

Newsletter Number 8
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley

As another year concludes, it is satisfying to look back on the many activities GaLTT has been involved in. There have been many this past year, but one which will have a significant impact on the parks and trails of Gabriola is the planning process for the 707. The board and many of our members participated in the planning process sponsored by the RDN for the 707 Acre Community Park (although that may not end up being the name). We attended the Open Space brainstorming session, the mapping workshop and posted ideas on the 707 website. We look forward to having an opportunity to review the draft plan and submit our thoughts. Just as we did with our initial submission, we will be sharing our draft response with our members to get their feedback prior to finalizing and submitting.

One of the interesting issues that has emerged from the planning process is what appears to be a clash of viewpoints between those who say 'leave it alone' or 'let it heal' and those who want a more managed approach to the park. I can understand why people say leave it alone and let it heal: this large wilderness tract has been ravaged by logging and used by some as a garbage dump. I too would like the park to 'heal' and return to a healthy habitat for native flora and fauna. However, that will not happen

by 'leaving it alone'. Scotch broom and other invasive plants have already established a foothold in the park and without stewardship by a caring community we will end up with 707 acres of broom, daphne laurel and tansy ragwort instead of douglas fir, big leaf maple, arbutus and alder. Ultimately the invasive plants will win – for proof of this, see Drumbeg Park which used to have a huge camas lily and Garry oak ecosystem and is now a forest of broom. GaLTT members spend hundreds of hours every year battling the broom and we are slowly making progress. In our submission to the RDN, GaLTT talked about a managed forest. Some people interpreted this as managing for the purpose of logging. Perhaps we should have said a stewarded forest. Our vision is one where we work to reestablish a healthy native ecosystem, removing invasive plants and ensuring that native plants can thrive in their natural environments. It would be nice if we could just leave things alone and trust that this would happen. However, given the predations that have already taken place on this land, we must now be prepared to fix what has been broken. This is not about environmental engineering but rather compassionate caring for the land and its inhabitants. And yes, a light touch is required. But doing nothing is not going to restore this beautiful ecosystem.



Mushroom expert, Jessica Wolf points out some of the many mushrooms growing on Gabriola.

EDIBLE WILD MUSHROOM WORKSHOP ON GABRIOLA

To eat or not to eat? That is the question. Some mushrooms are poisonous and a few are deadly, but many are choice edibles, like the Shaggy Mane.

Biologist Jessica Wolf's Nov. 14th workshop with members of GaLTT helped to develop skills to safely harvest edible forest fungi.

Jessica and some participants had brought along a bounty of locally foraged mushrooms and, through a show and tell format, the group learned how to identify some "easy edibles," and distinguish them from poisonous mushrooms. Mushrooms examined included the Cauliflower, lobster, Hedgehog, Sweet Tooth, Oyster, Chanterelle, Morel, Prince, and Shaggy Mane. A walk around the forest followed - to search for prized mushrooms in their habitat and, despite the late-arriving rains this year, participants found a good variety of mushrooms.

"Foraging mushrooms and other food from the wilds reminds me how I am part of nature, and ecosystems provide my life." says Jessica. "By nurturing this connection in others, I hope that we will steward nature in our backyards and communities."



GIVING FROM THE HEART
by Christine Purfield

GaLTT relies on generous donations from Gabriolans to exist. Our mandate of securing, developing, and sustaining a network of trails and parkland on Gabriola for the benefit of the community would not be possible without the help of people like you. There are a variety of ways to help us in our work:

- Volunteer - trail volunteers are always needed. Here's the perfect "excuse" you've been looking for to fulfill that New Year's resolution to get more exercise and fresh air. No special equipment is needed; well, maybe wellington boots and gloves. Just send an email to Randy Young (ranyoung@shaw.ca) if you can help. Randy will add you to his email list and let you know where his work team will be and when.

