



## THE LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

### Newsletter 106 September 2001

**Editorial** For a change this Newsletter seems to have quite a lot about current activities in Llanccarfafan. The reports of the Ruth Watts Pétanque Competition and the Cardiff Lord Mayor's Nantes Challenge Cup Pétanque Competition appear together in this edition. Apologies to their author, Phil Watts, that the first account has been so delayed. This is the Editor's fault as it was originally intended that the accounts should be in two consecutive Newsletters.

Despite all the problems caused by Foot & Mouth disease, the Hog Roast went ahead, albeit in the form of a Carvery and judging from Mary Gammon's account, was a great success.

In Newsletters 103 there was a short note on Edward Lhwyd's 17<sup>th</sup> Century reference to St Margaret's Chapel in Llanccarfafan and its link with the Raglan family. This was followed by information on the Raglan Chapel in Llantwit Major (Newsletter 104). These two notes have prompted Maddy Gray to give us a much longer article concerning the Raglans of Llantwit Major and *Garnllwyd* and the possible founding of a chantry chapel in Llanccarfafan.

### **2001 Pétanque Competition for the Ruth Watts' Cup, Sunday 17th June** by Phil Watts

The annual Pétanque Competition was held on the driveway of *Glan-yr-Afon* by kind permission of Philip and Mary Gammon.

Five teams of three entered, and competed to be first to reach nine points. There were some very close matches, resulting in a win for Joan Scott Quelch, Sue Evans and Patsie Smith with runners-up, Phil Watts, Philip Gammon and Richard Ferris.

The teams were made-up by a draw from a hat! The winning team will now go forward to represent the Society at Cardiff Nantes Fellowship Lord Mayor's Challenge Pétanque competition, which is to take place in July.

We were fortunate with the weather and enjoyed a sunny afternoon in Philip and Mary's garden. Sam Smith provided great expertise in his measuring ability and we are glad to have him around again after his recent illness.

Another bonus is that if we had held the competition on the originally arranged date of 16 June it would have been a wet afternoon.

### **Cardiff Nantes Fellowship Lord Mayor's Challenge Pétanque** by Phil Watts

Supporters of the Llanccarfafan Society's Pétanque Team will be wondering how the team performed in the Cardiff Lord Mayor's Nantes Challenge Cup Competition, held at the Pentwyn Leisure Centre on Thursday, July 12, 2001. The news is that the cup has returned to Llanccarfafan for the third year running! The Llanccarfafan Society 2001 champions, Sue Evans, Patsie Smith & Joan Quelch were unable to represent the Society due to prior engagements, so the runners-up team of Phil Watts, Philip Gammon and Richard (Dick) Ferris were nominated. An additional team consisting of Roger Cann, Sue Evans & Mary Gammon were

also entered. They put up a stout resistance to the winners in one of the semi-finals. The final was also a close match, but our first team showed what they were made of and played well enough to bring home the cup. This was another occasion when we made new friends. Players from Wenvoe extended an invitation to anyone interested to turn up at Wenvoe Pétanque Area on any Sunday morning at 10.00 a.m.

## **Summer Carvery July 2001**

by Mary Gammon

After many worries about the venue and whether it would be well supported, the Carvery Lunch, which this year replaced the annual Hog Roast, was agreed to be one of the best. Thanks to Mrs Dilys Liscombe for the use of the field above the tennis-court, it was held in a lovely setting which gave a really 'villagy' feel to the event. Gwynne's trees were much admired and did make a lovely backdrop to the event.

The weather was wonderful and the atmosphere very relaxed and friendly. Heather Stevens (chair of Llancarfan School PTA) had done sterling work in organising a coconut shy, bouncy castle and other attractions so that parents could enjoy the afternoon while the children were safely occupied. The food supplied by 'Blue Lake Catering of Barry' was delicious and plentiful: many thanks to everyone who supplemented the salad table. The huge amount of work involved in organising the event did pay off and a healthy profit was made at the bar.

