

# Malagawatch & MacRaes Cove

**CHS Chart No:** 4279 – Bras d'Or Lake

**Amenities:** none

## **Description:**

Malagawatch Harbour is formed by the mainland to the west and Big Harbour Island to the east, joined together by a small isthmus of low, marshy land at the headwaters. It is approximately two and one half miles long with the headland of Campbell Point providing shelter, on either side, from winds from any quadrant. Best anchorage is to the north of Campbell Point in River Cove or Cribwork Cove, depending upon wind direction. Easiest access to the shore is at the head of Cribwork Cove.

The Malagawatch end of "The Crossing" is on the southern shore of the harbour approximately 2000 feet west of the cable crossing; today, it is difficult to find. Boats hauled over "The Crossing" proceeded around Campbell Point and Nills Point to the narrow isthmus joining Big Harbour Island to the mainland. There, in the late 1800s, residents of the area, on their own initiative, dug the Malagawatch Canal—approximately 1000 feet long, 17 feet wide, and 4 feet deep—connecting Malagawatch Harbour to Denys Basin. Thus they could navigate safely among the islands from Marble Mountain to Orangedale on a route that saved about 5 miles. The trail to Big Harbour Island was maintained by a wooden bridge with a 4-foot clearance to allow small craft through the canal. With the advent of good roads and vehicles, the bridge was removed, and the breach filled with solid material; but the outlines of the canal remain in silent tribute to the industry of the early settlers of Cape Breton Island whose survival depended on the construction of such time- and life-saving facilities as the Malagawatch Canal.



## **Navigation:**

The approach to **Malagawatch Harbour** is from the southeast toward the entrance which is marked by Sheep Island to the west and MacRaes Island to the east. MacRaes Island is a rocky atoll growing only a few trees. From a low vantage point, it is difficult to discern.

At the narrowing of the harbour mouth, a submerged power cable crosses the bottom and anchorage in this area is prohibited. At the narrowing of the harbour at Campbell Point the deepest water is closest to the small island across from the point. Note also that Nills Point extends a submerged bar to the eastward towards Campbell Point.

North of Malagawatch Harbour, **MacRaes Cove** offers good protection in winds with any south in them. Access to the cove is gained by giving Fiddle Head a fairly wide berth and then proceeding southward along the shoreline behind the two small islands in the cove, taking care to avoid the extensive shoal north-east of the unnamed islet. The small cove at Birch Point is recommended for anchorage. Also, close to the beach protected by Malagawatch Point is a fine anchorage in settled weather. Bare Island is low and treeless, and is said to harbour poison ivy or similar toxic plant.

Revised: 2017-11-08

REVISED: 2017-02-14

