

cowichanvalleycitizen.com

COLUMN

Rat hunting was part of school day

A CREATIVE AFFAIR
 November 5th & 6th
 Sat & Sun 10am – 4pm

Prize Draws!
 Admissions for Mill Bay Food Bank kindly accepted

Mill Bay Masons Hall
 2744 Lashburn Rd

Across from Brentwood College & Mill Bay Centre

Experience the Spirit of Christmas with...
18 Vancouver Island Artisans

Check out a variety of local goods and creations...
 Join our 18 VI Artisans, also supporting the Mill Bay Food Bank!

Various payment \$\$ options available! Info contact: shellawarneken@gmail.com

Black Press Media

Citizen
 Cowichan Valley

Give them power. Give them confidence. Give them control.

GIVE THEM A PAPER ROUTE!

It's so easy to get started...call **250-748-2666**

circulation@cowichanvalleycitizen.com
 www.cowichanvalleycitizen.com

There have been episodes in my life that, in reflection, seem more like crazy movies than reality.

That thought went through my mind recently as I told my editor, Andrea Rondeau, about one day when I was in Grade 6 attending a rat-infested elementary school.

The school was built next to a river and rats, some very large, that live near the waterway were likely attracted to the school's garbage boxes where all the leftover food from the cafeteria was put out for pick up.

These were the days long before recycling, so the food scraps were not separated and were mixed in with the rest of the garbage, which was easily accessible to rodents.

It was a feast for vermin and the rats began inundating the school.

It was not uncommon to see the rats all over the facility and they would fearlessly run through the classrooms with impunity.

In today's world, this would never be allowed and I'm sure the health and school officials would have stepped in and closed the school until the rat problem was dealt with.



But it was almost half a century ago and the school's principal and teachers came up with their own rather bizarre plan to deal with the issue.

One day during morning announcements, the principal invited any students who owned pellet guns to bring them to school the next day for a rat hunt that would be held after classes.

I suspect any school principal who did that these days would be automatically fired and the story would have made national news but, as I said, those were different times.

So the next day, almost 100 youngsters got on buses and walked the streets on the way to school carrying guns, and occasionally shooting at things, and nobody even blinked an eye.

Today, a sight like that would

have police coming in all directions, but none of the passing pedestrians and motorists paid us any attention at all.

At 3 p.m., the games began. It was a poor school and we didn't have organized sports teams (at least none that I can recall), so the rat hunt could be considered an extracurricular sport I guess.

The teachers took us outside and instructed us to get in a line, about three feet apart, load our weapons and make sure nobody was pointing the guns at anyone else when the shooting began.

We were told that as we only had air guns, the best strategy to take down rats was to shoot the pellets straight at their heads to kill them because body shots would only wound them at best.

Then some of the teachers with hammers began banging hard on the sides of the garbage bin and rats began swarming out of there in every direction, including straight at us.

We frantically fired our guns in a panic and, while some of the shots were accurate and stopped rats in their tracks, most of the pellets were shot wildly and missed their

targets by some margin.

Rats ran between our legs in an effort to escape the slaughter, and I remember one even jumped on the shoulders of one my peers and he threw down his gun and made a frantic run towards the school trying to knock the rodent off.

All organization, if there ever was any, was gone and we began firing at any rat near us without taking into consideration that there were other people all around.

Amazingly, not one of the students or teachers was shot in the melee, and we successfully killed 22 rats.

I remember feeling frightened out of my wits when the rats came unexpectedly at us and felt fortunate to have survived the hunt with no injuries.

But, being young and stupid, we immediately began talking to the teachers about doing it again the next day.

But I think the teachers were shocked by the carnage they created and the fact that someone could have been seriously hurt and decided to terminate our new extracurricular activity for good.

Those were the days(?).

Cowichan Valley **SEPTEMBER 2022 TOP PRODUCERS** **NOBODY IN CANADA SELLS MORE REAL ESTATE THAN RE/MAX**

RE/MAX GENERATION

Miracle Home! Each time you buy or sell with a RE/MAX agent, a donation is made to the Children's Miracle Network & Children's Hospital in British Columbia.

Thank you to our clients for making this possible!

#1 Warren Chase 250-893-9277	#2 Sandy Stinson PREC* 250-710-0040	#3 Jennifer Allen PREC* 250-510-1311	#4 Paige Lindquist 250-932-1099
#5 Ally Earle PREC* 250-710-8794	#6 Carol Warkentin 250-667-7653	#7 Brittany Smart 250-252-0618	#8 Morgan Rogers 250-735-4725

250.749.6000 **REMAX-Generation.ca**

COLUMN

Sometimes history not exactly as it's written

A very, very old gold coin that was found on the south coast of Newfoundland, my home province, this summer once again draws into question just when Europeans first started settling North America's east coast.

It has long been accepted that Christopher Columbus "discovered" the continent in 1492 and sailor and explorer John Cabot discovered Newfoundland on behalf of the English in 1497.

But the gold coin, which has been identified as a Henry VI quarter noble, was minted in England between 1422 and 1427, more than 70 years before the province was officially discovered by Europeans.

