

BMN HIKE REPORT

Keats Island Traverse

Saturday, July 21, 2012

by Mark Johnston



A view from Keats Landing, looking toward the Langdale ferry terminal and NNE past the Shelter Islets to Mounts Liddell and Killam on Gambier Island. *Terry Puls photo.*

Despite some early morning rainfall, eight of us turned out for our latest venture combining seafaring and hiking. If, upon awaking in the morning, one had looked out the window, he or she would have been forgiven for getting back into bed. But our hardy little band was trusting that the forecast for afternoon clearing would prove to be correct.

After carpooling to Horseshoe Bay, we boarded the *Queen of Surrey* for the forty-minute trip to Langdale. As we sailed toward the Sunshine Coast, we had a good look at Keats Island and gained a sense of its length. Then at Langdale we switched to the small passenger ferry *Stormaway IV* and retraced much of the route we had just travelled. Toward Bowen Island, we could see a ribbon of silver on the otherwise cloud-darkened waters and hoped it might be a harbinger of the forecasted clearing. Veering to the south, we rounded the northeast corner of Keats Island and moments later landed at Eastbourne.

Once we had disembarked, we made our way along the main east-west road. At first, the road switchbacks steeply upward, but eventually the grade eases. We travelled along the wide thoroughfare through second-growth forest, only occasionally aware of buildings north or south of us.

When we reached what we took to be Corkum Road, we turned north toward waterfront property that islanders call “The Farm.” Although there was no indication of the name of the road, we were reassured that we were walking in the right direction by a sign announcing Barnabas Family Ministries, which we knew

to occupy the farm. As we proceeded along the private drive, we were amazed to see a number of old-growth Douglas-fir and cedar trees, some of truly sizeable dimensions. At last coming to the farm gate, we weren't sure whether to proceed or not, but when I enquired of a woman who was leaving the enclosure to go for a jog, she said by all means have a look around.



**The camp's general store and the view over to the Sunshine Coast.
*Terry Puls photo.***

She added that if we wanted an ice cream, the camp's general store would be open in the afternoon. While we didn't have time to stay for the ice cream, we did enjoy poking about the grounds and especially taking in the view across the water toward the Sunshine Coast and Gambier Island.

Back through the gate, we bore right along the road and then turned left on a signed trail to Plumper Cove Provincial Marine Park. This trail, like the road to the farm, was a revelation. Again, we were awed by the old-growth fir and cedar, and took delight in picking out the largest specimens. Staying as close to the coast as feasible, we soon began to pass the park's well-developed walk-in campsites and upon reaching the cove, went down to the pebbled beach to have our lunch. We looked out to the Shelter Islets, just a little way offshore, and beyond the islets, across the water to Gibsons and Langdale.

After lunch we continued along the coastal trail and started to gain elevation. While we had been walking under cloudy skies all day, the sun was beginning to make its promised appearance. At a fork six of us decided to take a short, steep side-trip to a high point variously called Lookout Peak, Stony Hill, or Highest Peak. While not the highest point on the island (it gets the latter name from its location near the summit of the main road), it is a fine vantage point. Scrambling up the grassy bluff, we had superb views of the outer islands, including Ragged, Pasley, Hermit, and the Pophams, with Worlcombe behind. We could also look down on Keats Island's southwestern extension toward Home Island (Salmon Rock).

Rejoining those who had sat out the climb, we continued to the end of the trail, which is near a BC Hydro building on the main road. At the intersection we were happily diverted by the sight of a tree-like huckleberry bush laden with fruit. Reaching up rather than down, we picked the ripe red berries as one would pick apples and quickly ate our fill.



**View from the southwestern tip of Keats Island toward Gibsons on the Sunshine Coast.
*Terry Puls photo.***

From the Hydro building it is a short jaunt through Keats Camp down to the landing. Since we still had more than an hour until our passenger ferry would arrive, some of us wondered about hiking out to the island's southwestern tip. After consulting with some campers, who were sitting in lawn chairs, talking, the same six of us who had scaled the bluff decided to go out to the point. We hastened along a beautiful shaded path and, in twenty minutes or so, came out on a splendid sunny bluff just a few metres above the surf. We now had a more horizontal view of the islands we had looked down on earlier. The bluff is a lovely spot, and we were sorry not to be able to dawdle awhile. According to a sign, it's been the location of many a romance, and it was easy to see why.

**Another view from the southwestern tip of Keats Island, looking SSE across a portion of Home Island (Salmon Rock) and toward (left to right) Hermit, Little Popham, and Popham Islands.
*Terry Puls photo.***



Back at Keats Landing, we boarded the *Stormaway* for the short crossing to Langdale. Then, after a lengthy layover, we embarked on the big ferry for the voyage back to Horseshoe Bay. It was a gorgeous evening, and most of us were happy to hang out on the upper deck, drinking-in the sunshine and island scenery, and perhaps dreaming about our next trip on the waters of the Salish Sea.