

Context:

Gabriola, petroglyphs

Citations:

Petroglyph at the garden party—DgRw253, *SHALE* 28, pp.49–50, June 2014.

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References:

Date posted:

February 22, 2015.

Notes

Petroglyph at the garden party—by *Nick Doe*

One of the strangest stories of the discovery of a petroglyph on Gabriola has to be that of the “garden party” discovery of the petroglyph now catalogued as DgRw 253. It was the summer of 2010. A group of friends were gathering for a leisurely Sunday afternoon of croquet, chatting, and entertainment by some of Gabriola’s best vaudevillians, when one of the guests (Jenni Gehlbach), who was sitting on a garden bench in the sun, remarked that she didn’t know that the hosts had a petroglyph in their garden. There was a startled silence, and

Jenni then pointed to a line on a landscaping boulder that was only just poking out above the surface of the earth. Rather skeptically, the assembled party-goers moved away the soil, gradually revealing a complete and relatively undamaged petroglyph.

The boulder had in fact only fairly recently been moved from its former position in the garden to its current one, and, evidently, the burly rock movers hadn’t noticed that they were handling not just a hunk of rock, but a precious example of petroglyph carving.

Although the consensus of the assembled experts was that it was not a recent creation, a photograph was taken by another guest,



DgRw 253, Canadian one-dollar coin (26 mm) for scale.

Photograph courtesy of Nick Halpin

who just happened to be a professional—no, this whole incident was definitely not staged—and sent to Doris Lundy, one of BC’s leading experts on rock art. She opined with no hesitation that it looked perfectly genuine to her.

The problem now of course is that, given that it is at least several hundred years old, maybe getting on for a thousand, how best to preserve it. Sandstone carvings once exposed to sun and rain erode in a matter of decades, and this particular one has only survived by being face down in the damp earth for most of its existence. It will require a home where there is little exposure to direct sunlight; the face remains vertical and thus fairly dry when it rains; air currents that aid evaporation are minimal; and upward capillary movement of moisture from the soil is prevented. It is, I know, in this regard, in good hands. ◇

Petroglyphs are sometimes targets of vandals, collectors, and “pot-hunters”. Consequently, I have not revealed the location of this petroglyph in this article, and request those who know where it is to restrict the information to those who will use it responsibly. Bona fide researchers, land owners, and land use planners can always access information about specific archaeological sites on Gabriola by submitting an application for it to the Archaeological Branch of the Provincial Government, and, of course, First Nations representatives always have unrestricted access to heritage site information.

Ice-age Gabriola—by Nick Doe

When it comes to talking about the geology of Gabriola Island, what often comes to mind is thoughts of happenings tens of millions of years ago, but in fact, a lot of what we see around us was shaped and put into place less than twenty-thousand years ago. The leg bone of a woolly mammoth bone found in glacial till on the island is a dramatic reminder that Gabriola has seen a

lot of changes far more recently than the late-Cretaceous Mesozoic era.

For the past two summers, 2012/13, I have been exploring all aspects of Gabriola’s ice-age history. The 240 pages of the results (14 articles) are posted on the web, which, if you are interested, you can start reading at: <http://www.nickdoe.ca/pdfs/Webp521.pdf>

This kind of research is never finished, but that’s one of the great things about doing science. Apart from obliging you to spend summer days augering holes out in a bog with only dragonflies, frogs, and soft winds in the willows for company, there’s always something new to learn, and there are always mistakes to correct.

Now; come on people! where on Gabriola are Muffy’s tusks? ◇



The distal end (the wrist end) of the left radius (front leg—the forearm) of a woolly mammoth found on Gabriola.