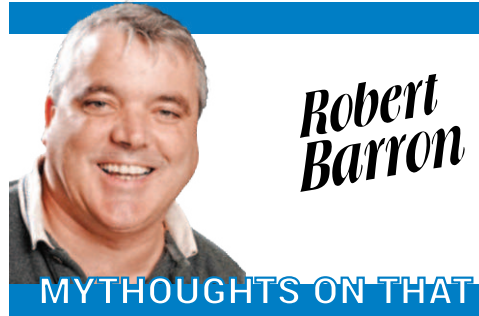
Of course, Vikings had established a small settlement on the north coast of Newfoundland about 500 years before Cabot arrived.

But that was short lived and archaeologists have determined that they likely stayed no more than 10 years before abandoning the settlement and heading back to Iceland and Greenland, never to return as far as the historical records currently show.

Sagas left by the Vikings, who were not exactly known for their diplomatic skills, indicate that they had bad relations with local First Nations who vastly outnumbered them, so they thought it better just to leave.

So Vikings more than likely didn't drop the coin, which is said to be the oldest English coin ever found in Canada, because they were long gone in the 1400s and, besides, the coin was found several hundreds of kilometres away from where the Viking settlement was.

Paul Berry, the former curator of the Bank



of Canada's Currency Museum, said the coin was worth a considerable amount of money in the 1400s and was probably not in circulation when it was lost.

While some European could have had a coin that was more than 70 years old in his pocket and lost in sometime after 1497, I think it's more probable that it was dropped in Newfoundland closer to the time it was actually minted, which was well before Cabot and his crew came ashore.

It has long been speculated that adventurous English, Basque, and Portuguese fishermen had come across Newfoundland's rich fishing grounds (at least they were once) generations before as they followed the fish around the Atlantic Ocean.

Many believe that they had kept this discovery a secret for as long as possible in order not to share the fishing grounds with anyone else.

I've always wondered how the very large east coast of North America was explored so quickly after Columbus landed in the Caribbean in 1492, and it seemed to me that some of the

ship's captains already had a good sense of where they were going and what they were looking for.

St. John's, the port city on Newfoundland's east coast that is the capital of the province, is known to have been visited by Europeans shortly after Cabot landed in 1497, but anyone familiar with the city knows how hard it can be to find the city's harbour when approaching from the sea.

Cliffs rise about 100 feet straight out of the crashing waves on the coast leading into the harbour, and the harbour is connected to the ocean through a small crack in the cliff face.

That means that once ships manoeuvre through that small passageway through the cliffs, which are now known as The Narrows, they sail into a large and calm harbour which serves as great protection from the wild North Atlantic Ocean for vessels.

But anyone approaching from the sea and not familiar with the area would probably not

have seen that crack in the cliff face easily and would have travelled right by it for many years before discovering where it led.

That's why I, and many others, theorize that St. John's was well known by European fishermen in 1497 and they probably had been using it as a base for many years before then.

Interestingly, an English silver coin minted in the 1490s was found at Newfoundland's Cupids Cove Plantation Provincial Historic Site just last year, and before the discovery of the gold coin a few months ago, it was considered the oldest English coin ever found in Canada.

History is not always as it appears or as simple as it is in the history books.

It's usually much more convoluted and complicated, and I can't wait to see what else will be found to add to our knowledge of those times.

Robert Barron is a reporter with the Cowichan Valley Citizen. He can be reached at Robert.Barron@cowichanvalleycitizen.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your items to: editor@cowichanvalleycitizen.com

Robert's column brings back memories

Several times I've re-read Robert Barron's column "Rat hunting was part of school day". It continues to make me smile, it makes me laugh out loud.

It also brings back memories of how seem-

ingly free we were, how uncautious, how un-fearful, how unrestrictive and yet respectful of authority. All this was not so very long ago.

Good job Robert and thank you. I'm making copies to bring smiles to others.

Angela Gustafson
Cobble Hill

COME SEE US AT OUR NEW LOCATION
126 Station Street, Downtown Duncan

- Lash Extensions • Nails & Pedicures •
- Teeth Whitening • Brow Tinting & Waxing •
- Semi – Permanent Brow Tattooing •
- Hydrojelly Facials • Dermaplaning • Lash Lift

Special Mani and Pedi \$60

tabithasbeautyoasis.com
250-797-7588

CHRISTY CABINETS

- CABINETS
- CUSTOM DESIGN & FINISHING
- REFACING EXISTING CABINETS
- QUALITY NEW CABINETS
- FACE FRAME KITCHENS
- CUSTOM COUNTER-TOPS
- ENTERTAINMENT CENTRES & MANTLES
- ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY GREEN CABINETRY

FREE Estimates!

Wayne Christy **250-701-5958**
www.christycabinets.com
christycabinets@shaw.ca

That's a BIG Deal!
12 EQUAL PAYMENTS WITH 0% INTEREST!!

* OAC. Some conditions apply. Limited time offer. On installed Van Isle Windows, Doors, and Skylights.

