

The Rucksack

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

Volume Fourteen, Issue One

Summer 2005



Memories of Life on an Island

Editor's note: Faye Power is a former resident of McNabs Island and is on the board of the Friends of McNabs Island Society. She provided us with pictures and stories of her life on the island.

Colin Cleveland, my dad, was the lighthouse keeper from 1932 to 1957 for the McNabs Island lighthouse, located off the Military Road. Today, only the foundation of our home remains.

I was born in 1947, the seventh and last child of our family. At the time, Reg my brother was 12 and Joan my sister was 17. My sister Marge (and her husband Mac) were caretakers of the Hugonin Battery and their son, David was born two months after me. By the time I was born, my older siblings were married and had moved away.



I was four when Joan married the duty boat Captain, Doug McGregor. Reg left shortly after to join the Air Force and was posted to Germany. Essentially, I grew up as an only child.

During my time on the island, there were about 20 families who lived on the island. My sisters were teenagers during the war and were courted by the soldiers and sailors stationed on the island. Our lighthouse was a happening place during that time, and my sisters ended up marrying servicemen.

I played with my nephew, David until I was 4, when his family moved to Purcell's Cove. Harry and Evelyn Wills took over the Hugonin Fort and their son, Harold and I played together. I also played with one of the Eddy girls and the Master Gunner's daughter, Linda Prior.

We had no electricity or a furnace in our home. Our heat came from a coal burning kitchen stove and a pot bellied stove in the living room. The heat rose through the grate to the upstairs. I remember Dad getting me up and standing me on a newspaper placed over the warming closet (water tank) on the side of the stove until I was warm enough to get dressed. I remember my dad sitting me on his knee in front of the newspaper to teach

**Friends of McNabs Island Society
Rucksack**

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

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Due annually on the date of membership.
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 also accept donations.

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

DEADLINES: February 1st for the Spring issue, 1 June for the Summer issue, September 1st for the Fall issue and November 1st 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 member interest and readers are to use their own discretion.



**Friends of McNabs Island
Executive 2005/06**

President

Cathy McCarthy

Secretary

Denyse Contrasty

Treasurer

Judith Campbell

Membership Secretary

Carolyn Mont

Newletter Editor

Theresa RolletMcWilliams

Board Member

Greg Haverstock

Board Member

Chris Poulain

Board Member

Katalin Ohlsson

Board Member

Faye Power

Board Member

Carolyn Gallagher

OOPS!

In the last issue of The Rucksack, we acknowledged those individuals and businesses who so generously contributed to our annual Silent Auction. However, we neglected to include the **Stratford Festival** on that list. We do appreciate their donation and regret the oversight.

Email Updates

If you wish to receive updates about the status of McNabs Island by email, please send your information to either: **Carolyn Mont** at carolynmont@ns.sympatico.ca or **Cathy McCarthy** at cathymc@accesscable.net

McNabs Island Merchandise

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

- ♦ **Discover McNabs Island** books are available for \$10.00
- ♦ Panoramic harbour view **POSTERS of McNabs Island** available for \$5.00
- ♦ **Brochures and Maps** are available for FREE.

Contact Carolyn Mont, 477-0187 to get yours today!

me my letters. When I started school, I could already spell "refrigerator".

I went to school in the one-room schoolhouse situated on the Military Road for the first two years of my education. Recently, I found remnants of an old school desk near there, when I was on one of the McNabs beach cleanups. I went to Hampton Grey Memorial School in Shearwater for Grades 2 and 3. I had to walk two miles from the lighthouse to the wharf at Range Pier. The Navy duty boat would then transport us to Shearwater, where we would walk another fair distance up to the school. Many times, when the weather was bad, we island kids made it to school when the locals didn't. We never considered it a hardship, it was just what you did.

One time tragedy hit when, the Navy boat was on its way to pick us up during a pea soup fog. It was hit by the Dartmouth Ferry and all hands, except the Captain, drowned. By the time we heard it on the radio, we kids had given up waiting for the boat and had walked home.