- Send money! Okay, that sounds crass, but a cheque for \$20 or more will get you a charitable donation tax receipt which could save you money at tax time. For full information on donating money take a look at Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) website: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/dnrs/menu-eng.html> and talk to your professional advisor.

- This Christmas ask for, or give, a GaLTT donation! Fed up with getting gifts for Christmas that you don't know what to do with, and which end up at the recycling centre? Or, perhaps you'd like to give Christmas gifts that actually make a difference and not just add to the consumerism of the season? Why not suggest to family and friends that they send a donation to GaLTT instead? Or send a donation in their name rather than spending time in the ferry line-up, shopping until you're dropping, wrapping, and posting. GaLTT will send a Christmas card on your behalf to let the recipient know that a contribution has been made. To be in time for Christmas please ensure your gifts are registered at info@GaLTT.ca by December 15th.
- Did you know you can bestow securities? If there's not much cash available but you have securities you are willing to donate, there are special tax incentives for the gifting of securities. Check out the CRA website and talk to your professional advisor.

- Remember us in your will. We're serious. You can leave a specific bequest or you can leave the residue of your estate after you've taken care of your loved ones and friends. Any donation made in the year of death is subject to favourable treatment under the Income Tax Act.

- And here's a donation that's close to our heart: land. Do you have land with special ecological qualities or with trails that you'd like to see preserved in perpetuity for the benefit of the community? GaLTT can help you make that dream a reality. Email us at info@GaLTT.ca for more information.

GOSSIP CORNER TO DRUMBEG PARK
by John Gambrill

This 5 km walk starts at Gossip Corner on South Road and takes us past Degnen Bay, along a country road to a beach access by Gabriola Passage. The walk continues along the shoreline trail in Drumbeg Park; then there are two alternatives to complete the circular route back to Gossip Corner. You will need to check the tide table before leaving, as two short beach sections are impassable at high tide. Park at the east end of Bevmaril Crescent.

Gossip Corner, on South Road, is marked by a mature Garry Oak tree with a circular seat around the trunk. Historically, this was the gathering place on South Road where residents of the south end of Gabriola would await the mail delivery. In the early days, before motor vehicles, mail for the south end came by boat from Nanaimo to Degnen Bay, and it was up to local residents to arrange collection. By the mid-1930s, T.P. Taylor became mailman for all of Gabriola, and would deliver south-end mail to mailboxes by Gossip Corner. A friend of mine recalls making weekly "mail day" trips to Gossip Corner in the late 1940's. Grandmother insisted he put on his best clothes for the outing, as they would be meeting "people". Being Gabriola, the wait could be long, and the ladies waiting for the mail had a chance to sit around the tree and exchange a week's worth of island gossip. From Gossip Corner, the walk takes us along Martin Road, which offers lovely views of Degnen Bay, and you can just imagine the mail boat chugging

into the quiet, sheltered bay a hundred years ago. Perhaps the mail boat came right into this end of Degnen Bay, and a trail connected it to Gossip Corner. If anyone has information about this, the Gabriola Museum people would love to hear from you.

