

Lady Llanover and the Creation of a Welsh Cultural Utopia

Celyn Gurden-Williams

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Summary of Thesis

Lady Llanover (1802-1896) was one of the most important female contributors to the nineteenth century Welsh cultural revival and although historians have paid her a certain amount of attention, her life and works have never before undergone a full study. The purpose of this thesis is to analyse her place in the history of nineteenth century Wales and to consider the view that her life's actions ultimately led her to attempt to create a Welsh cultural utopia for the Welsh tenants on her estate at Llanover in Monmouthshire. This study is not a conventional biography and therefore not every detail of Lady Llanover's life can feature, rather this thesis thematically explores her fascination with Wales, Welsh traditions and culture in order to throw light on what became a full and life long project. This thesis will focus on Lady Llanover's tenacious personality and explore her identity. It will take into account the economic, social and political changes that occurred in nineteenth century Welsh society and consider how Lady Llanover reacted and responded to such changes. Moreover, it will ask what influenced Lady Llanover's cultural ideals and reveal how her home was transformed into a centre of Welsh cultural scholarship. It will be revealed how she used her position of power to influence others and how this became an important aspect of her campaigns to safeguard her version of Welsh culture. She famously showed a special interest in the Welsh costume, triple harp and the Welsh language and therefore no work written on her could omit a discussion of those topics but what this thesis seeks to demonstrate is that even though Lady Llanover eventually came to be regarded by some, as an obsessive eccentric, she poured her energy into creating a haven for her version of Welsh culture.

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Contents

Summary of Thesis.....	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 - The Personality Behind the Project.....	21
Chapter 2 - Lady Llanover's World: Wales in the Nineteenth Century.....	43
Chapter 3 -The Road to Llanover.....	79
Chapter 4 -The Queen Bee in a Hive of Cultural Activity.....	111
Chapter 5 - Costumes, Triple Harps and Welsh Speaking Clergy: Lady Llanover's Symbolic Welshness	145
Chapter 6 - Life on the Llanover Estate: Lady Llanover's 'Welsh Colony'	194
Conclusion.....	230
Appendix	238
Plate 1: Lady Llanover	238
Plate 2: Lady Llanover	238
Plate 3: Lord Llanover.....	239
Plate 4: Llanover Hall	239
Plate 5: Examples of Costume Designs Accredited to Lady Llanover	240
Plate 6: Harpist and Triple Harp	241
Plate 7: Tea Drinking in Costume	241
Plate 8: Mrs Herbert and Betha Johnes	242
Sources and Bibliography	243
Books.....	250
Articles	255

Introduction

In 1911 a Welsh-American newspaper, the *Druid* remarked that, ‘among the Welsh women of the past century, Lady Llanover must be assigned a leading place.’¹ Lady Augusta Hall of Llanover² (1802-1896) certainly deserved the attention dedicated to her. Now there is renewed interest in this remarkable character and the time has come to reassess her impact on the history and culture of Wales. This work will explore the idea that Lady Llanover’s primary goal in life became to create a Welsh cultural utopia at her country estate in Llanover near Abergavenny. Contrary to most individuals of her position in Wales, Lady Llanover used her influence as a member of the iron and coal master aristocracy in industrial Monmouthshire to support Welsh culture in an area of Wales that was ever increasingly becoming Anglicised.

Lady Llanover is celebrated as a promoter of the Welsh language, literature, music, Eisteddfod and the creator of the Welsh costume. The passion and devotion with which she vehemently defended her construction of Welsh culture and identity earned her a valiant if somewhat forceful reputation. These elements of her personality are reflected by her rather apt bardic name, Gwenynen Gwent [*the Bee of Gwent*].³ Despite the fact that Lady Llanover’s efforts on behalf of her Wales are well known to historians, her life’s cultural works have never before undergone full study. Moreover, her wide and varied cultural activities have never before been examined as an overarching, serious and ambitious cultural project. This thesis will highlight Lady Llanover’s important part in influencing the national culture of nineteenth century Wales and will reveal how she used her power to promote her idyllic and romanticised view of what she believed Welsh culture ought to be. Finally, it will explain how and why she applied her ideas to the Welsh microcosm that was Llanover. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to assess what I view as Lady Llanover’s attempt to uphold and reinvent Welsh culture, to create an ideal and

¹ *The Druid*, 21 September 1911.

² Lady Llanover is known by various names including, Augusta Waddington, Augusta Hall and Gwenynen Gwent. In the interests of continuity, she will be referred to as Lady Llanover.

³ The symbolic significance of this bardic name may be interpreted in various ways. The choice of the ‘Bee of Gwent’ may refer to Lady Llanover’s industrious work ethic, others might interpret it as meaning that she had a sting in her tail.

exemplary Welsh community, as well as highlight her place in nineteenth century Welsh history.

As a woman, there is no doubt that Lady Llanover stands apart from most people of her sex and class. She is not easily categorised and this may explain why historians have been reluctant to undertake a comprehensive study of her place in Welsh history. Consequently, this thesis undertakes to fill a gap in the treatment of Welsh cultural history. It endeavours to explain how a woman who lived during most of the nineteenth century managed to penetrate gender stereotypes to some extent and use her influence amongst family, friends and tenants to safeguard a way of life, in which she chose to immerse herself.

From what the sources left behind reveal, one might easily be convinced that Lady Llanover was one of the most active supporters and maintainers of the nineteenth century Welsh cultural revival. Yet, it must be emphasised that she would only support a brand of Welshness and Welsh culture, which conformed to her criteria. All the same, Lady Llanover's version of Welsh culture was exciting, appealing and rich in pageantry and this thesis will assess the importance of some of the most striking aspects of her cultural campaigns. To unveil her deliberate attempt at constructing a centre for Welsh culture, this work will consider Lady Llanover's colourful personality and focus closely on the historical circumstances in which she lived. It will also take into account possible early influences upon her and ask why it was that Lady Llanover took such a fanatical interest in the cultural and religious affairs of Wales. The thesis will reveal something of Lady Llanover's influence upon her cultural allies who also helped shape the nineteenth century cultural revival and explain how and why certain traditions were reinvented and chosen by Lady Llanover as acceptable national symbols fit for a new era. Yet, as is already known not everyone subscribed to, or agreed with Lady Llanover's view of Wales and the Welsh. This element of conflict prompted Lady Llanover to concentrate her efforts further into moulding her own estate to reflect her image of the 'perfect' Welsh community.

There are limitations to what can be feasibly achieved within this thesis. This work is not a formal biography; the main focus will remain on Lady Llanover's

interpretation of Welsh culture and identity. Her life outside of Wales, including time spent abroad or at her residences in London and Bath, is not of central relevance. Neither is it possible to give as much attention to Lady Llanover's family life and aristocratic connections as one might expect from a conventional biography. While it must be accepted that the next two generations of her family played a part in Lady Llanover's concept of Welsh community and culture, and to some extent tried to carry on her legacy, they cannot take centre stage here. This thesis cannot either focus equally on Lord Llanover, though some of his contributions are of importance. It is certain that he supported his wife in her exploits both practically and financially and although perhaps his passion for Welsh culture was not of the same intensity as Lady Llanover's, he was still very much a part of his wife's activities. The network of cultural allies that became linked with the Llanover project is also of major significance. Many of the people whom Lady Llanover associated with are worthy of study in their own right but again this is a task beyond the remit of this thesis.

A review of the historiography clearly shows that Lady Llanover lived at time of unprecedented and profound transformations in Wales.⁴ Her attempt to create a cultural utopia was a reaction to those particular changes and therefore her project cannot be truly appreciated without giving due consideration to the social historical background of the period in which she lived. Neither can her place in the history of nineteenth century Wales be assessed without first reviewing what has been studied in the field of Welsh women's history. The nineteenth century heralded an era of industry and commerce unlike any other. During this period, Wales herself underwent stages of transition as the demography, particularly of the south-east underwent a massive shift due to the industrialisation process. Developments in language, religion, politics and popular culture ensued and in the wake of such changes it was perhaps inevitable that the perceived character and identity of the Welsh people would also undergo various transformations.⁵ For this very reason the nineteenth century has become the focal point of study for many Welsh historians as is highlighted in an article written by Neil Evans that critiques the writing of modern Welsh social

⁴ This subject will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two.

⁵ M. Jones, 'Beyond Identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 31 (1991), pp. 330-355.

history.⁶ He identifies this era of Welsh history in particular as a primary interest to those studying the history of the Welsh language, religions and nationality.⁷ Whilst the importance of social history in the period in which Lady Llanover lived, cannot be underestimated in the eyes of historians, one must acknowledge that treatment of women most especially of the aristocratic class receive less attention within historiography.⁸

Until the women's movement of the 1960s took hold, British history on the whole was traditionally deficient in its attempt to address the experiences of women in almost any context. The attitudes of historians in general have since changed. It is much more commonplace to find that social historians in particular have begun to include women in their interpretations.⁹ Welsh history has a notoriously poor record in reference to writing the history of women, whatever their class or status, as has been highlighted as a subject of criticism by Neil Evans, who commented that 'women's history achieved little prominence until the 1980s and was a belated discovery amongst most Welsh historians.'¹⁰ However, it would be misleading to say that the situation has not improved.

While polytechnic institutions became centres of study for women's history in England¹¹ during the late twentieth century, this was not the case in Wales due to a lack of such foundations. It may be argued on this basis that the history of women in Wales has been largely neglected because it has not been given any primacy in academic institutions. In a sense promoting the history of Wales and putting a valid focus on the history of Welsh women has proven a double dilemma:

The history of Welsh people has been camouflaged in British History yet women have also been rendered inconspicuous within their own Welsh history...The

⁶ N. Evans, 'Writing the Social History of Modern Wales: Approaches, Achievements and Problems', *Social History*, Vol. 17 (1992).

⁷ These three subjects are of major interest to Welsh Historians. They have been referred to as the 'Triple Net', the title of a study of Kate Roberts. See E. Humphreys, *The Triple Net* (Cardiff, 1988).

⁸ P. O' Leary, 'Masculine Histories: Gender and Social History' *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 22 No. 2 (December 2004), pp. 252-277.

⁹ J. Rendall, 'Uneven Developments' in K. Offen, R. R. Pierson, & J. Rendall, (eds.) *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (London, 1991), pp. 45-57, p. 46-47.

¹⁰ N. Evans, 'Writing the Social History of Modern Wales: Approaches, Achievements and Problems', *Social History*, Vol. 17 (1992), pp. 401-414, p. 405.

¹¹ J. Rendall, 'Uneven Developments', p. 47.

emphasis has been placed on celebrating the land of our fathers rather than viewing Welsh history from the equally valid perspectives of women.¹²

Perhaps the fact that historians such as Angela John and Deirdre Beddoe, who have led the way in the writing of Welsh women's history held positions at polytechnic institutions is no accident.¹³ In the main, the history of women has been published in article form¹⁴ and some important publications have arisen from this activity. *Our Mothers' Land*, edited by Angela John is such an example. It explores various aspects of Welsh women's history between 1830-1939. This book traces the experiences of Welsh women during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with chapters covering topics including protest, power and image amongst the working and upper classes.¹⁵ Picking up from this progress, titles including the aptly named *Out of the Shadows*¹⁶, *Our Sisters' Land*¹⁷ and *Struggle or Starve*¹⁸ have further developed the exploration of Welsh women's history during the twentieth century. Added to this articles on the role and lives of women appear occasionally in publications that deal with overarching topics including politics and nationhood.¹⁹ More still has been published on the role of women in wartime and beyond,²⁰ however little of that which had been published of late correlates in any detail with the subject of this thesis.

¹² A. V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers' Land* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 1.

¹³ N. Evans, 'Writing the social history of modern Wales: approaches, achievements and problems', p. 405.

¹⁴ Articles on women's history are often published in journals including: *Llafur*, *The Welsh History Review* and *Women's History Review*.

¹⁵ A. V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers' Land* (Cardiff, 1991).

¹⁶ D. Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff, 2000).

¹⁷ J. Aaron, S. Betts, T. Rees & M. Vincentelli (eds.) *Our Sisters' Land: The Changing Identities of Women in Wales* (Cardiff, 1994).

¹⁸ C. White & S. R. Williams, (eds.) *Struggle or Starve: Women's lives in the South Wales Valleys Between the Two World Wars* (Dinas Powys, 1997).

¹⁹ See D. Beddoe, 'Women Between the Wars' in T. Herbert & G. E. Jones (eds.) *Wales Between the Wars* (Cardiff, 1988).

D. Beddoe, 'Images of Welsh Women' in T. Curtis (ed.) *Wales: The Imagined Nation* (Bridgend, 1986).

D. Jones, 'Serfdom and Slavery: Women's Work in Wales 1890-1930' in D. R. Hopkin, & G. S. Kealey, (eds.) *Class Community and the Labour Movement: Wales and Canada 1850-1930* (Llafur, 1989).

T. Rees, 'Women in Wales' in T. Herbert & G. E. Jones (eds.) *Post War Wales* (Cardiff, 1995).

T. Rees, 'Women in Wales' in D. Dunkerley, & A. Thompson, (eds.) *Wales Today* (Cardiff, 1999).

²⁰ M. Williams, *A Forgotten Army: Female Munitions Workers of South Wales, 1939-45* (Cardiff, 2002).

M. Williams, *Where is Mrs Jones Going? Women and the Second World War in Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1995).

Historians have acknowledged that there is infinitely more work to be done in the field of women's history in Wales and are proactive in the task of safeguarding source material that will hopefully expand the horizons of future study. The Women's Archive of Wales has mounted a campaign fronted by leading historians of women in Wales to actively seek out and preserve possible source material through a series of workshop road shows. In a direct appeal to the public historians associated with the Women's Archive of Wales aim to copy and in some cases deposit archive material with the intention that it should be used in the future for innovative historical study, as the organisation's mission statement demonstrates:

The task of recovering women's history in Wales is urgent and pressing. Central to the reclamation of our distinctive history is the active process of tracking down, rescuing and conserving historical sources, which throw light on women's lives. We cannot reconstruct our past without authentic historical sources.²¹

It would not be overcritical to state that still too few publications have addressed the history of women in recent years and although action is being taken to remedy the lack of historical writing, the fact remains that the majority of work deals with uncovering the history of working class women,²² particularly in the twentieth century. This is an important task in itself, yet one must equally appreciate that a wealth of history surrounding individual Welsh women has remained untouched. Only the biography of Charlotte Guest by Angela John is comparable as a study focusing on a woman of the nineteenth century from a similar background and status to that of Lady Llanover.²³ As a friend and contemporary of Lady Llanover, active in the world of Welsh literature and Eisteddfodau, John's work on Charlotte Guest is an important monograph to consider within the context of this work's historiography. In the words of John:

²¹ www.womensarchivewales.org

²² See D. Beddoe, 'Towards a Welsh Women's History', *Llafur*, Vol. 3 No. 2 (1981), pp. 32-38.

²³ R. Guest & A. V. John, *Lady Charlotte- A Biography of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1987).

Whilst Lady Charlotte Guest was reviving pride in Welsh literature through 'The Mabinogion', Lady Hall's imaginative romanticisation was defining 'Welshness' in another way.²⁴

Of equal relevance is the recently published title by Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth Century Women's Writing in Wales*.²⁵ Her work argues that notions of Welsh identity have been influenced by the written work of many women and that their contributions have been sidelined in an analytical approach of the period. Therefore, she has brought back their works from obscurity and re-evaluated their long since forgotten input. Her methods and conclusions are of use to the approach of this thesis. In her second chapter entitled 'Writing Ancient Britain', Aaron analyses some of Lady Llanover's published work in the context of her contribution to writing during the nineteenth century Welsh Cultural revival. Moreover, Aaron assesses Lady Llanover as part of a wider network of women. In my view, Aaron correctly concludes that Lady Llanover's influence was of central importance to this group of women:

Such was the calibre of the women Lady Llanover gathered about her in Abergavenny; not only Charlotte Guest but also Angharad Llwyd,.. and Jane Williams, Ysgafell...contributed prodigiously to Welsh learning and culture. Not only through her own work, then, but also through that of other women she inspired, Lady Llanover added new and rich dimensions to her epoch's appreciation and understanding of Welsh difference.²⁶

Despite a wealth of primary source material available, as discussed earlier no comprehensive study of Lady Llanover has ever been tackled. That which has been studied was done so from the point of view of individual interests, consequently a fuller picture is still waiting to emerge.²⁷ On this point, one must consider that historians can find it problematic on occasion to handle a comprehensive treatment of characters if they prove hard to be classified. Lady Llanover is such a personality and

²⁴ A.V. John, *Lady Charlotte- A Biography of the Nineteenth Century*, p.104.

²⁵ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity* (Cardiff, 2007).

²⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁷ S. R. Williams 'Llwydlas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg' in G. H. Jenkins, (ed.) *Cof Cenedl XV* (Llandysul, 2000), pp. 98-128, p. 118.

in a sense I am reassessing her, yet there are a variety of reasons why she has proven difficult to analyse.

The legend of Lady Llanover and the stories that surround her are not easy to challenge and are often accepted at face value, thus much of what has been written about her is almost hagiographical in nature. As a woman she has been neglected in the history of the Welsh Gentry. As an aristocrat she cannot feature in labour history. As an Anglican Christian she does not fit into the dominant history of Nonconformity. As a wife, mother and London socialite, typical of the nineteenth century upper classes it seems that she has not stood out quite enough to warrant the attention of major writers in women's history. As a Welsh patriot, though not an out and out nationalist, she has to some extent been sidelined due to her ever-faithful obedience to the British crown and Empire. She was a complex individual, with personality traits, attitudes and prejudices that sometimes clash or contradict. Her interests were so wide and varied that it may have been disconcerting for historians to undertake a broad study of this remarkable individual. On this basis she has in essence been 'forgotten'. One might go as far as to state that a particularly noteworthy personality of nineteenth century Wales has remained obscured from view because history is unsure of where to place her.²⁸ This reluctance to delve into the Llanover myths and analyse the details of the Llanover project has left a need for further serious academic exploration.

Little effort has thus far been made to encompass all her activities in one study, or to see her efforts as a complete yet multifaceted cultural project. This is not to say that the 'Bee of Gwent' has been completely ignored. Some works have noted Lady Llanover's place in Welsh History. Passing references are present in benchmark historical works such as *When Was Wales* by Gwyn Alf Williams²⁹ and John Davies's *History of Wales*.³⁰ Focusing more deeply, Prys Morgan in connection with the 1988 Newport Eisteddfod wrote an introductory pamphlet to Lady Llanover, setting out a

²⁸ Angela John argues in an article written about the feminist Margaret Nevinson that historians have overlooked her because they have been unsure of how to read her identities.

See A. V. John, 'Margaret Wynn Nevinson: Gender and National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century' in R. R. Davies, & G. R. Jenkins (ed.) *From Medieval to Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2004), pp. 230-245.

²⁹ G. A. Williams, *When Was Wales* (Reading, 1985), p. 188.

³⁰ J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 1994), p. 387.

potted history of her life's achievements.³¹ No doubt the Eisteddfod's location prompted an upsurge of interest in the woman who played a forward role in the organisation of Eisteddfodau over a hundred years previously. Another more recent revival of interest surrounding her prompted Prys Morgan to revisit Lady Llanover as a topic in a general article published in the *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*.³² Morgan also notes Lady Llanover's cultural achievements as part of the innate cultural inheritance of *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*.³³ In this publication he described her as someone who 'looked for pageantry, colour, glamour, anything that would render things Welsh attractive and appealing.'³⁴ He also has given her place and that of some her associates due attention in an article entitled *The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period* which was published in a volume that addresses the theme of the invention of tradition. The article explains the contributions of a number of the Welsh romantics, including that of Iolo Morganwg. The content of the article may be summarised in its closing lines:

As soon as the romantics fell from their steeds their place was taken by fresh myth-makers and creators of tradition those of radical and nonconformist Wales, The huntsmen had changed, but the hunt went on.³⁵

One might argue that Lady Llanover seemed to bridge the gap between the romantic and Nonconformist mythmaker eras. She was a natural successor of the romantics, because she herself was of the same ilk, but her life expanded into the Nonconformists sphere of influence and Lady Llanover remained a contributor to Welsh culture throughout the Dissenter era.

Hywel Teifi Edwards has also undertaken some study on Lady Llanover in reference to his treatment of Eisteddfodau in his book *Gwyl Gwalia*.³⁶ Edwards also assesses Lady Llanover's contributions to Eisteddfodau on a smaller scale in an article entitled *Y Gymraeg yn yr Eisteddfod* which is contained in the book *Gwnewch Bopeth*

³¹ P. Morgan, *Gwenynen Gwent* (Casnewydd, 1988).

³² P. Morgan, 'Lady Llanover (1002-18960, 'Gwenynen Gwent' *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 2006 Vol. 13 (2007), pp. 94-106.

³³ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance* (Swansea, 1981).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

³⁵ P. Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period' E. Hobsbawm, & T. Ranger, (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983) pp. 43-100, p.100.

³⁶ H. T. Edwards, *Gwyl Gwalia* (Llandysul, 1980).

yn *Gymraeg*, a study of the social history of the Welsh language. In his article he describes the Abergavenny Eisteddfodau, which Lady Llanover was always personally connected, as ‘achlysuron...egsotig braidd’ [*rather exotic occasions*].³⁷ In his *Writers of Wales Guide to The Eisteddfod*, Edwards describes this cultural festival as an opportunity that ‘...afforded thousands of ordinary people a means of self-expression...’³⁸ It was a means of showcasing the talent held within a tiny fragment of the British Empire and a way of asking for equality. ‘Welsh patriotism as an imperial asset was regularly paraded and Gwalia as the most ruly of Victoria’s territories persistently asked for fair treatment.’³⁹ According to Edwards, this persistence was bound up and ‘reflected the neuroses of a people ever conscious of the need to prove themselves to that great neighbour ever ready to voice disapproval.’⁴⁰ Presumably then, this made the Victorian Eisteddfod as much about being accepted by the ‘English’ as a celebration and commemoration of a separate and rich culture. As we shall see, in Lady Llanover’s view, the Eisteddfod was an opportunity to promote Wales and her version of culture to those from outside the Principality.

Mair Elvet Thomas has studied the contributions of Lady Llanover in conjunction with her research on the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion society and those associated with its establishment in 1833.⁴¹ It was a relatively short-lived association of which Lady Llanover and many of her closest friends were members. The purpose of the society was to promote Welsh cultural activity such as essay writing, poetry, singing and musical competitions as well as the production of Welsh flannel via Eisteddfodau. Some of the fruits of these festivals later made it to publication. Thomas devoted an entire chapter to the achievements of Lady Llanover, however the content is mainly biographical. She notes that Lady Llanover does not seem to have protested upon the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society’s demise in 1854. Thomas infers that the most likely reason for this is that ‘Heb gwmni a chymorth Carnhuanawc ni allai hi, er ei holl frwdfrydedd, gynnal yr Eisteddfodau ar ei phen ei hun’ [*despite her (Lady Llanover’s) enthusiasm she was unable to hold the*

³⁷ H. T. Edwards, ‘Y Gymraeg yn yr Eisteddfod’ in G. H. Jenkins, (ed.) *Gwnewch Bopeth yn Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1999), pp. 275-295, p. 283.

³⁸ H. T. Edwards, *The Eisteddfod* (Cardiff, 1990), p. 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ M. E. Thomas, *Afiaith yng Ngwent* (Caerdydd 1978).

Eisteddfodau without the company and assistance of Carnhuanwc].⁴² In a sense Thomas is right to give weight to the importance of Lady Llanover's friends. However, just as little has been produced about them as the Lady herself.

With regard to the general cultural and linguistic background of Monmouthshire, Sian Rhiannon Williams has uncovered much from her study of the history of the Welsh language in *Oes Y Byd I'r Iaith Gymraeg*.⁴³ More recently she contributed the entry for Lady Llanover in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*,⁴⁴ and in an article written for *Cof Cenedl*, Williams draws attention to the influence of Lady Coffin Greenly (1795-1873) upon the young Lady Llanover and her achievements in the enrichment of Welsh culture. She argues that:

Y mae hanes ei bywyd yn gymorth i iawndeall yr hyn a symbylodd Arglwyddes Llanover i fod mor frwdfrydig o blaid y Gymraeg a'i diwylliant, ac y mae hefyd yn taflu ychydig o oleuni ar fyd bonheddig y cyfnod o safbwynt profiadau menywod

*[the history of her (Lady Greenly's) life is of help in understanding what inspired Lady Llanover to be so enthusiastically in favour of the Welsh language and its culture, it also throws some light upon the world of the upper classes in this period from the point of view of women's experiences.]*⁴⁵

Lady Llanover has not just attracted the attention of professional historians. Focusing on specific cultural aspects, Rachael Ley has undertaken a study on the history of the triple harp at Llanover Hall. The book focuses in detail on Lady Llanover's love of the triple harp, her efforts to promote the instrument via Eisteddfodau and personal patronage. Ley credits Lady Llanover with encouraging learning this complex instrument and its music and also draws attention to the musical legacy taken up by the Llanover harpists.⁴⁶ The Welsh dress has been a topic of interest for many amongst them, Christine Stevens⁴⁷, Morgan Ellis⁴⁸, Ken Etheridge⁴⁹

⁴² M. E. Thomas, *Afaith yng Ngwent*, p. 125.

⁴³ S. R. Williams, *Oes Y Byd I'r Iaith Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1992).

⁴⁴ www.oxforddnb.com/view/articleHL/39088?docPos=6&anchor=match

⁴⁵ S. R. Williams 'Llwydilas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg', p. 100.

⁴⁶ R. Ley, *Arglwyddes Llanover: Gwenynen Gwent* (Caernarfon, 2001).

⁴⁷ C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume and the Influence of Lady Llanover', National Library of Wales Web Site, <http://www.llgc.org.uk/gwyb/cyfeillion/stevensc-welsh-costume.pdf>

and more recently Michael Freeman. Some of these authors have built up a level of scrutiny on the topic. Freeman has challenged Lady Llanover's reputation as the inventor of the Welsh costume and as the artist credited with penning the now famous Welsh costume prints. In his opinion 'some of these assumptions are clearly incorrect but have been repeated so many times that they have acquired the status of folklore and may be quite difficult to dispel; others are more difficult to prove or disprove.'⁵⁰ Delving into the details of Freeman's argument is beyond the scope of the thesis, nevertheless it is important to acknowledge his ideas.

The European connections formed at Llanover have been the focus of Geoffrey Powell's⁵¹ research. His article is an important secondary source that highlights the exchange of ideas on culture and language, which took place between European intellectuals and scholars who mixed at Llanover. Other works chart Lady Llanover's contributions to institutions such as W. Gareth Evans's *History of Llandoverly College*.⁵² No part of the history is dedicated solely to her as a trustee but attention is drawn to her part in the general upkeep of the college buildings, her contributions to prizes for students and her attempt to protect the status of the Welsh language within the institution.

Maxwell Fraser has completed the most detailed survey of the lives of both Lady and Lord Llanover.⁵³ As Angela John has commented, Fraser seems to have mounted an effort 'to rescue Lady Hall from the autocratic image with which she ...has been associated.'⁵⁴ Fraser's publications are in the form of articles, which document the history of the Hall's lives in a chronological fashion. Some historians and commentators on Welsh culture have relied heavily upon Fraser's work when referring to Lady Llanover's cultural achievements. Her research is an essential source in itself. Fraser was able to utilise sources from private collections, which have

⁴⁸ M. Ellis, *Welsh Costume and Customs* (Aberystwyth, 1951).

⁴⁹ K. Etheridge, *Welsh Costume in the 18th & 19th Century* (Swansea, 1977).

⁵⁰ M. Freeman, 'Lady Llanover and the Welsh Costume Prints', *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (2007), pp. 235- 251, p. 235.

⁵¹ G. Powell, 'The Llanover Project: The European Dimension' *National Library of Wales Web Site*, <http://www.llgc.org.uk/gwyb/cyfeillion/geoffrey-powell-s.pdf>

⁵² G. W. Evans, *A History of Llandoverly College* (Cardiff, 1981).

⁵³ M. Fraser, A series of eleven articles on Augusta and Benjamin Hall in the *National Library of Wales Journal* (1962-8) XI-XVI.

⁵⁴ A. V. John, *Lady Charlotte- A Biography of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 104.

in some cases proven impossible to locate. It was necessary to rely upon data collected by Fraser and her meticulous research has been deposited at the National Library of Wales. Fraser's ambition was to write a biography of both Lord and Lady Llanover. This undertaking was never achieved yet it was no doubt the purpose of her research. As detailed and as vast as Fraser's study is, her opinions show a bias and admiration toward Lady Llanover.⁵⁵ Much of the work dates back to the 1960s and since this point, more source material has come to light. Consequently, it is time to review the subject with a new analytical approach, placed within the context of the wider cultural history of nineteenth century Wales.

