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NOTE: *Adjust the accessed date as needed.*

Most of this paper was completed in 2007 with the intention of publishing it in the journal *SHALE*. It was however never published at that time, and no further research has been since then. It was prepared for publication here in November 2016, with very little added to the old manuscripts. It may therefore be out-of-date in some respects.

It is 9 of a series of 10 articles and is the final version, previously posted as Draft 3.1.

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# Flea Village — field trip #3, September 2007

by Nick Doe

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While being convinced that I had located the site of Cardero's drawing, and hence Flea Village, on my return from Desolation Sound in September 2005, doubts quickly arose. The most serious of these was that I had seen no sign of a midden, and the Province's Archaeological Branch had no knowledge of the site.

There was only one solution to this dilemma. Another visit. So with *Polly Ester* all prepared, I set off again to Prideaux Haven and beyond in September 2007.

On my return, I did not, as I had done after my previous two trips, write up my notes. The following are instead transcriptions from my field note book, for the most part, unedited.

## Field notes

"Polly Ester 2007

Flea Village, September 13, Thursday  
3:15 ferry to Comox.

"...[objectives] details of water source; signs of fortification; evidence of middens; dimensions of the site.

"Friday: left motel around 7. Found the place where I could park and launch as I had done in 2005 [on Okeover Inlet].

"Nice sunny day, about an hour to Z[ephine Head]. Got confused with Josephine Islands [in Malaspina Inlet], went on west side thought was east.

"Heading from Z appears to be a very conspicuous point at 48°, turns out this is Bold Head in Tenedos Bay. You can't see Otter Island initially; it's behind Mink Island. About 3 hours altogether to Prideaux Haven.

"Camped at the suspect cove, very hot and sunny.

"No signs of midden anywhere. Rock is very fine grained granodiorite, almost rhyolite or dacite, and weathers to a fine powder that looks like shellfish ash. A Japanese oyster shell,<sup>1</sup> bear diggings? uprooted trees showed nothing, owl pellets?

"At water site, no flowing water, gully 30' not 20'. Tree is a cedar but my drawing exaggerates overhang.

"White fungi, very debris ridden, used trowel like an ice axe in soft moss and rotting wood.

"On rock where I camped, surface soil only a few inches deep through to bedrock.

"Nowhere where fortification could have been enhanced by inserting log into cliff.

"Dispirited, threw away ½ my beer....Site not nearly so exciting as last time.

"Took boat to look at Roffey Peninsula. No beach at all [on the northern side], thick salal, no midden, signs of hand logging, spring board slots, fewer CMTs than at the cove.

"There is a gully from one side to the other, flat in places, might be old homestead site. In all traversed 4 times, no more evidence than at the cove.

"Finally found what may be it [diagram showing the corner on the southwest side of Roffey Peninsula]. There are beaches on both sides and tall drop-off, maples, top about 25 paces across.

"Maple had 16 trunks, vanilla leaf, brambles, lilies.<sup>2</sup> No sign of Saulter's place but didn't look too hard. The path is easy up behind the

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<sup>1</sup> Not here before circa 1912?

<sup>2</sup> Unrecognized species, possible not native.

back of the maple tree, probably well known to locals.<sup>3</sup>

“Lives gone without a trace, midden exposures to 2’ below present surface.<sup>4</sup>

“Took sample [for radiocarbon dating] to right of path about 6’ above beach level, 8’ in from the beach.

“Flea Village, measured 50°09.045’N 124°39.611W [better is 50°09.061’N 124°39.598W], elevation 23’, fast flowing stream in the gully. Estimated 15m wide, 20m long [parallel to sea]. Cliff heights 12m east side and 8m west side.

“Left camp about 8 back at car 1:30. [Treated myself to large] Italian ice cream. Ferry 5:15.”

Photographs, *right* the old maple tree(s), each stem about 2-3’ around.

Nowhere is it possible to get a picture anything like Cardero’s drawing. The site is so overgrown.

The beaches either side of the site, EaSd-3 and EaSd-9 are only visible at low tides, which is part of the reason you can float right by without seeing the access beneath the overhanging branches. I was lucky (photograph is of EaSd-3 on the north side).



<sup>3</sup> Access is easy, no scrambling, once you know where to find the path.

<sup>4</sup> The midden is about two feet deep at the beach area and layers of seemingly undisturbed closely-packed shells are visible. The archaeological value of this site has probably been underestimated, particularly given the historical records.



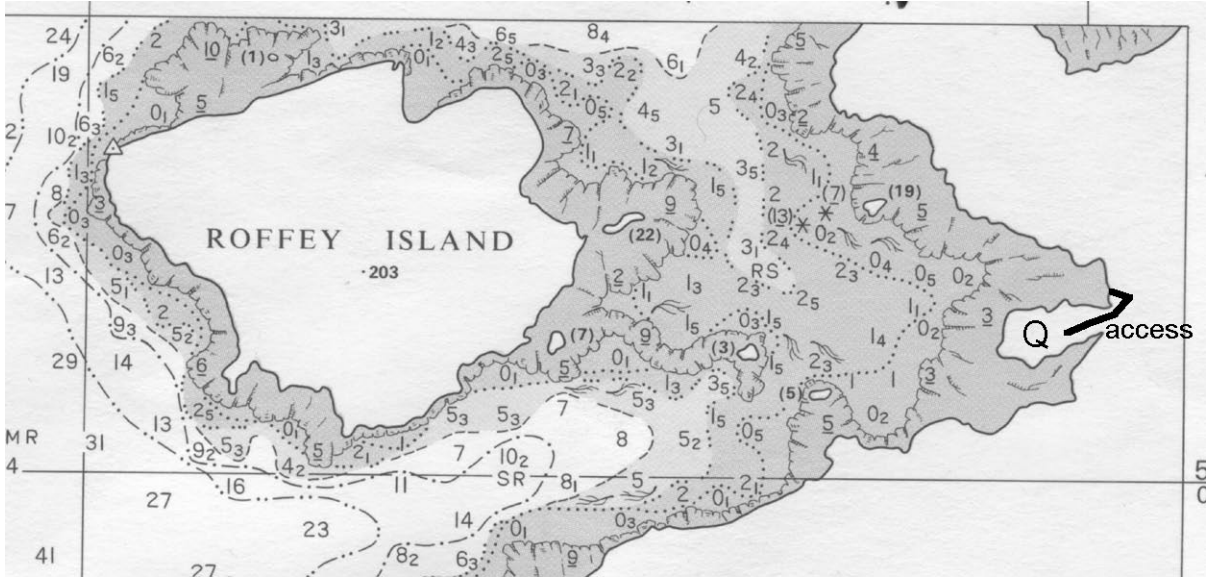
The access path to the top of the rock and the village from the gulley on the landward side beneath the maple tree. Nowadays, it's not as formidable a climb as it might have been in the 18th century; but then there's usually nobody up at the top hurling rocks at you.

Photograph by Larry Ross, July 2015.



*Above:* Flea Village, unrecognized, picture taken in 2005.

*Below:* the beach access at EaSd-3, often hidden by shrubbery and the tide, 2007.



On my way home, I stopped by at the village of Teeshohsum, just north of Powell River, which is where people of the Tla'amin Nation [formerly Sliammon] now live. This was just in the hope that I might find someone there who knew something about Flea Village.

anyone at all to speak to. The community is a vibrant one, but it was ironic that in searching for information about one deserted village, there was a momentary impression that I had come to another.

But it was all quiet, and I couldn't find



Teeshohsum in the 1960s. The main village of the Tla'amin people.

Powell River Historical Museum

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