

The Lightkeeper

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The objectives of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society are to promote and to support the preservation and awareness of Nova Scotia lighthouses; to assist community groups in leasing or taking ownership of the lighthouse sites; to provide access to written research and photographic documentation; to initiate oral history research; and to classify and monitor the status of historic lighthouse sites.

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Cover Photo

Caribou Island Lighthouse

Taken by Tammy LeBlanc

Back Photo

Westhaver Island Lighthouse

Taken by Sarah Almon

Membership News!

We're excited to announce that community groups supporting their local lighthouses will now have their affiliate fees waived.

Contact ask.us@nslps.com for more information.

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Forgotten Lighthouses of Nova Scotia—Ile Haute

By: Howard Eaton

Ile Haute is an island in the Bay of Fundy at the mouth of the Minas Basin located 8 km from Cape Chignecto and 16km from Harbourville.

The island is generally easily viewed from Harbourville and other coastal communities along the Fundy shore, but often, even on a clear day, it can be hidden behind a Fundy Fog bank and it seems to have disappeared!

Ile Haute has a very long and interesting history. It has a long association with the Mi'kmaq who have used the island for thousands of years as a stopping place and an area to make tools. Some experts believe this association goes back 10,000 years! The Mi'kmaq name for the Island is Maskusetkik which means place of wild potatoes.

In 1604 Samuel de Champlain sailed into the Bay of Fundy and noticed the island with the very tall cliffs on the south side. He names it Ile Haute - meaning "High Island". The 100 meter cliffs are the result of volcanic eruptions during the Jurassic period and it may, at one point have been connected to the North Mountain chain on the mainland 200 million years ago.

The island also has a connection to some Acadians, who are believed to have used the island during an escape to New Brunswick during the Expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia. No doubt Acadian fishermen and others stopped on the island over the years to rest, repair or picnic on the shoreline.

Due to its location in the middle of the Bay, and the ever present tidal currents and fog, the island has seen its fair share of ship wrecks.

The first recorded wreck was in 1786. Approximately 20 other wrecks occurred over the years with many vessels being caught by the infamous Quaco Ledge which is a gravel bar on the islands west side just under the water at high tide. Most of these wrecks were wooden sloops



employed on the coastal trade routes around Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

In 1878 the island received a lighthouse which was built to guide ships safely past the island. The structure was 53 feet tall and constructed in the middle of the island on a high bluff. The tower and adjoining keepers quarters were built using the same plans as the Wood Island lighthouse on PEI.

The light was 365 feet above sea level and visible for 20 miles. In 1883 it used a catatropic lens, which flashed a white light. In 1914 a hand operated fog horn was established and between 1922 and 1944 the light was equipped with a catatropic long focus lens. **Continued on page 4.**

Ile Haute, continued: With the establishment of the Light station, the island finally had a permanent settlement of at least one and often a family, who over the years cleared land and built a barn and chicken coop and planted crops to help sustain themselves while living on the island.

Light keepers were as follows:

1878 - 1889 Captain Nelson Card

1889 - 1904 Judson Reid

1904 - 1941 Percy Morris

1941 - 1946 Donald Morris

1946 - 1956 John Fullerton

In 1956 the lighthouse caught fire and collapsed. It was replaced by a steel skeleton tower with a white light on top.



One other interesting piece of history regarding the island is that the island is believed to have been used by pirates. Allegedly a nasty pirate by the name of Capt. Ned Low removed treasure from the Spanish galleon Señora de Victoria and buried the treasure on Ile Haute while running from a raid in New England in 1722. Low was eventually apprehended and ended his life at the end of a rope without divulging the location of his bounty.

In 1947 an American treasure hunter named Edward Snow came into possession of a map reputed to have been drawn by Capt. Low.

Snow landed on the Island in 1948 (?) and using a metal detector in an area previously dug by someone else, allegedly found several Spanish and Portuguese coins reputed to be at least 200 years old.

Snow published his story and photos in Life magazine but there has always been speculation that his find was questionable and that the coins may have been planted.

Today, the island is protected under the Special Places Protection Act. No one can dig on the island without an archeologist and no one can visit the island without permission of the Canadian Wildlife Service as it is now a bird sanctuary.