Primary source material relating to Lady Llanover is available in abundance, scattered amongst various libraries and record offices. Some useful sources are to be found at Abergavenny Museum, Cardiff Library and St Fagans National Welsh History Museum but the majority of material has been collected from Gwent Record Office, and the National Library of Wales. Relevant artefacts and sources are kept at Abergavenny Museum and the National Welsh History Museum (previously the Museum of Welsh Life). Abergavenny Museum has a specific interest in Lady Llanover and has presented exhibitions on her life and work. A small archive, generally made up of artefacts, photographs and newspaper clippings is held there. As a collector of Welsh cultural history the National History Museum of Wales also holds artefacts of significance, examples of which are the medals offered as prizes for competitions in the Abergavenny Eisteddfodau and some of the original programmes. These collections offer a tangible grip on Lady Llanover's cultural world.

Cardiff Central Library holds a number of collections regarding Lady Llanover. They range from press cuttings relating to Lord and Lady Llanover between 1860-96, household bills dated 1848-60⁵⁶ to copious lists of presents to the poor⁵⁷ and Sunday schools.⁵⁸ An address and visitors book⁵⁹ is also held there in addition to lists

⁵⁵ S. R. Williams 'Llwyddlas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg', p. 118.

⁵⁶ Cardiff MSS, 3.771, Lord and Lady Llanover, presscuttings, 1860-96, and household bills, 1848-60, relating to Lord and Lady Llanover.

⁵⁷ Cardiff MSS, 4.644, Lady Llanover's presents to the poor 1839-83.

⁵⁸ Cardiff MSS, 4.645, Lady Llanover's presents to Sunday school scholars 1869-79.

⁵⁹ Cardiff MSS, 2.1022, Lady Llanover's address and visitors book 1862-66.

of those invited to Llanover garden parties⁶⁰ and for Christmas dinners.⁶¹ Most of the sources are dated post 1860 but are nevertheless a useful body of information documenting Lady Llanover in later life.

In relation to estate affairs, sources documenting the day-to-day running of the Llanover and Abercarn estates are held at the Gwent Record Office. It is possible to trace household matters through wage and expense books, tradesmen's books and licences held at the Gwent Record Office.⁶² General correspondences are also available, which from time to time are of a more personal nature thus revealing a little of Lady Llanover's relationship with her tenants.⁶³ Tenancy agreements, tithes, taxes and rents also add to a general picture of the Llanover estate. Documents relating to the establishment and upkeep of various chapels⁶⁴ on the estates are kept at Gwent Record Office; this is also the case with parochial schools. Documents are also held upon improvements at Llandovery College⁶⁵ and the establishment of Llanover Ancient Britons society.⁶⁶ In addition, a number of maps⁶⁷ also give substance to a geographical picture of the estate

The study of newspapers, such as *The Times*, *Western Mail* and *South Wales Daily News* allows one to trace the cultural activities of Lady Llanover and the opinions formed upon her throughout her lifetime. They are an important means of mapping the changes that occurred in Wales during the nineteenth century. The same can be said when searching through periodicals, the most noteworthy of which include, *Y Gymraes*,⁶⁸ *Seren Gomer*, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, *Y Goleuad* and *Y Gwladgarwr*. The most substantial weight of source material is held at the National Library of Wales which is where many of the newspaper collections are held along with the Llanover, Abergavenny Cymreigyddion, Dolaucothi and Taliesin ab Iolo papers, all of which are of strong significance to this thesis.

⁶⁰ Cardiff MSS, 4.646, Lady Llanover's garden parties 1863-83.

⁶¹ Cardiff MSS, 4.638, Lady Llanover's Christmas dinners.

⁶² Gwent Record Office, D1210.221-615, Lady Llanover/Mrs Herbert Household.

⁶³ Gwent Record Office, D1210.147-148/D1210.663-685.

⁶⁴ Gwent Record Office, D1210.686-711, Chapels.

⁶⁵ Gwent Record Office, D1210.797-814, Llandovery college.

⁶⁶ Gwent Record Office, D1210.815, Llanover Ancient Britons.

⁶⁷ Gwent Record Office, D1210.1639-1641/D1210.1651-1657, Maps of Llanover estate.

⁶⁸ *Y Gymraes* was the first Welsh language publication aimed at women it was established in January 1850 under the patronage of Lady Llanover.

The personal diaries and correspondence of Lady Llanover's friends and family are some of the most insightful sources available. Augustus Hare wrote a biography of Lady Llanover's sister, the Baroness Bunsen in two volumes.⁶⁹ This biography is of particular use in reference to details on the Waddington children's upbringing. Although there are almost no references to the family's involvement in Welsh cultural activities, it is a valuable account of the life of a woman who was not only of comparable status to that of Lady Llanover, but also directly related to her. Maxwell Fraser also transcribed copies of the original letters and papers written between the Bunsen and Waddington families, which are held at the National Library of Wales. In addition Fraser also transcribed a memoir written by the Baroness Bunsen for her children.⁷⁰ Again, these papers are of major significance in piecing together Lady Llanover's early life.

Within Lady Llanover's group of friends there were key characters, most of them were middle or upper class intellectuals who were also keen to push the profile of Wales and keep her culture relevant and alive. The correspondences, diaries and works of Lady Llanover's cultural allies and associates are essential in piecing together a fuller picture of her influence and cultural contributions. They enable us to view Lady Llanover and her life's work through the thoughts, actions and opinions of others.

The letters and diaries of Elisabeth Coffin Greenly (1771-1839) are of use in understanding Lady Llanover's early years.⁷¹ Regrettably the original correspondence is incomplete. This document too was transcribed by Maxwell Fraser and is held at the National Library of Wales. Another transcribed copy is available at Hereford Record office.⁷² Lady Greenly compiled six volumes selected from her correspondence and diaries. Presumably what she regarded as unsuitable for public consumption was destroyed. This allowed her to control the information and image, which she felt was appropriate to leave behind. In the course of her research Maxwell

⁶⁹ A. J. C. Hare, *The Life and Letters of Frances Baroness Bunsen Volume I* (Hawaii, 2003).

⁷⁰ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB7 Extracts from Note and Letters of Baroness Bunsen (nee Waddington).

⁷¹ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Extracts re. Halls from Greenly Diaries and Letters.

⁷² Hereford Record Office, D6/1-3 The Greenly Diaries.

Fraser copied all entries relating to the Llanover family. Therefore the remaining source has been sifted through numerous secondary filters.

The journal of Lady Charlotte Guest, like the letters of Lady Greenly offer another woman's perspective on the efforts mounted to safeguard the cultural heritage of Wales. Equally important sets of sources have survived in the form of the Dolaucothi correspondence.⁷³ The collection includes letters written by Lady Llanover in English to her young protégé Elisabeth or Betha Johnes (1834-?).⁷⁴ Some of Betha's diary entries and letters have also survived. The correspondence between the two women is of a very personal nature. Not only do the letters disclose much of what was happening at the Llanover estate, they also unveil something of Lady Llanover's personality.

The letters and correspondence of Taliesin Williams (ab Iolo) are of great significance.⁷⁵ Taliesin was very much part of the literary world of his father Edward Williams (Iolo Morgannwg) 1747-1826; a poet and antiquarian who was a central figure of the Welsh cultural revival.⁷⁶ In the collection there are a number letters, which relate directly to Lady Llanover and her cultural activities. In the collection there is also a wealth of correspondence available between ab Iolo and other writers and poets. These sources add to a deeper contextual understanding of Welsh cultural movement during Lady Llanover's time and help explain how it was that Lady Llanover came to purchase the Iolo Morgannwg manuscript collection for the library at Llanover.⁷⁷

An account of Llanover from the perspective of a servant also survives.⁷⁸ The diary of Margaret Davies (1843-1937) gives some idea of what life was like for the staff at Llanover between September 1861 and May 1863. It reveals something of the hierarchy and routine that staff were expected to follow. The diary notes some of the

⁷³ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence.

⁷⁴ Elisabeth Johnes 1834-?

⁷⁵ NLW MSS, Iolo Morgannwg: Taliesin Ab Iolo Letters.

⁷⁶ Iolo Morgannwg's contributions are dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two.

⁷⁷ The Llanover collection has since been transferred to the National Library of Wales and so it is possible to view exactly what was in the Llanover library collection.

⁷⁸ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/5(iii) Copy of Margaret Davies's Diary when at Llanover, 1861-3, with Notes on Aunt Margaret at Llanover by Miss Morris'.

NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Mostyn Jones nee Davies.

duties and tasks undertaken by staff on the Llanover estate. It begins with Margaret's journey from her home on the Mostyn estate in North Wales. She found life at Llanover curious in some ways and was greatly amused by Welsh dress rule. Margaret was present at Llanover on her twentieth birthday; she also spent Christmas on the estate. It seems that although she enjoyed her life in Llanover on the whole, Margaret never intended to stay indefinitely and an element of homesickness underpinned her writing.

T. A. Williams a former schoolmaster at Llanover⁷⁹ wrote a lecture in Welsh, offering a short retrospective view of life on the Llanover estate. He was proud of his Llanover connection and evidently regarded it as a special place. The document is undated and so it is hard to verify whether the information is second hand. Other sources, such as contemporary news articles contain parallel information, therefore there is no reason to doubt its factual content. Williams's admiration for Lady Llanover shone in his speech in which he described her as being 'Cymreig' [*Welsh*], 'Caredig' [*Kind*], and 'Cadarn' [*Strong*].⁸⁰ The reminiscences of people who remember their childhood on the Llanover estate have also survived. An example of which is an account written by Mary Powell Sabin who lived for a short time at Llanover before her family emigrated to America to join a Latter Day Saint community in Utah. The account was written in her eighty-second year in 1925. The account is possibly romanticised or inaccurate in some places, yet the difficulty remains that there is often no way of verifying information, which is of a personal nature.⁸¹

Unfortunately, no diary belonging to Lady Llanover has ever been located and there is nothing to suggest in other sources that she kept an official record of her thoughts and goals. Close scrutiny is therefore required of the sources left behind by others in her life. Yet that is not to say that she left nothing behind. The published works of Lady Llanover are rare, but that which has been published reveals her chief interests and sheds much light on her priorities and ambitions. Her works include the

⁷⁹ *Weekly Argus*, 11 July 1936.

Thomas Arthur Williams, schoolmaster at Llanover was interviewed in an article entitled 'Fascinating Study at Llanover'. It may be possible that the author of the lecture is the same person.

⁸⁰ St Fagans, 1810/1-6 (5), Copi ffoto o ddarlith ar Llanofer gan T.A. Williams. (d.d.).

⁸¹ Mary Powell Sabin's account of her early life. (1926).

I am indebted to Helen Forder for giving me a copy of Mary Powell Sabin's account of her early life.

edited correspondence of Mrs Delany,⁸² but most significantly an essay on the 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of The Welsh Language, and National Costumes of Wales'⁸³ and a cookbook namely, *The First Principles of Good Cookery*.⁸⁴ These sources set out her cultural ideas and opinions and merit direct analysis in the course of this thesis. Moreover, these sources help clarify that Lady Llanover made it the focus of her life to construct a romantic and traditional image of Wales.

Formulating a structure that will best present the arguments of this thesis has proved challenging. The source material available shows beyond any doubt that Lady Llanover's connections and cultural interests were diverse, meaning that there are various ways of constructing this thesis, with each point of view offering its advantages and drawbacks. The thesis will be presented over six chapters, starting by introducing Lady Llanover's character and then presenting the argument from its widest perspective, raising questions on how Lady Llanover's actions and cultural activities, culminated in an attempt to create a Welsh cultural utopia.

Chapter One will analyse Lady Llanover's personal life and character. It will ask how Lady Llanover's position and personality traits shaped her utopian ideals. This section will argue that Lady Llanover and her project were inextricably linked and that her mission drew heavily on her energy and single-mindedness. In exposing Lady Llanover's complex character this chapter will uncover outside perceptions of the woman behind the project and show that on occasion her steadfast determination blinkered her cultural vision and undermined the popularity of her ideas.

Chapter Two will set out the historical background of the nineteenth century and explore some of the economic and demographic changes that occurred in Wales that resulted in rapid and fundamental shifts in the political, religious and linguistic make up of the principality. The chapter will also explore the background and early

⁸² Lady Llanover (ed.) Delany, Mary, Granville, Pendareves, *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany* (London, 1861-2).

⁸³ Gwenynen Gwent, Gwent and Dyfed Royal Eisteddfod 1834- The Prize Essay on the "Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of The Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales." (London, 1836).

⁸⁴ Lady Llanover, *The First Principles of Good Cookery* -with an Introduction by Bobby Freeman (Tregaron, 1991).

stages of the cultural revival and analyse the historical circumstances that Lady Llanover responded to and acted against in a lifetime that spanned almost ninety-four years.

Chapter Three traces the first steps in the development of Lady Llanover's interest in Wales and its culture. It argues that her desire to be a Welsh cultural protectionist went through clear stages. The chapter takes into account the early influences upon Lady Llanover, including her friendships with key individuals that were present during her culturally formative years. Furthermore, the chapter takes into account significant cultural events including the 1826 Brecon Eisteddfod, the composition of Lady Llanover's prize winning essay of the 1834 Cardiff Eisteddfod and finally the ball held at Llanover Hall that coincided with the celebrations of the 1837 Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod. These events are viewed as important stages in Lady Llanover's public arrival as one of the foremost leaders of the Welsh cultural revival.

Chapter Four will consider Lady Llanover's position as a driving force at the centre of the Llanover intellectual circle. It deals with arguably the most productive and rewarding period of the group's activities. This section will consider how Lady Llanover used her power and influence on her cultural allies to manipulate and effect their cultural contributions. Through revealing how this network interacted within foundations such as the Eisteddfod and Welsh manuscript society, further light will be shed on Lady Llanover's role in the Welsh cultural revival.

Chapter Five is split into three subsections that deal with Lady Llanover's promotion of three of Wales's most famous symbols, the costume and the triple harp and the Welsh language. This chapter will reveal why Lady Llanover championed these symbols and how her patronage became a battle to convince the Welsh that the costume and triple harp were worthy national symbols that reflected a unique culture and identity. The final section will uncover Lady Llanover's staunch support of the Welsh language within religious and educational institutions and will reveal that Lady Llanover would not negotiate the Welsh language's position of primacy. This section will show that her loss of influence in later life marked a decline in the Welsh language's fortune as people increasingly gave precedence to the use of English. It

shall be argued that Lady Llanover's goal was to ultimately secure a future for the Welsh language as a holy and scholarly language.

Chapter Six focuses on life at the Llanover estate since it was there that Lady Llanover had the personal freedom to live out her 'dream' of a seemingly virtuous Welsh lifestyle. The chapter traces Lady Llanover's involvement on the Llanover estate and analyses her view of the ideal Welsh community. It will disclose how Lady Llanover viewed and undertook her responsibilities and also focus on the relationship between her, the staff and also her tenants. This final section will highlight how the estate was run and address the notion that Lady Llanover's brand of Welshness was imposed upon her working class tenants. It will demonstrate that Lady Llanover's concept of national identity and culture retreated to Llanover in later years and that her home became an example of pure Welsh living that she desired to be adopted by the rest of Wales.

Chapter 1 - The Personality Behind the Project

There is no doubt that Lady Llanover's strong character contributed toward making her Welsh utopian project possible. She was a complex person who was able to fill a number of roles. Lady Llanover was a daughter, wife and mother. Added to her position as a leading contributor to the cultural revival, she became head of her estates as well as her family. This chapter will consider Lady Llanover's multiple roles in life and will trace her relationships with family and friends. It will discuss the opinions of supporters and critics of her 'regime' and in so doing, will reveal something of the personality behind the 'utopian project.'

Lady Llanover has been described as an 'old humbug',¹ a 'Field Marshall',² and a woman with the 'most tender of hearts.'³ Yet more importantly she was known as Gwenynen Gwent [*The Bee of Gwent*]. Never was there a more suitable pseudonym, for it described her character perfectly. As will be continually emphasised in this thesis she worked constantly and was as 'busy as a bee' but she also possessed a painful sting in her tail. She often used her authority and her public platform to undermine any opposition mounted against her cultural ambitions. Consequently, Lady Llanover clashed with individuals who would not accept her views. Tracing shifts in opinion toward Lady Llanover and the limitations of her influence will highlight the development of her own personality and project, but also reflect the attitudes of a changing Wales. As Prys Morgan has commented: 'her successes and failures were a good indicator of the ebb and flow of Victorian Welshness.'⁴ It is undeniable that Lady Llanover's campaign to protect the Welsh language and cultural customs as well as her drive to reinforce the religious and morally educated image of the Welsh became the purpose of her being. In the true spirit of the philosophy by which she lived, Lady Llanover confessed, 'everything I want to have done, I do myself.'⁵ Following Lady Llanover's death the press reflected a sense of loss for a woman who represented an idealistic past. Though Lady Llanover's strongly enforced

¹ Words used to describe Lady Llanover, NLW MSS, Sir John Williams Papers 1148, 'Letter to Silvan Evans', [n.d].

² *South Wales Daily News*, January 20, 1896.

³ Ibid.

⁴ P. Morgan, 'Lady Llanover' (1802-1896) 'Gwenynen Gwent', p. 94.

⁵ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, [n.d].

views had ceased to be relevant, there was agreement among those who loved and loathed her alike that she had been a unique character:

A bitter pang was the thought that Wales was deprived of a long and steadfast friend, whose love of country has been something far more precious and real than an empty and vapid statement. The thought that was uppermost in every mind and it came with telling force crystallised in the phrase "We shall never look upon her like again."⁶

The *South Wales News* correspondent, 'Tawelfab' described Lady Llanover in 1924 as a 'Saxon Maid who became so imbued with the Celtic spirit that she outdid many a native in her fervour for things Welsh.'⁷ By 1951, general opinion upon the mixed national identity of Lady Llanover was much the same as Olive Phillips confesses in her travel book of Monmouthshire:

She might have been English by birth, and a hybrid Monmouthshire woman by adoption, but her sympathies were Welsh to the extreme, which is much more than can be said of most Monmouthshire folk today, who, like myself, have divided loyalties between England and Wales.⁸

Interestingly, Lady Llanover revealed that she regarded an Anglo-Welsh heart to be 'worse' than a Saxon one 'because it is un-natural.'⁹ One might suppose therefore that Lady Llanover did not regard herself as English in the least. Her loyalty exclusively belonged to Wales. As she herself said 'Wales has been my object throughout-I can truly say.'¹⁰

Lady Llanover was born Augusta Waddington, the youngest of three surviving daughters of Benjamin (1749-1828) and Georgina Waddington (1771-1850)¹¹ at Ty Uchaf in Llanover, Monmouthshire on 21 March 1802. Lady Llanover adopted the

⁶ *Wales Weekly News*, 25 January 1896.

⁷ *South Wales Daily News*, 26 July 1923.

⁸ O. Phillips, *The Country Books, Monmouthshire* (London, 1951), p. 149.

⁹ Quoted from criticism mounted by Lady Llanover toward Rowland Williams for his acceptance of the English language as the main medium of instruction at St David's college Lampeter. NLW. Letter from Llanbadarn Fawr Parish Chest, 1842-55 (typescript), A. Hall to James, 2 June 1850, quoted in Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England*, p. 86.

¹⁰ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, Good Friday 1863.

¹¹ In all there were six daughters. Harriet born and died 1790, Frances 1791-1876, Mary Ann, born 1793, Emilia 1794-1819, Matilda born and died 1797 and Augusta 1802-96.

national identity of the country of her birth despite the rest of her family being English. Her parents had relocated to Llanover from Berkshire some ten years earlier having made their fortune.¹² She spent a happy childhood at Llanover and this undoubtedly formed her idyllic view of Welsh country life.¹³ Even if some believed her to be a Saxon, what one may be sure of is that, ‘ennillodd edmygedd y genedl trwy ei chydymdeimlad brwd gyda phopeth Cymreig’. [*she won the admiration of the nation through her avid sympathy for all things Welsh*].¹⁴ Lady Llanover ‘devoted her time and money to foster and encourage’¹⁵ the language, customs and culture of her Wales.

A strong bond developed between Lady Llanover and her mother, Georgina Waddington and they were to be lifelong companions. As a young child, Lady Llanover displayed character traits that were to compliment the ambitious endeavours of her adult years. Her determination to have her ears pierced at the age of three surprised and amused her mother and in a letter to Lady Llanover’s godmother, Lady Greenly¹⁶ Mrs. Waddington relayed the story:

I must tell you an instance of Augusta’s heroism...When in London she saw Mrs. Charles Locke’s daughters of her own age with earrings and the little vain puss has ever since desired to have her ears bored...I told her if she chose to be hurt for the sake of wearing earrings, I would send for a woman to make holes and put a pair in, but that she must have both ears done, even if after the ear was pierced she repented.¹⁷

Showing wilful desire at a tender age she sat to have her ears pierced ‘and though she changed colour and trembled, she never shed a tear, made a movement or uttered a cry.’ The first ear ‘bled much’ but ‘so strict was the value of promise’¹⁸ and having agreed to withstand the pain the second ear underwent the same treatment without any objection. Mrs. Waddington had been impressed by the young Lady Llanover’s

¹² Benjamin Waddington purchased the Llanover estate in 1792. He is credited with planting a rich variety of trees on the estate, which survive today.

¹³ M. Fraser, ‘The Girlhood of Augusta Waddington’ (Afterwards Lady Llanover) 1802-23, *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XII, No.4 (1962), pp. 305-322. p. 308.

¹⁴ *Y Cymro*, 23 Ionawr 1896.

¹⁵ *Wales Weekly News*, 25 January 1896.

¹⁶ Lady Greenly was godmother to Lady Llanover. Their relationship will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.

¹⁷ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Waddington, 11 July 1805.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

'heroic' sense of honour and her resolve in seeing through her pledge. One might argue that this aspect of her personality informed her commitment to the protection of her vision of Wales and the Welsh people, no matter how difficult the situation might be.

Lady Llanover did not receive a conventional upbringing since Mrs. Waddington had been much influenced by her great aunt Mrs. Delany (1700-1778) who had adopted the young Georgina from the age of seven. A member of the 'Blue Stocking Circle', Mrs Delany was regarded as an intellectual and the influence of this great family member filtered accordingly through her young protégé and on down to the next generation.¹⁹ Being well aware of her relation's high standing in aristocratic and intellectual society, Lady Llanover undertook the task of editing Mrs Delany's autobiography and correspondence.²⁰ So close was the Waddington children's education to that of a child living in the eighteenth century that it has been suggested: 'in a sense Augusta might well have been raised by Mrs. Delany herself, so effectively was the mother's upbringing passed on to her daughters.'²¹

Augusta and her sisters, Frances (1791- 1876) and Emilia (1794-1819) received a wide-ranging education, which was not simply geared towards gratifying a husband. Among the subjects on the curriculum of study were Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian as well as economics, history, literature, geography and astronomy. There were no set hours for lessons and the children were encouraged to play outside, thereby Lady Llanover developed an early love of the countryside. As young ladies, they were also taught to draw from nature and cut silhouettes, a hobby that Lady Llanover kept up.²² Music and dancing lessons also featured on the academic agenda, instilling skills that later developed a Welsh flavour.

¹⁹ Mrs Delany was patron of the painters John Opie (1761-1807), Thomas Lawrence (1760-1830) and William Gilpin, (1724-1804). She was correspondent to Jonathan Swift (1667-1745); she could count amongst her admirers the founder of Methodism, John Wesley (1703-91) and the novelist Horace Walpole (1717-1797) she was also a close friend to the duchess of Portland and apparently 'much loved' by George III (1744-1818) and Queen Charlotte.

²⁰ Mary Granville Pendarves Delany, *The autobiography and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany : with interesting reminiscences of King George the third and Queen Charlotte* / Edited by Lady Llanover (London, 1861-1862).

²¹ Lady Llanover, *The First Principles of Good Cookery, with an Introduction by Bobby Freeman* (Tregaron, 1991), p. 13.

²² Lady Llanover illustrated her cookbook and a children's book by Ysgafell. Lady Llanover, *The First Principles of Good Cookery* (1867).

In contrast to her sisters who both lived abroad with their husbands, Lady Llanover seems to have been most comfortable at Llanover. Emilia died a young woman but Lady Llanover remained in contact with her older sister Frances²³ who married the Celtic scholar and Prussian ambassador to Britain, Christian Karl von Bunsen in July 1817.²⁴ Lady Llanover had ample opportunities to travel widely throughout Europe.²⁵ Yet faith and commitment to Wales was her principal priority. She displayed a twinge of guilt even in expressing a degree of admiration for other places. This need to emphasise her love of Wales was reflected in a letter written by Lady Llanover to her young friend Betha Johnes whilst on holiday in Heidelberg on a visit to see her sister Baroness Bunsen:

I am now rather afraid if I tell you how very much I enjoy myself here, that you will feel angry with me and suspect that I am beginning to be corrupted, and that I have forgotten my own land, but I must remind you that a Welsh heart is capable of any exaltation.... although I really do admire this place exceedingly, Wales is not removed from the centre of my heart...to exalt Heidelberg can never lower Wales.²⁶

Lady Llanover believed that needed to be beyond reproach in all matters and she felt that her love for Wales had to be unambiguous and above scrutiny, even amongst friends.

Beyond the draw of personal attraction it was perhaps this deep love of home that predisposed Lady Llanover to marrying into a local family. On 4 December 1823, she married Benjamin Hall III of Abercarn (1802-1867).²⁷ His father, of the same name was an industrialist and politician closely linked with the powerful Crawshay Family.²⁸ Her 'desire was that everybody around might be joyous and gay at her

J. Williams, *The Origin Rise and Progress of The Paper People* (London, 1861).

²³ See A. J. C. Hare, *The Life and Letters of Frances Baroness Bunsen Volume I* (Hawaii, 2003).

²⁴ This union was of major significance in that it facilitated contacts between the Llanover intellectuals and leading European thinkers. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

²⁵ Lady Llanover visited Rome in 1816, 1830 and 1834. She went to Heidelberg and Turin in 1858.

²⁶ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Augusta Hall to Betha Johnes written in Heidelberg, [n.d.]. The letter is undated but it was in all likelihood written in the summer of 1858 when Lady Llanover also visited Paris and Genoa.

²⁷ Benjamin Hall III, born 8 November 1802.

²⁸ Benjamin Hall II, 1778-1817 married the daughter of Richard Crawshay with whom he was at one time a business partner in the Rhymney ironworks. His property included Hensol Castle and the

wedding, and it appeared that her wish was fully accomplished.’²⁹ They lived for a time in rented accommodation in the Newport area but upon the death of Lady Llanover’s father in 1828, the couple returned to Llanover and built a mansion, fittingly named Llanover Hall (completed 1837). As we shall see this became the main home for the rest of her life and physical centre of Welsh culture.³⁰ The skills that Lady Llanover developed in conjunction with running the Llanover household were no doubt transferable when it came to her cultural pursuits. She was accustomed to exercising leadership be it at home at Llanover Hall, at Eisteddfodau or cultural organisations.

According to surviving evidence the marriage of Lord and Lady Llanover seems to have been a generally happy one. Letters written by Lady Llanover to friends refer to her husband with great affection.³¹ Prys Morgan stated that ‘there was never a cross word between them.’³² Such a scenario is perhaps unlikely but one cannot dispute that the partnership was a good match. Even if they did not agree on every issue, there is some suggestion that their relationship withstood tensions. In a letter to ab Iolo, Lady Llanover declared that she became ‘so annoyed as to strike Sir Benj sufficiently to induce him to alter the spelling’ of Llanover to Llangovor. Lady Llanover felt that the spelling should be changed to reflect the theory that Llanover had been named after St Govor.³³ To her annoyance Lord Llanover was ‘bent against it’.³⁴ There is also some evidence that Lord Llanover took part in an undisclosed indiscretion. What is beyond doubt is that Lord Llanover developed a close friendship with Queen Sophie of the Netherlands in whom he confided and engaged in intimate correspondence. Upon his death Queen Sophie was candid about their rapport. Writing in June 1867 to Lady Llanover she admitted having:

Abercarn estate. He served as MP for Totnes from 1806 to 1812, for Westbury from 1812 to 1814, and for Glamorgan from then until his death.

²⁹ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to her parents, 5 December 1823.

³⁰ The house was built in the Jacobean style under the architect Thomas Hopper (1776-1856) who was also responsible for Penrhyn Castle as well as the construction of Margam Castle. The mansion house was made from sandstone and it is unlikely to have been robust enough to withstand any period of neglect. In fact the building stood less than a hundred years, it was demolished in 1936.

³¹ See NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence.

³² P. Morgan, ‘Lady Llanover (1802-1896), ‘Gwenynen Gwent’, p. 96.

³³ Carnhuanawc, ab Iolo and Lady Llanover had researched the origins of Welsh place names.