The Army truck would come to Garrison Pier, during stormy winter weather, to drive us down to the boat at Range Pier. I remember my dad wrapping me in a blanket in the toboggan and pulling me down to Garrison Pier to meet the truck on those occasions.

We had no inside plumbing and used an outhouse near our lighthouse. The Eaton's and Sears Catalogues were our toilet paper. At night, we used the "thunder jug". In the winter, I remember heating the newspaper (with a hole cut in it) to red hot and running like the dickens for the outhouse before it got cold. A nifty way to have a warm seat to sit on.

Church services came to us via battery-operated radio. I loved to hear the Bible stories that my dad read me at bedtime. I left the island when I was 10 years old. We moved to Fox Point (near Hubbards) and I joined Sunday School. They wanted to put me in the lowest grade as they assumed I had no religious teachings. I was soon moved to the highest class, since I knew all the Bible stories.

Growing up on the island, we beachcombed, picked berries, and Lady Slippers, and climbed trees, had wiener roasts, listened to ghost stories and played in Fort Ives. We swam in the swimming hole at Strawberry Hill. We made our own fun and had no trouble doing it.

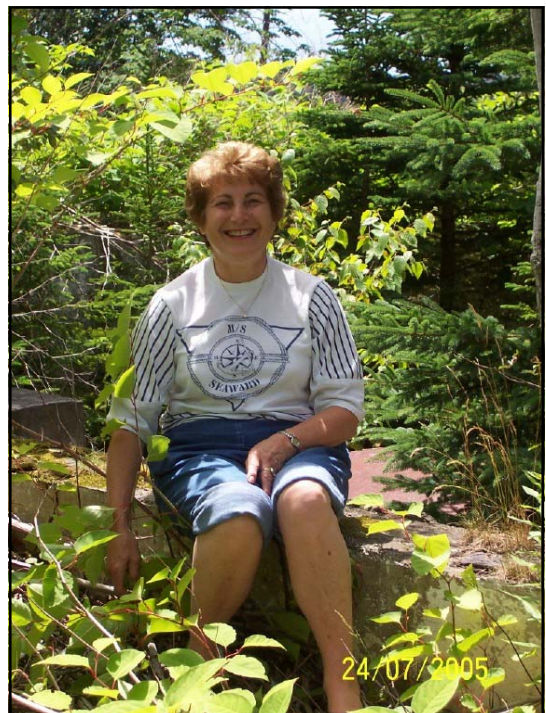
We attended all the organized picnics held on the island, including the Dockyard's huge annual picnic, and they always seemed to have enough hot dogs and hamburgers for us island kids.

In the winter, when we would come in the house after sledding or skating at Findlay's Cove, mom would have hot chocolate waiting on the stove. As it got dark, I would do my homework by the light of the Aladdin lamps.

My mother and I would go to Halifax often as there was a daily duty boat, Monday to Friday. We would leave Garrison Pier to go to Queen's Wharf and we would be picked up at 4 p.m to return home. In the morning, we would pick up our mail at the post office and shop at Eaton's, Simpsons and other stores. In the afternoon, we would visit friends or one of my sisters until it was time for the boat. We did a lot of window shopping and I'm still good at that!

The Wills family had a TV and we would go down to their place to watch it. I remember Eddie Arnold and the Ed Sullivan Show. I vividly recall when Mrs. Wills stood in front of the TV to block her daughter Patsy from seeing the "disgusting gyrations" of Elvis Presley.

I have nothing but fond memories of my early life on McNabs Island and I think the rest of my family feels the same way. I know my Mom and Dad loved it there.



Volunteers Clean Up McNabs Island on World Environment Day

June 5, 2005

World Environment Day on June 5th was celebrated by 125 volunteers who pitched-in to help the Friends of McNabs Island Society clean up the beaches of McNabs Island Provincial Park in Halifax Harbour. Since the first beach clean-up was held in 1991, volunteers have filled more than 7,000 bags with garbage and recyclable material collected from the shores of McNabs and Lawlor Island Provincial Park.