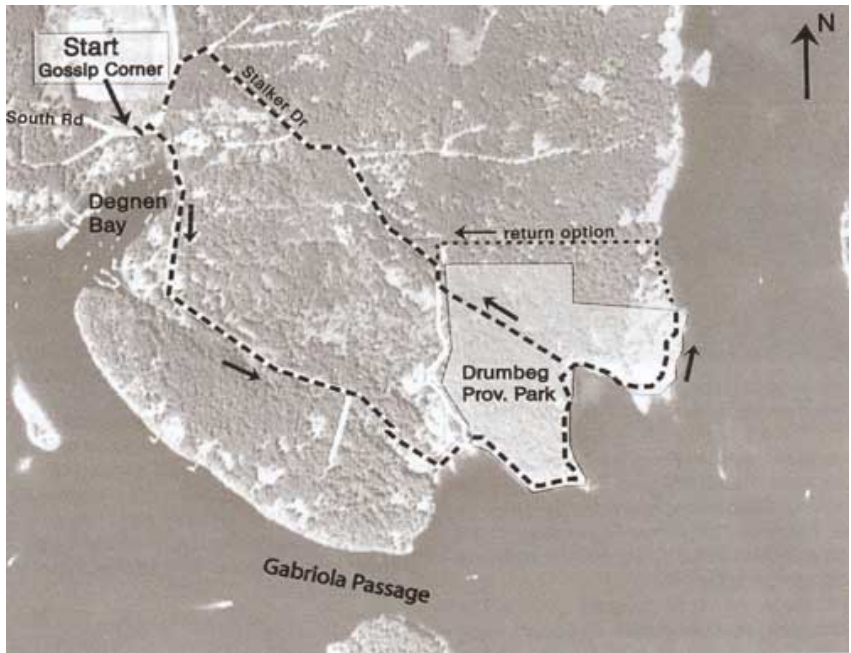
No wonder that the early settlers of the south end of Gabriola used this sheltered bay for docking and off-loading their supplies and livestock from Nanaimo. Among those early settlers were two young men from Ireland, Thomas Degnen and Robert Gray. They met in Nanaimo around 1860, and both had dreams of owning and farming their own land.

One day, the two men were invited by a young Indian girl in Nanaimo to travel in her canoe to visit her parents on the "Big Island" (Gabriola Island). When they arrived at the south end (presumably at this bay, which bears Thomas Degnen's name) the two men realized this was their dream come true. As we know, both pioneers settled at the south end, where they farmed and raised their families.

Continue along the road, past the cedar rail fence, and along a straight section of the road (about 500 m) until you reach a sharp right-hand bend. Walk straight ahead onto what looks like a private driveway, but is actually an undeveloped road allowance called Sir Williams Drive. After about 50 m you will see a small sign on the right side - "trail to beach" - which is a beach access that bypasses the private property on your left. A set of car-tire steps takes you down onto the beach.

Take a moment to orientate yourself. Around the bay to your left is the shoreline of Drumbeg Park; to your right is the entrance to Gabriola Passage, and the land straight ahead is the north end of Valdez Island.

Gabriola Passage is the northernmost passage of three major passages through the chain of Gulf Islands that shipping can use to travel to/from Vancouver Island and the Mainland. Peak tidal flows can be significant, and boating traffic usually waits for the "slack tide" before entering Gabriola Passage. On the other hand, ducks seem to love the maximum tidal flow, and you may see flocks of them enjoying a free ride through the passage, and then flying back to do it



again (I assume they feed on the ride through - but then again maybe it's just fun!).

Back to the walk - 50 m to your left along the beach is an access to Drumbeg Park. Be aware of very slippery surfaces in winter as you proceed along the beach. After the house, climb across the beach logs and up to Stalker Road and enter Drumbeg Park via the trail on your right.

The property that now comprises Drumbeg Park was originally settled and farmed for 30 years by Neil Stalker in the early 20th century. He named the farm "Drumbeg" after his home village in Scotland. A subsequent owner sold 20 hectares to the province in 1971, and Drumbeg Provincial Park was born.

The trail winds through the park following the shoreline with wonderful sandstone formations at low tide. Middens can be seen all along the trail, reminders of First Nations settlements in days gone by. The first section of the trail twists and turns through some magnificent mature Arbutus, Douglas fir and Garry oak trees, and wildflowers abound in the Spring. Soon you reach a headland, with park benches. This is an ideal spot for a break to just soak up the action on Gabriola Passage, or to admire the views south along the coastline of Valdez Island. Also (if the tide is low) you can explore the fascinating sandstone rock formations along this shoreline. Continue along the coastline trail, into the main swimming bay in Drumbeg Park. Just past this bay there is an Interpretive Signboard, full of information about what to look for in the park. Further along the trail you soon come to what is probably the best stand of Garry oaks on public land on Gabriola.