Over 150 people came and our worries were truly unfounded; it was a success and we hope that it will be possible for us to continue this now traditional event. It was good to see many new faces - from Penmark, parents of school children and also Mrs Susan Morgan, the new Head Teacher. We are glad to welcome her to the village and we thank her for the use of the school's facilities during the event.

## **More notes on the Pitching pole** by Phil Watts

In the Newsletter 104 article the terms "jib" and "derrick" were used to describe the swinging arm of the pitching pole. Ralph Morgan remembers this part of the pole being called the "garth", at Walterston. Bob and David Evans also remember this name.

Tony Thomas says that, on *Pancross Farm*, it was called a "gaff" and also that he has two sets of clamps if anyone is interested.

All of the aforementioned people plus myself, Ruth and many others, I am sure, recall the introduction to hay-making. The first stage (after jumping on haycocks) would be to lead the horse back and forth in the pitching pole. The horse would have far more experience than the young leader. It was necessary to watch where the clamps were going, from wagon to mow, as well as avoiding the feet of the horse. Having brought the horse forward the necessary distance to get a clamp full of hay to the mow and tip, it was more difficult to persuade the horse to back-up to the starting point for the next load. One soon learned to have nimble footwork and also be friends with the horse for best co-operation.

**Editor's note.** Garth and Gaff will be added to the list of agricultural terms we are collecting. In a gaff-rigged sailing ship, the gaff is attached to the mast in exactly the same position as the gaff of the pitching pole and supports the weight of the sail below it. This is probably the origin of the term, and it's a bit of a coincidence that Lyn Price's pole was cut from a timber that was probably a ship's mast (Newsletter 104). The word comes from Provençal *gaf*, meaning a hook. A gaff is also a hook-shaped implement used by anglers (and poachers!) to lift a heavy fish from the water. I suspect that "garth" probably arose by long usage as a

variant of gaff. However, in N. England the word garth is a variant of girth, the strap which holds a horse's saddle down, but this seems unlikely as an origin and the phonetically similar Welsh *gardd*, a garden or enclosure, is not likely to be related.

**Obituary note** We are saddened to hear of the death of Mrs Enid Jones, wife of the late Ivor Jones and mother of Valerie (Cram), Sylvia (Hook), Patsie and John. Ivor was the son of our famed beekeeper, John Jones who featured on the 2000 Calendar. Ivor and Enid lived at *Great House* with the family during the war-years and were a prominent part of a strong village community. They moved to Rhoose, where Ivor died in the 1980s and Enid spent her last few years in *Southways* at Cowbridge. Our sympathy goes out to all of the family.

## People and places

### Nurston and Aberthaw scares

The last two Newsletters (104 & 105) carried disturbing stories from local papers and HTV, concerning the possible destruction of Nurston by the moving of DARA, the RAF aircraft servicing facility at St Athan, to Cardiff (Wales) Airport and also the impending closure of Aberthaw Power Station because of an EC pollution edict.

HTV and also the *Barry and District News* (July 19) reassure us that DARA, will remain at St Athan and MP, John Smith, has expressed great anger at the high-handed way people in Nurston were treated with threat of compulsory purchase. Amongst other comments he claimed that the *Highwayman* has lost a great deal of trade and income from its long-term car park because it was widely rumoured to have closed.

In the same issue of the paper, Jill Evans, MEP, is reported as saying that Aberthaw is safe and that it never was under threat, despite its high sulphur emissions, as it automatically qualified for exemption from the new EC ruling.

All of this is good news but we do need to get our act together over the release of information, which can be deeply damaging to businesses and worrying to individuals. According to John Smith and Jill Evans, neither Nurston nor Aberthaw were seriously threatened. If this is true, are we talking of Council and WDA irresponsibility or is it that the local media love to have scare-stories? What do members think - particularly those who have been affected?

The Editor, wearing another hat, couldn't resist writing to the *Western Mail* suggesting that it would be a magnanimous environmental gesture if the Government were to pay for Aberthaw's emission controls to be brought up to EC standards, even though we are not being forced to do so.