On this 14th annual clean-up, local fisherman, Raymond Naugle of Eastern Passage, hauled 220 bags of garbage, recyclables and large items of junk back to Eastern Passage. From there, Halifax Regional Municipality Public Works staff transported the material to the landfill or recycling facility.

A few days later on June 9, 50 volunteers from Formation Safety and Environment at CBF Halifax cleaned up the harder-to-reach areas of the island. They collected a further 75 bags of garbage, scrap tires and other large items of debris.

The most unusual items collected at this year's clean-up included: a Barbie doll, a plastic sheriff's badge, a multi-meter current measuring instrument, a Brut bottle of aftershave, a children's inflatable wading pool, a croquet ball, a liner for a half-ton truck box, a harmonica, a bowling pin, a Mary Kay membership card, a kitchen sink, an empty military shell and a Colt 45 liquor bottle.



The most common item found every year on the beaches of the provincial park is plastic including: plastic tampon applicators that are flushed down the sewer system, plastic bags, and plastic motor oil containers. From the Arctic to the Pacific, plastic debris litters island para-



dises and shorelines. Plastic debris is not only an eyesore but is also harmful to the marine environment and wildlife. It will outlast all of us, even in the harsh Atlantic Ocean. For more information on "plastic litter" visit the website <http://www.mindfully.org/Plastic/Ocean/ocean.htm>

What can we do about plastic debris? Each year volunteers comb

beaches of Canada's Ocean Playground to clean them up, and each year there are more and more plastic items found. One solution is to increase the fines for littering. Perhaps if the fines were steep enough they could help pay for enforcement officers.

Another solution might be to impose a levy on plastic bags, which has been done in Ireland. The "bag tax" has been found to significantly reduce plastic litter.

And for Halifax Harbour, the solution to plastic tampon applicators littering our beaches is for women to stop purchasing these products. There are plenty of other alternatives on the market. If women must buy these products then they should ignore the "flushable" instructions on the package. "flushable" in Halifax means "littering" our beaches and shorelines.

Again thanks to all the volunteers who volunteered to clean up McNabs Island Provincial Park. A special thanks to Michelle Johnson of Formation Safety and Environ-





ment at CFB Halifax for organizing a cleanup on McNabs Island for her co-workers. Thanks also to Tara Warner's Grade 5 class from Falmouth District Elementary School that traveled all the way to McNabs Island from Falmouth to clean up garbage. Thanks also to our sponsors, Parks Canada, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, Halifax Regional Municipality, Clean Nova Scotia, RRFB

Nova Scotia, Murphy's on the Water, and McNabs Island Ferry.



Wildlife Festival – Eastern Passage June 5, 2005



An estimated 130 people stopped by the Friends of McNabs' display at the Wildlife Festival in Eastern Passage on Sunday June 5th according to Denyse Contrasty, co-ordinator for this event. Three Friends answered questions about McNabs and Lawlor islands and encouraged visitors to visit McNabs this summer.

The new Department of Natural Resources McNabs park brochure was distributed along with an insert "How do I get to the Island?" The latter gave the phone numbers for the airport

Visitor Information Centre that maintains a list of current boat operators and also suggested using the Yellow Pages under Boats/Charters, Rental. Again a significant number of people asked about facilities on the island such as toilets, shelters, campgrounds etc and wondered if DNR would organize scheduled transportation to and from the island in July and August. by Denyse Contrasty

The Friends of McNabs' 2005 Annual General Meeting was held at the Brightwood Golf Clubhouse in Dartmouth on Tuesday, April 05 2005 with 24 people in attendance.

Friends AGM 2005

Cathy McCarthy, Chair of the Board, talked about DNR's contracting to clear main trails on McNabs following Hurricane Juan. Broken spruce trees that cannot be chipped will be re-



removed from McNabs while all damaged trees within 40 to 50 feet of these roadways will be cut and left.

The 2004 financial and membership reports were presented and the 2004 Board plus three new volunteers will form the 2005 Board.

