNabs Island.

- ◆ **NEW Discover McNabs Island** 2nd Ed. books are available for \$19.95
- ◆ Panoramic harbour view **POSTERS of McNabs Island** available for \$5.00. Contact Carolyn Gallagher at 447-8624 or Faye Power at 443-1749 to order either item.
- ◆ **Brochures and Maps** are available for **FREE** from Carolyn Mont. Call her at 477-0187 to get your copies today.

How can YOU help?

The Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on volunteer power, please consider giving a few hours of your time.

Do you have an interesting story about the Island? Submit it to the newsletter! Not all jobs take a lot of time, some can be one-time-only help with an event, doing call backs or mailing out the newsletter. Please contact the executive through our email address:

mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca

Email Updates

If you wish to receive updates about the status of McNabs Island by email, please send your contact information to:

mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca

Photo Credits

Page 1 - Guns at Fort Ives under a blanket of snow by Mike Tilley
Page 3 & 7 - by Cathy McCarthy
Page 4 - John Sinclair from the Halifax Citadel Library
Page 5 - museum kit photo by Eve Burns
Page 6 - Foliage tour photos by Faye Power

**THE FRIENDS OF McNABS ISLAND SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION and RENEWAL FORM**

NEW MEMBERSHIP

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SUPPORTING MEMBER (\$50 annually)

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER (\$15 annually)

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP (\$20 annually)

NEWSLETTER ONLY (\$15 annually)

Willing to help out? _____

Annual membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society starts on the date of payment of dues and includes a year's subscription to the society's quarterly newsletter, *The Rucksack*. We thank you for your continued support and welcome your interest!

Send money or cheque, payable to:
The Friends of McNabs Island Society

PO Box 31240
Gladstone RPO
Halifax, NS
B3K 5Y1

or phone Carolyn Mont at 477-0187 for membership inquiries.



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The Rucksack is published by the **Friends of McNabs Island Society**.

Contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome.

Visit our website at: www.mcnabsisland.ca

Phone: Cathy (902) 434-2254 evenings

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