For many people, these trees and the associated ecosystem are symbolic of the Gulf Islands.

There are more vistas at the next park bench along the trail. Breakwater Island is just off-shore, and is one of the Flat Top group of islands that stretch around the south-east corner of Gabriola Island. The meadow to your left has Camus lilies in the Spring, and the ongoing eradication of Scotch broom from this area is a GaLTT initiative (volunteers needed).

The trail ends by the bench at the northern end of the park (a sign indicates private property beyond). If the tide is right an extension of this walk takes you along the beach ahead for 250 m until you see a yellow beach access marker between two houses on your left. The 500 m beach access trail (cleared and built by GaLTI volunteers) winds its way up through woodland to a junction, where you turn left and this brings you to Stalker Road.

Alternatively, from the bench you may retrace your steps back to the swimming bay in the park and leave via the parking lot to Stalker Road. Turn right along Stalker, then left at Coast Road, and left again on South Road to return to Gossip Corner.

A 'COMMONS' STORY

By Barb Hague, with thanks to Judith Roux and Randy Young for sharing their stories.

There is a distinct disadvantage in not knowing the history and stories behind certain places, people and events. In a much larger community the sense of story, which after all is what history is, seems much more remote and less immediate to

your every day life. Perhaps this is in proportion to the size of the community. Certainly working with an organization like GaLTT can deepen one's knowledge of the stories on Gabriola, but it can also create a feeling of never being able to catch up with stories that may have begun a hundred years ago. However many stories are being acted out as we speak and if we are lucky enough we can be around when someone is telling them. This became most evident when it was decided that the new boardwalk going in at the back of The Commons was an important topic for this newsletter. A visit to the GaLTT work party on Sunday, November 14th (the work parties are regular events in various locations on alternate Sundays) provided an opportunity to record events with a camera and to see history in action. Chatting with people connected to both GaLTT and The Commons brought forth evidence that there were many stories connected to this trail project.

Randy Young, who is instrumental in organizing our work bees, and Judith Roux of The Commons passed on the story of how the Redwood boardwalk project came to be. Discussions last year with Judith Roux, led to GaLTT "resurfacing"- with recycled asphalt the Redwood Trail at the end of the Rollo Center property. This now allows access to the Elder Garden in The Commons by parking in the Rollo Center and taking a short walk to the gate in the fence. From this first collaborative project the old idea of a boardwalk on the Redwood trail resurfaced.

The concept of a boardwalk was actually raised several years ago at a GaLTT planning meeting and received instant support and approval from The Commons, as they were, at that time, beginning to trace trail connections crossing The Commons leading to Folklife Village. When GaLTT recently voted to make a boardwalk detour along the Redwood Trail and onto The Commons their top priority project, there was unanimous approval by the Gabriola Commons Foundation board and a determination to furnish volunteers to help complete the job.

The Redwood Trail, located behind The Commons, is mostly used by people living in the Cottonwood area off South



Road to reach North Road and the school. For many years parents have been building, rebuilding, and repairing the trail. However, they finally gave up on constructing any kind of bridging over Goodhue Creek section where the creek floods the pathway on the Redwood road allowance. For some reason the beaver have decided that this is a great place for a dam; this dam backs up even more water to pool on Redwood, which hasn't helped much either. The beaver rebuilding schemes seem to rival what any human group can accomplish! The project of a bridge/boardwalk on Redwood itself had been explored, but the Ministry of Transport takes a dim view of permanent structures erected on roadways.

According to one story the trail had been maintained by an elderly neighbor living on Redwood until one day he returned home minus his boots. They had been left behind in the mud! A few planks were thrown over the spot but the land is low and during the winter the trail is covered with water. Now that the property adjacent to Redwood has become The Commons, the idea of a detour through The Commons became

the perfect solution for a trail connecting the North and South roads. This becomes even more evident as the pasture land on the south-east corner of The Commons is opened to community garden allotments. At present, the daily back-and-forth use of the trail is made feasible by a pathway of random pallets and boards providing precarious passage over the section where Goodhue Creek enters the property.