Guest speakers from Parks Canada, Linda Frank and Dr Ron McDonald, discussed Parks Canada's Management Plan Review for Fort McNab National Historic Site of Canada and the Halifax Defence Complex using a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions from the audience.

TOUR GUIDES VISIT McNABS

By Carolyn Mont

On May 14, I led a group of tour guides from Ambassatours Gray Line on a hike on McNabs Island. We spent the day enjoying many of the amenities that the island has to offer. Since many of the group had not been to McNabs before, they were pleasantly surprised with what they saw and did.

We met at Fisherman's Cove in less than ideal circumstances. The day was unseasonably cold, with temperatures just above freezing; the wind was high and it was cloudy. I must say, the group was very enthusiastic and did not let the cold mar their day.

Upon landing at Wreck Cove, we walked up the beach to have a look at the osprey nest on the lamppost there. There were clearly osprey in the nest, a sight that is always exciting to see. There were no signs of young birds but certainly, at times they can be seen peeping over the top of the nest. Osprey have been coming back to this nest for many years.

The next stop was Fort McNab. The view from there is magnificent and a source of great interest for history buffs. It is certainly easy to draw a mental picture of the submarine nets that stretched from McNabs to York Redoubt during both World War I and II. There was a very real threat of German submarines coming into Halifax Harbour and the role of the nets was to keep them out. On the way out of the fort, we paused at the McNab family graveyard, a cemetery that Thomas Raddall, in Warden of the North, called the best guarded graveyard in the world, because it is inside the walls of Fort McNab.

Upon leaving Fort McNab, we walked along the Garrison Road to the Lighthouse Road. Because McNabs Pond was breached during Hurricane Juan, it is not possible to get to the lighthouse but we had a pleasant walk along Mangers Beach to get back on Garrison Road.

From there we made our way to the Tea House. That is not what the name suggests, at least not anymore. The building is still there but is boarded up. It was built on the site of the former Hugonin/Perrin house and garden. There were lots of daffodils in bloom, remnants of the garden that, in the late 1800's rivaled the Public Gardens. Japanese maples, hawthorns, a copper beech tree and the dreaded Japanese knotweed remind us of the beautiful garden that was once there.

Traveling along the Old Military Road, we were passed by a large group of young people on bicycles. By the time we arrived at the Conrad-Davis house, the sun had come out and it was warm enough to sit on the lawn for our picnic lunch. The group was pleased to learn that that house and the Matthew Lynch House are both open to the public when the Friends of McNabs Island Society sponsors our annual Fall Foliage Tour on Sunday October 16. We expect to see them on the island for that event.

When we arrived at Fort Ives, we came upon a group of Cubs pitching tents, preparing to stay the night. This Cub pack, from St. Michael's Church in Spryfield, has camped at Fort Ives before in what has become an annual event for them. (Last year's trip was foiled because the park was still closed due to hurricane damage).

We walked along Garrison Road from Fort Ives on our return to Wreck Cove where McNabs Island Ferry would get us back to Fisherman's Cove. Everyone was amazed to see the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Juan. Even though I've seen it many times, I'm constantly surprised to see that it has not been cleaned up. It is certainly worrisome to see the piles of dead

trees, which are a serious fire hazard.

Arriving back at Wreck Cove we came upon a couple of people who had kayaked to the island. Even though it had begun as a very cold dreary day, the group was surprised at the amount of activity on McNabs.

As we walked around the island, we observed a lot of litter, lots of it large plastic items that had drifted onto the shores with the tide. It was obvious that there would be plenty of work to be done at the Beach Clean-up on June 5. (See accompanying article). It is important to note that the material to be removed is not debris left



behind by visitors to the island but items that have drifted onto the beaches.

It was a great day, both for the Ambassatour tour guides who had never been to the island and for me, who is always pleased to spend time on McNabs Island. It is a special treat for me to show off this jewel to newcomers.