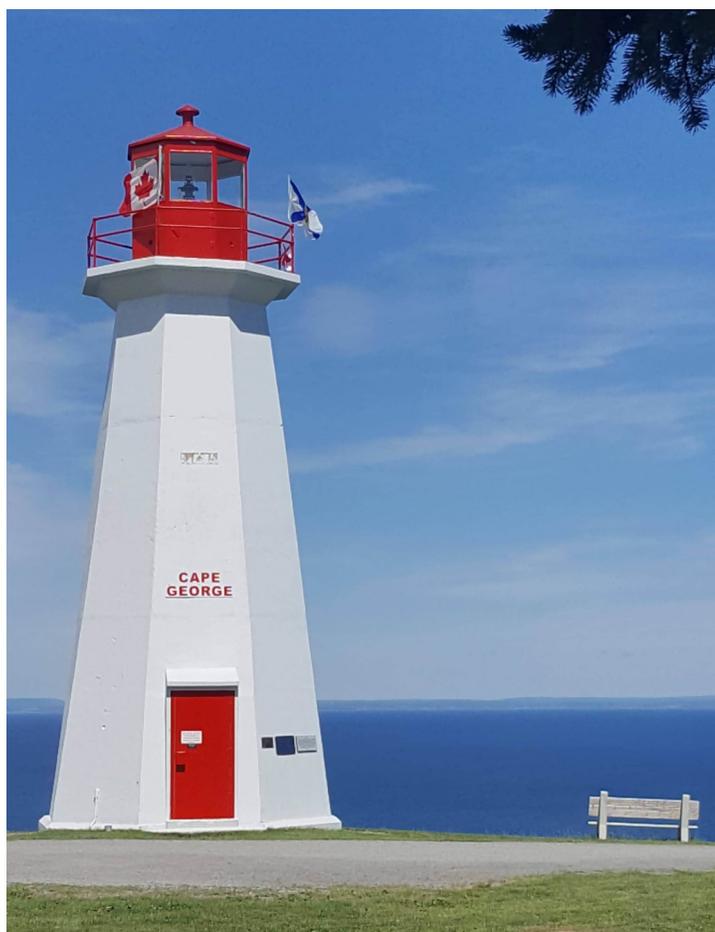
2020 Lighthouse Tour Review

By: Tammy LeBlanc

Arisaig Point lighthouse- 137 Arisaig Point Rd, Antigonish

We enjoyed walking around this beautiful little lighthouse all nestled in the corner of this small community's fishing wharf. The Arisaig lighthouse hosts a small ice cream stand within itself, offering a succulent way to cool down by the seaside. There are a few sitting areas to sit and relax and take in the fresh sea air as well as a small café nearby. As we walked along the edge of the rocks we enjoyed reading about the local history which was placed on monuments a stone's throw away all while watching the fishermen working on their boats. We really loved stopping in and seeing this beautiful view of the Northumberland Strait that reconnected us with nature if only for an afternoon.

(Foot note: no outdoor bathrooms and we didn't notice if the café was open or their hours of operation for food & drinks on the other side of the Wharf)



Cape George Lighthouse- 152 Lighthouse Rd, Antigonish

As we continued our afternoon adventure along the Sunrise Trail we came upon Cape George lighthouse. It was a little off the main road just up from Cape George Provincial Park (with walking trails & outdoor bathrooms). We arrived to a well kept resting area of Cape George lighthouse. The view was breath taking. Trees to left and ocean to our right and standing tall & proud was the well maintained lighthouse. It is a beautiful place to get our stretch your legs, and or sit down at a table or bench and have a picnic. We squandered our time absorbing the beauty & history of Cape George lighthouse.