³⁴ NLW MSS, Iolo Morgannwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters 126-250 21272 E (249) Lady Llanover to ab Iolo [n.d].

burnt all the letters, except the pencil notes he wrote me during his last illness. I know he wished it, and he wrote me once “In his time of indiscretion it was a relief to him to know I destroyed his letters.” I often regretted it, they were interesting, amusing, but I felt it was right.³⁵

The indiscretion is more likely to have been political rather than in matters of the heart. No firm evidence has come to light that would fully explain this ‘indiscretion’, but whatever Lord Llanover’s mistake the marriage remained solid.³⁶

Lady and Lord Llanover had three children, yet only the eldest daughter, Augusta Charlotte Elizabeth (1824-1912) survived into adulthood.³⁷ She became known as Gwenynen Gwent Fach [*The Little Bee of Gwent*] an inherited name from her mother. She worked with Lady Llanover diligently on behalf of Wales and its culture. Lady Llanover passed on her pride in the Welsh language and culture to her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She was adamant that her own children be taught Welsh and that they should take an early interest in literature. In 1839, Lady Llanover’s first-born son, Benjamin Stuart Hanbury Hall (1826-1845) wrote to ab Iolo in Welsh thanking him for a poem the latter had sent him. Hanbury promised ‘mi gymeraf llawer o ofal trosti’ [*I shall take very good care of it*].³⁸ By 1845, both of Lady Llanover’s sons had died. Her sense of loss became more acute when her mother and companion Mrs. Waddington also died in 1850. Lady Llanover’s correspondence suggests that she did not dwell on her grief often, yet it is clear that on occasion memories of happier times could be painful:

I was much depressed yesterday...from... the mental effect of seeing again after so many years the same glorious sea and mountains and palaces illuminating the same sun that shone on my poor dear mother, Hanbury and Caradoc, as if only one night has passed since we were here together, and yet all [are] gone from this world...³⁹

³⁵ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB 8-9 Letters of Queen Sophie of the Netherlands to Lord Llanover, Queen Sophie to Lady Llanover, 24 June 1867.

³⁶ In 1860 a Mr. Stone sought an action for libel against Lord Llanover it seems for slurring his name with allegations of bad conduct. The case was reported in the press.

See *Reynolds Newspaper*, 24 June 1860 and *Morning Chronicle*, 30 June 1860.

³⁷ The three children included; Augusta Charlotte Elizabeth (1824-1912), Benjamin Stuart Hanbury (1826- 45), Caradoc Trevor Frances Zacchia born in Rome (1830- 36).

³⁸ NLW MSS, Iolo Morgannwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters 126-250 21272 E (213) Benjamin Stuart Hanbury Hall to Ab Iolo, 24 January 1839.

³⁹ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 26 October 1858.

One might argue that part of the reason Lady Llanover was enabled to be so active in the Welsh cultural revival of the nineteenth century is because she had a relatively small family as a young woman. By the time Lady Llanover was in her early forties, circumstances dictated that she was in some senses free from the responsibilities of organising the needs of any children, thereby leaving her free to concentrate all her energies on cultural matters. It is true that a woman of her social class would have servants to tend to the children, nevertheless it is prudent to consider that Lady Llanover became one of the most prominent women in the development of nineteenth century Welsh culture because she was able to substitute the time that she otherwise would have spent on family matters with planning how best she might benefit Wales and the Welsh people.

In 1846 Lady Llanover's only surviving child married John Arthur Edward Jones of Llanarth. They later changed their name to Herbert in honour of a family connection with the Earls of Pembroke.⁴⁰ The pedigree of the family met with the approval of Lord and Lady Llanover who had a longstanding connection with the Herberts. Their Catholic religion was, however, a matter of some contention. Augusta Charlotte converted to Catholicism when she married and in the eyes of her parents this decision disqualified her from inheriting officially. Lord Llanover had hoped that his grandson Ivor Herbert would renounce the religion of his upbringing, but Lady Llanover's descendants steadfastly held on to their Catholic faith.⁴¹ Lady Llanover never resolved the 'problem' of her family's religion. As reported in *The Times* following Lady Llanover's death 'no person professing the Roman Catholic religion, and not being a Protestant Trinitarian Christian, shall take any benefit under the will'.⁴² Trustees officially ran the Llanover estate. Though, the next two generations kept their authority, though perhaps inevitably the Welsh characteristics of the estate enforced under Lady Llanover's will gradually depleted.

⁴⁰ John Arthur Jones (1818-1895), obtained a royal license in 1848 to assume the surname of Herbert in lieu of Jones, as descendent of the house of Herbert.

⁴¹ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB 8-9, Letters of Queen Sophie of the Netherlands to Lord Llanover, Queen Sophie to Lady Llanover, 24 June 1867.

⁴² *The Times*, 22 January 1886.

In the interests of Wales she was able to blinker her vision and keep the focus on the importance of fostering culture. As will be seen in chapter five, in later life, Lady Llanover formed a cultural alliance with John Patrick Crichton Stuart the third Marquis of Bute (1847-1900). His fascination with different religions and cultures were a matter of some amusement to her, as a letter to Betha Johnes on the subject reveals:

The newspapers announced that he had joined the Greek Church, and you may imagine my anxiety to know if it is true- and my hope that it is so- for it would be a comparative blessing to Wales and elsewhere if he belonged to the Greek Church instead of the Roman Catholic. I thought at one time he was more likely to turn Jew, but the Greek Church is more probable. He is devoted to antiquity and if once convinced by a learned Greek priest that the Pope is a modern invention, I think there would be a possibility, if not a probability of his throwing the Pope overboard!⁴³

One can only imagine that the Marquis's obsession with religions was a topic that continued to be taboo. His rank within aristocratic society was more important and as will become clear his wealth further boosted Lady Llanover's cultural mission. To engage the higher-ranking aristocrats and royals in her activities was a mark of success. Lord Llanover was well placed to use his connections with royalty. In 1860, Queen Sophie's son, the Prince of Orange stayed at Llanover and was treated to a lavish reception of 'completely Cambrian entertainment'.⁴⁴ Such a visit undoubtedly boosted Llanover's profile on the social scene.⁴⁵ In 1879 the Archduke of Baden visited Llanover and as late as 1890 Lady Llanover offered her home as 'hotel of rest' to the Queen of Romania. Again seeing an opportunity to boost Llanover's profile she declared 'not to receive such a personage, if she chooses to come, would really be flying in the face of providence in favour of our "Achos."'⁴⁶

Closer to home, both Lord and Lady Llanover worked hard to bring the Prince and Princess of Wales into the Welsh cultural fold. Aside from invitations to attend cultural events Lady Llanover regularly offered gifts to the royals. She often sent

⁴³ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 1 February 1879.

⁴⁴ The purpose of the visit was to form a union with English Princess. Lord Llanover was requested by Queen Sophie to do all he could to promote this.

⁴⁵ *Illustrated News of the World*, 25 February 1860.

⁴⁶ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 27 September 1890.

Welsh mutton and game at Christmas as well as birthday presents to the Prince and Princess of Wales.⁴⁷ There is nothing unusual in her desire to shower the royals with presents. However arguably Lady Llanover was overly competitive in this area. The giving of special gifts required a greater degree of organisation. In 1863, Lady Llanover headed the commission of a gift for the Princess of Wales on behalf of the Welsh aristocracy. This mission turned into a saga of conflict between Lady Llanover and Lord Cawdor (1817-1898). She felt sure that there was a conspiracy against her efforts and her version of the story was related in bitter detail to Betha Johnes. The episode is a valuable piece of evidence that illustrates the perhaps extreme elements of Lady Llanover's personality.

Originally, the ladies of north Wales led by Lady Williams Wynn had undertaken the task of collecting subscriptions toward a present. Lady Llanover joined the scheme suspecting that 'they wished to repudiate South Wales unless their funds were short.'⁴⁸ From the beginning Lady Llanover felt that there may 'be trouble, and perhaps told Mon[mouthshire] is England!' With characteristic confidence she declared 'if I held my peace I could do well as Gwenynen Gwent with all Cymry in Sir Fynwy and no thanks to anyone else [but] I really am unable to contend with conflicting elements just at present.'⁴⁹

Conflict pervaded many aspects of Lady Llanover's cultural activities and her ardent wish to impress the royals was no exception. It was decided by the committee of Welsh gentry to present the Princess with jewellery. The design could not be agreed upon and infighting ensued. Lady Llanover felt particularly aggrieved that her ideas had not been credited and was furious that the design was not 'emblematic and illustrative of Wales.'⁵⁰ Adding further insult, she was to 'be bribed by the choice of a Welsh motto to put around it.'⁵¹ It was an unsatisfactory offer to Lady Llanover's mind and this only further ensconced her annoyance. The issue weighed so heavily on her that she confided in Betha saying, 'I can scarcely sleep at night; all day I am engaged in counteracting evil-but there is no doubt the enemy is worsted and not yet

⁴⁷ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB 8-9, Letters from Lord Llanover to political colleagues.

⁴⁸ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, March 1863.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 3 June 1863.

⁵¹ Ibid.

gained a single point!’⁵² Lady Llanover saw conspiracy in Lord Cawdor’s involvement with the committee, in spending the funds and in choosing the design. But she stood her ground in order to have an emblematic piece of jewellery made. Victory on the issue was gained by collecting funds from the Ladies of Monmouth who raised £800 toward the gift, outstripping every other county in Wales. With this, the balance of power shifted in her direction. Lady Llanover declared at the committee meeting that she ‘was determined not to be party to anything that was not thoroughly national and emblematic of Wales,’⁵³ or else she would return every penny of the £800. Feeling that opinion was against her, Lady Llanover put on record that she had acted on behalf of the Welsh people. She felt sure that her rivals would misconstrue the events. Her protestations reflect a defensive, insecure and perhaps paranoid side to her personality, even so she managed to gain her desired results on behalf of her Wales:

Pray let it be known that I have fought to the death and if the money is not misappropriated those that are true to the country may thank me. No creature spoke a word against the nationality of the token but none had the courage to speak out at all, except Lord C. himself who was increasingly wrangling and interfering.⁵⁴ I have been the victim of such real and determined and continued persecution on part of Lord and Lady Cowdor and their ignoble friends...because I would not sell South Wales.⁵⁵

Lord Llanover contributed his support and his wealth toward his wife’s cultural project. In addition to his involvement in the Eisteddfod network he enhanced the profile of Llanover by hosting royals, diplomats and intellectuals of diverse backgrounds. In 1867, he suffered a shooting accident when his gun ‘kicked back’⁵⁶ and left his face injured by the gunpowder. The wound became infected and eventually blood poisoning set in. His death was slow, arduous and one would suppose extremely painful. Lady Llanover nursed him through his illness and from what her correspondence reveals, this event left her exhausted and traumatised. In a seemingly rushed note Lady Llanover told Betha of her husbands sufferings:

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Lord Llanover suffered two accidents of this kind. The second being more serious.

...he is much worse... and in pain-obliged to have chloroform continually to produce relief-could not go from one bed to another yesterday-can scarcely take anything now-even through a teapot spout. Pray for him for me...this is very bitter but God knows best- I try to say sincerely "Thy will be done".⁵⁷

His death at Great Stanhope Street, London came almost as a relief. Lady Llanover's declaration of grief was short and to the point. She confided in Betha, 'the light of my life is gone. He died at ½ past 3 this morning after fearful sufferings...I am very miserable-I ought to be more thankful for him.'⁵⁸ His private funeral was held at Llanover Church bilingually. There he was buried in the family vault, his coffin having been made from oak felled on the estate and decorated with evergreens.⁵⁹

It has been suggested that Lady Llanover's widowhood was less eventful.⁶⁰ Although her public profile may not have been as strong, Lady Llanover did not shrink away post 1867.⁶¹ If anything, one might argue that she redoubled her efforts and made her cultural utopia at Llanover her priority. There she had absolute power to protect her ideals. Moreover in her widowhood she became head of the estates and her family, a role, which she viewed, with a great sense of responsibility. In a sense Lady Llanover was to her family the archetypal Welsh Mam,⁶² though obviously she was of the wrong class to be analysed in such a role. By 1879 she was a great grandmother and proudly told Betha, 'I have all the clothes for the baban made here by hand.'⁶³ One might go as far as to say that between her cultural activities and her family responsibilities Lady Llanover's workload accelerated in later life:

Now for my troubles pray pity me.- Here I am with the sole management and arrangement on my shoulders of the first arrival of the 4th generation! And I assure

⁵⁷ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, ? April 1867.

⁵⁸ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 27 April 1867.

⁵⁹ *Cambrian*, 31 May 1867.

⁶⁰ *Banner ac Amserau Cymru*, 29 January 1896.

⁶¹ S. R. Williams, 'Llwydlas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg', p. 122.

⁶² The image of the Welsh Mam is part of Welsh historic mythology. She was a powerful woman who allegedly held the real decision-making and economic power of the family in her role as household manager.

⁶³ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 1 February 1879.

you that is no joke. I am more than ever tied here by inclination and duties and business without end...⁶⁴

Lady Llanover used her authority within the family to offer advice at every given opportunity and was so controlling as to instruct the servants exactly how many mouthfuls of food to give each grandchild, down to the last strawberry.⁶⁵ It evidently frustrated Lady Llanover if her advice was ignored by her daughter, as is shown by a letter written to Ann Phillips the children's nurse:

I have never seen the gowns and petticoats I bought for them on their backs but twice and I do not think they ever wear them. I have never seen the muslin handkerchiefs I gave them either [and] you know how I dislike to see wrong colours out together... I know that you cannot get other clothes for them but take the first opportunity (when you have a good one) of telling Mrs. Herbert when their things are bad or look ill.⁶⁶

Lady Llanover thought of Ann Phillips (who was affectionately known by the family as Gaffr) as a friend, but as would have been naturally the case when instructing servants, she was frank in her communication. Nevertheless Gaffr was a valued member of family staff and so was treated as a confidant and invited to dine at Llanover.⁶⁷ There seems to be two contrasting sides to Lady Llanover's personality, which explains why some found her overbearing and interfering but others regarded her as generous and as a person who took pride in being a good friend and landlady. This might explain the contradictory views expressed by those who met her. As one commentator put it 'she is heralded by one party as little less than an angel and by others as below a woman in hardness of heart.'⁶⁸

Tenants who lived under her strict supervision also held such contradictory opinions, a topic that will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Six. It was part of Lady Llanover's character to be kind to some and one might say cruel to others. Therefore it was possible for those who lived at Llanover to experience both sides of

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ St Fagans, 3520/6-47, A collection of personal letters written mainly to Ann Phillips, Lady Llanover to Ann Phillips, 25 August 1864(?).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ St Fagans, 3520/6-47, A collection of personal letters written mainly to Ann Phillips, Lady Llanover to Ann Phillips, 20 March 1886.

⁶⁸ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser Bequest CB24/-1-53, R.S Hawker to Mrs. Watson, 6 August 1856.

her personality. Lady Llanover took personal responsibility for looking after those who were unwell. She gained satisfaction in looking after people in periods of ill health. As Jane Aaron put it, 'her generosity to her friends and protégés was caring and personal.'⁶⁹ However this generosity extended outside of her social class. One might suppose that if Lady Llanover had not been a part of affluent society, the occupation of nurse might have suited her well. She would bring her own medicine to the needy, a mark of her maternal instinct but also of her indifference to, and independence from, the medical profession. Lady Llanover never relied upon a doctor to mix her tonics; rather, like her mother and godmother before her she always used her own homeopathic remedies.⁷⁰ When John Powell, superintendent of mason work at Llanover was taken dangerously ill with an unknown contagious disease, Lady Llanover went to the Powell's home in order to combat the 'strange sickness' as the daughter of the household recorded in old age:⁷¹

In the midst of our trouble, Lady Hall and her maid came...She spent her winters in London and her summers in the country. She had known mother since a child... I met her at the door and hung her wraps in the little hallway. She went straight upstairs to mother's room... Night after night Lady Hall came and cared for father.⁷²

Despite John and his wife Elizabeth's protests, their daughter Mary noted that their mistress insisted on making the journey to the house to give Elizabeth, who had recently given birth to her fifth child, some respite. Lady Llanover was apparently happy to give up her evenings as she had the leisure to sleep during the day. Although the account again reflects Lady Llanover's mythologised and complex character, the story also shows that she had in her an unyielding focus on the duty of care to her tenants.⁷³ Lord Llanover also held this attitude of concern for his workers:

⁶⁹ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity*, p. 67.

⁷⁰ St Fagans, 1810/1-6, (5) *Darlith ar Llanofer* gan T.A. Williams, p.19.

Lady Greenly was also a homeopathy enthusiast as was Lady Llanover's daughter Charlotte Augusta.

⁷¹ Mary Powell Sabin's account of her early life. (1926), p. 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Mary Powell was 9 years old when this event took place. Mary was born in 1844; therefore it is likely that the date of this occurrence must have been around 1853.

He urged father to safeguard his health. Father thanked him. Said he, "Give your orders and let the men carry them out. Go home each day before sundown. You need to look after your health. I want to keep you John for as long as I can."⁷⁴

The following winter after John Powell's recovery he served his notice to Lord Llanover so that the family could emigrate to Utah. Powell's dream as stonemason and Mormon was to help build the temple of the Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. One can only assume that Lady Llanover saw no real value in this, her religious prejudice was well known. She is said to have remarked; 'Poor John all that's the matter is his mind is tuned by Mormonism.'⁷⁵ In order to move, Mary Powell's parents had to sell all their possessions, a task made difficult by their fellow tenants reluctance to part with their money, though most of their worldly goods were eventually sold for a 'moderate price.'⁷⁶ It is possible that the Powell's fellow tenants were aware of Lady Llanover's general disappointment at the family's decision to leave and this might well have effected the slow take up of the house sale. John Powell achieved his ambition, yet only fleetingly; he died two weeks after he began his work, having survived a gruelling journey.

A tenant described Lady Llanover as a benevolent autocrat who took it upon herself to protect the welfare of her tenants from cradle to grave,⁷⁷ however if her wishes were ignored it soon became evident that Lady Llanover's sympathy had its limitations. When the young stable worker William Griffiths became disillusioned with life at Llanover he emigrated to the U.S.A., only to be taken mentally ill after the death of his brother. With his sanity in question he was transferred to the state hospital for the insane in Danville. Concerned about William's condition, a friend of his wrote to Mrs Griffiths upon his companion's admission to hospital:

I think, if any body from his home could come to fetch him from here that he may get well again, we will do all we can for him but I think the best remedy would be for

⁷⁴ Mary Powell Sabin's account of her early life. (1926), p. 6.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ St Fagans, 1810/1-6, (5) Darlith ar Llanofer gan T.A. Williams. [d.d.], p. 17.

you to come yourself -if it is possible to fetch him he may get all right by crossing the water.⁷⁸

William's sister appealed to Lady Llanover in a letter written on behalf of her mother imploring assistance and advice on how to bring the troubled young man home. In a bundle, Ann Howell included two letters written by different doctors both of which described William as being unresponsive to the outside world.⁷⁹ A reply was delivered through Lady Llanover's agent Dafydd Williams, who expressed his mistress's sorrow that nothing could be said or done on account of the fact that William had been advised not to go to America. The letter infers that Lady Llanover was of the opinion that it was not wise to fetch William home if he had indeed taken leave of his senses. The communication closed by advising that the remaining brother, John should remain a 'good boy' whilst in Lady Llanover's service.⁸⁰ One might deduce from the examples noted above that while Lady Llanover was keen to keep relations with her tenants warm, she was unwilling to help those who went against her advice. However, one must guard against being over judgemental of Lady Llanover's decision. William Griffiths's case was extreme. It seems unlikely that any landowner would pay for the return passage of a mentally ill former employee, who left his position with only two weeks notice after having already being given a pay rise.

Just as her tenants experienced different aspects of Lady Llanover's authority and behaviour so too did her friends. She lent her financial support to Ieuan Gwynedd (1820-1852) who in 1850 established the first periodical aimed at Welsh women, *Y Gymraes*.⁸¹ The *Western Mail* described Lady Llanover as 'one of Ieuan's ideal women- the embodiment of noble patriotism and generosity.'⁸² When the publication failed she is said to have 'stood by him.'⁸³ Mrs Evan Jones, his wife became Lady Llanover's 'invaluable unfailing helper' for more than forty years and acted as her secretary until she died in 1894. In the second half of her life, Lady Llanover had no

⁷⁸ Gwent Record Office, D.1210.822.1, Correspondence re. the condition of Gwilym Gruffydd formerly in Lady Llanover's service now in asylum in America.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *Y Gymraes*, (Caerdydd, 1850-51).

See S. R. Williams, 'Women's Nineteenth Century Periodicals' in A.V. John (ed.), *Our Mother's Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1839* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 69-92.

⁸² *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

⁸³ Ibid.

greater friend than the aforementioned Betha Johnes. Their correspondence reveals much of Lady Llanover's personality and actions. There is no evidence to suggest that Betha ever begrudged her friendship with Lady Llanover. Yet, those around Betha found that Lady Llanover monopolised Betha's time and tended to suffocate her freedom to have friendships with others. Betha's sister Mrs. Charlotte Cookman complained to her father of Lady Llanover saying: 'what annoyed me was her meddling interference in affairs and her domineering spirit.'⁸⁴ She added, 'I cannot stand being dictated to by L' Llanover or any other Lady because she has a little before her name.'⁸⁵ She added: 'In matters where my best affections are concerned Lady Llanover has been most inconsiderate of my feelings and has done all in her power to estrange Betha from her family, thank God her affection is too true and pure to be taken from me.'⁸⁶

Neither did Lady Llanover's criticism of Betha's friendship with Bishop Connop Thirlwall go unnoticed. In a letter from a mutual friend of Betha, Charlotte Cookman and Lady Llanover, Geraldine Jewsbury a regular guest of Lady Llanover wrote in 1875 to Mrs. Cookman:

She [Lady Llanover] says that tho it may well suit Mr Thirlwall to try to make a great show of B's continued acquaintance with him- yet it would not be for the benefit of B's good name. She expressed herself very strongly and B was very good about it.⁸⁷

Though Lady Llanover was perhaps too forthright in her criticism of those she did not take kindly toward or understand, in the case of Betha Johnes, Lady Llanover tended to have her friend's interests at heart. As we shall see, Lady Llanover had little time for Thirlwall and the other Bishops of Wales and once again her narrow-mindedness would not allow her to contemplate that Betha could see good in a person that she regarded as an enemy of Wales and her religion.

Lady Llanover was very protective of her younger friend. One might even say that they had an almost mother-daughter relationship. After Betha's affections for

⁸⁴ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Mrs Cookman to Mr Johnes, 28 October 1859.

⁸⁵ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Mrs Cookman to Mr Johnes, 18 October 1859.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Geraldine Jewsbury to Charlotte Johnes, 9 August 1875.

Lady Llanover's nephew Arthur Berrington were not returned Lady Llanover was less than pleased. She offered a sympathetic ear to Betha saying in the midst of her ordeal, 'I know your poor little wounded spirit can only be healed by pouring out its feelings while they are so overpowering.'⁸⁸ However, when rumours of his immoral conduct (which included drinking heavily and consuming opium) began to circulate, both Lady and Lord Llanover were furious and broke off all ties with him.⁸⁹ The situation was indeed awkward and Lady Llanover feared that her relationship with her sister-in-law would come under strain. In a letter to the trustworthy Betha, Lady Llanover made her opinion of her nephew Arthur Berrington very clear:

Who knows of what he might have persuaded her [Mrs.Berrington]? What falsehoods he may have told of me...In fact I believe it to be impossible for anybody who puts trust in him either to do right (if influenced by him) or to be happy. He makes misfortune for all he has to do with and then calls it fate... I scarcely think him human. Don't repeat this last bit!⁹⁰

One might say that in her love of Wales Lady Llanover became lonely not least because she refused to tolerate those who did not concur with her views. In truth, the number of friends who shared her passion for Wales in later life was small. A letter she wrote to Betha in 1864 beseeching her to come and visit suggests an element of desperation in keeping her friends close:

Lady Ll hopes she is not selfish in wanting visit of Betha because all at Llanover-Welsh inhabitants, servants with myself no. 1 love and want her so much.. I do not desire to have a creature here (at Eisteddfod) except Welsh hearts and bodies and at present I do not know one except ourselves (Miss L. Miss B. and myself, and the jolly vicar, the Llywydd and his attendant Welsh parsons)...I must not punish you doubly and trebly for kindly coming to the old Gwenynen in her Welsh Cartref, Yes Indeed!⁹¹

⁸⁸ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, ? May 1861.

⁸⁹ Lord Llanover stopped an allowance of £100 a year. They were not reconciled until just before Lord Llanover's death.

⁹⁰ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, from Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, ? 1861.

⁹¹ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 13 October 1864.

Visitors to Llanover no matter when were sure to have a memorable stay. Not everyone warmed to Lady Llanover's character and likewise not all visits to Llanover yielded good reports. Lady Mary Elisabeth Lucy who in 1853 visited Llanover in connection with the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod wrote one of the most scathing accounts of Llanover. In contrast to the image and reputation Lord and Lady Llanover had tried to build, Lady Lucy complained that 'Sir Benjamin and his lady were anything but a genial host and hostess.'⁹² She found it surprising that 'when the eisteddfod was over, Sir Benjamin never offered to give the gentlemen shooting...but planned a drive or a ride, marshalling everyone as to how they were to go, perfectly regardless of their own wishes.' She found his company 'far from agreeable.'⁹³ From what Lady Lucy wrote about her visit to Llanover in her memoirs a clash of personalities surfaced between the two women who shared a love of the harp. At Llanover, Lady Lucy met the harpist Mr. Thomas an experience that was for her, unforgettable:

He most good-naturedly uncovered his harp and played. I was enchanted and fancied the king of the fairies himself swept the cords, never did I hear such feelings tone, richness and power combined. He told us he was staying at Llanover and was appointed 'Judge of Music' at the Eisteddfod to award prizes to the best harpists.⁹⁴

Eager to hear more recitals Lady Lucy 'asked Lady Hall why she did not let [them] hear him sometimes, for his playing was simply glorious.' Lady Lucy was disappointed when 'the provoking and tyrannical woman said, "No, you would spoil him, he must keep to his room and study."⁹⁵ Lady Lucy was shocked by Lady Llanover's apparently possessive control of the harpist she remarked that, 'Lady Hall disapproved of his dancing which we all thought was real too bad for all the young ladies would have been delighted to have had him for a partner.'⁹⁶ As Lady Lucy recorded one woman later rebelled in spite of Lady Llanover's watchful eye:

⁹² Mary Elizabeth Lucy, *Mistress of Charlecote: The Memoirs of Mary Elizabeth Lucy 1803-1889* (London, 1983) p. 98.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Mrs. Herbert... gave a ball to which all the Llanover party were invited, and she especially named Mr. Thomas. The two houses were only about five miles apart. Soon after we entered the ball room Miss Bickersteth who notwithstanding her designs on Court Esterhazy, had really lost her heart to Mr. Thomas, asked him to dance which he modestly declined, saying that perhaps it might annoy Lady Hall. But Miss Bickersteth would take no denial and Lady Shelley said, 'Nonsense, Mr. Thomas, you cannot refuse a lady when she asks you to be her partner,' so he stood up and they danced together. Lady Hall, seeing them, flew at him like a tigress and insisted on his retiring. Then we all attacked her and defended Mr. Thomas, Mrs. Herbert too came to the rescue and remonstrated with her mother and there was quite a scene. But Mr. Thomas was triumphant and danced and enjoyed himself for the rest of the evening.⁹⁷

In 1877 and again in 1879, Augustus Hare visited Llanover in order to conduct research on his biography of Lady Llanover's sister Baroness Bunsen. He described Lady Llanover as 'very small and very pretty.' Hare believed that they had a 'mutual bond in our love for her sister.'⁹⁸ They talked from 4.00pm until 10.30pm apparently proving that she still had full use of her lungs!⁹⁹ It seems that Hare was unsure of what to make of Llanover Hall. He evidently realised that the reason Llanover was unique came down to Lady Llanover's personal authority. He said of her 'there is a good deal... to admire in Lady Llanover: her pertinacity in what she thinks right, whether she is right or not [and] her insistence in carrying out her sovereign will in all things.'¹⁰⁰ As we have seen Lady Llanover could be generous to her tenants yet she was a spend thrift in the home. The parsimonious aspect of her character took Augustus Hare aback. He remarked that 'after tea she gathered up all the lumps of sugar, which remained and emptied them with a great clatter into a box, which she locked up.' He added 'with £20,000 a year the same economy pervades everything'.¹⁰¹ As Hare observed, despite being financially comfortable Lady Llanover lived her day-to-day life, especially in her later years, along modest lines but again this may have been a reflection of a desire on her part to lead by example.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 98-99.