Park Advisory Committee Update

by Cathy McCarthy

The McNabs and Lawlor Islands Park Advisory Committee has not met since January 2005. At that time, we were informed that a massive forestry operation to remove all damaged spruce trees would begin this past spring. To date nothing has happened. We have heard rumors that there is a dispute over who will pay for this forestry operation, the federal Canadian Food and Inspection Agency (CFIA) or the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

In the interim much work is needed to be done. The frequented outhouse at Garrison Pier is still overturned and the road to the lighthouse is still not passable. We have heard that the Department of Natural Resources will call for tenders later this fall to patch up Garrison Pier, which buckled under the force of Hurricane Juan.

The Province has spent Hurricane Juan relief money to refurbish all other provincial parks ravaged by the hurricane on September 29, 2003. Now it is time to direct attention to Nova Scotia's newest provincial park, McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park.

The Draft Management Plan for the islands was completed last fall and sent to Natural Resources Minister, Richard Hurlburt for approval. To date, the plan has not been signed off. It is hoped that an announcement will be made soon.

Introducing Irene Arthur

(The following article first appeared in the Northwood Resident Times, March 2005)



Irene was born on August 14, 1913 on McNabs Island. Her father, Russell Arnett was the Master Gunner at the island's army base, Fort McNab. He was born and raised on Prince Edward Island. Irene's mother, Agnes, originally from Quebec, raised four children (three girls and a boy). Irene was the second oldest.

Irene attended school on McNabs Island until her mid teens. Because of the small population of families on the island, the teacher would board with the students' families for several months at a time. Irene recalls that when the teacher was living with them, she was very strict and would make her and her sisters do their homework and go to bed early.

When she was younger, Irene and the other children on the island would make their own fun. "There was always something to do," said Irene. In the summer, they would swim every day off the government wharf and in the winter, the local tennis court would be turned into an outdoor skating rink.

Every Sunday, Irene and her family would travel by motorboat across to Ferguson's Cove to attend church. In turn, churches from the mainland would visit McNabs for picnics. "I remember enjoying these times very much," said Irene.

In 1927, the Arnett Family moved to Halifax so the children could attend high school. Irene graduated from St. Pat's High School in 1931 and went on to work for a while in the clothing store, Wood Brothers. When her mother became ill, Irene left her job and took care of her mother until she died in 1942.

On July 19, 1943, Irene married Gordon Arthur. They met at a dance at St. Mary's Boathouse, although Irene claims she taught Gordon everything he knew about dancing! The couple became very interested in the sport and according to their daughter, Mary Jane, "were beautiful dancers!"

Irene and Gordon had three children: Mary Jane, who lives in Hubbards; Owen, who lives in Saskatoon; and Bruce, who lives in Halifax. Irene also has seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

In 1955, Irene and Gordon moved to Black Point on the South Shore. Gordon worked as a taxi driver, then with the school board and the local fire department. Irene raised her children and worked at a local store during the summer months. Then from 1968-78, Irene was employed in the accounting department of a company called Canezel in East River.

In 1989, Irene and Gordon moved back to Halifax and were living on Bayers Road. When Gordon passed away in April 2004, the couple had been married for 60 years. Last July, Irene moved into Northwood and enjoys participating in any and all music activities, as well as the Gardening Club.

Irene is a very sweet lady with a lot of pride in her heritage. And rightly so, as she is most likely the oldest person still living who was born on McNabs Island!

How to Get to McNabs Island

search when selecting transportation to the island. This list was taken from the Yellow Pages under "Boat – Rental & Charter". Any boat operators who wish to be added to the list should contact the Friends of McNabs at mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca.

