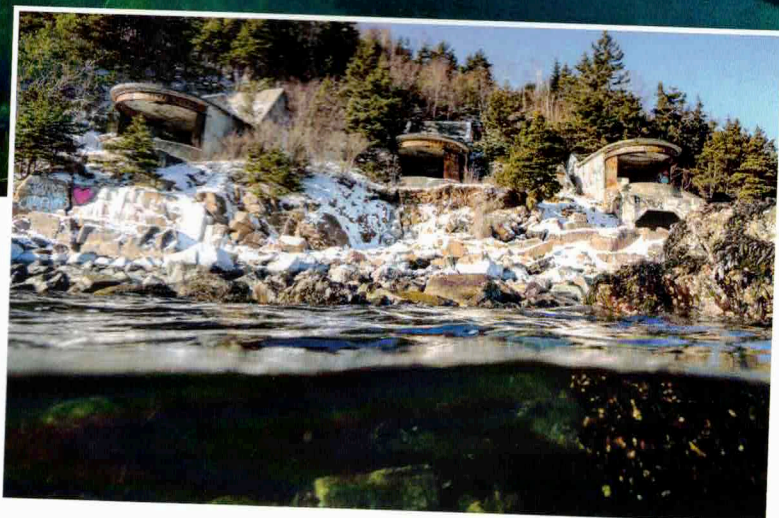


# IN THE SHADOW OF HISTORY

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The coastline on the outer approaches of Halifax harbour in Nova Scotia is rugged, exposed, and breathtaking. It is also rich with history. Along this unceded Mi'kmaq territory, indigenous peoples have lived for thousands of years. Explorers and colonizers arrived here seeking new worlds. Troops sailing for the battlegrounds across the Atlantic during WW II and immigrants seeking a better life in Canada marked their respective departures and arrivals by passing the famous Sambro Lighthouse, North America's oldest surviving lighthouse.

Defunct coastal fortifications and dilapidated batteries from WWII that once housed watchful soldiers and weaponry still dot the landscape, a testament to the past.

Against this backdrop, freedivers explore the cold waters of the North West Atlantic at Chebucto Head, halfway between the city of Halifax and the Sambro Lighthouse.

An idyllic hiking trail along the rocky landscape leads down steep slopes to the water's edge. The slopes continue beneath the waves, where kelp-covered boulders dominate the seascape. Crevasses, rocky outcroppings, and swim-throughs provide a freediver's perfect playground for exploring.

In summer, freedivers might find themselves swimming in a smack of comb jellies, observed at a distance by shy grey seals, or witnessing school of feeding Atlantic mackerel fly by. Or possibly spotting an ocean sunfish on the surface or a torpedo ray on the sandy bottom of the drop-offs at 65 feet (20m). Of course, the iconic lobster,

the mainstay of the local economy, is ever ubiquitous.

Those who brave the near-freezing waters between winter storms are rewarded by clear waters and a show of light beams breaking through the surface, reminiscent of diving in Mexican cenotes.

Leaving the surface doesn't mean leaving history behind. This harbour's long past means its approaches are littered with wrecks. Remnants of the steamships *Isleworth* and *AW Perry*, which foundered here on the rocks in the early 1900s, now rest between 32-65 feet (10-20m) depth and are accessible to divers.

Chebucto Head has always been a favourite for Halifax freedivers. During the COVID-19 pandemic it has become a refuge from a world in turmoil, providing a sense of connection to some of the past upheavals this coast has witnessed and reminding us that better days are ahead. [ ]

**Freediving in Halifax has grown in popularity during the pandemic, with WWII coastal batteries off the coast (insert) a prime spot for basking in the sun's rays**

[ ISO 400 f5.0 1/250s 16mm. Canon 1DXIII in Nauticam housing with ambient light. [www.nicolaswinkler.com](http://www.nicolaswinkler.com) ]