⁹⁸ A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of my Life Vol. 5* (London, 1900), p. 2.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 3.

Aside from her strong character Lady Llanover was known for her astonishing work ethic. It is true she outlived many of her friends and family but she evidently took considerable satisfaction in her matriarchal role and continued to defend her vision of the Welsh nation. According to one newspaper ‘hanner addolid hi trwy Gymru oll’. [*she was half worshipped throughout Wales*]¹⁰² What Lady Llanover stood for and strove toward was known and understood by the press and this is what prompted them to look back at Lady Llanover’s personality and successes because in effect it was the same as assessing the Welsh nation’s cultural past. Each publication highlighted her activities some giving more emphasis to literature, others to music and some to the Welsh language. *Y Cymro* regarded her as an extraordinary character and the living patron saint of Welsh literature.¹⁰³ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* had often reported on her and denied any charges of lunacy saying, ‘i rai dybied mai gwallgofi ar bethau Cymreig; ond nid oedd dynes o feddwl cryfach na hi i’w chael o fewn y Dywysogaeth. [*to some it was thought that she had become mad for all Welsh things; but never was there a Lady of stronger mind to be had in the Principality*].¹⁰⁴

A life spanning almost 94 years, one, which was dedicated to ‘the Welsh cause’, could not go unnoticed by the Welsh nation as is reflected in one of many obituaries:

At a time when it was fashionable to sneer and snub Wales, its people its language, its literature, its traditions, and its customs, she... raised her voice in vigorous protest against the perpetuation of so suicidal a policy, and carried her protest to the length of insisting what was practically a crusade in favour of rehabilitating the national customs of the Cymry in popular estimation and of calling forth among the Welsh people themselves fresh enthusiasm for their national characteristics.¹⁰⁵

The choice of words used to honour Lady Llanover portrays her in an almost messianic fashion. It gives the impression that her aim was to save the Welsh people from themselves, a valid argument to be considered in light of exactly how Lady Llanover set about reviving an interest in language and culture amongst the Welsh

¹⁰² *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 29 January 1896.

¹⁰³ *Y Cymro*, 23 Ionawr 1896.

¹⁰⁴ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 29 January 1896.

¹⁰⁵ *Pontypool Free Press*, 20 January 1896.

themselves. But regardless of that hard work, her later years mark a decline in her general influence. The tendency of her contemporaries to consider the elderly Lady Llanover as a peculiar and occasionally interfering 'busy body' highlights this. Although many admired her cultural project, some thought 'she carried her predilections for things Welsh to a point that earned for her the reputation of being an eccentric nationalist.'¹⁰⁶ She was renowned for her controlling and uncompromising nature, a quality that was undoubtedly essential in establishing and continuing the enforcement of her prescribed Welsh character on the Llanover estate.

This chapter has shown that Lady Llanover possessed multiple identities. It has surveyed her as an individual within her personal circumstances and has taken into account her roles as an aristocrat, wife and mother. All such elements will be given full consideration throughout this thesis in order to explain what influenced her Welsh cultural project. Her motives and personality will also be brought into consideration and analysed throughout. Clearly, Lady Llanover's interest in Welsh culture ran deeper than an urge to romanticise about the past, though there is no doubt that she herself was a romantic, her campaign for Wales and its culture was a serious one. What is certain is that her labours were not solely for her own amusement. As will be revealed, it is for this reason that Lady Llanover used her power and matriarchal authority to mould Llanover into her perfect Wales and in this sense one might view her in an early feminist light. Lady Llanover's competitive nature and her unbending will were fundamental in shaping and driving her Welsh cultural project. Her attempt to create a cultural utopia is inextricably linked with her personality. As will be shown Lady Llanover was the life-force of her cultural revival and utopian ideals. Though Lady Llanover's personality almost predestined her to be a leader of sorts, she was not born 'Gwenynen Gwent'. In a sense, she was created by the transformations that occurred in the new industrial era. The next chapter will explore those changes of the nineteenth century that informed Lady Llanover's cultural mission.

¹⁰⁶ *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

Chapter 2 - Lady Llanover's World: Wales in the Nineteenth Century

The Wales in which Lady Llanover was born into on 2 March 1802 was markedly different from the Wales that she departed on 17 January 1896 and it is no simple task to explain the circumstances, which so greatly altered Wales during this period. One might say very plainly; the industrial economy grew, with it the population, the Welsh language gradually set aside, politics became radicalised, religious zeal energised and cultural matters both 'high' and 'popular' reinvented and contested. In order to understand the motivation behind Lady Llanover's attempt to create her idea of a Welsh cultural utopia and to understand from where her values and attitudes derived, it is essential to view Lady Llanover's life in the context of the most important historical developments of the nineteenth century. This chapter will argue that such changes created a new and diverse Wales.¹ Furthermore, it will explain that the core of Lady Llanover's cultural utopia and her view of the Principality were borne out of her reactions to this changing Wales. As previously noted in the introduction, the nineteenth century holds much fascination for Welsh historians. This chapter is split into five subsections that will discuss in turn the economy and demography, the Welsh language, politics, religion and culture of Wales. Through exploring these important topics it will be made clear how they are relevant to Lady Llanover's life and project. By approaching changes in society thematically, this chapter seeks to explain how Lady Llanover responded to these changes and how ultimately how she became out of touch with modern Welsh society.

Economy and Demography

Of all the major transformations that occurred in nineteenth century Wales, one must look to the economy in order to understand the roots of those changes. As Prys Morgan rightly commented 'it is the overwhelming impetus of industrialisation

¹ See N. Evans 'Gogs, Cardis and Hwntws: Regions, Nation and State in Wales 1840-1940' in N. Evans (ed.) *National Identity in the British Isles* (Harlech, 1989), pp. 60-72.

which makes the period unique.’² Yet, as Neil Evans argues ‘The industrialisation of south Wales has always been puzzling.’³ In the wake of this progression came what might be described as an explosion in the population, especially in southeast Wales. Dai Smith summed up the situation in a chapter written on ‘changing Wales’ in his book *Wales: A Question for History*, when he said that ‘the ratio of population in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire to all other Welsh counties changed between 1801 and 1911 from one to four to three to one.’⁴ This was without doubt the single most important consequence of the industrialisation process, which in effect altered the makeup of the people of Wales and in doing so changed her characteristics entirely. Yet as W. E. Minchinton has highlighted, growth in the population differed from area to area depending on where industry was establishing and flourishing. In his introduction to *Industrial South Wales* he pointed out that ‘the pattern is not one of simple growth, but it is complicated by local increases and decreases as the fortunes of different parts of the region fluctuated.’⁵ But despite such local differences there is no doubt that Wales’s increasing population fed the industrial revolution and John Davies identified the central importance of this sequence of events in his work on the first half of nineteenth century Wales:

The growth was the source of the multitudes who were drawn to the furnaces, the collieries and the quarries of industrial Wales. Population growth made possible the rise of mass communities in Wales, a central development in the country’s social, political and cultural history.⁶

Without the development of the heavy industries and the technological advances that made building a modern economy possible, Wales would most likely have remained the rural, isolated yet picturesque region of Britain she was renowned for being in the eighteenth century. In 1802 the vast majority of Wales’s inhabitants made a living off the land. In the main the Welsh economy was at the time of Lady Llanover’s birth a resolutely rural one, as it had been for centuries. The majority of

² P. Morgan, ‘Engine of Empire’, P. Morgan, (ed.) *Wales: An Illustrated History* (Stroud, 2005), p. 211.

³ N. Evans, ‘Two Paths To Economic Development: Wales and the north east of England’ in P. Hudson (ed.) *Regions and Industries: A Perceptive on the industrial Revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 201.

⁴ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History* (Bridgend, 1999), p. 63.

⁵ W. E. Minchinton (ed.), *Industrial South Wales* (London, 1969), p. xxxix.

⁶ J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 1994), p. 323.

Welsh terrain being rough and hilly, it was suited more to pastoral rather than arable farming. This is surely a reason why Wales has remained stereotypically famous for its sheep rearing.⁷ Yet a hundred years later the image of a pit head winding gear could be put side by side with that of the sheep and so equally represent a Welsh stereotype, evidence in itself that Wales had become renowned for more than one industry.

By the year of Lady Llanover's birth, a few entrepreneurs had already sewn the seeds of industrial change. By the close of the eighteenth century, Wales had begun to turn toward an economy based on the heavy industries. The factory and landowners responsible for investing in this new era of heavy industrial manufacture understood the value of Welsh land, rich in mineral wealth. Though it must be remembered that the rural and industrial image of Wales coexisted side by side throughout the nineteenth century. What changed was the balance of industry. It had been the rural experience which started off as the familiar way of life for the majority of Wales's population, but by 1896 the industrial economy had fused the people of Wales as well as a plethora of migrants into an urban existence and thus creating a 'frontier society of proletarians.'⁸ According to Dai Smith, 'what happened in Wales during the last century is easy to describe statistically. A small population of about half a million in 1800, over eighty percent of whom lived on the land, had become, by 1914, a people over five times that number, eighty percent of whom lived in towns and cities.'⁹ Nevertheless, as David Howell, has shown 'farming remained vital as a source of food supply and employment.'¹⁰ Wales functioned under a dual economy, both contributed to the mix of society yet one market was destined to take over and create new communities.

What made Wales's industrial economy a success was the demand put upon it by the modern world. As Minchinton states, 'exports provided the main engine of growth.'¹¹ The need for iron,¹² copper¹³ and later steel and tin plate manufacture

⁷ See D. W. Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth Century Wales* (London, 1977).

⁸ D. W. Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth Century Wales*, p. xi.

⁹ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 57.

¹⁰ D. W. Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth Century Wales*, p. xi.

¹¹ W. E. Minchinton (ed.), *Industrial South Wales*, p. xx.

¹² See M. Atkinson & C. Barber, *The Growth and Decline of the South Wales Iron Industry 1760-1880* (Cardiff, 1987).

guaranteed that the coal industry needed to fire all furnaces became the corner stone of the Welsh industrial economy.¹⁴ This specialisation and 'lack of diversification'¹⁵ is also what made it so vulnerable to outside trends. The 'period saw a complex process of growth and decline in which the baton was passed from iron to coal.'¹⁶ But when the market was ripe, Wales's economy flourished and with it the need for skilled workers to power the industry and pioneer technological advances.¹⁷ To an extent Wales's industries fed off the success of one another. Across Britain the more industrial factories that were established, the more towns expanded, as did the demand for slate to roof the new urban dwellings and the need for manufactured textiles to clothe the workers. As long as there was a need for materials produced by the heavy industries be it for arms production, the laying of rail networks or the expansion of the Victorian British Empire and global trade, Wales's industrial economy was set to rise to a level that had a knock on effect in every aspect of life.¹⁸

Wales's export trade was helped along enormously from the mid-nineteenth century onwards by the laying of rail networks. The industrial south Wales valleys and their ports became famous for specialising in certain industrial productions. While Swansea and Llanelli became famous for its copper and tinsplate, (from where, by 1870, some 90 percent of Britain's production was derived) the southeast made its name with iron and then steel. Such was Wales's strength in the iron industry that in 1827 around half of Britain's iron exports came out of Cardiff.¹⁹ Yet as hitherto mentioned the predominance of the coal trade held sway over them all. By the 1880s 25 percent of the world's coal was exported from Cardiff docks.²⁰ Wales was a leader in the temperamental and unpredictable business of world exports.²¹

The processes of the Industrial Revolution have been overwhelmingly been assessed from the male perceptive. As Pat Hudson has shown 'this is now being superseded by attempts both to integrate women's experience into the mainstream

¹³ See R. Rees, *King Copper: South Wales and the Copper Trade* (Cardiff, 2000).

¹⁴ See J. H. Morris & L. J. Williams, *The South Wales Coal Industry* (Cardiff, 1958).

¹⁵ N. Evans, 'Two Paths To Economic Development: Wales and the north east of England', p. 221.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁷ See J. Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised?* (Llandysul, 1995).

¹⁸ See I. G. Jones, *Mid Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed* (Cardiff, 1992).

¹⁹ J. Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 352-3.

²⁰ P. Morgan, 'Engine of Empire', p. 226.

²¹ See M. J. Daunt, *Coal Metropolis: Cardiff 1870-1914* (Leicester, 1977).

accounts and, more importantly, to question the terms and point of reference of the established male orientated historiography itself.’²² There is much to explore in view of the role of women employed within the agricultural, heavy and domestic service industries during the nineteenth century.²³ Yet, outside official employment many women undertook important jobs within society that have slipped through the censuses:

Population growth, urbanization and male cyclical and technological employment combined to create an expansion of many female traditional activities tied to making ends meet: petty trading, neighbourhood services, back street brewing, nursing, laundering, childminding and sweated homework organised on a putting-out basis for the production of things such as envelopes and boxes. The fact is that when we come to consider the impact of industrialisation on women’s work and on the contribution of women to the family patch work of survival, the evidence is varied and inconsistent, with enormous variations by region, sector and class.²⁴

The export trade was to create a proud and confident middle class by the mid to late nineteenth century. The civic pride of the middle classes based in Welsh towns inevitably clashed on occasion with the interests of the big industrial families.²⁵ Both had gained a great deal from the proceeds of the industrial revolution. Massive fortunes were made by those families privileged enough to own industrial land, people such as the Stuarts of Bute,²⁶ the Guests of Dowlais, the Crawshays of Cyfarthfa, and one may count amongst them the Halls of Llanover.

Benjamin Hall’s maternal grandfather was the infamous iron master Richard Crawshay. His father had been a trusted business partner and married Crawshay’s daughter. Thus Lord and Lady Llanover could thank, at least in part, the Abercarn and Gwithen iron and coal company for the means to finance their country life at

²² P. Hudson, ‘Women and Industrialisation’ in Purvis (ed.) *Women’s History: Britain 1850-1845* (London, 2000), p. 26.

²³ See A. V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers’ Land: Essays in Welsh Women’s History* (Cardiff, 1991).
D. Jones, ‘Serfdom and Slavery: Women’s Work in Wales 1890-1930’ in D. R. Hopkin & G. S. Kealey (eds.) *Class Community and the Labour Movement: Wales and Canada 1850-1930* (Llafur, 1989).

²⁴ P. Hudson, ‘Women and Industrialisation’, p. 28.

²⁵ See N. Evans ‘Regions Nation, Globe: Roles, Representations and Urban Space in Cardiff, 1839-1928’, in A. Frahmeir & E. Rembold, (eds.) *Representations of British Cities: Transformation of Urban Space, 1700-2000* (Berlin, 2003).

²⁶ See J. Davies, *Cardiff and the Marquises of Bute* (Cardiff, 1980).

Llanover, moreover their credentials as coal and iron masters had their roots in one of the most prominent families in south Wales and their friends were some of the most powerful industrialists in Britain. Lady Llanover was part of both the rural and industrial experience but there is no doubt that it was the country life, which she preferred and thus promoted. She thought of herself as belonging to the country gentry, though she was equally part of the iron and coal master aristocracy. Both she and her husband had one foot in the urban world but they preferred to put more of their weight on the foot that walked in a rural setting. While Lady Llanover's husband, Benjamin Hall was known more as an MP and country gentlemen there is no denying that the couple's wealth came mainly from their industrial assets and it was this wealth that financed Lady Llanover's cultural activities.

The Welsh Language and Demography

The decline of the Welsh language during the nineteenth century is one of most striking developments of the nineteenth century, which has attracted the study by a range of Welsh historians, and is also of direct relevance to Lady Llanover's cultural project. Again, this topic is perhaps as interesting as it is hard to explain.²⁷ Again a simple description would be to state that at the time of Lady Llanover's birth the majority of the population of Wales were Welsh speaking. The situation had completely reversed by 1896 and to find a monoglot Welsh speaker was an increasing rarity. By this point there had been an increase in the number of bilingual speakers and there is no question that the English language was fast becoming the more dominant of the two, giving rise to a new pattern of monoglot English speakers in working class Wales. The first census to include data collected on the Welsh language was taken in 1891. As with many past censuses, problems due to the way in which the data was collected and the questions put make it hard to be in any way certain that all of the information given was accurate.²⁸ But in the absence of any superior data collection, the 1891 census serves as the best method of estimating the number of Welsh speakers at the time. According to that survey, the number of Welsh speakers

²⁷ See G. H. Jenkins (ed.), *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Cardiff, 1998).

G. H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1801-1911* (Cardiff, 2000).

I. G. Jones, *Towards a Social History of the Welsh Language* (Aberystwyth, 1994).

S. R. Williams, *Oes y Byd i'r Iaith Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1992).

D. Jones, *Statistical Evidence relating to the Welsh Language 1801-1911* (Cardiff, 1998).

²⁸ D. Jones, *Statistical Evidence relating to the Welsh Language 1801-1911*, p. 215.

in Wales was 54.4 percent and by 1901 the census showed that the English language was spoken and understood by 84 percent of the population of Wales.²⁹ This marks a clear decline in the Welsh language's fortunes.

Nowhere in the Principality was this experience felt more than in the county of Lady Llanover's birth, Monmouthshire. Eastern Monmouthshire in particular had a long tradition of familiarity with the English language. When Archdeacon Coxe made a *Historical Tour of Monmouthshire* his findings on the Welsh language published in 1801 clearly indicated that the county had a mixed acquaintance with the English language:

The Welsh language is more prevalent than is supposed: in the north eastern, south eastern parts, the English tongue is in common use; but in the south western, western and north western districts, the Welsh excepting in the towns, is generally spoken. The natives of the midland parts are accustomed to both languages; in several places divine service is performed wholly in Welsh, in others in English, and alternatively both. The natives of the western parts, which are sequestered and mountainous, unwillingly hold intercourse with the English, retain their ancient prejudices, and still brand them with the name of Saxons; this antipathy, however, is gradually decreasing, by means of the establishment of English schools, and the introduction of the English manners and customs, and manufactures.³⁰

Therefore, although the English language had made inroads into the county, it would be misleading to state that this had always been the case in Monmouthshire as a whole. The Welsh language went through a period of revitalisation during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century before its decline in the closing years. In the introduction to her work on 'The Welsh Language in Industrial Monmouthshire', Sian Rhiannon Williams crystallises the circumstances of eventual decline thus:

The rapid growth of the iron and coal industries from the late eighteenth century onwards attracted a large and hybrid population into what had previously been a sparsely populated area, creating an entirely new, multilingual, yet dominantly Welsh speaking society which, within a comparatively short period of time, became almost

²⁹ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 49.

³⁰ W. Coxe, *An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire* (London, 1801), p. 2.

wholly English in speech, with the exception of some communities in the north-western corner.³¹

Paradoxically there is a strong argument to suggest that the industrial revolution both helped and hindered the progress of the Welsh language. According to Brinley Thomas the progression of industrialisation 'was the hero, not the villain' in the history of the Welsh language's survival.³² It has been suggested that the industrial revolution offered up the chance to the Welsh to 'colonize their own country.'³³ In the early stages of establishment of the heavy industries, migrants were attracted to the south Wales valleys from all over Wales. Therefore, Welsh speaking migrants replenished any fall in the numbers of Welsh speakers in Monmouthshire. According to John Davies 'rural men were attracted by the experience of living in crowded, cheerful and Welsh-speaking society'³⁴ and as Glanmor Williams pointed out in an article entitled 'Language, Literacy and Nationality in Wales:' 'The Welsh in their search for industrial employment were not obliged to abandon their language along with their old rural homes.'³⁵ However, the situation eventually changed and as Thomas asserted, it was not until the number of English speaking migrants increased to be the primary ethnic group heading for work in the south Wales valleys that English began to truly displace Welsh as the language of the home:

The anglicization of Monmouthshire was mainly due to substantial English immigration accompanied by out-migration of many thousands of Welsh people from the declining iron districts to the expanding coal communities in the Rhondda and Aberdare valleys.³⁶

It is impossible to identify accurately the point in time when this linguistic shift took hold, though it is generally thought to have occurred between the 1860s and 1870s. By this point the actual number of Welsh speakers had increased, yet the

³¹ S. R. Williams, 'The Welsh Language in Industrial Monmouthshire c. 1800-1901.' in G. H. Jenkins (ed.) *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 203-229, p. 203.

³² B. Thomas, 'A Cauldron of Rebirth: Population and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century' *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 13 (1986/7), pp. 418-43, p.419.

³³ G. Williams, 'Language, Literacy and Nationality in Wales', *History* (1971), pp. 1- 16. p. 11.

³⁴ J. Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 351.

³⁵ G. Williams, 'Language, Literacy and Nationality in Wales', *History* (1971), pp. 1- 16. p. 11.

³⁶ B. Thomas, 'A Cauldron of Rebirth: Population and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century' p. 433.

percentage of Welsh speakers within the population of Monmouthshire had dwindled to roughly 40 percent in 1861 compared to some 80 percent sixty years earlier.³⁷ Yet this shift was initially concentrated in certain areas. Whole communities in the Monmouthshire valleys such as Bedwellte remained Welsh speaking despite the overall decline across the county. Sian Rhiannon Williams's research has revealed a multifaceted picture of contrasting communities: 'the variation in the relative strength of the two languages differed greatly in localities within a few miles of each other, and even within town and villages.'³⁸ Williams's work has highlighted the danger of oversimplifying the stages of the Welsh language's eventual decline. The story of the Welsh language in Monmouthshire during Lady Llanover's lifetime has been shown by Williams to be a most complex topic that needs to be scrutinised in terms of looking at the influences of industry, migration and culture. There is no doubt that some communities showed a resilient desire to hold onto the Welsh language. Lady Llanover made sure that her estate at Llanover was one such community.

Interest in the patterns of demography and language is not a new concept and at the time of these demographic shifts, studies were carried out to quantify the use of the Welsh language in Monmouthshire. Sian Rhiannon Williams used the data collected by E. G. Ravenstein in 1871 and J. E. Southall in 1893 as well as the 1891 census results as contemporary surveys of the language situation. Llanover fell within the district in Abergavenny and according to the data produced by Ravenstein and interpreted into map form by Williams, Llanover fell into the category where 25-50 percent of residents in 1871 would have spoken Welsh.³⁹ The data of Southall collected in 1893 gives a more optimistic impression. He claimed that Llanover fell within the category of Monmouthshire where at least 60 percent of residents spoke Welsh. However, Williams speculates in her work that some of this positive outlook was at least in part down to Southall's patriotism.⁴⁰ An exact picture of the situation through statistical analysis is impossible to achieve but what is certain is that Llanover was one of these exceptionally 'Welsh' communities because it was by the late nineteenth century still partly Welsh speaking. Moreover, if the data collected by

³⁷ S. R. Williams, *Oes Y Byd I'r Iaith Gymraeg*, p. 15.

³⁸ S. R. Williams, 'Welsh in the Valleys of Gwent' *Planet*, Vol. 51-56 (1985/6) p.115.

³⁹ S. R. Williams, *Oes Y Byd I'r Iaith Gymraeg*, p. 114.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Ravenstein and Southall is correct, it suggests that Llanover may have experienced an increase in the number of Welsh speakers between 1871 and 1893.⁴¹

As will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six the fact that this situation was possible may help to explain how Lady Llanover managed to keep the Welsh language alive on her estate at first naturally and then through personal control. Lady Llanover was at her most culturally active at the same time as Monmouthshire was being 're-colonised' by Welsh speaking migrants. This could potentially be how Lady Llanover saw the link between keeping the Welsh language alive in an area by ensuring a steady supply of Welsh speaking settlers. When resident Welsh speakers at Llanover either moved away, died off or even turned to English as their chosen language of the home, Lady Llanover felt able to look to the wider ranging population of the Principality to fill in the gaps, and to in a sense artificially reverse the trend. During the second half of the nineteenth century she actively encouraged the migration of workers to live at Llanover and to replant the rural traditions of Wales on an estate that was becoming an island of 'Welshness' on multiple levels. Again one might speculate that Lady Llanover's resettlement policy may not have come about had she not lived through the early period of Welsh language renaissance in Monmouthshire and so the fact that she was born at the turn of the nineteenth century in time to witness these trends may have been a crucial influence on how she saw Llanover's future as a Welsh speaking community

There was at the time of Lady Llanover's birth no Welsh speaking aristocracy of any major influence and therefore she reinvented herself as a replacement and as an example for patriots to look toward. The aftermath of the publication of the 1847 Report on the State of Education in Wales exposed how thin support for the Welsh language had been amongst the upper classes.⁴² Though the report was meant to assess the provision of education in Wales the document systematically attacked almost every aspect of Welsh life with a view to emphasising the need to teach the English language in schools. It mounted an 'often vicious and often lying attack on

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See P. Morgan (gol.) *Brad Y Llyfrau Gleision* (Llandysul, 1991).

Welsh Nonconformity and the Welsh language itself, as a vehicle of immorality, backwardness and obscurantism.’⁴³

Particular questions about the morality of women in Monmouthshire were raised and in reaction to this, Lady Llanover financed *Y Gymraes* a Welsh publication for women edited by Ieuan Gwynedd, a co-defender of the Welsh language and the Nonconformist movement.⁴⁴ This publication added to a great number of Welsh periodicals both religious and secular that appeared in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ Though some were short-lived, a constant line of material that dealt with religion, politics and culture went to press.⁴⁶ Lady Llanover enthusiastically collected subscriptions to many such Welsh periodicals and evidently was keen that women should have an outlet of literature that dealt with issues relevant to them.

The first edition of *Y Gymraes* published in 1850 stressed the essential role of the mother in passing on the Welsh language to the next generation of children as a matter of duty and morality. The vast majority of the landed gentry had long set aside their connections with the Welsh language. However, the scathing report put together by the ill informed commissioners served only to galvanise a defence mounted by the Nonconformist denominations against the unjust criticism laid on the Welsh people and their language. Expressions of outrage were less common amongst the Established Church and upper class but they did exist in the shape of Lady Llanover and her associates.⁴⁷ Though they were less in number than the Nonconformist camp they were no less offended by the commissioner’s comments and no less ardent in their defensive reactions. Lady Llanover fundamentally could not agree with the notion that the English language was superior to the Welsh, or that it would benefit Welsh society in any degree to displace the vernacular, rather she thought that such a development might harm the nation. Her schools escaped any harsh criticism by Monmouthshire’s commissioner, J. C. Symons. At this stage changing her schools to

⁴³ G. A. Williams, *When Was Wales* (Reading, 1985), p. 208.

⁴⁴ Evan Jones (Ieuan Gwynedd) (1820-1852) Independent minister and journalist.

⁴⁵ W. G. Evans, ‘Y Ferch, Addysg a Moesoldeb: Portread y Llyfrau Gleision’ in P. Morgan (gol.) *Brad Y Llyfrau Gleision* (Llandysul, 1991), p. 94.

⁴⁶ S. R. Williams, ‘The True ‘Cymraes’: Images of Women in the Women’s Nineteenth Century Welsh Periodicals’, pp. 69-92.

⁴⁷ See J. Williams, *Artegall: or Remarks on the Reports of Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (London, 1848).

English only institutions would have been met with sympathy and even encouragement, but to Lady Llanover the teaching of both languages was in her opinion the only and best way to educate the children of her estates. She was apparently isolated in this belief. In 1852, Abercarn Colliery School was the only institution, which used 'Welsh as a normal mode of instruction.'⁴⁸

Dai Smith described Lady Llanover as a 'philanthropic patriot,'⁴⁹ but as will be emphasised throughout this thesis she saw her responsibilities towards the Welsh language as being bound by duty, rather than charity. Lady Llanover's personal fascination with the Welsh language was not just based on an intellectual level. That is to say she wanted to preserve the Welsh language as the every day vernacular of her tenants and staff. For this reason she insisted that her household staff conducted their lives through the medium of Welsh. She went further by fighting for a Welsh-speaking clergy in the Anglican Church, which had lost its parishioners to Welsh speaking Nonconformist denominations. Sunday schools offered bible study and the chance of literacy to the Welsh speaking working class, a happy consequence that in the opinion of Lady Llanover was to be encouraged. It however did not impress the commissioners of 1847. So offensive was the material produced in their findings that it was dubbed as the 'treachery of the blue books' in recognition of the colour of the cover of the document. These blue books have become very much part of the mythology surrounding the Welsh language and identity.⁵⁰

The Nonconformist chapels of Wales developed as a safe haven for the Welsh language.⁵¹ Ironically, this situation is what ultimately marginalized the language into the sphere of religion. It may be argued that the Welsh language's special status in the Chapels eventually took the emphasis away from it being used in the workplace and even the home:

The role of religion in protecting the Welsh language beyond the base of the home and farm against Anglicisation can hardly be overestimated. Indeed, it was precisely

⁴⁸ I. G. Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed* (Cardiff, 1992), p. 70.

⁴⁹ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 81.

⁵⁰ See G. T. Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff, 1998).