(Foot note: besides the Provincial Park with the outdoor bathrooms- nowhere to buy food or drink so bring your own). **Continued on page 6.**

Caribou Island Lighthouse - Caribou Island Rd, Pictou

19 minutes (21.6 kms) from the Pictou Rotary or 22 mins (20.1 kms) from the Northumberland Ferry Service to Prince Edward Island and a 23 mins (21.7 km) drive to Caribou/Munroes Island Provincial Park (picnic tables, outdoor washrooms/camping area and beach area). This is a beautiful drive on a winding paved road with homey cottages & homes. In certain areas you were faced with a salty water breeze from both sides of the road. However the road there does have some issues with pot holes so drive slowly. This stand alone lighthouse overlooks the Northumberland strait has no coverage or anywhere to sit and no outdoor washrooms, however if the tide is out and you are feeling adventurous you can carefully climb the over the boulders and enjoy your feet in the sand and watch the Northumberland Ferry departing and or arriving. The views of the amazing sunsets from this light house are breathtaking.

(foot note: It has been recently updated in the couple of years).



2020 Annual General Meeting review

By: Sarah Almon

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society (the “Society”) recently held its 2020 Annual General Meeting (“AGM”), which was delayed from its usual springtime place on the calendar in hopes that the public health situation in the province would improve sufficiently to hold an in-person AGM. Unfortunately, with the state of emergency and distancing requirements still in effect in Nova Scotia, the Society made the difficult decision over the summer to move ahead with a shortened version of the AGM in the fall, which was held on October 6, 2020 at 7 pm by conference call.

Given the limitations of holding the AGM by conference call, the meeting itself was fairly brief; the agenda was adopted and the minutes of the April 24, 2019 Annual General Meeting were accepted, the Treasurer’s Report and the non-financial annual reports on Membership, the Website, the Lightkeeper, and Social Media (copies of which were circulated to members via email in advance of the AGM) were accepted, and retiring President Joe Flemming gave the Address of the President, which was warmly received by all attending the AGM. Following the Address of the President, the nominations for the 2020 directors and officers of the Society were presented and accepted, with the result that the current directors and officers of the Society are:

President, Denyse Contrasty; Past President, Joe Flemming; Vice President, [Vacant]; Secretary, Sarah Almon; Lightkeeper Editor, Maggie Jane Spray; Treasurer, Matthew Burke; Social Media Co-ordinator: Breagh Jenkins; Membership/Website, Denyse Contrasty; and Members-at-Large, Howard Eaton, Jean Daigle, and Rhett Pahl. Continued on page 7.

AGM Review, continued: With that, the business of the AGM was concluded and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 pm.

The Society wishes to extend a special thanks to those members who were able to join the AGM by conference call this year, and we hope that next year, we will be able to hold a more traditional AGM, including a guest speaker presenting on a topic of interest to our membership.

With thanks to Rhett Pahl for preparing the meeting minutes for this year's AGM.

School Days—Lighthouse Style

By: Denyse Contrasty

Each year after Labour Day, children of all ages head to a new teacher and classroom at a school that is usually in their neighbourhood. In today's world of Covid-19 this "one size fits all" approach no longer applies. Depending on the local School Board and/or current number of Covid cases in their area, children this year may attend school virtually or in person or some combination of in order to respect physical distancing rules.

Prior to the start of automation of lighthouses in 1970s, lightkeepers' children faced a similar dilemma based on their geographical circumstances. Would they be doing correspondence courses by mail as described by Billy Budge who arrived on St Paul's Island at the age of seven? Would they be ferried to school as Faye describes below? Would they be boarding in a nearby town to complete their education as the Richardson children did, leaving behind their lighthouse home on Bon Portage?

Faye Power's father, Colin Cleveland, was lightkeeper of the McNabs Range Lighthouse from 1932 to 1957. The youngest of seven children, Faye came to the island as a newborn and left at the age of ten when her father retired. Faye was luckier than most lighthouse children as military personnel were stationed on McNabs Island along with their families until the 1960s. Given the number of children living on the island, Faye's parents were instrumental in getting a school established on McNabs and her mother boarded many of the teachers in the lighthouse.



I asked Faye a series of questions regarding her early experiences at school and here are her replies:

Q: How old were you when you started school?

A: I would have been 5 I think but I have no memory of going to the one room schoolhouse in grades Primary and 1. However, I did go back in grade 4 for three months in 1957.

Q: Can you describe the McNabs one room school? Up to what grade was taught?