### The Gainey family

In the last Newsletter we wrote about the death of Henry Charleds Gainey during WW1. The Gainey family arrived at the *Old Post*, Bonvilston prior to WW1, and Henry's parents, Augustus and Margaret, remained there until some time in the 1920s, then vanished from parish records. I do not know if there were other children.

No one seems to know anything of them and I was surprised to discover that the name is so uncommon that it does not feature in any of the usual dictionaries of surnames. Gain, Gaine, Gaines and Gayne(as in Gaynes Park, Essex) but no Gainey. The name comes from Latin *ingania* meaning trickery.

The telephone directory for Cardiff and the Vale contains just three Gainneys, which tempted me to send each of them a copy of the WW1 article and the question: "Are you a relative?" This also drew a blank.

I am grateful to Mavis Coles who searched the 1881 census CD-ROM to see whether the family was in the area at that time. Mavis also went beyond the call of duty and searched the International Genealogical Index. None of this has helped, in the sense that no Gainneys were found in the Vale of Glamorgan.

However, one of the three 'phone-book Gainneys told me he thought his family originated from Ireland and, as the 1881 Census located a Gainey family in Monmouthshire, all born in County Kerry, I have passed that information on. There were other Gainneys in Newport who could have been relatives, though there is no evidence. The IGI search did not help, except to tell us that the Gainey family was in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire in the 17-1800s and surprised me with its large number of overseas members, particularly USA and Australia. However, this may just reflect the geographical bias of the Index.

Over to you, readers: does anyone have information on this enigmatic family?

## **Vermin**

Every now and then, wild creatures become such a nuisance that we all turn against them. Wasps are a case in point. Years ago we discovered that wasps had built a large nest behind the gable-end boarding of *Ceffyl Du*. There were wasps everywhere, inside and outside the house and my own efforts to dislodge them were quite impotent.

A single phone call to the Council brought a "control-officer" who solved the problem in a very short time. A recent *Barry and District News* reveals a very different state of affairs twenty years later. Killing the wasps would now cost £24 and removal of the nest £48. Even those on Supplementary Benefit pay half these amounts. One wonders what the Vale does with its very substantial Council Tax income and how many people will ignore problems with domestic vermin rather than pay for something, which was a traditionally free service.

## **Empire Air Day**

The story of Duncan McGill's flying exploits in the last two Newsletters (104 & 105) seemed so interesting that the Editor wrote to the *Western Mail* with an appeal for further information. So far nothing more has surfaced about Duncan himself, but Mr Arthur Jones of Cowbridge replied as follows: -. "I can confirm that Empire Air Day was held in 1937 - I visited RAF Kenley (near Croydon) to watch the display. By 1938 I had joined the Air Force and by coincidence was posted to RAF Kenley in time to assist in entertaining the public with various exhibits on show. Whether there were Empire Air Days before 1937 I cannot tell and of course, the war intervened following the 1938 display."

## **School chess** a letter from Mrs Elsa Lewis

In the last Newsletter we enquired about chess tournaments in Llancarfan School. Mrs Elsa Lewis, of Llandaff, has written to say that she understands that chess was introduced to the school by her late husband, Headmaster, Enoch Lewis. Mrs Lewis added that it was not played during the years that her daughter Elizabeth was at the school, which suggests that the tournaments were started during the 1960s.

## **The Chapel of St Margaret at Llancarfan** by Maddy Gray

The Raglan family of Llantwit Major were certainly both rich and pious. The chantry they founded in the western chapel of Llantwit Major church and dedicated to the Virgin Mary was one of the wealthier ones in the county. It had an annual income of £6 (about £12,000 in modern terms - not bad, for a priest whose only duty was to say Mass daily). The chantry had its own chalice for the celebration of the Mass - a silver chalice worth 51s 4d, according to the 1547 Chantry Certificate - and a set of vestments of old velvet valued at 2s. The priest also had his own residence, the delightful Chantry House whose ruins can still be seen in the south of the churchyard.