⁵¹ R. O. Jones, *Hir Oes I'r Iaith: Agweddau ar Hanes y Gymraeg a'r Gymdeithas* (Caerdydd, 1997), p. 253.

the strength of the religious domain in Wales, which blinded many to the dangers of bilingualism in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵²

Even so, seeing that attending the Nonconformist chapels dealt with the security of the Welsh language and spiritual needs of the people, Lady Llanover fully supported their culture of creativity and education. She sought to mirror this in the Established Church. Moreover, she endeavoured to keep the Welsh language as a medium of education not only in her schools at Llanover and Abercarn but also in the educational institutions, which she had been instrumental in setting up. The founder of Llandovery college, Thomas Phillips chose Lady Llanover as a trustee along with some of her other associates 'because of their well known sympathy with his own desire to encourage the study of the Welsh language and literature.'⁵³ With her usual zeal, she took her responsibility as a trustee to encourage the use of the Welsh language at Llandovery and later at Lampeter College as conscientiously as though they were part of her own estate. In her role as a trustee of Llandovery she was able to examine all candidates for posts at the college and indeed she used her influence to make sure that only the most scholarly and honourable men were employed. Despite her insistence on the teaching of the Welsh language, its use declined at the college as it was diminishing in almost all aspects of Welsh life but this did not deter her from offering prizes for Welsh scholarship right up until her death as W. Gareth Williams highlighted in his *History of Llandovery College*:

The language of the school was English, and the pupils were not encouraged to show interest in things Welsh...The fortunes of the Welsh language remained unchanged and its insignificant status unquestioned, though it would be wrong to say that no Welsh was taught at any time between 1885 and 1920. A Welsh examination in 1890 is recorded and Welsh prizes were given faithfully by Lady Llanover until her death in 1896. However Welsh was only taught to a handful of pupils in these years and was certainly not compulsory.⁵⁴

By the time of Lady Llanover's death her reputation for enforcing what might be termed as her Welsh language policies further entrenched the image of an eccentric

⁵² D. Jones, *Statistical Evidence relating to the Welsh Language 1801-1911*, p. 413.

⁵³ W. G. Evans, *A History of Llandovery College*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

old woman, stuck in her romantic Welsh bubble. There is no doubt that the prevailing attitude by 1896 was that Wales had moved beyond the point of debating whether adopting the English language as a first language was a good thing, yet Lady Llanover had held on resiliently to her rural Welsh speaking estate. In doing this, she created for herself a place in the history of the Welsh language in Monmouthshire and in Wales as a whole. In later years the language campaigner and nationalist, Gwynfor Evans praised Lady Llanover's defence of the Welsh language and heralded her as one of Wales's lesser-known national heroines.⁵⁵

Politics

For the Welsh men, the late nineteenth century was arguably the most important era of all in view of the development of the opportunity to have a say in the political running of the country. Matthew Cragoe has researched the specific significance of this era, leading him to argue:

The key to the mystery of Wales's unique historiography is that, in the context of British politics, 'Wales' itself only came into being during the mid-Victorian period. In the first half of the nineteenth century no political significance attached itself to the thirteen counties that comprise modern Wales. For all legislative purposes, they remained part of a greater England, and contemporaries routinely described the United Kingdom in terms of three 'nations' England, Ireland and Scotland.⁵⁶

The struggle to make this aspiration of political representation a reality was long and in some cases violent. It took until the closing years of the nineteenth century for Welsh men to realise their goal, although women had to wait until the following century for an equal input with their male counterparts.⁵⁷ In 1802, a very small landowning aristocracy ruled Wales as it had done for centuries. As mentioned previously, the arrival of the industrial revolution and the increase in the population saw the rise of a new and powerful middle class that called for their share of power and in turn this was to eventually filter down through the class structure.⁵⁸ By the time

⁵⁵ G. Evans, *Seiri Cenedl* (Llandysul, 1986).

⁵⁶ M. Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886* (Oxford, 2004), p. 2.

⁵⁷ See A. V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers' Land* (Cardiff, 1991).

⁵⁸ M. Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886*, p. 2.

of Lady Llanover's death it was possible to describe Britain as a democracy, a statement that would not have been true in modern terms some 93 years earlier. Yet Lady Llanover only saw the process half complete, since she did not live long enough to see women enfranchised. As Prys Morgan conveys in his chapter 'Engine of Empire' in the volume, *Wales: An Illustrated History* the process of democratisation was a gradual one:

A tiny proportion of the population took part in politics before the reform act of 1832, and while a larger minority of people participated after that, and an even larger minority of people participated after the second Reform Act of 1867, it was only after 1884 that a large proportion of the male population could vote.⁵⁹

Therefore, throughout much of Lady Llanover's life only a small proportion of the population had been enfranchised. It was not until 1867, the year of her husband's death that any serious measures were taken to include the wider male population official politics. Yet that is not to say that the Welsh working classes had not tried on a number of occasions to involve themselves by drawing the attentions of the authorities through protest. Though it was by no means the only contributing factor, the element of poverty and the unpredictability of work and wages during the 1820s and 1830s no doubt led to a willingness in the industrial communities to take remonstrative action. Attacks on workhouses and shopkeepers were a direct means of showing discontent toward what the poor in society saw as a system which was keeping them in dept. Relations with coal and iron masters were notoriously difficult. Such was the feeling of injustice amongst many of the industrial workers that they resorted to forming a secret society known as the 'Scotch Cattle' in order to inflict terror on any individuals who stood in the way of access to fair work and wages.⁶⁰ Disguised with blackened faces and wearing animal skins, mobs would attack company property and intimidate strike-breakers or migrant workers willing to take a cut in wages.

The first half of the nineteenth century was distinguished by a period of political unrest. A significant number of the people of Wales took the opportunity to

⁵⁹ P. Morgan, 'Engine of Empire', p. 228.

⁶⁰ D. J. V. Jones, 'Scotch Cattle and Chartism' in T. Herbert & G. E. Jones (eds.) *People and Protest: Wales 1815-1880* (Cardiff, 1988).

communicate their grievances through popular protest being as they had no power through the political vote. The Merthyr Rising (1831), Rebecca Riots (1839-44), and the Chartist Rising (1839), secured for Wales a reputation of unruliness:

Throughout the nineteenth century a kind of radical triangle repeatedly reappears in Wales, linking the industrial valleys of the south-east, the south-west and the textile townships and factories of mid Wales where differences were really only ones of scale. All of them were ultimately to be embraced in the Chartist movement.⁶¹

The implications of these protests have been studied and reviewed by historians over the last century. There is some debate over the interpretation of the events, however there is a strong agreement that these protests marked the radicalisation of Welsh politics and that this was a reputation that, especially later in the nineteenth and early into the twentieth century became closely connected with Welsh identity.⁶²

The political changes that came about in the nineteenth century were of importance to Lady Llanover and her social status. Benjamin Hall was initially asked to stand as the Whig candidate for parliament representing the county of Monmouth. His father before him had been 'the first industrialist to enter the political field in Wales.'⁶³ Apparently feeling that he might compromise his friendship with Sir Charles Morgan who had a vested industrial interest in the area, he declined. An opportunity to stand for the borough of Monmouth as a supporter of the reform Bill of 1832 secured for Lord Llanover a seat in parliament, which he held between 1831 and 1837. His election was however marred by controversy, including three allegations of bribery. Nonetheless, he survived the Conservative drive to unseat him on the basis of corruption.⁶⁴ The 1832 Reform Act fell desperately short of giving the Welsh population the right to vote and so for all of Lord Llanover's political career only one in five men in England and Wales had the right to vote. Nonetheless it gave other industrialists the boost into parliament they needed. Wales was given five additional

⁶¹ G. A. Williams *When Was Wales*, p. 191.

⁶² See D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: The Newport Insurrection of 1839* (Oxford, 1985).

D. J. V. Jones, *Rebecca's Children: A Study of Rural Society, Crime and Protest* (Oxford, 1989).

D. Williams, *The Rebecca Riots: A Study in Agrarian Discontent* (Cardiff, 1955).

G. A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising* (London, 1978).

⁶³ D. Williams, *John Frost: A Study in Chartism* (Cardiff, 1939), p. 65.

⁶⁴ M. Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886*, p. 126.

seats in recognition of the rapid growth of the urban population. What is now regarded as a small political development perhaps not worthy in real terms of the title 'reform' was heralded at the time by *The Times* newspaper as a victory for the unselfish aristocracy:

There never was, in the history of the world, an example so ennobling to the character of the English nation, or so encouraging to the hopes of every other, as this triumph of intellectual and moral power, achieved over gross stupidity and brutal force. A race of usurpers have been ousted from the field of their usurpation, and a great empire reconquered by its own people, without the shedding of one drop of blood, or the disturbance of any one right of person or property which the common consent of civilized men holds sacred.⁶⁵

Yet in Wales the two decades following the passing of the 1832 Reform Bill was characterised very clearly by the shedding of blood and destruction of property. Tension between industrial workers and their all powerful and controlling employer-landlords was extremely high. 'Sir Benjamin Hall tried to persuade his friends that Chartism had flourished in precisely those communities where the anti-truck legislation had been ignored'⁶⁶ and in December 1839, Lord Llanover was called upon to sit on the jury during the trial of John Frost and his Chartist associates at Monmouth court. Less than ten years earlier John Frost had supported 'Hall [as] the son of the proprietor of the Rhymney iron works, a friend of the Nonconformists, and an advocate of the ballot in elections'⁶⁷ in his campaign for parliament. Though his politics were Liberal there is little doubt that both he and Lady Llanover would not have approved of the Chartist method of insurrection.

Lady Llanover was appalled by the behaviour of the protesters and made every effort to distance herself as well as the image of Wales from what she regarded as yet another black mark on the Welsh people's otherwise immensely good character. Lady Llanover, it seems, was unwilling to blur the lines between culture and politics and so when Llewelyn Williams a harpist and son of Zephaniah Williams, one of the most prominent Chartists involved in the Newport Rising competed in an Eisteddfod

⁶⁵ *The Times*, 6 June 1832.

⁶⁶ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: The Newport Chartist Insurrection of 1839* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 36.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

competition she 'would have nothing to do with him.'⁶⁸ Despite his talent as a musician he was in all probability one of the only harpists unwelcome at Llanover. Lady Charlotte Guest held a more altruistic view on the matter. She commented in her diary, 'I think the fact says much for the liberty of England that the son of such a man should be quietly playing his harp for the gentry, whom his father had so ruthlessly assailed only nine years ago.'⁶⁹

By July 1837 Benjamin Hall was elected MP for Marylebone, his electoral campaigns in the Monmouth borough had been hard and costly work. Much of his politics from that point onward was London based. His roles as the Chairman of the Board of Health (1854-55) and First Commissioner of Works (1855-58) distanced him somewhat from Llanover.⁷⁰ But this is not to say that he had in anyway sidelined Wales. During his time in politics he became entangled in many debates with the Bishopric over the provision of Welsh speaking clergy in the Principality. As stated previously Benjamin Hall died in 1867 the year of the second Reform Act, which this time enfranchised householders, but again left out many from working classes. By 1868 the Welsh electorate increased by 57,000 and the Merthyr Tydfil constituency was granted an extra M.P. What happened in the election of 1868 represented in Wales a new order in political allegiance and according to John Davies has a 'central place in Welsh Liberal mythology.'⁷¹ A powerful alliance between the Liberal party and the Nonconformist chapels had influenced the Welsh electorate to vote for a party that was in touch with Welsh issues. In a sense it was the beginning of a voting culture in Wales, one which was based around ousting the domineering landed classes and then later the seemingly all-powerful industrialists. As John Davies pointed out, the election results have been made out to be more dramatic than in fact they were. In

⁶⁸ A. V. John, *Lady Charlotte- A biography of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 106.

⁶⁹ Bessborough, *The Diaries of Lady Charlotte Guest* (London, 1950), p. 223.

⁷⁰ M. Fraser, 'Benjamin Hall, M.P for Marylebone 1837-1839', *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XIII, No.1 (1963), pp. 313-328.

M. Fraser, 'Sir Benjamin Hall in Parliament in the 1850's Part I- 1850-1852' *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XV, No. 1 (1967), pp. 72-88.

M. Fraser, 'Sir Benjamin Hall in Parliament in the 1850's Part II- president of the Board of Health' *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XV, No. 2 (1967), pp. 113-26.

M. Fraser, 'Sir Benjamin Hall in Parliament in the 1850's Part III- First Commissioner of Works' *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XV, No. 3 (1968), pp. 310-24.

M. Fraser, 'Sir Benjamin Hall in Parliament in the 1850's Part IV- First Commissioner of Works (continued)' *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XV, No. 4 (1968), pp. 389-404.

M. Fraser, 'Lord Llanover ('Big Ben') in London', *The Transactions of the Honourable Royal Cymmrodorion* (1964), pp. 69-92.

⁷¹ J. Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 431.

truth, most of the 23 Liberal MPs returned were Whigs of the landed class, the 10 Conservatives were of the same ranks. The right to vote in secret was yet to come in 1872 with the Secret Ballot Act, and so in many areas the authority of the landed gentry prevailed.⁷² There was astonishment however, in Merthyr Tydfil where it was assumed that the industrialists would win both seats recently allocated. Yet Henry Richard, who identified with the working classes and their struggles, and who aligned himself with the Nonconformists took that second seat.

A main feature of the 1868 election was the debate over disestablishment of the Church in Ireland. A very small minority had any allegiance to it and by 1869 the link was severed under Gladstone. It was hoped by many in Wales that the situation would be echoed in the Principality, yet not so by Lady Llanover. Even though she saw great merit in the Nonconformist establishments this did not extend to tolerating the idea of the Church being disestablished in Wales. As we shall see in Chapter Five in many ways Lady Llanover displayed conservative tendencies and the disestablishment of the Church would in her opinion go against the regulations and tradition of the Christian religion in Wales. In essence she shared the conviction that 'the Anglican Church was the proper heir of the early British Church and therefore should be obeyed'⁷³ and left in place as part of an ancient legacy. This was in her view a way of displaying patriotism within the British context. As will be discussed in Chapter Five she made her opinions clear to her tenants on this matter but in any event the disestablishment of the Church in Wales did not occur within her lifetime, yet the fact remains that she campaigned against it and this exemplifies how uneasy Lady Llanover felt with this particular aspect of her changing Wales. Moreover, the disestablishment of the Church being linked with an assertion of political will or national identity was not something that she could agree with.

The process of democratisation went into its third stage with the advent of the third Reform Act of 1884, which gave workers and agricultural labourers the vote and extended the franchise to 18 percent of the overall population of Wales. Such political developments shook up the political landscape of Wales. In Matthew Cragoe's view, 'the Second Reform Act of 1867 and the Third in 1884 brought electoral combat up to

⁷² J. Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 431.

⁷³ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 86.

near modern levels of intensity.⁷⁴ Gwyn A. Williams saw this as the end of an era for the landed gentry and by the same token this point may also be seen in terms of marking the end of influence for Lady Llanover:

In a Britain, which had become a democracy, this new Welsh nation crashed through the franchise barrier.... Throughout Wales the 300-year reign of the squires came to an abrupt end. The gentry went into a kind of internal exile as they were expelled no less forcibly from the history of their nation...All over Wales the bastilles went down before the ballot as the Nonconformist people entered its political kingdom.⁷⁵

The political world to which Lady Llanover had been born had fundamentally changed and given rise to influences that had modernised society. She invariably came into contact with these changes but felt unable to completely accept them. Wales had no doubt transformed into something that she did not fully recognise.

Religion

There are further aspects of the question of religion that need to be discussed. Lady Llanover's life was dominated by religion; one might label her as a very conservative, almost militant Christian. Lord Llanover's grandfather Dr Benjamin Hall had been the chancellor of Llandaff and so a Christian heritage was assured on his side. Lady Llanover was brought up an Anglican and always worshipped as such; it may be argued that her class had predestined her for this given the close connection between the aristocracy and the state church. Again, in a sense she and her husband were part of the old order. By the time of Lady Llanover's birth Wales had grown into a nation of ever increasing Nonconformist worshippers. Despite Lady Llanover's religious conservatism and her hitherto mentioned refusal to support disestablishment she was a major supporter of the dissenters because of their religious zeal, connection with the Welsh language and educational drive.

The Welsh nation's conversion to the Nonconformist denominations had its roots, like that of the industrial economy and the Welsh cultural renaissance, in the

⁷⁴ M. Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ G. A. Williams, *When Was Wales*, p. 219.

eighteenth century. Feeling that the Established Church fell short of meeting their spiritual needs, Nonconformity was viewed as more absorbing and to some extent, stimulating way to worship. According to Prys Morgan, 'Methodism greatly appealed to thoughtful young men and women, who found little place for the individual personality in the orthodox and communal services of the Anglican parishes.'⁷⁶ The fame of characters such as Howell Harris and William Williams, Pantycelyn as extraordinarily, lively and inspiring preachers made the Christian religion in Wales spiritually exciting, and what is more an accompanying force to the provision of education:

The tradition of literacy based on volunteerism that was so eagerly promoted by all the denominations combined creatively with the older tradition of radicalism nurtured by the dissenters to produce a new culture which enabled the country at large to survive the destructive forces unleashed by the new industrialism of the second half of the century.⁷⁷

During the eighteenth century Sunday Schools were set up within the Anglican Church and later as part of the Dissenter movement in order to give the Welsh working class the privilege of reading and understanding the scriptures for themselves. The processes that occurred in society in the first half of the nineteenth century facilitated the conditions that made the growth of Nonconformity particularly suitable for a changing Wales:

It was industrialism that had brought, and continued to bring, the people together in great towns and urban settlements: the denominations believed that it was the force of religion that was primarily responsible for transforming them into particular and defined communities sharing basic beliefs and holding to specific modes of behaviour.⁷⁸

In a world that was transforming rapidly around them, fresh sets of moral dilemmas were raised in the newly founded communities and in this new system of living the

⁷⁶ P. Morgan, 'Engine of Empire', p. 240.

⁷⁷ I. G. Jones, 'Religion and Society' in *Explorations and Explanations: Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales* (Llandysul, 1981), p. 235.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 232.

Welsh people desired to exert a certain amount of power around their spiritual welfare. As Ieuan Gwynedd Jones has noted 'the denominations were one instrument in the hands of a people seeking to adapt creatively to their environment, and in so doing shaping that environment, or those parts of it that were not entirely beyond their control, in accordance with their own highest cultural aspirations.'⁷⁹ He put the success of the dissenting chapels down to the fact that 'religion was organically a part of society and not something defined by others from above and imposed by force of law.'⁸⁰

A large portion, though by no mean all, of the population of Wales developed an attachment to religion that became a fundamental part of their identity and later their politics. Intense religious revivals served to periodically boost the passion surrounding Christian worship. In the first half of the nineteenth century revivals that had occurred in 1806, 1809, 1819, 1825, 1839 and 1849⁸¹ took parishioners away from the Established Church, out of the doldrums of indifference and into the Nonconformist Chapels that were fast growing in popularity and support. These periodic revivals whipped up enthusiasm and regenerated the Nonconformist denominations:

The proportion of 'hearers' in their congregations ebbed and flowed with the changes in the religious climate of revivalism, but they constituted a kind of reservoir from which memberships were renewed.⁸²

So intense were the building programmes of first half of the nineteenth century that on average a Nonconformist chapel was built every two weeks. In some cases the rate of opening new establishments could be as regular as every eight days.⁸³ As Ieuan Gwynedd Jones comments in his article on religion and society in his 1981 publication *Explorations and Explanations* the Nonconformist denominations made spirited bids for the support of communities, however while 'it was accepted on one level that the denominations existed in competition with one another,... this

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 233.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 235.

⁸¹ J. Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 360.

⁸² I. G. Jones, 'Religion and Society', p. 228.

⁸³ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 87.

competition was not unlimited or archaic: it took place only in accordance with accepted norms of corporate behaviour. But at the levels that really mattered the denominations presented a united front to the world.’⁸⁴ As mentioned previously, this was especially true as a result of the repercussions surrounding the 1847 Report on the State of Education in Wales, when the Nonconformist denominations were criticised for prolonging the Welsh people’s ignorance of the English language.

An official attempt to determine the level of Christian religiosity was made by Horace Mann in 1851. He took charge of a census of Christian religious attendance taken in England and in Wales on the last Sunday in March of 1851. The primary reason for the census resulted from a debate between the established Anglican Church and that of the Nonconformists about the role of the Christian Church in society. Mann was expected to estimate how much of the population was able to attend religious service, and how many actually did this. Moreover, he needed to assess whether there was adequate provision of establishments to do so. The results showed that on the whole there was an over abundance of places to worship in Wales, while the opposite was true of England.

The collection of the data posed a number of problems not least the fact that some people had been counted twice in the census by attending both a morning and an evening service thus giving a result of more than 100 percent attendance in some Chapels. In spite of the difficulties in interpreting the information, historians have had no option but to conclude that Nonconformity was by far the dominant religious force in Wales. On ‘census Sunday’, in the principality it was revealed that 9 percent of service attendees had been present in Anglican places of worship; conversely 87 percent had been at Nonconformist meetings. As Ieuan Gwynedd Jones observed ‘it is clear... that the masses in Wales had rejected the Established Church and that in the measure of that rejection was their astonishing success in providing themselves with places devoted to alternative forms of worship. Wales was a Nonconformist country.’⁸⁵ The statistics point conclusively to the fact that the Welsh people ‘voted with their feet’:

⁸⁴ I. G. Jones, ‘Religion and Society’, p. 232.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

Of the total of places of worship of all kinds, 26 percent belonged to the Church and 71 percent to other denominations. For each 100 persons the Church provided 26 sittings, and the others between them 58 percent. Of a total of 983,653 sittings 30.5 percent belonged to the Church and 69.5 to the nonconformists.⁸⁶

Yet this is not to say that other forms of Christian worship were completely absent in Wales. This sort of variety was more common in the populated areas. There were 21 Roman Catholic Churches mostly in ports and industrial towns attended particularly by Irish immigrants. The Mormon Later Day Saints initially established a religious community at Merthyr. But in the main orthodox Protestantism was what the Welsh people adhered to. The strongest of all the Nonconformist denominations was Calvinistic Methodist. Almost twice as many people attended their Chapels in comparison to the Wesleyan Methodists. The Baptists and Independents could also claim a following, though this varied from region to region.

Lady Llanover always attended St Bartholomew's church in Llanover. Far from a silent worshiper, she met with the vicar before Sunday service to discuss the sermon. Services were held in Welsh at Lady Llanover's insistence. She and Lord Llanover were highly critical of what they saw as the sort comings of Established Church. Between 1715 and 1870 no Welshman had been appointed Bishop in Wales.⁸⁷ As R. Tudur Jones has said 'the fact that the Church was linked to the state meant that it was heavily influenced by the prejudices and assumptions of English political leaders.'⁸⁸ Many of the clerics were guilty of pluralism, corruption and were ill educated. Seeing this as a major reason as to why the Welsh people had turned away from the Established Church, and indeed being concerned for the rights of the Welsh people to worship and hear the sermon in their familiar tongue, both Lord and Lady Llanover worked energetically to highlight the need to provide Welsh speaking clergy for Wales. Yet 'it was not easy to campaign against the deep prejudices of their

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 227.

⁸⁷ P. Morgan, 'Engine of Empire', p. 240.

See R. L. Brown, *Clerical Lives: Essays Relating to the Victorian Church in Wales* (Welshpool, 2005).

M. A. Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England* (Devon, 1970).

⁸⁸ T. R. Jones, 'The Church and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century' in G. H. Jenkins, (ed.) *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 215.

opponents because the power to decide who was to be honoured with preferment within the Church lay in their hands.’⁸⁹

As will become clear in Chapter Five, Lady Llanover along with her husband used every ounce of her influence to pressure the Anglican Church into appointing well-intentioned Welsh speaking Bishops. This was a long running battle that caused Lady Llanover to be extremely critical of the bishopric. She could be particularly scathing toward the Bishop of St David’s, Connop Thirlwall who resided in the See between 1840 and 1874. This is strange when one considers that Thirlwall was a friend of Lady Llanover’s brother in-law and popular with some of her other friends. He even gained praise for his decision to learn Welsh in order that he might preach to the Welsh people in their first language. Despite this, his reserved personality made him unpopular amongst his clerics, an observation made by R. Tudur Jones in an article on the Welsh language and the Church in the nineteenth century:

No one doubted Thirlwall’s ability as a linguist and, as far as his new flock was concerned, his interest in the Welsh language boded well. But these expectations remained unfulfilled. The bishop was a man of aristocratic bent, who disliked the common clergy and could be cruelly discourteous in his dealings with them.⁹⁰

Not content with the efforts of Thirlwall and the bishopric in this field of providing trustworthy Welsh speaking clerics, Lady and Lord Llanover took matters into their own hands. Again to them it was a matter of duty that they should provide the means to worship in the Established Church in the vernacular, therefore Lord Llanover established a Welsh Church at their industrial estate in Abercarn. It is unknown whether the findings of the 1851 religious census influenced its establishment. The building was erected in 1853 and opened in November of the following year.

Lady Llanover along with, Dr Saunders⁹¹, Revd David Howell⁹² and Canon Silvan Evans⁹³ embarked on a project to edit a revised version suitable, for use at

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 236.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 220.

⁹¹ Dr David Saunders (1831-1892).

⁹² Revd David Howell (1831-1903).

⁹³ Canon Silvan Evans (1818-1903).

Abercarn church.⁹⁴ Though Ieuan Gwynedd Jones has said that the historian is misguided in thinking that ‘the esoteric ideas and subtly-spun differences of trained theologians should be of much relevance to the average worshipper’⁹⁵ it would seem that Lady Llanover counted theology among her main interests. In her case she treated the details of religious practise with sincere and intense scrutiny. In the second half of her life her reputation as a religious zealot was extremely strong and she could count amongst her friends as well as her enemies leading figures of Welsh Christian life.

The messages of self-improvement and temperance preached in both the Established Church and in that of the Dissenter denominations corresponded with Lady Llanover’s core belief that the Welsh people by definition of their attachment to religion, were a moral people of special calibre. As we shall see piety and temperance were prescribed ways of life at Llanover, though not so across Wales by any means. By the late nineteenth century Wales had become a nation that possessed a series of identities and cultures and they would often intermingle and conflict with one another.

The Cultural Revolution

As has been emphasised so far, the period in which Lady Llanover lived saw a transformation in Welsh society. This was made all the more apparent in the field of culture. Since the Anglicisation of the indigenous gentry, Welsh culture in the main was seen as something that belonged to the lower ranks of society. This culture, which, was made up of country customs and a sense of ancient Celtic history, was passed on mainly through the oral tradition. The process of redefining and rediscovering a sense of Welsh history and culture accelerated in the eighteenth century along with the changes that occurred in the country’s industry, demography and religion:

During a century of considerable Anglicisation of language and manners, and considerable erosion of the ancient, traditional life, a great deal had been done to

⁹⁴ NLW MSS, Daniel Parry Jones 38, ‘Study of the Prayer Book of the Methodists Church of Abercarn, Monmouthshire.’

⁹⁵ I. G. Jones, ‘Religion and Society’, p. 231.

record, classify and publicise the remains of the old language, its literature and its history, though the recovery was always adapted to the needs of the day.⁹⁶

Conflict was permanently present amongst those in society who sought to influence the making of a new Welsh culture just as it was prevalent amongst the individuals that mounted efforts to protect it. One should not underestimate the contributions of clerics, of both the Established and Dissenter Churches. Again tension was present between both camps. The Methodists chiefly were accused by early cultural enthusiasts of stamping out traditional Welsh customs, regarding them as base and unfit for a society pure in its morality. The position was reversed in many respects by the nineteenth century. Methodists became keen to promote Eisteddfodau and all things Welsh as a civilising mechanism. It may have been seen as adding value to the image of the religious, cultured and literate Welsh, and so served a purpose that had not at first seemed in keeping with the Methodist religious doctrine of a century earlier. The Eisteddfod became 'the means of preserving old traditions and of creating new ones and thus of binding the present to a vivid and meaningful past.'⁹⁷ During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century a number of Anglican clerics had taken a keen interest in preserving the Welsh language and writing its history. 'The Church of England had made a honourable contribution to Welsh culture'⁹⁸ but again their position on the whole overturned later in the nineteenth century. One might interpret the situation as a role reversal amongst the dominant religious institutions, the Anglicans and the Nonconformists.

In searching for the beginning of the secular societies that drove the Welsh cultural revival it is not to Wales one must look but to London, where a group of Welsh professionals began to lament the erosion of the language and culture of their homeland. In 1715, the first society to deal with the Welsh community in London was established. The purpose of Society of Ancient Britons was to organise events with a Welsh focus, such as St David's Day. The society's foundation was symptomatic of the desire to assert Wales's place of importance in the recently formed United Kingdom. In 'The Eighteenth Century Renaissance' Prys Morgan argues that:

⁹⁶ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 100.