A: I really am not sure. Probably to grade 8, then my sister Joan and (brother) Reg went to QEH.... As for the schoolhouse, I remember that there was a pot belly stove and the teacher... was a very heavy woman so when she walked, the entire school shook. She couldn't bend down to tie her shoelaces so I would have to tie them for her.

Continued on page 8.

School days, continued: [Commander Stevens being a family friend of the Clevelands, got Faye into the navy school at Hampton Grey Memorial in CFB Shearwater.]

Q: What differences did you notice between the two schools?

A: The McNabs school was quite small – only one room. When I went to Hampton Grey, it was quite a large school, or so I thought.

School Days—Lighthouse Style, continued: I remember the first day when they were assigning us to our teacher/classroom, they call out Faye P.... Of course, I went to that class as I had to be on the only Faye. The teacher said to someone that she ended up with two Faye's that day. It all got sorted out.

Q: What did you think of all these kids earing about when you were fairly isolated on the island?

A: I think I took it all in stride.... We Island kids were given special privileges.... Because we had to wait to catch the boat, we were allowed to stay in our classroom and use school supplies to do projects (one we made up).... The janitor was left in charge of us and let us do what we wanted along as we behaved ourselves. I loved it!

Q: When you started going to Hampton Grey, how long did it take to get to school as you had water travel?

A: I am not quite sure as mom told someone she used to get me up at 6am. I had to walk to Garrison Pier. I would say about a half hour. Then continue all the way to Range Pier near Wreck Cove. We passed by Fort McNab and then down the hill. Then we had to wait for the Navy boat to come get us (it was dropping off workers for Fort McNab) and it would take us back to Shearwater. Then we would walk from the wharf in Shearwater up to Hampton Grey Memorial. [The total time for Faye to get to school would have been about 90 minutes - a good hour to walk to Wreck Cove, another ten minutes by boat to the Shearwater wharf, and ten to walk up to Hampton Grey school.]

If it was snowing, Dad would wrap me up on blankets and put me in the toboggan and haul me down to Garrison Pier and then the army truck from Fort McNab would come and pick us up and drive us to Range Pier. We usually made it to school in the winter even when the local children in Shearwater did not – they found it too stormy!

Q: You spoke once of the Navy duty boat being sunk on the way to Shearwater. Was this the boat you used to get to Shearwater?

A: Yes. Once, when we were waiting for the boat to pick us up, it never came. It was very, very foggy. We eventually went home and when I walked in the door, it came over the radio that the [Halifax/Dartmouth] ferry had hit the navy boat that was taking the workers over to Fort McNab and there were several deaths. The Captain survived but I am not sure there were other survivors.

Q: You gave a good amusing description of your return to the McNabs school and your encounter with the history of dinosaurs. You say you were the only child in grade 4. Had the number of students gone down while you were at Hampton Grey?

A: Yes, that was a traumatic time for me. I had no one to take the heat off of me when a question was asked. I was it! I could not remember the names of the dinosaurs or even what they looked like to save my soul, and that was what the entire exam was about.... It was the only exam I have ever failed in my entire school life. There were very few children on the island near the end.

The photo with this story (page 7) taken in March 1956 of Faye standing in the lighthouse yard with the island school house behind her. It was located on Military Road with the back side facing the lighthouse. It shows five perpendicular windows and one corner of the Cleveland barn nearby.

Tom Roberts—A Shining Light in Aids to Navigation



Tom Roberts, visiting Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans. Credit: Chris Mills

Written by Chris Mills: I first met Tom Roberts ten or more years ago. Although I don't remember the exact occasion, I *do remember immediately thinking* "This guy is special". Tom's love for his work with the Coast Guard's Aids to Navigation Team in Dartmouth, and the care he showed for those around him, shone brightly, right away.

Throughout the years, Tom and I forged a strong friendship. True, it was based on a mutual love of lighthouses and aids to navigation, but it was the interest and passion he put into his work that really struck me. As well as supporting his team, he always went to bat for the aids to navigation themselves, including the last remaining fog horn in the Halifax area. When the horn at Chebucto Head broke down a few years ago, Tom had it taken out, rebuilt and re-installed; quite a feat in these days of reliance on GPS and radar. But Tom was always covering all the bases. Someone might need that horn, and he felt responsible to make sure it was still in place, and still working properly.