According to the Exchequer deposition your correspondent quotes, the family had clerical connections, as Sir Hugh Raglan was the bishop's deputy. Other members of the family are found among the diocesan clergy, and an Edmund Raglan was serving as priest of the other chantry at Llantwit Major in 1547.

The Royal Commission inventory of medieval buildings in Glamorgan says that *Garnllwyd* had passed to a branch of the Raglan family by the mid 15th century. It was built before 1441, when Lewis Matthew, possibly the builder, was living there. His daughter and heiress, Catherine, married John Raglan. The quality of the late medieval building at *Garnllwyd* suggests that it was their main home.

It is quite possible that, as one of the leading local families, the Raglans of *Garnllwyd* would have endowed a chantry or private chapel in Llancarfan church. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that they actually did so. The Chantry Certificate for Llancarfan records only that  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre of meadow in Llanbethery Moor and  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of arable in Llancarfan had been given to provide for repairs to the parishioners' part of the church. (The chancel was the responsibility of the owners of the rectory, the Dean and Chapter of Gloucester, to whom it had passed at the dissolution of Gloucester Abbey in 1540.) The land produced an annual rent of 2s - about £200 in modern terms, not much, but it would help. I wonder who has the land now?

Not all the land, which had been given for private chantries and chapels was reported in 1548. Your correspondent's Llantwit Major reference is from the proceedings of one of the concealment commissions. These had the task of enquiring into land, which should have come to the Crown as part of monastic or chantry endowments but had been withheld. One of the most striking examples of this is the property in Brecon which was given to maintain two masses in the Lady Chapel in Brecon and a service called the mass of St Michael which was actually said in the charnel house in Brecon. Now that was a priest who earned every penny of his stipend! The property had been given to the bailiffs and aldermen of Brecon to administer. They saw no reason why the Crown should have the land in 1548, so they just kept quiet about the whole thing. When Mary Tudor came to the throne in 1553 and the Catholic faith was restored, they even appointed a new chantry priest to revive the services. However, Elizabeth's accession in 1558 meant an end to all that, and eventually, in 1576, someone ratted on them and the land was confiscated.

We know of a number of similar cases - but of course we only know about the ones which were caught. I have been through the proceedings of the concealment commissions and failed to find anything about a chantry in Llancarfan, but it is quite possible that there was one and that it was successfully concealed. However, on the evidence we have, it may be more likely that the Raglan Chapel in the parish church was so named not because the family had a permanent chantry there but because that was where their bodies were buried. Individual members of the family could have left money to have Mass said in the chapel for their souls for a few years after their deaths, but this would not necessarily leave a permanent record. It is possible that the chapel of St Margaret was an unendowed chapel, a separate building put up by the family but maintained by the offerings of local people and as such of no interest to the Crown's surveyors in 1548.

St Margaret was quite a popular saint in Wales. She is one of the few saints from the international tradition whose life was translated into Welsh. Her story was quite horrific. She was one of the martyrs of the early church. The daughter of a pagan priest, she was converted to Christianity by her nurse. The Roman prefect Olybrius tried to seduce her but she rejected him. In a strange attempt to persuade her to succumb to his advances, he had her savagely beaten and tortured, then threw her into prison. Here the Devil appeared to her as a dragon, and swallowed her. She made the sign of the cross and the dragon burst into pieces, leaving her unscathed. After unsuccessful attempts to have her burned or boiled to death, Olibrius finally had her beheaded.

St. Margaret is frequently depicted leading a chained dragon, carrying the cross with which she overcame the devil or standing by a large vessel which recalls the cauldron into which she was plunged. In spite of her heroic defence of her own virginity she was regarded as the patron saint of women in childbirth. Her escape from the dragon's belly was thought to reflect the child's escape from the mother's womb. According to later versions of her story, as she died, she prayed that women who called on her in childbirth should be safe, and a dove came down from heaven and declared that her request had been granted.