⁹⁷ I. G. Jones, 'Religion and Society', p. 235.

⁹⁸ J. Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 360.

The term 'Ancient British' put it beyond any doubt that it meant the Welsh, with the suggestion that they were the primary people of the British Isles. This was the keynote of Welsh patriotism in the eighteenth century, the Welsh must struggle to gain a proper recognition of their part in British history, not separate themselves from the rest of Britain.⁹⁹

By the mid eighteenth century a new society was formed based on the Society of Ancient Britain's principles. The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion had markedly more success in that it is still in existence today. Two London Welsh brothers, Lewis Morris and Richard Morris, established it in 1751. These secular societies served to encourage interest in all things Welsh, to preserve what was in decline and to boost intellectual pursuit in the hope of highlighting the Welsh language, its literature, history and poetry. Prys Morgan highlights the importance of such societies:

The Cymmrodorion and their kindred societies are a remarkable instance of the Welsh revival in the eighteenth century. The societies were convivial, charitable, antiquarian, self-consciously Welsh. Nobles and gentry play an important role in these societies....more because they were interested individuals rather than leaders of local communities and the tone and atmosphere in the societies was predominantly middle-class.¹⁰⁰

Lady Llanover and her associates were to become very much part of these new middle class scholarly institutions that were inherited from the eighteenth century. Much of what they came to regard as characteristically and traditionally Welsh had its beginnings in the eighteenth century not least the new lease of life afforded to the Eisteddfod. Before this point the Eisteddfod 'was no more than a gathering of amateurs in a tavern, exchanging poems, sometimes hilarious impromptu satires, over cheese and ale.'¹⁰¹ But with the support of both secular, religious cultural enthusiasts and the patronage once more of the gentry not only did the Eisteddfod take on a new

⁹⁹ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

mainstream role in the celebration of Welsh culture; but the process of deciding what exactly this culture should entail was also begun:

When the Eisteddfod in its modern form arrived in 1789, its success came through using new methods of organisation, with finance from the new society. The success of the eighteenth-century Eisteddfod raises a hard intellectual problem which must be faced when dealing with any renaissance... were the new elements less important than the old, how much was really revived, and how much was novel?¹⁰²

Iolo Morganwg¹⁰³ was unquestionably responsible for defining what became in the next century a picture of Welsh culture. A poet and genius forger, he was active on so many levels that it would not be an exaggeration to stress that he was responsible for preserving the Welsh language and its culture, but also simultaneously reinvented it on a scale that mislead people into believing that his notions were genuine. He was a master not only in the art of poetical composition but also in game of pageantry. Prys Morgan has described him as:

A perfect example of the way in which the process of cultural recovery can run out of control, how a delight in the discovered past turned into mimicry, bogus invention and forgery.¹⁰⁴

Notwithstanding his talent for forging the fourteenth century poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym, perhaps his greatest invention was the gorsedd of the bards, a Druidic based ceremony intended to honour the master poet of the Eisteddfod festival. His dress rehearsal occurred in 1792 on Primrose Hill in London where he convinced his associates that the ceremony was an ancient ritual unbroken in its form since the days of the Druids. There, the 'tradition' may have ceased but for its adoption in the 1819 Camarthen Eisteddfod, and so, Iolo Morganwg's creation passed into the new century and the next stage of the cultural revival. If his aim was to make proceedings more exciting and to give the Welsh people a version of culture that they could enjoy and be proud to promote then one might say that he succeeded in this. As Prys Morgan has pointed out he was a product of a time that yielded new influences:

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰³ Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg) (1747-1826)

¹⁰⁴ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 112.

He more than any other Welsh writer, partook of that cultural effervescence of ideas which we associate with the end of the century and with the French Revolution, taking something from nearly every movement – the Welsh Renaissance, language primitivism, Druidism, Celticism, Dissent, rationalism, political radicalism...and conservative or reactionary Romanticism.¹⁰⁵

He used these influences for all their worth and produced a way to make Welsh culture appealing to the next age. Iolo Morganwg died in 1826. The fruit of his literary pursuits could be found stacked in his cottage ‘from floor to ceiling.’ In the same year Lady Llanover met Taliesin ab Iolo, Iolo’s son and heir to his literary remains at the Brecon Eisteddfod. She and her contacts always believed every line of Iolo Morganwg’s work to be genuine, and as such spent many years sorting through and publishing parts of his works. So convinced was she that his work contained authentic literary treasures, that she bought them from Taliesin ab Iolo’s widow. The mastery of Iolo Morganwg’s work became a century long headache for scholars to unravel, for they needed to get through the literary maze that he left behind.¹⁰⁶

Prys Morgan has argued that ‘It [was] a marvel that so much was achieved without academic system, critical structure or institutional machinery, but it was also in many ways a terrible failure...’¹⁰⁷ Had there been an educational body in existence that could have checked the validity of what was being proposed as ancient Welsh tradition perhaps the Welsh people would have been handed a culture that was more academically qualified. Though this potentially would have curtailed the new and interesting features that added fascination to all things Welsh. As Dai Smith commented ‘if the Welsh nation was ‘required’ to possess certain traditions or aspects that were more dependent on a history that could not be ascertained, then myth, invention and even deliberate forgery would fill the gap.’¹⁰⁸

One cannot refer to one discernible picture of Welsh culture; rather Wales’s culture during the nineteenth century developed a myriad of features. What is certain

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁰⁶ See G. H. Jenkins (ed.), *A Rattleskull Genius: The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff, 2005). M. Loffler, *The Literary and Historical Legacy of Iolo Morganwg 1826-1926* (Cardiff, 2007).

¹⁰⁷ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁸ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 79.

is that the nineteenth century heralded another era of reinvention and rediscovery. Hywel Teifi Edwards summarised Lady Llanover's contributions within this creative process:

She turned Llanover Court into a forcing-house for the kind of Welshness she prized, and she worked for the benefit of the language in the fields of religion, education, and folk culture. It is no exaggeration to say that she saved the triple harp from extinction by means of competitions in the Abergavenny Eisteddfodau, that she secured life-giving prominence for folk songs and dances, and – to some dismay- that she devised a national costume for the 'authentic' Welsh woman.¹⁰⁹

Therefore, in this period the popularity of Eisteddfod attendance grew and with it came the adoption of triple harp as a national instrument. Lady Llanover's notion of the Welsh costume was taken on as the official national dress, the leek as the national emblem; these assertions of nationality have their roots in the eighteenth century but 'nationalism [was] a nineteenth century creed'¹¹⁰ and for the Welsh a relatively novel concept, 'the words in Welsh for 'nationalism', 'national' and 'nationality' appear, for the first time, in the late eighteenth century and are in regular usage, from the 1850s.'¹¹¹ Indeed, borrowing from Benedict Anderson's theory,¹¹² Mathew Cragoe asserts in *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales* that 'by the end of the [nineteenth] century the claims of the new nation to distinctive treatment were well established and widely acknowledged. The imagined nation of the mid-century had come of age: modern Wales had been born.'¹¹³ One way of expressing this nationalism and distinctiveness within the United Kingdom was by celebrating Wales's 'unique' culture. Lady Llanover and those of her ilk championed many features of Welsh reinvention. Indeed as will be discussed later, other aspects of culture would have been unceremoniously flattened had her power been great enough to achieve this.

¹⁰⁹ H. T. Edwards, 'The Welsh Language in the Eisteddfod' in G. H. Jenkins, (ed.) *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1901-1911* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 301.

¹¹⁰ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 84.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

See: K. O. Morgan, 'Twf Cenedlaetholdeb Fodern yng Nghymru' in G. H. Jenkins (ed.) *Cof Cenedl: Ysgrifau ar Hanes Cymru* (Llandysul, 1986).

K. O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Cardiff, 1982).

¹¹² B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

¹¹³ M. Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886*, p. 2.

It seems appropriate to state that Lady Llanover literally inherited the mantle of the Welsh romantics.¹¹⁴ The year of Iolo Morganwg's death also marks the first documented year that Lady Llanover attended an Eisteddfod and has therefore been seen as the point at which one can say her interest in Welsh culture was kindled. Lady Llanover was part of a wider network of cultural enthusiasts. Together they worked tirelessly to promote their specific image of Wales. There is no doubt that Lady Llanover built up a circle of friends who were always made welcome at Llanover, though it must be said that she outlived many of them and so was left to carry on her cultural battles almost alone.¹¹⁵ The Llanover set included clerics, musicians, industrialised gentry and middle class intellectuals. They too were natural successors of those earlier cultural enthusiasts who had originally sparked the cultural revival in the previous century. All belonged to the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion society which was formed in 1833 in the same tradition as those eighteenth century Welsh societies. Through the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion a number of Eisteddfodau were held that served as an outlet for the Welsh cultural enthusiasts of Monmouthshire.¹¹⁶

The Llanover network's most active years belong to the first half of the nineteenth century and within that time Lady Llanover formed relationships with her strongest of allies. During this period the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion existed to facilitate the celebration of Welsh literature, poetry and music. Arguably the most significant of all Lady Llanover's co-members was the Rev. Thomas Price, vicar of Cwmdru whom she had met at the 1826 Brecon Eisteddfod. Price competed at Eisteddfodau under the name of Carnhuanawc and he was undoubtedly one of the chief romantics of the Welsh cultural revival. He was also an example of the select yet diligent Anglican clerics that championed the Welsh language.¹¹⁷ Added to the pastoral duties of administering his flock he worked persistently as a poet, historian and promoter of Welsh culture. He was sure to make an appearance at virtually every

¹¹⁴ P. Morgan, 'Keeping the legends alive' in T. Curtis (ed.) *Wales the Imagined Nation: Studies in Cultural and National Identity* (Bridgend, 1986).

¹¹⁵ M. Fraser, 'Lady Llanover and Her Circle', *The Transactions of the Honourable Royal Cymmrodorion* (1968), pp. 170-96.

¹¹⁶ M. E. Thomas, *Afiaith yng Ngwent* (Caerdydd 1978).
M. E. Thomas, *The Welsh Spirit of Gwent* (Cardiff, 1988).

¹¹⁷ Revd. Thomas Price (Carnhuanawc) (1787-1848) The Revd. Thomas Price shall be referred to throughout as Carnhuanawc.

Eisteddfod that occurred in the south Wales region and was renowned for his patriotic and fiery oratory along with his skills as an adjudicator.¹¹⁸

Historians have tended to regard Lady Llanover and Carnhuanawc as a team. As John Davies pointed out ‘gentry and clerics such as Lady Llanover and Carnhuanawc were not numerous.’¹¹⁹ Prys Morgan asserted that ‘they had profound and complex plans for the regeneration of the Welsh people.’¹²⁰ Hywel Teifi Edwards likewise, saw Lady Llanover as ‘a tireless missionary for the kind of Welshness she considered a credit to the nation and an adornment to Britain,...’ this vision was shared with her Anglican friend. ‘The series of Eisteddfodau which she, together with Carnhuanawc... were mainly responsible for directing, should be seen as an advertiser’s promotion.’¹²¹ Therefore, together they were responsible for projecting their image of Wales. However, it would be misleading to portray Lady Llanover and Carnhuanawc as the only people who shared this desire to ‘advertise’ Welsh cultural delights. Other members of the gentry and other Anglican clerics, were very much part of their contingent.

Lady Llanover found an equally important friend in Lady Elisabeth Coffin Greenly.¹²² Her wealth and pedigree predated mass industrialisation and from this point of view she was part of the eighteenth century order. Her links with the beginnings of cultural revival made her an inspiration to Lady Llanover, and being a close friend to her mother Georgina Waddington, Lady Greenly was very much part of the Llanover circle.¹²³ Both Lady Greenly and Carnhuanawc are worthy subjects of study in their own right, but Carnhuanawc has tended to have more attention in the writing of Welsh history. In a sense Lady Greenly represents a forgotten woman who had her own, if more subtle, impact on the revival of interest in all things Welsh. Like Carnhuanawc, Lady Greenly rarely missed an Eisteddfod held in southeast Wales and like Carnhuanawc she had links with the cultural revivalists of the past century. Lady Greenly was one of the early patrons of Iolo Morgannwg, sponsoring him as early as

¹¹⁸ A. Jobbins, *Carnhuanawc Country* [Thomas Price] *A Hero For All Time* (Cardiff, 2004).

¹¹⁹ J. Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 387.

¹²⁰ P. Morgan, ‘Engine of Empire’, p. 219.

¹²¹ H. T. Edwards, ‘The Welsh Language in the Eisteddfod’, p. 301.

¹²² Lady Elisabeth Coffin Greenly (Llwylas) (1771-1839).

¹²³ See S. R. Williams, ‘Llwydilas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg.’

1806.¹²⁴ Her cultural enthusiasm was given some reward when she was made a Bardic aspirant or Ovate in around 1782.¹²⁵ In fact she herself was happy to compete in Eisteddfodau under the name of 'Llwydilas' as well as to offer prizes for competitions. Both Carnhuanawc and Lady Greenly were without question major influences on the young Lady Llanover and it is for this reason that they merit closer attention in the Third Chapter of this thesis.

Lady Greenly had a particular interest in Welsh folk music and found great stimulus in her friendship with the musician and singer Maria Jane Williams who competed in Eisteddfodau under the name of 'Llinos'.¹²⁶ They were introduced at Llanover where Maria Jane Williams's project to compile traditional Welsh music was greeted with much enthusiasm. Llinos belonged to the scholarly Aberpergwm family, who also had industrial interests. However, they could trace back a long tradition in their patronage of Welsh literature. Maria Jane's father, Rees Williams was a landowner and coal master but is also thought to be one of the last of the landed gentry to uphold the tradition of employing a household bard. Her sister and lifelong companion, Elizabeth Anne, as well as her brother, William Williams were frequent visitors to Llanover.¹²⁷ While engrossed in her music project that entailed the collection of Welsh airs, Lady Llanover introduced Maria Jane to the cleric and poet Rev. John Jones.¹²⁸ He along with ab Iolo assisted in formulating translations of the songs. Again an Eisteddfod goer the Rev. John Jones competed under the name Tegid and was a great favourite of Lady Llanover. Through her influence she helped to secure a living for him at Nevern, Pembrokeshire. He also edited the poems of Lewis Glyn Cothi on behalf of the Cymmrodorion Society but he is better known still for helping Lady Charlotte Guest¹²⁹ along with Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain) with transcribing the Red Book of Hergest Stories for her Mabinogion folk tales.¹³⁰ All were projects that received the backing of Lady Llanover and as we shall see in Chapter Four through her introductions she further enabled those who possessed great

¹²⁴ M. Fraser, 'Lady Llanover and Her Circle', p. 172.

¹²⁵ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser, CB/6 (ii) Extracts from Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club Herefordshire Vol, XXXII, Part II, p.238.

¹²⁶ Maria Jane Williams (Llinos) (1795?-1873).

¹²⁷ William Williams of Aberpergwm (1788-1855).

¹²⁸ John Jones (Tegid) (1792-1852).

¹²⁹ Lady Charlotte Guest (1812-1895).

¹³⁰ M. Fraser. 'Lady Llanover and Lady Charlotte Guest' *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, Vol. 13, No.31, pp. 36-43.

talent to work uninhibited. Lady Charlotte Guest, with her husband Sir Josiah John Guest¹³¹ and Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar were amongst the higher-ranking cultural enthusiasts of wealthy industrial backgrounds that were instrumental in the patronage of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau, as well as many other cultural events. Their 'names' ensured the expansion of the cultural calendar.¹³²

Among the middle class intellectuals on the Llanover cultural scene were poets and antiquarians such as Taliesin ab Iolo. He became an active member and contributor to both the Welsh Manuscript Society, and the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion. Lady Llanover for a time was in charge of the subscriptions and took on a central role in 'chasing up' the work of the scholars that endeavoured to promote knowledge of rare Welsh literary material. In her capacity as a member of the Welsh manuscript society Lady Llanover was often in contact with the publisher William Rees¹³³ who set up a successful business at Llandovery and was along with Carnhuanawc a co-trustee with Lady Llanover of Llandovery college, a situation which no doubt strengthened their association and friendship. It was to Williams Rees the Welsh Manuscript Society turned to publish its volumes. Arguably the most famous and successful was Charlotte Guests' *Mabinogion*.

William Rees also published the work of Jane Williams, a member of the Llanover literary circle and biographer of Carnhuanawc. She took on the name Ysgafell, a reference to the name of her Welsh ancestral home near Talgarth.¹³⁴ A close friendship developed between Ysgafell and Lady Llanover that led to them working on a number of projects together. Lady Llanover used her childhood interest in the art of drawing to illustrate Ysgafell's work. Ysgafell had a successful career as a writer, poet and historian and published some thirteen works in the course of her life including, 'A History of Wales'. Although she enjoyed much respect during her lifetime most of her works have long been out of print and forgotten, as has she. Yet

¹³¹ Sir Josiah John Guest (1785-1852).

¹³² M. Fraser, 'Lady Llanover and Lady Charlotte Guest', pp.36-43.

See also A. V. John, *Lady Charlotte- A biography of the Nineteenth Century*.

¹³³ Williams Rees (1808-1873).

¹³⁴ Jane Williams (Ysgafell) (1806-1885)

Jane Williams shall be referred to throughout as Ysgafell.

as a Victorian female writer she gained the respect of her fellow cultural allies and her talent as a writer made her a valuable asset to the Llanover literary circle.¹³⁵

The second half Lady Llanover's life was marked by the loss of some of the key members of her circle. This became all the more stark following the death of her husband in 1867, by which time it can be said that her influence on the national cultural scene was beginning to fade. During her widowhood Lady Llanover found a close companion in Elisabeth (Betha) Johnes. Lady Llanover had taken Betha under her wing when a young woman. Betha was, like her mentor, a promoter of Welsh culture as well as an avid visitor to Eisteddfodau. Since she was one of Lady Llanover's most trusted friends she became privy to some of Lady Llanover's most personal thoughts and therefore had the best insight into Lady Llanover's ever growing frustrations on how national culture was growing and changing in directions that were to her mind unsuitable. The Welsh cultural romantics that gathered at Llanover added to a wider scheme that was partly brought into being by Lady Llanover's overall cultural vision. As such, their contributions are an essential element in understanding Lady Llanover's cultural objectives and so they shall be discussed in more detail later on in Chapter Four.

The rationale for this chapter has been to set out clearly the context of Lady Llanover's life and to demonstrate that Lady Llanover had multiple roles and interests in the creation and protection of what was thought to be a traditional Welsh culture worthy of a national status. All the changes that effected Wales in turn shaped her and her vision of what Wales ought to be. The people of nineteenth century Wales were presented with an opportunity to redefine themselves, to look at the past and preserve what was deemed culturally significant. They were able to resurrect and rewrite the history of Welsh heroes but also invent new traditions for a new Wales. Many different people with their own influences and prejudices fought in a sense to have their ideas promoted and adopted as the nation's 'official' image and identity. Inevitably, this has produced a Wales that displays multiple identities and a mixed culture. Lady Llanover contributed enormously to this process and battled to have her vision made supreme. The remainder of this thesis will explore that process.

¹³⁵ M. Fraser, 'Jane Williams (Ysgafell), 1806-1885' *Brycheiniog*, Vol. VII (1961)

Chapter 3 -The Road to Llanover

Lady Llanover was a Welshwoman of Welshwomen. From her earliest years she imbibed a fondness for her country which was remarkable in a woman of her station.¹

Those were the words chosen by the *Western Mail* correspondent, ‘Morien’ to honour the passing of Lady Llanover in January 1896. Yet the fundamental question is, why would a woman of her station become intrinsically linked with a campaign to preserve, protect and even reinvent the culture and traditions of Wales during the nineteenth century. This is a mystery to which it seems there is no single or clear answer. Therefore it has been the task of historians to surmise why she linked herself so closely to Wales by using what is left of source material, foremost of which is the correspondence of her cultural ally Lady Greenly, the prize winning essay written by Lady Llanover herself on the subject of the Welsh language and costume, as well as various accounts of the Eisteddfodau attended by Lady Llanover. Her links with the cultural elite that were reinforced by her attendance at Eisteddfodau undoubtedly influenced and shaped her notion of Welsh identity and her choice to promote the romantic ideals of culture.

This chapter will sketch out the early years of Lady Llanover’s involvement with Welsh cultural leaders and her activity in the Welsh cultural community. It will argue that the years between 1826, which marked her first recorded attendance at an Eisteddfod and 1837, when an Eisteddfod ball was held at Llanover Hall, were crucial in her development as a person who ‘outdid many a native in her fervour for things Welsh’². So much so, in fact, that she ‘soon came to be regarded as a living patron Saint’, of whom it was said that ‘her enthusiasm ...practically knew no bounds and its influence was widespread.’³ Yet in order to ascertain why and how this rare female Welsh icon was created, one must consider her early formative years. Therefore this chapter analyses Lady Llanover’s unionist nationalism⁴ and asks who and what

¹ *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

² *South Wales Daily News*, 26 July 1923.

³ *South Wales Daily News*, 22 January 1896.

⁴ See C. Williams, ‘Wales’s Unionist-Nationalist’: Sir Thomas Phillips (1801-67)’, *Llafur*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2003).

influenced her up until the completion and celebration of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod party held at Llanover Hall in 1837, which this chapter will argue was the clearest marker that 'Gwenynen Gwent' had 'arrived'.

Because Lady Llanover never categorically stated what had inspired and influenced her interest in Welsh culture there is no way of firmly proving from where her progressive and sympathetic attitudes toward the Welsh language and culture stemmed. The fact that she left behind no official written record of her life was a source of instant regret to biographers following her death and it is even more so for the historian.⁵ Not surprisingly, perhaps, there has been plenty of scope to speculate. No evidence has come to light to suggest that the influence of family played a part in Lady Llanover's initial interest in Wales and the Welsh. In fact sources suggest the contrary:

Mrs Waddington did not think of acquiring knowledge of the Welsh language, which had a large share in her occupations, when, after the marriage of her elder daughters, she was occupied only by the care of her youngest child, who from childhood exhibited a passionate attachment for everything connected with the country of her birth.⁶

A letter written by Lady Llanover's eldest sister, Baroness Bunsen dated 8 July 1818 clearly indicates that as a teenager Lady Llanover had taken a keen interest in the Welsh language and was determined to convince her sibling, whom she greatly admired, of its value:

I begin with an apology to Miss A. as to the Welsh. I repeatedly have studied her valuable extracts, and hope soon to thank and praise her in a few Welsh verses, as I really have the last fortnight been very much interested with whatever relates to Gaelic and Kymric languages...⁷

⁵ Cardiff MSS, 3.771, *Lord and Lady Llanover, Presscuttings, 1860-96* publication unknown dated, 25 January 1896.

⁶ A. J. C. Hare, *The Life and Letters of Frances Baroness Bunsen Volume I*, p. 68.

⁷ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser, CB7 Extracts from Notes and Letters of Baroness Bunsen (nee Waddington) p. 37.

Yet Lady Llanover's upbringing at Llanover should not be underestimated for it may well have been a crucial influence in other ways. In all probability she developed her early curiosity for the Welsh language by talking to her father's tenants. This is indeed the explanation recorded in the *South Wales Daily News* upon her death. As a small child and in her teens Lady Llanover apparently conversed in Welsh with her father's estate workers. According to the same source, the concerns of one old man are said to have shocked Lady Llanover into action. He allegedly remarked:

What a pity it was to think that 40 years hence Welsh would be an unknown language in these parts. The heiress instantly answered, "You are wrong, for Welsh shall be very much spoken here if I can help it".⁸

The origin of this story is unknown, but whether a true explanation given by Lady Llanover herself or a newspaper fabrication, it implies that the preservation of the Welsh language on the Llanover estate became a conviction early in life. That this was an unusual attitude amongst the privileged upper class of the time cannot be overemphasised.

Apart from the contact which she had with Welsh speaking tenants as a child, and a tendency to name her array of pets by Welsh names, there is almost no evidence of Lady Llanover being involved in social engagements of a 'traditionally' Welsh nature until her attendance at the 1826 Brecon Eisteddfod. Yet that is not to say that Lady Llanover had never before been exposed to aspects of Welsh culture for example, a Welsh harpist played at her wedding.⁹ In addition she had special lamp frames made for the occasion 'with B.H and a harp, and a transparency of a goat with Cymru dros byth' embossed on them. This proves something of a Welsh connection, which predates any claim of a single Welsh cultural conversion thought to have occurred at the 1826 Brecon Eisteddfod. Nevertheless it is curious that there is not more evidence of her interest in Wales if one considers that her mother, Georgina Waddington, was a close friend of Lady Elisabeth Coffin Greenly, a leading Welsh cultural enthusiast, as we have already seen. As Godmother, Lady Greenly's influence

⁸ *South Wales Daily News*, January 20 1896.

⁹ NLW MSS, Maxwell FraserCB/6(i), Letter to Lady Greenly's parents, 5 December 1823.

surely permeated Lady Llanover's life early on. The Waddington family held Lady Greenly in high esteem and it is highly likely that the latter's interest in Welsh culture was transferred to the young Lady Llanover. Later reflecting on her childhood, Baroness Bunsen remembered that her mother 'found [Lady Greenly] the most unassuming of mortals, and could not but be won into intimacy by the warm attachment shown to her from the very first'.¹⁰ Moreover she recalled that Lady Greenly was a rare model of the fast disappearing traditional landed gentry:

I perceive that they belonged to a condition of society entirely gone by, that of country gentry, of ancient descent and landed proprietorship, unconnected with any of the industrial sources of wealth which have since been originating cause of such numerous country establishments.¹¹

This perspective is an illuminating one as the romantic in Lady Llanover strove to base her own life on the conduct of the old landed gentry, a section of society that had practically died out by the time of her own generation. She saw Lady Greenly as an example of how the Welsh gentry had once been active contributors to Welsh culture, through scholarship and financial patronage. The country gentry were later overshadowed by the dominance of the industrial entrepreneurs and even though Lady Llanover herself married a man of industry, she viewed herself as a descendent of the landed gentry just as Lady Greenly did.

Thanks to the trouble Lady Greenly took to write letters and diary entries, a unique testament to the hard work of those linked to the Welsh cultural revival of the first half of the nineteenth century has survived. In Marjorie Wright's draft preface to a book on the Greenly Diaries (which never made it to the press) she crystallizes Lady Greenly's significance thus:

In later life one of Lady Greenly's chief interests lay in the revival of the Welsh Eisteddfod, in which her god daughter, Lady Llanover was still more deeply

¹⁰ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser, CB7 Extracts from Notes and Letters of Baroness Bunsen (nee Waddington) p. 47.

¹¹ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser, CB7 Extracts from Notes and Letters of Baroness Bunsen (nee Waddington) p. 44.

involved. She learnt Welsh enough to converse with bards and scholars, composed music for the harp, and always considered herself a Welsh woman.¹²

Lady Greenly was present at the 1822 Brecon Eisteddfod and noted that it was “very fully attended.”¹³ Sir Charles Morgan presided as president and Iolo Morganwg ‘was a prominent personage in the ceremonies of investiture.’¹⁴ As we have already seen in the previous chapter, a circle of Welsh cultural enthusiasts existed well before Lady Llanover’s presence on the Eisteddfod scene was noted. As it was Lady Greenly who first showed her commitment to the preservation of Wales’s cultural heritage, it is highly likely that Lady Llanover followed her example. It might even be argued that, in part, it was Lady Elizabeth Greenly who first nurtured Lady Llanover’s pursuit of a haven for Welsh culture.

Historians such as Prys Morgan and Maxwell Fraser have suggested that it was at the Brecon Eisteddfod in 1826 that Lady Llanover’s major enthusiasm for Welsh culture was kindled. At this event, Revd Thomas Price, ‘Carnhuanawc’, vicar of Cwmdru, was the first speaker. It is he whom popular legend accredits with firing the then Augusta Hall’s fascination with Welsh culture.¹⁵ This is also the explanation recorded by Carnhuanawc’s biographer, Jane Williams, ‘Ysgafell’. According to her, the event was as significant for Carnhuanawc as it was for Lady Llanover:

This meeting,...became to him ever ...memorable, as an era alike auspicious to Cambria’s welfare, and gratifying to his personal feelings, for his honest and fervid eloquence proved the means of stimulating the inherent patriotism of Gwenynen Gwent, and gained for him the long-life friendship of the Llanover families.¹⁶

As Ysgafell was a valued member of the Llanover set, one can perhaps safely assume that she was well placed to know the background of what Prys Morgan has called Lady Llanover’s ‘cultural conversion’. According to him ‘Augusta found herself

¹² NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(iii) Marjorie Wrights draft preface to a book on the Greenly Diaries

¹³ Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i) Greenly Diary Entry, 22 September 1822.

¹⁴ Ibid, (Iolo Morganwg is credited with reinventing the Gorsedd ceremony of investiture.)