As a former lightkeeper, it was a treat for me to compare notes with Tom. We talked all the time about the lights, and how things were changing; he was my go-to guy for anything tech-related. I once lamented the loss of lightkeepers, as well as fog horns, which are slowly but surely being phased out. Tom replied

"I would agree about re-staffing, but we have enough blowhards around here (bureaucrats) that can be the foghorns!"

Tom did care about the people he worked with, and he always gave credit where due. He spoke highly of his team, working with sometimes limited resources in a large geographical area with many hard-to-get-to sites along the coast. And being the lighthouse keeper that I am, I was in regular contact with Tom when I had questions, or to report a light or a horn not working properly. After getting in touch a few times about a few lights, I apologized to Tom for bugging him so much. He responded "Never worry about being a pest, buddy. You're a second set of eyes for me on the coast."

Tom made a big impression on the new friends he made. When he met Bob Trapani of the American Lighthouse Foundation a few years ago, they clicked right away, and got into tech discussions and lighthouse stories right off the bat. Bob wrote to me recently and said "I only met Tom a couple of times, but we did correspond many times over the years, so I felt like I knew him that much more. He loved the lights and keeping them shining bright. He will be missed on many fronts" Then he went on to say "...one of a kind...Tom cannot be replaced."

Tom also made an impression on Joe Flemming of the Sambro Light Heritage Society and Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society. Joe says "Tom was very kind and mentoring to me. When I felt out of my element, he brought a calming effect to our conversations. Made me feel like I could handle it, and he had my back."

Tom always thought of others ahead of himself. In late March, he wrote me from hospital:

“The people who work here make everybody feel important and I owe my future to the encouragement they give me every day. I am honoured to be here with all of these angels.”

Just before Covid descended upon us, I was able to visit Tom in the Infirmary, with his daughter Ashley. We had a great chat and we reminisced, and when I left, he said “I love ya buddy”. He was that kind of a guy.

I didn’t get to see Tom face-to-face again, but in June Tom wrote to me: “I am not gone yet Chris. I may still be able to work a few miracles. You never know what I can do.”

Although this is such a sad and difficult time for Tom’s wife Brenda, his daughters Ashley and Amy, and his grandchildren Landen, Beckett and Mason, Tom will live on. That’s what good vibes do, like a stone thrown into a pond, ripples spreading out long after the stone has disappeared.

And...every time I hear the fog horn at Chebucto Head...I think of Tom.