Margaret was not as well known as Catherine, the saint who gave her name to the Catherine wheel, but the two are often depicted together as saints who made heroic efforts to defend their chastity. They appear carved in alabaster, one on each side of the Virgin and Child, on the recently restored tomb of Richard Herbert of Coldbrook in the priory church at Abergavenny. Margaret may also be in one of the wall paintings which were discovered in the church from Llandeilo Talybont which is now being rebuilt at the *Welsh Folk Museum* in St Fagan's. She appears with Catherine and with Barbara and Dorothy, two of the other virgin martyrs of the early church, in the east window of the medieval church at Gresford in north Wales. The main part of the window illustrates the *Te Deum*, the great hymn of praise of the church to God, which used to be part of the Anglican service of Mattins. The four young women are there to represent the 'noble army of martyrs' who are mentioned in the hymn.

It is possible that one of the women of the *Garnllwyd* family had prayed for St Margaret's help in childbirth and had founded the chapel after a successful delivery. Because of St Margaret's reputation as a saint who could help women in childbirth, a chapel dedicated to her, and presumably containing a statue or painting of her, could have attracted enough in the way of small offerings from local women to pay for the maintenance of the building. Such offerings would be illegal after the Reformation and the chapel would gradually have fallen into ruin. This is all guesswork - but it is a possible explanation for the reference in Lhuyd.

## **The Raglan Chapel 19th-21st century**

by John Etherington

When you enter the present day St Cadoc's through the South Door, the South Aisle is on your right and extending across it is a carved wooden screen, one of the first features noticed by a visitor.

When my father was in his 80s he painted the view into the chapel, shown on the next page. The original is a monochrome of about 9 x 8 inches, in a mixture of black water colour and Indian ink. Dad always experimented with different media and at this time he was also painting village views in acrylic colours and making sketches in anything from pencil to ball-pen!

Dad wasn't a religious man but he loved churches for their tranquility and beauty. As a child and teenager I went with him to countless churches all over the country. Whilst he sketched, I would look at plants in the churchyard, a habit which is still with me decades later.

Many others have written about St Cadoc's and its Raglan Chapel: -

- The chapel, which joins the chancel and the south aisle, has, like the rest of the building, a cradle-roof, plastered between the ribs. There are two south windows of two lights, and a lancet south door. The east window has three lights. All are of the date of those in the north wall of the nave. In the south wall is a piscina. Here also is a good Perpendicular oak screen dividing the chapel into two parts. It appears originally to have divided the aisle from the chapel, and to have been moved eastward. It is said now to mark off that part of the east end of the chapel which was repaired by the lords of Carnllwyd, and where, therefore, the Raglans are probably buried (Clark, G. T., 1865. *Archaeologia Cambrensis*)
- In line with the chancel arch the pier in the south aisle has been slotted to receive a wall standard of a screen. It is now placed several feet to the east. Each bay is 11 3/4 inches wide. The screen is not representative of the best Welsh work and it would appear to be modelled on a style fairly common on the border and probably comes from Gloucestershire, Worcestershire or Herefordshire (Crossley & Ridgeway, 1958. *Archaeologia Cambrensis*).

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## **Web-Wonder** - an Editorial thought

It only seems yesterday, but three years have elapsed since Graham Brain set-up the Llancarfan Web-site which carries some pages devoted our more recent Newsletters and other Society matters,

The Internet often to get a bad press from some journalists - you could even believe that the whole thing had been arranged by pornographers and thieves, hell-bent on corrupting the children or stealing your credit card number. This is not my experience at all - indeed things you can buy from W.H. Smith's shelves more frequently offend me, and the only trouble I've ever had with a credit card was losing the silly bit of plastic.

The other side of the coin is having instant access to information on almost anything that you can imagine. The web includes wonderful devices that constantly search for key words and include them in an ever-growing indexing system. Sit at your computer in Beijing, Nome or even the International Space Station and type in "Llancarfan" and you will find our Newsletters! Even more abstruse search words will get you there as you will discover if you read on.