¹⁵ M. Fraser, ‘Young Mr. And Mrs. Hall, 1823-30’ *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XIII, No.1 (1963) pp. 29-47 p. 35.

¹⁶ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II* (Llandovery, 1875) p. 129.

bowled over by ...the passionately Welsh oratory of Carnhuanawc'.¹⁷ Ysgafell's decision to record his speech for posterity indicates that his performance at the 1826 Brecon Eisteddfod was both compelling and noteworthy. Much of the rhetoric and imagery used by Carnhuanawc in his oratory later manifested itself in the work and correspondence of Lady Llanover. From this point of view Carnhuanawc demonstrated an irrefutable influence on Lady Llanover's thoughts and actions. His style of expression gives a sense of the conviction held by the Eisteddfod goers whom Lady Llanover began to associate with and may also give the closest idea of what pulled her even further into their fold. As always a sense of romance is used as one of the most important ingredients in the speech but the underlying point of Carnhuanawc's delivery emphasised the national value of Eisteddfodau:

...while other countries are involved in tumult and misery, and while many less fortunate districts, even in the British Islands, are all but menacing rebellion... the happy natives of the Principality are composing odes for Eisteddfodau, and offering medals for the cultivation of the harp: and long may it continue so peaceably employed! If not among the cause, these occupations are at least the surest evidence of internal peace and comparative prosperity. Then let the bards chant their odes, and the datgeiniaid sing their pennillion rhymes; and let the harpers harp their bardic antique strains. I would say earthly happy are the people that are in such circumstances.¹⁸

His words can be seen as being aimed at reassuring the upper classes that directing energy toward the promotion of Welsh culture would ultimately pacify the Welsh nation and turn attention away from developing discontent. As members of the coal and ironmaster aristocracy the happy prospect that promoting Welsh culture would further stimulate social harmony and a proud yet non-extreme level of national pride was sure to have appealed to Lady Llanover and her husband. As discussed previously in Chapter Two the image of industrial south Wales as a cockpit of social unrest in the early nineteenth century was one that both Lord and Lady Llanover were keen to eliminate.

¹⁷ P. Morgan 'Lady Llanover (1802-1896) 'Gwenynen Gwent', p. 97.

¹⁸ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 132.

Although Carnhuanawc's fiery address was most likely delivered amongst friends, Eisteddfod meetings presented opportunities, either directly or through the coverage offered by the Welsh press, to challenge those sceptics who dismissed the value of Eisteddfodau:

I am aware there are some who either doubt, or altogether deny the utility of these proceedings, and would ask, to what end, to what useful purpose is all this? ...I would say in answer then, that the establishment of these institutions has in an eminent degree, conduced to the awakening among us of a spirit of national attachment; and nationality is very nearly allied to patriotism,... and the advantages of this principle have already shown themselves, in the most decided manner, for in every town and district throughout the kingdom, in which any considerable number of Welshmen reside, this national attachment has operated for good; and in many places, in which a few years ago the Welsh residents were in many respects extremely destitute, and their condition unattended to, since the establishment of the Eisteddfod, a better spirit has gone forth among them, and is now in active operation.¹⁹

According to Carnhuanawc's hypothesis, from an intellectual and spiritual point of view the Welsh were well provided for in having the freedom to express their patriotism through Eisteddfod activities. It was, however of paramount importance to Carnhuanawc that the Welsh language should continue to be nurtured for the sake of the academic sustenance of the working classes:

the Welsh language is at the present day to the Welsh peasant, a much more cultivated and literary medium of knowledge than the English is to the Englishmen of the same class. I am not disparaging the language of England... its numberless publications are infinitely beyond all estimate in point of literary value. But it must be acknowledged that... all these works are far removed from the reach... of the common people; at least I believe it will be admitted, that to see a periodical in the hands of an English peasant is not a thing of very frequent occurrence. But amongst our own countrymen... it is our own great boast and glory that... the real peasantry and labouring classes... entirely support them.²⁰

¹⁹ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 132.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

Carnhuanawc was an accomplished public speaker and was well aware of the need to inspire as well as to please his audience. By heaping praise upon the Welsh publications and acknowledging their importance in keeping the *gwerin* up to date with current affairs and literary news Carnhuanawc secured for himself allies in the Welsh press. Periodicals such as *Seren Gomer*, *Y Gwyliedydd*, and *Y Dysgedydd*, among others, were specifically mentioned by name in his speech as favourites among the working classes. In response these publications returned the flattery lavished upon them:

Who can say that Welsh is a useless language, or that those who patronize it are not rendering a service to the country? Show me another language in the world in which such a body of knowledge is found in the hands of the common people! Show me another race of men on the face of the earth, among whom the labouring classes are entire patrons of the press!

As will become apparent on several occasions in this thesis Lady Llanover also benefited from the favour of the Welsh periodical press, even in her later years, for generally her principles and romantic image of Welsh traditions and culture remained in step with that of the Welsh language Nonconformist press.

At the heart of Carnhuanawc's speech lay the Welsh language. Sarcasm, biblical language and imagery were fervidly deployed to drive home the importance of safeguarding the Welsh language as the key to learning and intelligence:

Who would wish to extirpate such a language as this? To choke up at once such channels of knowledge? Who would wish to extinguish such a flood of light, from which the mightiest beams have emanated, and rays of more than earthly splendour? Would they put out our eyes? Or hide from us the face of heaven? If any person could be found so foolish or so wicked, as to wish to arrest the progress of knowledge, we can assure them, that in this instance, at least all their attempts will be in vain and useless.²¹

²¹ Ibid., p. 134.

Carnhuanawc's crusading, direct appeal to the ruling class's sense of duty may well have sealed Lady Llanover's conviction that she should actively protect and promote the language and culture of her own tenants:

And when the higher classes evince a concern for the welfare of the people, by an interest in their engagements, and a friendly participation in their feeling, it will be the means of strengthening those bonds of society, and brightening and riveting still closer the link of that social chain which it is the interest of every member of society to preserve entire and uninjured.²²

At the very least it can be suggested that words such as these reinforced her already strong protective nature and maternal instinct towards her tenants. As we shall see in Chapter Six facets of her personality overtly controlled life on the Llanover estate. Carhuanawc's message was patently aimed at urging the ruling classes to exercise their power and influence to 'manfully stand against the deluge' and 'feel an affection of the language itself' on the grounds that 'it was the language of our race at the earliest colonization of this Island [Britain]'.²³ Harking back to the antiquarian value of the Welsh language and its scholarly worth as well as appealing to the sense of responsibility of the upper classes and emphasising the importance of patronising the Welsh press all became part of what Lady Llanover herself was to advocate publicly at a later date. Her experience at the Brecon Eisteddfod and her exposure to the passionate supplications of Carnhuanawc undoubtedly struck a chord in the young Lady Llanover but it is perhaps far more useful to regard the experience of 1826 as another step in her ongoing progression towards eventually attempting to create a Welsh cultural utopia. All the same, one can be certain that the people, whom she associated with at the 1826 Brecon Eisteddfod had a lasting effect on her. The Eisteddfod needs to be seen in the context of a series of developing stages that led Lady Llanover's transformation into Gwenynen Gwent.

It is to the diary of Lady Greenly which one must turn for a fuller account of the event. She was always extremely keen to inspire the interest of others in Welsh culture. In a letter to her parents dated 28 September 1826, Greenly wrote:

²² Ibid., p. 136.

²³ Ibid., p. 137.

I have been pleased to find that even strangers thought the Eisteddfod interesting-far more so than expected...the speakers were so enthusiastic in the cause that the feelings even of those who were unconnected with the Principality could not fail of being excited.²⁴

The enthusiasm whipped up by Eisteddfodau was of real benefit to what was seen by many cultural campaigners as the 'Welsh cause', in that it raised an awareness of the Welsh profile and Welsh issues. During this period, feelings ran high in Westminster that uniformity should be felt amongst British subjects and that part of improving the 'welfare' of the labouring classes was to guarantee that they all 'bettered' themselves by turning to the English language.²⁵ At the 1826 Brecon Eisteddfod, it was proclaimed that new opinion considered that the most effective means of achieving this goal was instructing children English through their mother tongue, an experiment that was about to be put into action in Ireland. Carnhuanawc suspected that the aristocracy 'were inclined to abolish the Welsh language'.²⁶ Lady Greenly and Lady Llanover's own views on this matter are not recorded but their beliefs and actions suggest they shared his concerns. On this occasion the Eisteddfod served as an arena to debate and exchange opinions on current Welsh issues thus Lady Llanover and her peers were enabled to familiarise themselves with the particular brand of Welsh ethos that Carnhuanawc and those of his ilk promoted. Moreover, it seems reasonable to argue that Carnhuanawc's impassioned speech on how the Welsh aristocracy had neglected their duty to preserve the Welsh language and patronise the bards inspired Lady Llanover to revive this mostly abandoned aristocratic obligation and in a sense drove her to set an example amongst her peers as Lady Greenly had done.

A lack of useful source material makes it hard to trace what developments regarding Lady Llanover's commitment to Welsh cultural events may have occurred during the years between 1826 and 1833. During this period she was likely to have been preoccupied by extensive travel in Europe, caring for three small children and

²⁴ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to her parents, 28 September 1826.

²⁵ See P. Morgan (ed.) *Brad Y Llyfrau Gleision* (Llandysul, 1991)

G. T. Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff, 1998)

²⁶ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to her parents, 28 September 1826.

her husband's developing political career.²⁷ Yet it seems certain that the 'Welsh cause' was not forgotten. Lady Greenly noted that Lady Llanover had started Welsh lessons by November 1833²⁸, suggesting that she had taken further positive steps towards her public emergence as 'Gwenynen Gwent'

The Cardiff Eisteddfod was held on Wednesday 20 August 1834 on Cardiff Castle green. By November 1833 subscriptions for the Eisteddfod were already near to £1000 and so it was expected that the event would be a big success, so much so that it had secured the patronage of the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria.²⁹ Given that the Eisteddfod was so well supported there was widespread disappointment at 'the non-appearance of Princess Victoria, which has been so anxiously hoped for'.³⁰ Proceedings began with speeches by the president, ab Iolo, and the host, the second Marquis of Bute, who, according to Lady Greenly 'had not the gift of eloquence', an opinion shared by Lady Charlotte Guest, who thought his speech 'miserable'.³¹ Whatever the calibre of the Marquis's performance, Carnhuanawc's oratory was apparently as inspirational as ever. Lady Greenly regarded his speech as 'excellent and his flow of words beautiful'.³² Lady Charlotte was in complete agreement, commenting in her journal that it was 'the most beautiful and eloquent speech that was ever heard'.³³ Such observations serve to confirm further Carnhuanawc's key role in inspiring the ladies of what was to become the 'Llanover circle'.

The 1834 Eisteddfod's essay competition turned out to be of major importance to Lady Llanover's development as an energetic and dedicated Welsh cultural activist. As is well known, Lady Llanover won this competition and this should be regarded as a prominent milestone in her emergence on the Welsh cultural scene. In November 1833 Lady Llanover sent a letter to Lady Greenly containing a sketch of a ring seal, to

²⁷ Fraser, M, 'Young Mr. And Mrs. Hall, 1823-30', *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XIII, No.1 (1963) pp. 29-47.

Fraser, M, 'Benjamin and Augusta Hall 1831-36', *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XIII, No.1 (1963) pp. 209-223.

²⁸ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 10 November 1833.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 22 August 1834.

³¹ Earl Bessborough, (ed.) *The Diaries of Lady Charlotte Guest*, 20 August 1834, p. 33

³² NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 22 August 1834.

³³ Earl Bessborough, (ed.) *The Diaries of Lady Charlotte Guest*, 20 August 1834, p. 33

which the ladies of Gwent, including Greenly, had subscribed as a prize for the Cardiff Eisteddfod. The seal was offered for the 'best essay on the advantages to be derived from the preservation of the Welsh language' at a cost of 10 guineas. It was designed in the shape of a harp with 'cas ni charo y wlad a'i magu' [sic] or 'hateful be he who loves not the country which reared him', inscribed upon it.³⁴ It is perhaps an indication that the motto reflected the sentiments of Lady Llanover and Lady Greenly that both decided to compete, under the pseudonyms Gwenynen Gwent and Llwydlas respectively. By the time the Eisteddfod was held, the title of the competition had been slightly altered to include preserving the Welsh dress as well as the Welsh language. Gwenynen Gwent was victorious but Llwydlas was a close runner up and the adjudicator praised both essays highly:

On this nationally interesting subject, two essays had been sent. That of Llwydlas possessed evidently the beauties of easy and elegant style in composition, but for its brevity it only left the Judges to regret that so practised a writer had not pursued the subject further. The other essay was a powerful argument in support of the preservation of the Welsh language and costume, enriched with valuable notes and explanations, the Judges award the prize to Gwenynen Gwent.³⁵

Lady Llanover's triumph was arguably the most important symbolic step on the road to Llanover and an event of major significance. It marked her public emergence as a rare Welsh cultural enthusiast amongst the Welsh gentry. According to a local newspaper, the 'appearance of this beautiful and amiable Lady receiving honours which her talents had so eminently won produced a most powerful interest.'³⁶ Lady Llanover received her prize from Lord Bute amidst 'thunderous applause'. Llwydlas, humble in defeat, recorded in her diary that although rather disappointed,³⁷ she was also only too happy to admit that, 'Mrs Hall took great pains and had opportunities of research...and deserves a reward for her diligence.'³⁸ There is little doubt that Lady Llanover's success had a marked effect on her. Consequently, her involvement in what she regarded as all things Welsh intensified and she was welcomed into the inner circle of the bards. Lady Llanover admitted to Lady Greenly:

³⁴ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 26 November 1833.

³⁵ *Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian*, 23 August 1834.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 22 August 1834.

³⁸ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 31 August 1834.

‘My head is almost turned by being elected an Ofyddes...’³⁹ Her rise to prominence at the Cardiff Eisteddfod was a crucial point in the process of consolidating Lady Llanover’s connections with the Welsh cultural elite, a group which she eventually made her own. In a Welsh-language letter to Taliesin ab Iolo she thanked him for bestowing this ‘great honour’ upon her and acknowledged the impact of the Eisteddfod committee’s decision:

Syr, Deisyfaf ganiatâd i fynegi fy niolchgarwch i chwi ac i'r Beirdd oll y sawl a ffafriasant yr Orsedd ddiweddar am yr anrhydedd yr ydwyf yn mwynhau trwy fy etholiad yn aelod o'r corff... i ba un y perthynwch...Yr wyf yn awr gydafrys yn ymbaratoi i hwylio tua'r cyfandir ac felly nid oes gennyf amser i dywedyd llawer ymhellach nag y bydd imi yn wastad gyfrif yr amgylchiad hyn o fy nerbyniad i rifedi y Beirdd ymhlith y dedwyddaf o'm heinioes ...⁴⁰

[Sir, I beg permission to express my thanks to you and to the bards who favoured me in the last Gosedd and elected me to the honourable position I now enjoy as a member of the body to which you also belong. I am now busily preparing to sail for the continent and so I do not have time to say much more except that I shall always count my acceptance to the bardic circle as one of the most treasured experience of my life.]

While Lady Llanover basked in the glory of this tribute her diligent support of Welsh culture amplified to greater levels. She always took her responsibility toward the patronage of Eisteddfodau with immense seriousness and later took her task too much to heart. As will be discussed later this caused Lady Llanover to fall out with Eisteddfod competition organisers over her extreme and rigid rules. Inevitably she became alienated in later life from the mainstream Welsh cultural community. Nevertheless, we shall also see that she continued to battle on with her patronage of Welsh culture outside the official Eisteddfod arena as she saw fit.

Arguably, Lady Llanover’s best-known academic achievement within the Welsh cultural circle was the publication in both the English and Welsh languages of

³⁹NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Letter to Mrs Hastings, 12 October 1834.

⁴⁰ NLW MSS 126-250 21272 E, (206). Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo letters, ‘Gwenynen Gwent’ to Taliesin ab Iolo, 5 October 1834.

her prize-winning essay in 1836, its full and final title being; 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of The Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales'.⁴¹ The essay warrants close analysis as a source that clearly reflects Lady Llanover's patriotic sentiments, and as a further piece of evidence that illustrates Gwenynen Gwent's arrival and acceptance on the cultural scene. Copies of the essay appear to be rare. It was published for a second time during 1850 in the Welsh language periodical for women *Y Gymraes*. The lack of copies remaining in circulation either in public or private hands would suggest that its readership was small and its direct influence minor. Despite this, the essay is perhaps the most informative source that reflects the first opinions and principles of Lady Llanover. In essence this early work is a statement of her credo and therefore looking in close detail at it will help clarify how it was that Lady Llanover nationalism and patriotism contributed toward the decision to make Llanover Hall and estate the core of her cultural ideas.

The style in which she wrote was similar to that used in a sermon, indicative of Carnhuanawc's oratory influence. The work was in effect a lecture that expressed with frequency the importance of unionist-nationalism. The focus was essentially on the preservation of an ever reducing and ancient Welsh way of life with a familiar touch of romanticism added in reference to the historic religiosity, good and faithful nature of the Welsh people. The real audience for this work was the Welsh cultural elite but the aim was surely an appeal to working classes and more specifically to women. This opinion is borne out by an extract of the essay that later appeared in *Y Gymraes*.

The essay was written for one reason, namely to win a competition set by ardent Welsh patriots of the Cardiff Eisteddfod committee. It may be safely assumed that it pleased the committee greatly that a woman of economic and social status with vigorous energy and zeal had joined their ranks. As previously argued the winning of this competition was a means of making her arrival official, in the same sense as a coming of age or an initiation, for she had proven herself to be a genuine supporter of Welsh traditional and cultural interests. Victory for female participants in literary or

⁴¹ Gwenynen Gwent, 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of the Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales'

essay competitions was comparatively rare. From this perspective Lady Llanover had gained a level of equality with the men that had made written contributions and in this respect one might argue that her status was assured.

Although Lady Llanover did not expressly refer to her own feeling national of alliance the composition, rings with a personal note, as the following extract exemplifies that stresses the elemental nature of nationalism:⁴²

Nationality is a virtuous feeling which exists within us from birth, and either strengthens with our strength, and is developed with our manhood, or it is crushed and suppressed- though seldom or ever totally extinguished; so deeply rooted is the love of country in the breast, that not infrequently it is found to survive almost every earthly affection.⁴³

The extract exemplifies a primordial interpretation of nationality One's nationality therefore is inescapable. It is something, which every individual is born with and it cannot be quashed. It is also an allegiance that links every individual member of a nation. Lady Llanover continued by setting out what maybe seen as her belief in the importance of nationality and patriotism to the Welsh people. She declared:

The fact must certainly be admitted that nationality is desirable, as it tends to promote honourable conduct, and by disposing us first of all love for our country, it induces us to wish for its welfare and next to promote that welfare to the utmost of our abilities.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Lady Llanover was convinced of preserving the Welsh language as a crucial factor that strengthened the nationalism, patriotism and moral fibre of an obedient Welsh nation:

...the Welsh language promotes nationality, and nationality is the parent of patriotism, we would endeavour to demonstrate that the preservation of the language

⁴² A. D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁴³ Gwenynen Gwent, 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of the Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales', p. 4

⁴⁴ Ibid.

is upon that ground alone desirable, as the morals of a people are strengthened and supported by their nationalism, and human nature without the love of a country, is generally acknowledged to be in a perverted and degraded state.⁴⁵

As we saw earlier in Chapter Two, to some within and outside the Principality assimilation through the gradual displacement of the Welsh language by that of the English language was regarded as a possible solution to the problems of protest that manifested the early half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ However, Lady Llanover took exception to this view, and this is clearly evident in her essay:

-supposing for an instant the possibility of Anglicising Wales, what result could be expected? Instead of zealous and efficient soldiers and subjects it now produces, we should have a broken spirited, or a brutalized race, deprived of their natural and legitimate objects of attachment, their language and customs, they would either be callous, stupid and indifferent, or they would become as remarkable for crime, as they are now justly celebrated for the reverse.⁴⁷

Lady Llanover always clung on to and relished this supposedly stereotypical view of the Welsh being wholesome and moral in character.⁴⁸ She paints an almost apocalyptic picture of the consequences of sidelining the vernacular. There is room to speculate that part of motivation behind Lady Llanover's strong support of the Welsh language was to use it as an ideal instrument in appeasing the Welsh, thus keeping them away from the influences of radical politics and protest. After all the Welsh had so far been 'exemplary in their allegiance in times of trouble and discontent, and the continuance of their loyalty [would] best be promoted by encouraging the preservation of that fine language which they have as yet so wonderfully and so creditably maintained'.⁴⁹ Another of the reasons put forward in the essay that explained the Welsh language's survival and indeed another rationale for its

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁶ It was believed that industrial protests such as Scotch Cattle and the Merthyr Rising of 1831 were organised through secret communication in the Welsh language and so it was thought that by displacing the Welsh language in favour of English such situations would be avoidable in the future.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See R. Davies, *Secret Sins: Sex Violence and Society in Carmarthenshire 1870-1920* (Cardiff, 1996) P. Morgan, 'Keeping the legends alive' in T. Curtis (ed.) *Wales the Imagined Nation: Studies in Cultural and National Identity* (Bridgend, 1986) pp. 19-41, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Gwenynen Gwent, 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of the Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales', p. 7.

protection was its connection with Christianity. As Lady Llanover stressed, it was to Wales not England that Christianity had first been exported. It was in the vernacular that any changes in the *status quo* of religion had to be preached in order to secure success. As Glanmor Williams stated in his work on *Wales and the Reformation*, 'from early on, the protectionists of the Welsh language had been quick to seize upon the point that the Reformation had as much to contribute to it as religion.'⁵⁰ Lady Llanover also attributed the 'success' of the Reformation in Wales, as many had done before her to the use of Welsh language as a mechanism of religious instruction:

..what was the instrument made use of as the means of influencing the minds and feelings of the people? Most assuredly not the English language, though it was at that day, as well as at present, the organ of legal and legislative proceedings! But had it been the only means resorted to for the instruction of the people, the inhabitants of the Principality would have been at the present moment, like our neighbours, the Irish members of the Church in Rome.⁵¹

Therefore, by allowing, and indeed fostering a desire in the Welsh people to hold on to a highly developed sense of nationhood and identity all residents of the Principality would remain a happy, godly and most importantly, an obedient people. In the opinion of Lady Llanover it was essential to promote nationality with all its signifying facets in order to uphold 'public honour, and the security of every social community'.⁵² To protect the Welsh language was to protect the status quo and uphold the status of the landed gentry.

The opinions of Lady Llanover on language, religion, morality and patriotism have been clearly set out here. The second subject tackled in her prize-winning essay, the preservation of the national costumes of Wales, is the enduring message popularly remembered in her work. This section of the essay will be discussed in Chapter Five. It is suffice to say at this point that the essay argued passionately for the reinstatement of the Welsh woollen industry and the wearing of native fabrics on practical more than patriotic grounds.

⁵⁰ G. Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff, 1999) p. 404.

⁵¹ Gwenynen Gwent, 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of the Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales', p.6.

⁵² Ibid., p. B.



With values such as those articulated above Lady Llanover built her vision of a cultural utopia. As mentioned in the Introduction, Lady Llanover's own written works are rare but what has survived clearly conveys her beliefs and ambitions. By 1834 her ideas had reached the Eisteddfod stage and by 1836 they had been released into the public domain. All this further testifies to her progression on the road to Llanover. Yet it must be understood and emphasised that Lady Llanover did not act alone, especially in her earlier years. She was linked to a network of like-minded individuals who influenced and assisted in continually bringing the Welsh language and culture to the forefront through the celebration of Eisteddfodau. The cooperation of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society, an association dedicated to the upholding of Welsh traditions, was of the utmost importance in developing her project and also her confidence as a Welsh patron. Its members took responsibility for the organisation of competitions and prizes and thus it served as an arena in which Lady Llanover could shine.

The Abergavenny Cymreigyddion was founded by prominent Welsh intellectuals and formed on 22 November 1833.⁵³ The committee included Revd. John Evans vicar of Llanover church, as president. The lawyer William Price as vice president, other committee members included the poets T. E Watkins (Eiddil Ifor), Thomas Bevan (Caradawc), and Revd Thomas Price (Carnhuanawc). At the first meeting a letter written by Carnhuanawc on 21 November 1833 was read. Though unable himself to attend, as a key member it was no doubt of personal importance to him that the purpose of the society should be confirmed as 'in the first place to cherish the language'. Concern for the future generation was the foremost priority:

I would have drawn your attention to the necessity of teaching the Cambrian language to the children of Cambria in the daily as well as Sunday school, and that all members of Cambrian Societies should bind themselves to support such a system. In the next place, as a maintenance of patriotism: I would have endeavoured to persuade every one who has Cambrian blood to bind him self to give Cambrian names to his children, instead of adapting foreign ones now in common use among the people.⁵⁴

⁵³ See M. E. Thomas, *Afaith yng Ngwent*.

⁵⁴ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 230.

A second meeting was held some five days later, at which Lord and Lady Llanover as well as her widowed mother, Mrs Waddington, signalled their desire to become members. A fortnight later Lady Greenly also affiliated, making this group the society's earliest and enthusiastic members. The rapid growth of the society was deemed noteworthy enough for Ysgafell to comment upon its quick progression. The society would remain an important focus in both Carnhuanawc's and Lady Llanover's lives:

In less than three months from its commencement, the Cymreigyddion Y Fenni had enrolled seventy-five members, among whom comparatively few belonged to the upper class of society. The Llanover Family, Lady Coffin Greenly of Titley, Mr Williams of Llanybi, Monsieur Rieu, Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar, Sir John and Lady Charlotte Guest sanctioned the objects of the society by becoming the earliest of such volunteer allies.⁵⁵

Undoubtedly membership of the upper echelons of society gave credence to the prestigious reputation strived for by the group. This view was emphasised by *Seren Gomer* when it was declared that the society was 'dan nawdd y boneddigion mwyaf urddasol yn y parth hwn' [*under the patronage of the most noble gentry of the region*]⁵⁶

Meetings generally took place in 'Yr Haul' [*The Sun*], a tavern in Abergavenny. Initially the rules of the society insisted that meetings were to take place in the Welsh language only. In the long-term however, it proved impossible for the committee to stick to this principle, presumably due to a lack of first language Welsh speaking committee members. However, an unyielding rule was the strict ban on smoking and alcohol; neither was to be consumed on the premises of 'Yr Haul' during the meeting. As we shall see later, this policy undoubtedly met with Lady Llanover's approval given her desire to uphold temperance, at the cost of her tenants' personal freedom. The rule might partly be attributed to the clerical members of the committee but this wish to sustain temperance is again another mystery tied up with

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 231.

⁵⁶ *Seren Gomer*, November 1835 Vol. XVIII No. 242, p. 341.

Lady Llanover's early influences. The initial arrangement was that Eisteddfodau should be held annually, yet this was far from the case. Only a few official programmes survive. Existing accounts tend to be sketchy and it is necessary to rely on a variety of contemporary newspapers, publications and the correspondence between those who took part in order to piece together a fuller picture of events.

The Abergavenny Cymreigyddion society annual meeting of 1834 was held on St David's day. Proceedings began at 'Yr Haul' and then the company moved to the town hall, which had been decorated under Lady Llanover's supervision. After attending to society business, competition results were announced. All competitions noted were for poetry and literature. Among the subjects were 'St David', 'The History of Gwent' and the 'History of Abergavenny'. All carried relatively modest prize money in comparison to what was to follow at later Cymreigyddion meetings. Although a relatively small event, it was obviously deemed successful enough to warrant future efforts.

Much hard work and preparation was involved in making the Eisteddfod meetings a spectacle worthy of aristocrat's time. Prizes had to be worth competing for, the most prestigious of which was always the Eisteddfod chair and in the 1835 improvisation was necessary to produce the most important award:

Yr wyf wedi troi fy meddwl amryw weithiau at y Gadair Cymreigyddol a fy marn yw hyn- fod yr amser yn fyr iawn i wneuthur y fath orchwyl..., ac mae gwell fydd cymerid ryw gadair gyffredin dros dro hyn a'i thrwsio a dail ac ysrodeuan addas i'r achos, a chymered pwyll i gerfio cadair hardd ardderchog erbyn y flwyddyn nesaf ... gallaf sicrhau i chwi y bydd llawer iawn o waith manwl yn angenrheidiol i wneuthur y fath gadair y cydymffurfiai a myfi yn fy marn.

[My mind has turned to the making of the Cymreigyddion chair and my opinion is this- that the time is very short to undertake the task..., and it would be better to take a common chair and fix it with leaves and appropriate decorations for the occasion, and take care to carve an excellent and beautiful chair by next year. I can assure you

*that much detailed work is required to make the type of chair, which will conform to my opinion.]*⁵⁷

No mention has been found in either the press or the correspondence of Cymreigyddion that the chair on this occasion was below standard. As expected criticism within the press circle and members of the society is uncommon. It may be that the improvised chair made the grade or a new chair was carved in record time but what is certain is that difficulties arise when attempting to gain a clear picture of the logistics around planning an Eisteddfod due to the fact that the emphasis in the sources tends to be about the successes of the Cymreigyddion.