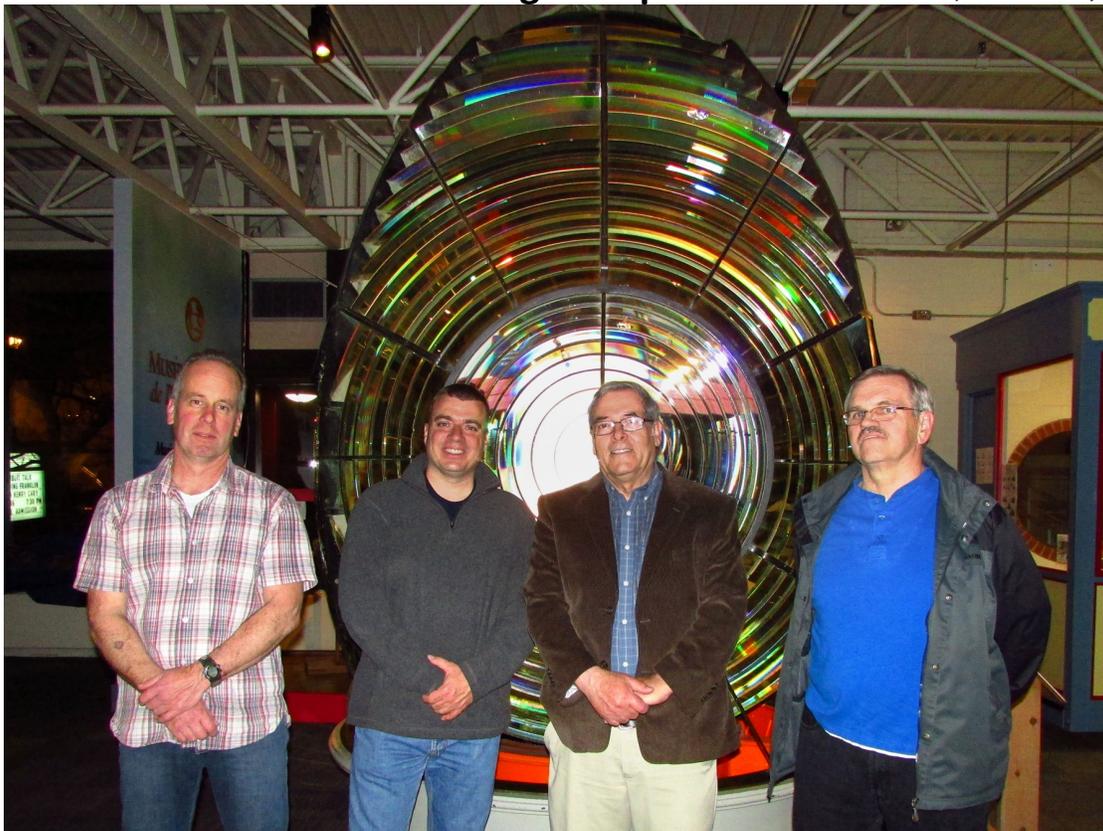
EDITORS NOTE: Tom Roberts passed away on Aug. 22, 2020. He will be missed by all current and past members of the NSLPS Board.



Above: Tom & Bob Trapani discussing various light-house structures and equipment with a DFO staff member. Credit: Chris Mills.



Above & Left: Tom & Bob Trapani on a visit to DFO. Credit: Chris Mills.



Above: Left to right, Chris Mills, Bob Trapani, Barry MacDonald & Tom Roberts posing in front of a lighthouse light on display at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. Credit: Anne Marie Trapani.

Written by Barry MacDonald: In the early days of lighthouse preservation in Nova Scotia, one of the essential steps to success was an understanding of the internal workings of the Canadian Coast Guard (DFO) & how this government agency would look upon those who sought to question their approach to maintenance & upkeep of this aging part of their infrastructure. As was pointed out to us repeatedly, their mandate was one of implementing a marine safety program which included a robust & ever- changing “Aids to Navigation” branch. The mandate in no way included caring for heritage structures like lighthouses. “We carry out our mandate in the most cost-effective manner” was the message. Indeed the shrinking DFO budgets of the early 2000s made providing basic services a challenge to those responsible for program delivery.

One DFO employee charged with this challenging task was Tom Roberts. Tom began his career as a Lamp Room Technician then as an Aids to Navigation technician – a job which required him to travel the Maritimes, servicing lights, lighthouses & buoys. His last job was that of managing the department he had worked in for many years. To this position he gave his all as he had done throughout his career.

It is at this point in the story that I wish to acknowledge how important it was to have Tom Roberts as a friend & supporter of NSLPS. Tom shared the same love & respect for lighthouses that drove us to work tirelessly to preserve them. As a DFO Manager, Tom saw these lighthouses as more than just a number on an inventory sheet. He took the time to learn lighthouse & light-keeping history. Indeed, Tom took the time to serve as an NSLPS Board member so he could further his knowledge & appreciation of what we were trying to accomplish. This dedication translated into work done to our lighthouses by DFO that otherwise would not have been done at all. Tom always tried to strike a balance between carrying out the DFO mandate while giving our aging lighthouses proper care & maintenance.

On a personal note, the work I was able to do on behalf of NSLPS was rewarding on many levels. By far the greatest reward was the amazing people I had the pleasure to meet & work with along the way. Tom Roberts was a person whom I hold in high regard. He was kind, thoughtful, hard-working, dedicated to his family & would do whatever he could to help anyone – in short – a good human being. It was my pleasure to have known him.

Rest in peace, Tom – we will miss you.

