



### **Far from home**—by *Nick Doe*

Above is a picture of a large *erratic*, nearly four-metres high, brought to Gabriola by a glacier more than twelve thousand years ago. The boulder is made of quartz-diorite, which contains milky-white silicates (feldspars); crystals of quartz; and dark iron-rich specks of hornblende and sparkling biotite (a kind of mica). This type of rock is very common in the mainland Coast Mountains, but much less so on Vancouver Island. As bedrock, it is found on the Gulf Islands only in a small area of Saltspring. The boulder must weigh over a 100 tonnes (a ferry load of cars) and is now sitting on a hill overlooking South Road, about 110 metres above the present sea level.

Erratics like these were once at the centre of an acrimonious debate that lasted for thirty years or more. Villagers living in the mountains knew that glaciers carried along with them rocks and debris. They also knew that they sometimes advanced, sometimes retreated; and they rightly suspected that in former times they had extended well beyond



their present range, but it took an expedition to the coast of Greenland to convince the majority of geologists in Europe that it was not floods, not a “deluvium”, nor yet icebergs that had scattered erratics over the plains and lowlands of northern Europe and North America, but almost unbelievably large flows of ice. ◇