



Idols' Island (Elku saliņa)

Location

State: Latvia

Region: Vidzeme

Town: Valmiera

Other references to the location

Not far from the centre of Valmiera, in the Culture and Recreation Park.

Coordinates

lat= 57.5394444444, lon=25.4352777778

57° 32' 21" N, 25° 26' 7" E



Idols' Island. Photo by I.Grinfelde



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Description

I.Grinfelde

An ancient ancestors' shrine. According to legends a furrow of sacred oaks or an oak with idols' images - Pērkons (The Thunder), Potrimps and Pikols - used to be here. In the excavations made in 1979 3 fire sites were found filled with coal and ashes, however, there were no other evidences referring to an ancestors' cult site. (History Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Latvian SSR, T. Berga. Scientific report materials on the archaeologist and ethnographer research results of 1979 (Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas materiāli par arheologu un etnogrāfu 1979. gada pētījumu rezultātiem) - Rīga, Zinātne, 1980, p. 29.) Archaeological heritage of local significance (VKPAI 2504). Other sites nearby: the Valmiera Castle Ruins, Valmiera Old Town, Valmiera Museum, Luca Hill, Valmiera Recreation Park and Brethren Cemetery Memorial, Valmiera.



Idols' Island. Photo by I.Grinfelde

Narrative

Not far from the site a sacred spring flowed which had healing properties. (J. Kalnačs. Valmiera. Ceļvedis.(A Guide) 005) One of the ancient sites of Valmiera City lies next to the medieval castle complex, Luca Hill Fort. In the medieval times it was surrounded by water and gorgeous oaks grew there, in the middle of an islet there was a sacred oak with images of deities where sacrifices were laid; this is where the name of the Idols' Islet comes from. Valmiera inhabitants know the legend about the spring that once gurgled not far from the Idols' Islet in the Luca ravine. The spring was considered to have healing properties and to be sacred and the Svētupīte River (the Sacred River) used to start from (or flow through) it. The local people used to heal eye diseases there. On the Idol Hill there were images of the ancestors' three greatest gods - Pērkons (the Thunder), Potrimps and Pikols. The hill was a kind of a dwelling place for the deities. There the people eased their grief, requested grace from the gods, worshipped them (the gods) standing on their knees and brought

sacrifices (to them)...." (W. D. Balodis, Valmiera. A historic composition with maps, views and Valmiera privileges (Valmiera. Vēsturisks apcerējums, ar kartēm, skatiem un Valmieras privilēģijām). 1911; K. Bukums. Place Names (Vietvārdi), letter to V. Dambe in September, 1970)

Attraction

The site is relatively attractive. If no additional information is provided it is rather to be perceived as a scenery element. It is to be regarded as a part of the complex.

Availability

The site can be easily found □ both in the guides of Valmiera and its surroundings, tourism maps as well as in nature. At the site there is a sign "Idols' Island". The site can be visited free of charge.

Infrastructure, management, facilities

There are paths or paved walking roads leading to the site from various sides (Valmiera Old Town, Daliņš □ Stadium, Open-Air Stage, Kazu krāces (Goat Rapids). At the very site there once used to be benches, now there just the remains of them. The site

Local info

No

Capacity

10 - 40

Publicity

Popular

Legal Status

Municipal property