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Written by a Gabriola resident using the name “Gabriolore”. It was originally posted on May 14, 2010 on his website: <http://www.gabriolore.ca/>.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Its original title was “Dyck Brook”, but the more usual (modern?) spelling is “Dick”. The only known example of the “Dyck” spelling is an old water licence; on old maps it is rendered “Dick”; however, it should be noted that “Dyck” might not have been a mistake in its time. Modern English has sometimes replaced “y” by “i” to indicate that the pronunciation is as in “it”, not as in “yes”, “type” or “plenty”.

## **Dick (Dyck) Brook**



This bucolic scene shows part of the farmland that was once Dick Swamp



It feels like a rain-forest along Dick Brook as it flows towards Peterson Bay

Gabriola's largest working farm is on the site of what used to be Gabriola's largest swamp. Somerset Farm, owned and operated by Eric Boulton and family, has been a fixture on Gabriola for over fifty years. Many islanders have been brought up on Boultons's local beef and their huge turkeys have graced many a Christmas dinner table. The 400+ acre farm looks great from satellite pictures as its green pastures cover a lot of flat land between North Road, Peterson Road, and Dorby Way.

Before the farm, Dick Swamp covered that part of the island. With some creative ditching the water was funnelled to Dick Brook, which runs east towards Silva Bay. The small seasonal stream crosses under North Road about a kilometre outside Silva Bay and empties into the Georgia Straight at Peterson Bay. It has usually stopped running by mid-summer, with only a few wet spots that only the local deer know about.

The farmland that was created was cleared and fenced over the years and remains the largest farm on the island. It became very popular in the sixties—much to the dismay of farmer Eric. The unwelcome popularity was a result of a certain mushroom—psilocybin—that thrived in the rich soil. Every September, when the rains came and the mushrooms appeared, so did great numbers of young mushroom pickers from afar. These transient pickers—usually defined as 'hippies'—found their way to Somerset farm and peacefully harvested (and ingested) the hallucinogenic fungi. They set up camp in the nearby 'Centennial Park' on Degnen Road, and made a party of their time on the island. Unfortunately their partying included trashing the park and they got careless with their treatment of the fences and gates at the farm. With cattle escaping and the park becoming a haven for squatting hippies, the quiet farmer came up with a plan. He spread a nitrogen-rich mixture of poultry dung over the fields and within a couple of seasons, the mushrooms pretty much disappeared. The annual horde of hippies did too, although if you ask enough folks here, you will probably find someone who will admit that mushrooms led to their move to Gabriola Island. Far out man.

Now just a seasonal stream, Dick Brook starts near Peterson Road and meanders through some acreages, under Cresta Roca, and eventually crossing North Road just outside Silva Bay. It flows into the Georgia Straight at the head of Peterson Bay. ◇