**According to Dai** *by Vicky Hampton*

Dai watches the little wheel decant the game’s geometry

seeing in its rotation

the old pit head at Blaina.

He said, as miners churned the black below

his grandfather turned red above

belting the descant on Calon Lân with the paint machine round the new pitch.

They bled for it see

he said.

Mind you, wives and sweethearts too, Dai said,

wrestled that bitch of sheep-thistled sod;

sleeves rolled with their men in stair-rod sleet

to maul rock and tup and make a playing field,

converting the land of their fathers, which

he said, like God, it didn’t want to give up.

His bucket trickles the white,

magnesium as his capped skull, as he trundles, measuring

up

and down

touch line, the half-way, the twenty two...

On that hillside

before each season’s spewing of blood and teeth,

his whole line drew them; finicky straight, year in

year out under thunder and blue and buzzards

mewing and wheeling on uplift,

rickety contraptions squealing on corners at a few zealots

hushed as chapel

watching the virgin marks consecrate,

neat as a peach, Dai said, snow bright

like a line of Blaina valley sheets.

They say, said Dai,

in the Millennium, when they expose heaven

the wind drops in reverence to groundsmen -

like players, he says,

hewn from the granite of youth

forged in steel and coal.

And he should know. He’s a chip off the old block,

drawing his tachometry with love

round the boundaries of their passion.