A & M Sea Charters

Fisherman's Cove, Eastern Passage, NS
Season: year round
Toll Free: 1-888-858-5545
Phone: 902-465-6617
www.amseacharters.com

Captain Ed's Charters

Halifax, NS Contact:
Season: May 1 - November 30
Phone: 902-477-9630, 499-2686 Fax: 902-477-1637
capt.eds@eastlink.ca www.theseatiger.com

Captain Ron's Fishing Charters

Alderney Landing Dartmouth, NS.
Season: May 1 - October 30
Phone: 902-830-3759, 489-7401
captainron@somesites2sea.com
www.somesites2sea.com

Four Winds Charters

Halifax, NS
Season: May 15 - October 15 weather permitting
Toll Free: 1-877-274-8421
Phone: 902-492-0022 Fax: 902-826-9047
fourwinds@fourwindscharters.com
www.fourwindscharters.com

Harbour Taxsea

Downtown Halifax
Season: April 15 - October 30
Phone: 902-830-3181 Fax: 902-465-9763
www3.ns.sympatico.ca/taxsea/taxsea.htm

McNab's Island Ferry

Shearwater, N.S.
Season: year round
Toll Free: 1-800-ECO-ILND-(326-4563)
Phone: 902-465-4563 Fax: 902-465-1335
redbeard@mcnabsisland.com www.mcnabsisland.com

New Dawn Charters

Season: year round
Phone: 902-479-2900
newdawn@hfx.eastlink.ca

Sandpiper Water Charters

Alderney Landing, Dartmouth, NS
Phone: 830-8687

Waterfront Water Taxi

Halifax, N.S.
Season: May 15 - October 15
Depending on demand, weather and availability.
Phone: 902-420-1015 Fax: 902-423-7942
reception@murphysonthewater.com
www.murphysonthewater.com

The Friends of McNabs Island Society does not guarantee the service provided by these boat operators, and the list is provided for information purposes only. Please do your own re-

search when selecting transportation to the island. This list was taken from the Yellow Pages under "Boat – Rental & Charter". Any boat operators who wish to be added to the list should contact the Friends of McNabs at

McNabs Island Paddle and Clean-up

Saturday, September 10, 2005 - 10AM
(Rain date - Saturday, Sept 17, 2005)

Join fellow sea kayakers and open canoeists of Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia and Friends of McNabs Island Society for a leisurely paddle along the shoreline of McNabs and Lawlor Islands in Halifax Harbour. We will stop at several beaches to collect litter. Plastic bags will be provided, and a motor boat will pick up the full bags afterwards.

PFDs have to be worn while on the water, while the safety equipment required by the Coast Guard (floating line, bailer, and signalling device) will need to be on board. The group will meet at the unpaved parking lot near Dook's wharf in Shearwater (across from Tim Hortons) on Eastern Passage Road. Bring your own lunch, drinks and rain gear.

For information or to register, contact: Kate-lin Ohlsson at 464-1236 (evenings) or at KEOhlsson@aol.com

McNabs and Lawlor Islands

Fall Foliage Tours

Sunday October 16, 2005
RAINDATE Sunday October 23, 2005
10 AM-4:00 PM Cost: \$7.50 members/
children & \$9.00 non-members

Join the Friends of McNabs Island Society for the annual Fall Foliage Tours of McNabs Island Provincial Park. See the island in its autumn splendour and participate in guided history and nature tours, including a tour of the historic island homes. Wear comfortable shoes, and bring a lunch and drinking water.

Groups of more than ten persons must pre-register. Space on the boat is limited and is available on a First Come, First Served basis. Depart to McNabs at 10 am from Murphy's on the Water, Cable Wharf, Depart McNabs 4 pm
For more information, contact Carolyn Mont at 477-0187 or visit www.mcnabsisland.ca or e-mail: mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca

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

____ NEW MEMBERSHIP

Name: _____

____ RENEWAL

Ad-
dress: _____

I AM ENCLOSING \$ _____ FOR

____ DONATION

____ SUSTAINING MEMBER (\$100 annually)

____ SUPPORTING MEMBER (\$50 annually)

____ INDIVIDUAL MEMBER (\$15 annually)

____ FAMILY MEMBERSHIP (\$20 annually)

____ NEWSLETTER ONLY (\$15 annually)

Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

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.

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

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 or Carolyn (902) 477-0187

This issue went to print July 2005.