ASK US ABOUT REBATES
YOU COULD QUALIFY FOR UP TO \$1,200 PER WINDOW*

Bob Dubois
Sales Rep

Van Isle Windows LIMITED
VAULTPAY

Call Bob to make an appointment: 250.754.0824 | vanislewindows.com

COLUMN

Worker shortage a real dilemma



DARREN MEINER REAL ESTATE
250-748-4804
www.darrenmeiner.com

exp
 REALTY

VIP Water Inc.
 BULK WATER DELIVERY
7 DAYS A WEEK

Specializing in bulk water delivery.
 We deliver potable water for cisterns, pools,
 hot tubs and ponds.



A Division of COLUMBIA ICE
 4970 Polkey Road, Duncan
CALL FOR A QUOTE TODAY 250-754-4721
www.islandh2oservicesltd.ca

Island Health Approved Locally Owned and Operated

When I first moved to B.C. in 1996, I was delighted to find work at a concrete plant that paid more money than I ever made before within 48 hours after stepping off the ferry in Nanaimo.

Jobs were scarce, even low-paying ones, on the east coast where I came from at the time and those that had them desperately hung onto them as if their lives depended on it because, in many respects, they did.

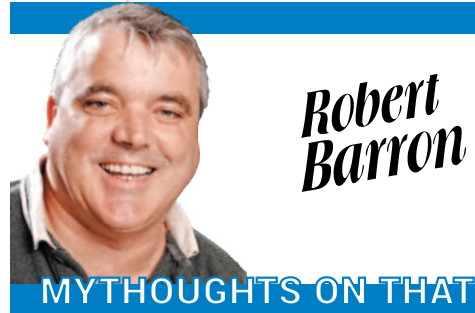
I was a member of the Teamsters Union at the concrete facility and the pay I received reflected the fact that the plant's employees were part of a strong international collective of workers.

I was astonished at how easily and quickly I was hired there, but the new owners of the plant had recently gotten rid of a bunch of employees who were not pulling their weight and were desperate for good workers who could do the job, which required a fair amount of physical ability.

I remember thinking when I was hired that if the plant was in operation in my hometown, there'd be a lineup of people desperate for work that would extend down the road for blocks.

The economy, of course, is cyclical and there have been downturns in B.C.'s economy since then in which finding work was a little harder for people but, for the most part, there always seems to be some sort of work for those that want it and are not too particular.

But the pendulum has swung way out of whack these days and there's lots of jobs available in the region and across the province that,



amazingly to me, nobody seems to be biting at.

Even the concrete plant with the great wages where I began my work career in B.C. has a "Now Hiring!" sign that appears to be perpetually placed in front of the facility.

I recently talked to Julie Scurr, president of the Duncan Cowichan Chamber of Commerce, about the labour shortage and she said it's the result of a perfect storm of circumstances.

She pointed out that a huge skilled-labour shortage that was predicted more than a decade ago has come to fruition, and that is a big factor in today's worker dilemma.

I was covering the education beat at the *Nanaimo Daily News* at the time and I remember labour and government leaders heading to high school classrooms talking to students about the many opportunities in the skilled trades that paid well and offered them excellent futures.

But it appears that most didn't take them up on their advice and now skilled labourers are

retiring much faster than they can be replaced, which is causing problems in the industries in which they are employed.

Added to that, Scurr told me, is the ongoing fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic that knocked many businesses, particularly those in the hospitality and retail industries, on their butts, with many still trying to get back on their feet.

A lot of workers from those businesses were temporarily thrown out of their jobs as their employers were forced to close their doors for extended periods, and now a high percentage of them have moved on to other employment and have chosen not to return.

"There are simply not enough bodies to do all the jobs out there," Scurr told me.

"Immigration is sometimes used to help fill the employment niches, but where will these workers live when they come here? There's no places for them to live in during the ongoing housing crisis. There's no magic bullet to solve this problem, and I expect this will be the way of the world for awhile."

It sure is a completely different world these days than the one I grew up in.

I would have drooled at all the employment opportunities available today when I was a kid.

Robert Barron is a reporter with the Cowichan Valley Citizen. He can be reached at Robert.Barron@cowichanvalleycitizen.com

AXIS Previously
 LMG Insurance Brokers

New Name
Same Location
Same People
Same Commitment

Now more ways to renew your ICBC insurance

We've made it easier for you to new your ICBC Insurance.
 Do it in person, over the phone, or online. Contact us today!

Renew in Person: **380 Trunk Road (Duncan Plaza)**
 Renew Over the Phone: **250-748-3242**
 Renew Online: www.axisinsurance.ca/icbc-renewal

Axis Insurance (Previously LMG Insurance Brokers)
 380 Trunk Road (Duncan Plaza)
Hours: Mon - Tue: 8am - 5pm | Wed - Fri: 8am - 6pm | 2 Saturdays/month: 9am - 3pm
Phone: 250-748-3242
www.axisinsurance.ca

DID YOU KNOW?

- LMG became Axis Insurance in February 2022
- LMG was a part of the Axis Insurance Group for 6 years before the name change

WE'RE PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF THIS COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTER OF:

- o BC SPCA
- o Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Cowichan Valley
- o Chemainus Theatre
- o Stuff the Truck & Food Banks of BC