Developing a boardwalk, through what is a treacherous area during the winter months, has been impressively masterminded, and undertaken by engineer, Randy Young. Several work bees, enthusiastically supported by GaLTT and The Commons have produced the framework of the entire boardwalk and solid cedar joists have been carefully calculated to permit a sinuously curving pathway. Once these are in place on large concrete blocks the next stage will see decking installed on the framework. Pretty impressive for a small volunteer group! Everyone using The Commons regularly will join in thanking GaLTT (and particularly Randy Young) for this amazing accomplishment!

After the heavy rains in November establishing a boardwalk is a timely improvement to create an all weather, all season trail. Upcoming weekends will find volunteers from both organizations working to complete this project thus connecting Gabriola neighborhoods with trails and with stories. What a great community!

**PARKS and OPEN SPACE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
by Tom Cameron

This news item looks specifically at the role and function of the Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee - Electoral Area B (POSAC B) in the context of GaLTT and the general public. The opinions given here are my own and do not represent those of POSAC members or the RDN.

The very good news is that the POSAC is up and running once again and the first meeting was held September 27, 2009. At this meeting I (Tom Cameron) was selected as chairperson and Cameron Murray as recording secretary. The other members

are Jennifer Macleod, Catherine Williams, and Gisele Rudischer who is also our RDN Board Director. There are two vacant member positions as per the terms of reference.

A report by Director Rudischer in the newspapers in advance of the September meeting outlined the agenda. There were controversial agenda items including: the proposed conversion of a local park in the Clamshell neighbourhood to a community garden, public shore access issues off Decourcy Drive, and GaLTT's Tunnel Trail proposal to the RDN and the Ministry of Transportation. Numerous passionate citizens participated in the open POSAC meeting. The Committee has yet to review its procedures and priorities.

Given the terms of reference and a reactivated committee, here are some of the questions and challenges that I see for POSAC B in 2010:

- The Committee will need to establish context and procedures for its operations and reporting.
- Would it be worthwhile to add members for a stronger committee? Committee meetings are held about four times per year. How will POSAC B get up to-speed and provide leadership in representing community initiatives, priorities, and opinions?
- Will POSAC B provide a leadership role and cooperation on parks and open space issues with the RON or will it just provide advice to the RON on their agenda items?
- How can POSAC B make its proceedings easily available to the public?
- Can POSAC B help bring additional funds and funding sources into play in support of priority parks and open space projects?
- Is the Electoral Area willing to request the levy of additional taxes in support of parks and open space initiatives?

Your input and suggestions regarding POSAC B would be welcomed.

Tom Cameron, Phone: 250-247-7587

NEW GaLTT APPLICATION FORM

At the Christmas craft fair, GaLTT began using a new application form. This updated Membership Information and Donation Form clarifies the application process, facilitates charitable donations, and fits nicely with the conservation and stewardship emphasis of the new GaLTT brochure.

The new form marries the specifics of the constitution, our charitable tax information, and fund raising and volunteer strategies adopted by the board. New or renewing members can now indicate their volunteer talents, or request to be contacted regarding conservation and stewardship programs for their lands.

GaLTT currently provides for pre-authorized monthly donations, but if this becomes a major emphasis, the society will need to consider a CAFT (Customer Automated Funds Transfer) system as is used by several other charitable organizations on the island. This item will be discussed at the December board meeting.

The board will discuss the concept of lifetime (or long-term) memberships and fees. Membership fees are currently a major income stream for GaLTT and lifetime memberships could provide an income blip but then perhaps a declining income for the future. It may be that a three or five year membership term could provide convenience for our members and yet not reduce our membership income.

Watch for the new form and updated membership policy to be posted to our website in the New Year.