When Graham first proposed the idea of including the Newsletters on the Web-site I must admit to being lukewarm about it - thinking to myself that I was already spending enough time on keeping-up with the clerical work of the Newsletter. Well - I was wrong. For the first year or two nothing happened but now we have a growing tide of e-mails from people who have found us on the Web. Sometimes they have a bit of information and sometimes a question. All of that is what the Society is about

I thought you might like to see some edited highlights of recent e-mail exchanges which show just how diverse our interaction with the outside world had become: -

**Decoy Aerodromes from Peter Hayball:** *I have been searching for information about WWII decoy aerodromes between Cardiff and Swansea. This is on behalf of my Mother whose own Father was posted to the area during the war. His name was William (Bill) Palmer and he would probably have held the rank of Flight Sergeant The decoy site was probably the one protecting St Athan aerodrome. I found some possibly relevant material in one of your Newsletters (An extract from: A conversation with Millward Harris by Phil Watts. Llancarfan Society Newsletter 36 1990) which made fascinating reading. Any help in locating the site itself would be very gratefully received, as would any background information about decoy sites in the area and the RAF personnel maintaining them.*

**Editor's reply (1):** The decoy for St Athan was on the area of land between Llanbethery and Treguff known locally as The Downs. Map reference ST 033 704 falls within the area of the decoy, according to the memory of one of our members. I haven't found anyone who recalls the exact boundaries, markings and positions of the lights. However as Andrew Plant of *Treguff Farm* has found buried cables etc., he may be able to add more information.

I have not tried, but it is possible that the MOD can give you some more information or put you onto a source. Presumably the decoy was classified in the 1940s but if it was declassified before the 50s, the documents might now be accessible.

**Peter Hayball replied:** *The map reference will be of the greatest importance in the short term, as it will allow us to zero in on the correct large-scale maps. We are planning to contact the MOD soon, probably through the Hendon RAF museum, in an attempt to identify any extant declassified records. I would be happy to discuss any reader memories jogged as a result. If we do find anything further of interest would you like a short article or even just notes of it to consider for your Newsletter?*

**Editor's reply (2 & 3):** A web-search has shown that English Heritage (1998) carried out a survey of "Every thing from decoy airfields to coastal gun batteries, from anti-aircraft artillery sites to airfield and airfield defences ...to limit the constant erosion of the heritage." If Wales was surveyed it would presumably have been by CADW. The same web-search produced reference to a book, *Fields of Deception* (Britain's Bombing Decoys of World War II), by Colin Dobinson. Methuen (2000) - the blurb suggests that this was written from the English Heritage survey.

Yes, if you do unearth any more information concerning the Decoy Airfield I would be pleased to publish a short article. The constitution of our Society not only embraces residents and former residents of Llancarfan but also anyone who has an interest in the village or nearby area of the Vale. I have never confined authorship to members of the Society, so any offers are welcomed.

**From Gareth Davies, Vancouver Island:** *I grew up in Barry and lived there until I was thirty (too many years ago now). I was doing some research on Porthkerry Park [using the Internet] when I came across the following note: -*

*"... Porthkerry. A parish near Barry overlooking a pretty bay. On the cliffs are some earthworks known as 'the Bulwarks'"*

*I have written a short story referring to "the ruins" on the cliff-tops slightly west of Porthkerry Park close to Rhws Point. I have never known them as anything else. You can imagine my surprise to see a reference to "the Bulwarks". Are these the same ruins I am talking about? It certainly sounds like it. Anyway, I did a further search and came across your "Newsletter 101, Christmas 2000" and read it in the hope of finding out more. Of course I became intrigued with the Newsletter for its own sake and spent an hour reading it before*



*remembering what it is I am looking for! Alas, I cannot find reference to "the Bulwarks" anywhere. Would you know precisely where the ruins of "the Bulwarks" are?*

*My wife and I and many of our friends in our teen years and twenties visited so many places in the Vale, Llancarfan, Penmark, Aberthaw and so reading about these places brought back many memories. We live in Parksville on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. If you can help I would be very grateful indeed.*

**Editor replied:** The Bulwarks. are the remains of an Iron Age hillfort some 4.5 ha in extent and simply comprise earth banks surrounding a central protected area. The hillfort dates from a few centuries B.C. If you recollect the ruins of a building, then it was not the Bulwarks. To the west of Rhws Point, toward Aberthaw, there is the ruin of a large lime-works, which was built, in the late 1800s. This stands some 40 feet above sea level but not at the top of the cliff. It is built of the local grey limestone with various parts picked-out in red brick and brickwork tunnels under the old limekilns.

**Reply from Gareth:** *How absolutely lovely it is to receive the fruits of your kindness. You and Alan [Taylor] have really provided me with all I need. Yes, it is all coming back to me now, you see I did my exploring of such places during the war (and I know you won't ask, which war?). .....my "ruins" are undoubtedly the old "limeworks".*

*My wife and I would, on special occasions, go to the Three Horseshoes or the Six Bells and a few other delightful country pubs, including the Fox and Hounds, when a pint of bitter was 10d. and a Baby Cham was 1/3d. (so my wife has just informed me). Makes you think. We used to go to the Blue Anchor in Aberthaw, but it became so that you couldn't get through the door for the crowd, so we stopped going there. There was a boy in my class in Barry Grammar called John Deer, he came from Llancarfan I'm sure, but that was in the mid forties! John would be sixty-six now.*

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We have even had some quite odd queries which have arisen because searching the Web for keywords will often find an item within a document - the next is one such, the enquirer having searched for "Andrew Vicari".

**From Suzy B—— :** *Subject:Andrew Vicari. I have discovered an original painting by the above on my ceiling in my house, please advise how I may contact him?*

**Editor replied** that Andrew Vicari had lived briefly in Llancarfan (1960s) and was now resident in Monaco. "Vicari, Artist, Monaco" would probably find him! Alternatively, the *Western Mail* often features him, and might forward a letter.

## **Rabbits, warrens and pillow mounds** by John Etherington

It is difficult for anyone who lived through the rabbit plagues of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to understand why anyone should need to farm rabbits; they farmed themselves only too effectively. Now in the first years of the next century, myxomatosis has faded a little and once again the edges of some cereal fields are grazed to bowling greens.

The rabbit was first brought to Britain for its meat and fur, probably by the Normans. Whether the environment or the rabbits themselves have changed, it is certainly the case that they needed careful nurturing. Artificial warrens, enclosures and rabbit gardens were built for them but inevitably some escaped. Interest in pursuit of game, and the associated predator-

control probably triggered the rabbit “explosion” after c. 1750, from which time, artificial warrens were no longer needed.

Medieval sites are often associated with pillow-mounds, banks of soil a metre or two high and sometimes furnished with artificial drainage and possibly burrows. Archaeologists have repeatedly argued the toss about such mounds and whether they were built for rabbits.

We have one rather atypical pillow-mound in the parish at Llanvithyn, to the east of the deserted village of Bradington (ST 0539 7130). It is about 20 m long, running NE to SW along the foot of a gentle slope, and varying between 7 and 9.5 m wide with a maximum height of 1.5 m. (RCAHM, 1982).

The RCAHM account also includes the following quotation from the time of Henry VIII: - “To Robert Bing, of the Wyke, smythe, for a great long nagre [auger] of irne to make and bore cony [*sic*] holes within the king’s beries new made for blake coneys in the warren.”

On the island of Ramsey, close to the editor’s home in Pembrokeshire, there are pillow-mounds, which are known by the local name of “berries” and the RCAHM volume also records “buries”, on Dartmoor.

Not much doubt there I think? The fur of “blake coneys” (black rabbits) was widely used by glove-makers and the occurrence of occasional black rabbits near Llancarfan has been mentioned in a previous Newsletter; maybe descendants of the mound creatures.

**Reference.** Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (1982). *Inventory*, Volume 3 Part 2.