Eisteddfodau were rarely without controversy; objections were raised and internal strife present at times. Carnhuanawc felt the need to air his disapproval of the choice of one competitor's bardic name on the grounds of it being an absurd name with an anglicised twang:

Nis gwn pwy yw Horne Tooke, ond nis gallaf fodd yn y byd ymfoddlon i adael i'r fath enw anghymreigaidd, diystyr ymddangos ym mhlith y Beirdd, ac yr wyf yn deisyf arnoch beidio ei argraffu yn ein hysbybiad. Heb law ei Seisnigrwydd, y mae yn swnio gormod o ymbleidiad gwladwriaethol.

*[I do not know of Horne Tooke, but there is no way on earth I can be willing to allow such a non-Welsh and destructive name to appear amongst the bards, and I appeal to you not to publish the name in the programme. Apart from its Anglicisation it sounds too much like a partisan state.]*⁵⁸

Quite clearly in the opinion of Carnhuanawc to choose Horne Tooke as a serious bardic name was tantamount to an attempt at sabotaging the reputation of the society, therefore in the interests of preserving dignity the trouble maker ought to be crossed off from the list of true bards. The matter was far from trivial, protecting the scholarly image of the establishment was a primary consideration for the Eisteddfod organisers and they saw fit to weed out any element, which might misrepresent the society. Moreover, it is clear that the organising committee saw a real need to implement an

⁵⁷ NLW MSS 13182-13183E. Cymdeithas Cymreigyddion Y Fenni, Carnhuanawc to Caradawc, 16 November 1835.

⁵⁸ NLW MSS 13182-13183E. Cymdeithas Cymreigyddion Y Fenni, Carnhuanawc to Caradawc, [n.d].

element of control over what was deemed acceptably 'Welsh'. As we shall see Lady Llanover took a self appointed lead in such matters.

With the important prestige of a competition winner playing to her advantage, Lady Llanover set about helping to organise Eisteddfodau. She worked towards ensuring that each Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod built upon the success of the last. The 1835 Eisteddfod was no exception and it appears her aim was to outdo the 1834 Cardiff Eisteddfod. In a letter to Lady Greenly written in December 1835, Lady Llanover claimed triumphantly 'It is impossible to describe how much beyond our hopes on the whole the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion has turned out'.⁵⁹ She continued by thanking Lady Greenly for the prize Bible and medal offered, which she regarded as superior to those of the Cardiff Eisteddfod. According to Lady Llanover every country gentleman within a fifteen-mile radius had been in attendance with the exception of Mr Hanbury Leigh of Pontypool, whose absence was exonerated by his membership of the society along with his donation of a 5-guinea prize.⁶⁰ Lady Llanover's competitive nature shines through here; it was vital to 'Gwenynen Gwent' that an Eisteddfod associated directly with her should be a resounding success and it would seem that she partly measured that achievement upon the number of gentry in attendance. Evidently Lady Llanover's pride in the occasion was well placed, as Charlotte Guest's account of the day written in her journal concurs with Lady Llanover's proud statements of success. Lady Charlotte noted that 'All the first families of the neighbourhood attended and everything went off perfectly well. Mr Price conducted the transactions and spoke with great pride'.⁶¹ Lady Llanover's main ambition was to enhance the success of the Eisteddfod in order to engage the interests, and win over as many people as possible. As will become clear the Eisteddfod was a vehicle, which served to promote Lady Llanover's cultural ideas. The aim of the Eisteddfod and indeed the purpose of her cultural utopia was to celebrate a version of Welsh culture that Lady Llanover believed all classes in Welsh society could and should take pride in.

The opportunity came for Lady Charlotte's husband, Sir John Guest came to be president on the occasion of the 1835 Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod,

⁵⁹ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Mrs Hall to Lady Greenly, December 1835.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ NLW MSS, Journal of Lady Charlotte Guest, 25 November 1835.

held on 25 and 26 November. Upon the entry of the bards, he as president was 'at the head of them and before him was carried a gigantic leek 4 foot high'. Lady Llanover apparently provided 'very sublime leeks' for the procession⁶². Sir John was unable to address his audience in Welsh but emphasised that this did not detract from his patriotism, as it was after all to Wales that he owed everything. This time however, the main attraction was the Breton scholar Francois Rio of Brittany who gave a speech on the shared history and similarities of Wales and Brittany.⁶³ His debut was a great success in the eyes of Lady Charlotte who thought his contribution to be 'a most brilliant speech. At the conclusion there was a great deal of enthusiasm and... most ... cheered.'⁶⁴ Rio's appearance had been long awaited, as an enthusiastic letter by Lady Greenly testifies:

Mrs. Hall has shown me a letter from Madam Bunsen in which she says that a Mr. Rio has been at Rome, and introduced to them, who is a Breton on which he values himself not a little, and on being able to speak the Breton language, but as he believes that of his forefathers to have been in a much purer state in Wales he is determined on coming to the Principality in order to hear it in perfection, and was quite charmed to find that Mrs. Bunsen could give introductory letters to residence in the country he was so anxious to visit. He is highly informed and very agreeable.⁶⁵

The inclusion of Mr Rio at the 1835 Eisteddfod reflects the Llanover sets expansion into European circles. The pioneer was Lady Llanover's sister Baroness Bunsen, who had written a letter of introduction to the Llanover family on Rio's behalf in 1832. He went on to marry Appalugia Jones of the Llanarth family, this union cemented his connection with the Llanover circle.⁶⁶ Carnhuanawc had also travelled extensively through Brittany and was well versed in Celtic connections. This European dimension was an ongoing alliance throughout the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion society's existence and served to enrich the volume of scholarly work being produced in association with Eisteddfod competitions.⁶⁷ On this occasion a correspondent from *Seren Gomer* was unable to attend but the monthly published its

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ M. E. Thomas, *Afiaith yng Ngwent*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ NLW MSS, Journal of Lady Charlotte Guest, 25 November 1835.

⁶⁵ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 16 November 1832.

⁶⁶ The Jones (later the Herberts) of Llanarth had long been known to Hall's of Llanover. Lady Llanover's daughter married John Arthur Edward Jones of Llanarth in 1846.

⁶⁷ Further details on this subject are to be found in Chapter Four.

thanks to the committee for the invitation and the support shown by the Cymreigyddion toward the publication. It also pledged to offer assistance to the society by keeping its pages open to it always.⁶⁸

Seren Gomer kept its promise and as a result published an extensive account of the 1836 Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod, which was held on 23 and 24 November, Llanover became a natural choice for attendees to congregate. On this occasion the Williams's of Aberpergwm stayed at Llanover. A family of 'perfect Welsh scholars', Lady Greenly delighted at there being so much 'Welsh and nationality'⁶⁹ in the house. Miss Maria Jane Williams or Llinos was a gifted singer and was a regular competitor and patron of Eisteddfodau. Lady Greenly said of her performance at Llanover 'I have seldom heard in a private room so mellifluous, yet powerful a voice'⁷⁰ Maria Jane Williams was often accompanied by her older sister Elizabeth and on this occasion their brother was also present, a man who according to Lady Greenly's correspondence, had impressive intellectual capabilities. She noted that, 'Mr Williams of Aberpergwm has lived much abroad, speaks and understands every modern language, the modern Greek included, yet is enthusiastically attached to the Welsh, which he loves to converse in, and reads deeply.'⁷¹

Increasingly, during the 1830s Llanover was becoming the head quarters for the middle and upper class intellectuals to meet and discuss the finer points of how best to express their patriotism, and national identity in, as they saw it in a culturally sophisticated atmosphere. The Llanover party left for the Eisteddfod in 3 carriages 'dressed in various Welsh stuffs' for the schoolhouse at Abergavenny, which had been 'fitted up for the occasion with a platform.'⁷² Due to the absence of the originally intended president Mr. Rio of Brittany the responsibility fell to W. A. Williams M.P. This it seems had not effected the preparation for the event, which Lady Greenly noted had been principally been organised by Carnhuanawc. At Llanover, Lady Greenly was given a sneak preview of 'the medals to be given at the Cymreigyddion – 23 in number'. Her own prize was reserved for the best essay on the

⁶⁸ *Seren Gomer*, November 1835, Vol XVIII. No. 242, p. 341.

⁶⁹ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 28 November 1836.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 21 November 1836.

early translators of the Bible into Welsh⁷³, won by Thomas Williams of Crickhowell and the medal awarded by Greenly worth 3 guineas and a further prize of 2 guineas. Lady Llanover also offered a prize for the best historical notes on the Welsh people within the last 200 years. Daniel Lewis received the medal worth 5 guineas and the 2-guinea prize. Lady Charlotte Guest offered a medal worth 3 guineas and a prize of 2 guineas for the best collection of unpublished traditions of Gwent and Morganwg, which was received by Edward Williams of Pontyfon.⁷⁴

The prizes given equalled around £80 with more prizes to the value of £109 already promised for the following year. Lady Greenly observed that one of her company, a Mrs Hughes 'was greatly struck by the simple manners and appearances of the men who gained the prizes for various literary productions in prose and verse-by the real delight their success seemed to give the crowded audience, especially those of their own station in life'.⁷⁵ The remark not only highlights what seems to have been the genuine enjoyment displayed by competitors at the opportunity to express themselves in an artistic sphere, it also points towards the fact that the educated working classes were not as unrefined as some among the more privileged ranks had perhaps feared. Moreover, ostensibly separate classes were capable of socialising within this particular public context. In short the Eisteddfod to some extent offered the opportunity for the classes to mix.

An essential feature of the Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau was the opportunity presented for rousing speeches such as those made during the two-day event of 1836. Carnhuanawc again spoke eloquently according to *Seren Gomer*:

...gan ddangos buddioldeb y Cymdeithasau Cymreigyddol, a gwroldeb y Cymry yn gwrthsefyll eu gelynion, yn mynnu eu hiawnderau, ac yn sefyll yn genedl anymddibynol hyd y dydd hwn.

⁷³ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 10 November 1836.

⁷⁴ *Seren Gomer*, December 1836, Vol. XIX No. 255, p. 374.

⁷⁵ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 28 November 1836.

*[by showing the benefits of Welsh societies and the courage of the Welsh in withstanding their enemies, demanding equality and standing as an independent nation to this day]*⁷⁶

Seren Gomer expressed regret that Benjamin Hall's excellent speech on Welsh literature could not be published, perhaps because it was too long or longwinded. Arguably, Mr. Williams of Aberpergwm made the most important of all speeches 'on searching out, printing and translating of Welsh MSS as likely to throw light on British and... European history.' Lady Greenly declared, 'We hope this object will be earnestly followed up.'⁷⁷ Her hopes were realised in the formation of the Welsh Manuscript society, which was established in order to meet the demands of the criteria set out by Williams. This national society was born out of a local Eisteddfod, proof in itself that what might seem on the surface as a provincial event could have far reaching and beneficial cultural implications.⁷⁸ In the next chapter we shall see how Lady Llanover did all in her power to make the Welsh Manuscript society a success.

In all of the Eisteddfodau noted up until 1836 it is likely that Lady Llanover played an important part. There seems to be little evidence to show exactly what her role was, other than encouraging the offering of prizes for competitions and promoting her home as a central meeting point. Yet despite the fact that Lady Llanover had no official post her diligent patronage of these cultural events further developed her identification with Wales in general. In a letter to Lady Greenly, Lady Llanover assured her friend that the subtle efforts undertaken by herself, Greenly and Carnhuanawc would have a cumulatively positive effect upon Wales. She declared, 'Like Ants we work quietly and busily unnoticed and un-thought of, till some day perhaps our ant hill will suddenly appear so strong and well built that it may be deemed advisable not to oppose our further efforts for the benefit of our country.'⁷⁹ Who exactly would undermine their efforts is unclear but as will be revealed in all the following chapters, Lady Llanover lived up to the reputation of having a sting in her tail and she would scorn any individual whatever their rank in society for daring to challenge or destabilise her cultural agenda.

⁷⁶ *Seren Gomer*, December 1836, Vol. XIX No. 255, p. 373.

⁷⁷ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 28 November 1836.

⁷⁸ Further discussion of the Welsh Manuscript Society appears in Chapter Four.

⁷⁹ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Llanover to Lady Greenly, 23 November 1834.

Whatever her role up to 1836 it was the fourth Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod, which was held on Wednesday and Thursday 18 and 19 October 1837, that sealed Lady Llanover's reputation as one of the foremost cultural enthusiasts amongst the Welsh gentry. There is no doubt that this Eisteddfod was of particular personal importance to Lady Llanover. Not only was her husband, Benjamin Hall, president of Eisteddfod but she had also chosen this event to showcase the newly constructed Llanover Hall to her fellow Eisteddfod goers by holding a lavish ball that was to be the climax of the cultural experience. By September 1837 the Llanover household was apparently in a frenzy of preparation:

A letter from Mrs Waddington describes the hurry and the bustle of preparation for the reception of a large party at the new mansion at Llanover – 17 painters have just departed, several gilders yet remain- the paper is not come for the drawing room, and the feather beds, pillows and bolsters from London smelt so strongly they have been obliged to be opened [and] purified with lime water The work that has been done and the work there is to do, is immense!⁸⁰

Up until this point the balls had always been held at the Angel Hotel in Abergavenny but here was an unrivalled opportunity for Lady Llanover to shine as an example to her upper class peers. It may also be argued that this opening of Llanover Hall to the public was in fact the symbolic opening of the centre for Welsh cultural scholarship, a major feature in the attempt to construct a Welsh cultural utopia that will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

By 1837 membership of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society had grown to 140. There were 170 competitors in some 34 competitions contending for 150 guineas worth of prizes. The event was a far cry from the first Eisteddfod of 1834 in which 3 competitors contending in 5 categories amounting to 5 guineas worth of prizes.⁸¹ The Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod was intended to be a grand event full of pomp and ceremony. According to the printed official programme the expected number of bards, singers and singers with the harp to attend the Eisteddfod numbered 23, 10 and 13 respectively. All of the Llanover set contributed money

⁸⁰ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, [n.d].

⁸¹ *Seren Gomer*, November 1837, Vol. XX No. 266, p. 346.

towards a variety of prizes. Lady Charlotte Guest offered a medal valued at £5.5s and a premium of £5.5s for the best history of Merthyr Tydfil. Mr Williams of Aberpergwm offered a medal worth £5.5s and a premium of £5.5s for the best history of the town of and Abbey of Neath. Miss Jane Williams of Aberpergwm contributed a medal worth £1.1s and a premium of £1.1s for the best new air in the style of ancient Welsh music.

Lady Llanover chose to offer a medal valued at £3.3s and a premium of £2.2s for the best history of Iestyn ap Gwrgant, Prince of Morganwg. Benjamin Hall chose music for his contribution, offering a medal to the best female singer with the harp valued at £2.2s with a premium of £1.1s. The society offered prizes for competition, which would add an extra air of modern Welshness to the newly completed Llanover Hall. They included a medal valued at £2.2s with a premium of £1.1s for the best englyn [verse] to be placed upon the Porthmawr [*main gate*] at Llanover and a medal, worth £2.2s and a premium of £3.3s for the best poetical composition, 'to be sung with the harp, upon the occasion of the president, B, Hall MP taking possession of his new house at Llanover'.⁸² These competitions were set with the intention of promoting and to some extent recovering the history and traditions of Wales. By encouraging the creative process through competitions Lady Llanover was setting herself up as a patron of the Welsh arts thus harking back to the former role of the landed aristocracy, which she so greatly admired. Perhaps most importantly of all Lady Greenly offered a medal valued at £3.3s and premium of £2.2s for the best collection of unpublished Welsh music. The event was to have far reaching effects on the survival of traditional Welsh music.

One might argue that this particular competition had been thought up with a view to promoting the talents of Maria Jane Williams, a valued member of the Llanover set. It must have been obvious to all that Llinos would be victorious. As referred to previously, Lady Greenly and Llinos had already met at Llanover in 1836. Lady Greenly had been most impressed by the talented singer, who claimed at the time that she had learnt some traditional Welsh airs from an old Glamorganshire woman. In all, Llinos asserted that she knew roughly a hundred songs and was intent

⁸² St Fagans, 784.0p Ab37, Programme of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society Eisteddfodau 1837.

on writing them up for fear that they should be entirely forgotten by future generations. Having been given a rendition at Llanover, Lady Greenly was engrossed by the charm of these songs. In a letter to her cousin, Mrs Hastings, written from Llanover on 28 November 1836 Lady Greenly describes the music as follows:

They are of a very different character to any Welsh music I have ever heard before, they are plaintive or devotional, with a touching wildness... I remember Margaret used to tell me of them as being sung among the hills, and I have heard wild notes along mountainsides from the peasants, in my rambles with her.⁸³

A romantic image is portrayed here of a perceived melodic labouring class cheerfully going about their businesses to the accompaniment of song, a stereotypical representation of the Welsh nation, which has endured. Nevertheless, Lady Greenly displayed a genuine desire to enrich Welsh music. This perhaps is why she took it upon herself to compose her own air in the Welsh style. Her music was submitted at the 1836 Eisteddfod, however no award was given due to its late receipt. Despite this her work was subsequently rewarded by the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society, which voted to have a medal, made especially for Llwydilas.⁸⁴ Lady Greenly was delighted to receive formal recognition of her talent, despite this being by way of a consolation prize. As we shall see in the next chapter, the real value of Llinos's work came into fruition when it was later published with much encouragement and intervention by Lady Llanover and her allies.

There was never any shortage of prizes offered for Welsh textiles. This was a way of awarding the promotion of culture outside the boundary of literature and music. In her correspondence Lady Greenly revealed that she was touched to witness the joy of Mrs Harris of Rhyd y Llyfen Manufactory on receiving a medal for 2 yards of 'beautiful fine Welsh check' she was dressed in 'true and complete Welsh costume- round black hat...cap, and brilliant handkerchief over her shoulders.'⁸⁵ There is no doubt then that by this point Lady Llanover and those of her standing had managed to influence Welsh manufacturers to bring back the making of traditional Welsh fabrics and therefore it should not be forgotten that there was a practical

⁸³ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 28 November 1836.

⁸⁴ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 23 October 1836.

⁸⁵ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 23 October 1836.

element to the Llanover faction's cultural campaigns. The very nature of the competitions clearly shows that the Abergavenny Eisteddfod was as much about the invention of tradition as the preservation of it, and it would appear that this was all carried out of a sense of duty as well as fun.

The Abergavenny Cymreigyddion were obviously pleased with their efforts on behalf of what they saw as the preservation of the Welsh nation. This filters through when reading Lady Greenly's account of the event; in it one detects a self-congratulatory tone amongst the organising aristocracy. The 1837 Eisteddfod closed with 3 cheers for Sir Charles Morgan, 3 for the houses of Llanarth and Llanover, another 3 for Lady Greenly and also Lady Llanover and finally 3 times 3 for the Queen. The Welsh aristocratic intelligentsia were proud of themselves, consequently much back patting served to extend the formality of the event. One might argue that the Eisteddfod was more an occasion for the amusement of the ruling classes rather than for the *Gwerin*.⁸⁶ But Lady Greenly had always been convinced that their efforts were for the good of the nation as a whole and this was no doubt an opinion shared by both Lady Llanover and Carnhuanawc:

To all, who from ignorance or prejudice oppose these national meetings, let it be said that whatever preserves nationality – that love of language, customs, habits and appearances of our forefathers which has most commonly a strong hold on the uncorrupted mind, ought to be encouraged, for it cannot be doubted that the prevalence of such feelings is the safeguard of a people.⁸⁷

The eagerly awaited ball held at Llanover Hall marked the grand finale to a meticulously organised Eisteddfod designed to incorporate the support and interest of the aristocracy and the educated middle and working classes alike. One only has to glance at the list of attendees recorded by Lady Greenly to know that this was a grand occasion for the local aristocracy and beyond, with some 250 people present. Such an event held at the most impressive of venues called for the finest attire. Lady Greenly wore diamonds, her medal and a silver leek. She noted that many of the guests took

⁸⁶ My interpretation of the *Gwerin* in this case is of an educated, virtuous, cultured working to middle class people who often conveyed nationalistic sentiments all be it within the British context. The term is problematic to define; for a full discussion see- P. Morgan, 'The Gwerin of Wales - myth and reality' in I. Hume & W. T. R. Pryce, (eds.) *The Welsh and their Country* (1986), pp. 134-152.

⁸⁷ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Greenly to Mrs Hastings, 10 November 1833.

the inspiration for their dress directly from Lady Llanover's book of Welsh Costumes. The event was evidently impressive enough to warrant compliments all round. Lord Crewe apparently proclaimed that he had never witnessed such magnificent entertainments even in Paris. The great hall was 'fitted as a ball room and hung with banners, having the Arms of Wales'. The Ladies' maids who served refreshments in the library in Welsh costume added a further touch of drama to the fanciful performance. It would appear that a good time was had by all, as is described by Lady Greenly's letter to Mrs Hasting dated 23 October 1837. Lady Greenly then approximately age 66 left the party at 3 o'clock in the morning.⁸⁸ Yet, behind the fancy dress extravaganza Lady Llanover was beginning to make her home the focal point of Welsh culture, and as this chapter has argued she was partly inspired to do so by her fellow Welsh culture protectionists.

It was never a forgone conclusion that Lady Llanover would take such a deep interest in the language, culture and traditions of Wales. Lord and Lady Llanover might easily have chosen to become absentee landlords but as a young couple they decided to establish themselves at Lady Llanover's family estate. Although some of the aristocracy displayed sentimental tendencies toward the customs of Wales it was a rare thing for a woman of Lady Llanover's background to dive into and indeed almost begin to lead a group of cultural enthusiasts in a practical and proactive manner. This chapter has argued that the road to Llanover was paved not only by the young Lady Llanover's feelings of national identity and patriotism, which she later captured in her written work, but also by her shared experiences with seasoned Welsh patriots such as Carnhuanawc and Lady Greenly. It was they who were instrumental in involving Lady Llanover with the Eisteddfod circuit and the societies, which grew out of these celebrations. Llanover Hall was much more than a party venue and a fashionable location for the aristocracy of South Wales to be seen. As will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six there was a serious cultural ethos behind day-to-day life at Llanover. In essence Lady Llanover never experienced a single cultural conversion, rather she evolved into Gwenynen Gwent, over time and for a number of reasons. Such reasons included her idyllic childhood at Llanover, the stimulation of the cultural protectionists whom she admired, and the gratification felt by her for that early

⁸⁸ It may be argued that this was Lady Greenly's last celebration of this level. What is left of her transcribed letters and diary does not mention Llanover during 1838. She died 29 January 1839.

Eisteddfod victory of 1834. Gwenynen Gwent's arrival into the cultural fold had far reaching implications for the cultural revival and the Llanover estate. Life became geared toward protecting and later on creating a Welsh community. Lady Llanover's ambition to drive the cultural revival and create her ideal Wales was by no means a straightforward task but as will be revealed in the next chapter she used all her energies as 'Gwenynen Gwent', including that infamous sting in the tail to influence a new culture for a new Wales.

Chapter 4 -The Queen Bee in a Hive of Cultural Activity

Llanover was the Mecca of every Welsh bard, the one spot where he was sure of a royal welcome. She was certainly a remarkable personality, keen as a critic, warm and generous to the cause she held so dear...Through her efforts and those of the band of stalwarts around her, those members of the Yr Hen Gymreigyddion y Fenni came a great revival of Welsh industry in Gwent and Morganwg.¹

In 1910, from across the Atlantic the Welsh American periodical *The Cambrian* highlighted Lady Llanover and her project's contribution to the Welsh cultural revival. While Chapter Three focused on Lady Llanover's early years and her public arrival on the Welsh cultural scene this section considers Lady Llanover's activities as a cultural leader, paying specific attention to how she influenced her allies in their own cultural pursuits. Lady Llanover became to all intent and purposes a self-appointed "Queen bee" in a hive of cultural activity; and this might be described as the golden age of her endeavour. During the period between 1837, (the year of her lavish ball in celebration of the Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod) and 1853 (the year of the last Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod) Lady Llanover and her contemporaries seemed strong and able to celebrate, even reinvent and defend their views of Welsh culture and identity. They partly achieved this by using Eisteddfodau² and the Welsh Manuscript Society as outlets for their cultural endeavours. Lady Llanover made sure that both societies became key facets of her cultural plans and she used her influence within those societies to shape the direction of cultural revival.

In essence there were two important aspects within the Llanover project's development. The first was the campaign to preserve what was believed to be thought, as exclusively Welsh and this will be touched on in more detail in the next chapter. The second was actively to add to the richness of Welsh culture through intellectual and creative pursuits and in the process sometimes creating new aspects to the arts and customs of Wales. As we have seen, on the Eisteddfod circuit close relationships

¹ *The Cambrian*, 1 July 1910.

² The Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau took place annually between 1834 and 1838 and again in 1840, 1842, 1845, 1848 and finally in 1853.

For a detailed survey of these events see M. E. Thomas, *Afaith yng Ngwent*.

were forged with likeminded intellectuals, keen to explore questions of how to preserve Welsh culture and identity. We have seen how Lady Llanover's interest in Welsh culture was galvanised by her involvement in the early Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau. This chapter investigates how her role within the Eisteddfod and cultural scene changed from that of faithful enthusiast to energetic leader. The Eisteddfod became a vehicle, which served Lady Llanover's cultural interests and there is no doubt that she drove it in a direction that caught the attention of outside observers of the Principality. As *The Cambrian* noted 'great gatherings were held at Llanover Hall, where foreign ambassadors and leading servants of all nations came to the famous meetings of the bards at Abergavenny.'³ Thus, in conjunction with the hospitality offered at her home, Lady Llanover fostered European and world connections that advanced the prowess of both Abergavenny Cymreigyddion and its sister association the Welsh Manuscript Society. As a result Llanover Hall's reputation as a centre for Welsh cultural activity and expression became renowned. To understand how Llanover Hall developed its reputation one must look to the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau, the Welsh Manuscript Society and the Llanover circle, for at the centre of each of them was the dynamic energy of Lady Llanover.

There are a range of sources relating to the Eisteddfodau and also the work and correspondence of Lady Llanover's closest friends. Perhaps the most open and abundant of the source material derives from the input of Carnhuanawc. Most interesting of all is a volume compiled by Ysgafell. *The Literary Remains of the Rev. Thomas Price, Carnhuanawc* / [with a memoir of his life by Jane Williams].⁴ was published in two volumes and in the opinion of Lady Llanover was 'one of the most interesting works that the literate of Wales, have had for a long time.'⁴ The first volume contained the work of Carnhuanawc and the second his memoir. Ysgafell believed that 'The Welshman's love of antiquities [was]... part of his patriotism.'⁵ In sorting through and publishing Carnhuanawc's literary remains Ysgafell not only safeguarded the work of one of the most respected intellectual Welsh patriots of the Welsh cultural revival but also provided his history and that of his associates, many of

³ *The Cambrian*, 1 July 1910.

⁴ NLW MSS, Glansevern (2) 3689, Lady Llanover to Arthur Johnes, 4 October 1852.

⁵ Jane Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev T Price Carnhuanawc Vol. I* (Llandovery, 1851) p. X.

whom moved in the Llanover circle. In essence the second volume offers a view of how the Welsh cultural revivalists wished to be portrayed through the account of Carnhuanawc's contributions. Lady Llanover fully supported Ysgafell's conscientious attempt to preserve the work of the cleric poet and historian; she even lent a hand by contributing her own illustrations to the work. Lady Llanover was very much part of the volume's production and from this point of view the source, like most other accounts of Welsh cultural events displays bias toward concentrating on the accomplishments of the cultural revivalists but it also explains the occasional difficulties faced by the group.

Other sources of use include a small and rare number of original Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod programmes and correspondence, reviews of the Eisteddfodau written in newspapers and periodical such as the *Monmouthshire Merlin*, *Illustrated London News* and *Seren Gomer*. In the main this source material revolves around the arrangement and funding of competitions, the publication and borrowing of work and in some cases controversy over the best way 'to go about things.' Many of the Cymreigyddion letters are in rough note form, they tend to be brief and are on occasion undated, meaning that to fully understand contextually the information contained within can be problematic.

Particular attention is dedicated to the source material left behind by Llinos and Ysgafell;⁶ these women were of middle class backgrounds that had been educated to a high level. Like Lady Llanover, they possessed independent and strong characters; qualities that made them especially important to the vitality of the Llanover project. The work and letters left behind by these women prove beyond any doubt that they too were of great importance to the development of the Welsh cultural revival. Other crucial individuals such as Carnhuanawc and ab Iolo were also in close contact with Lady Llanover and played an instrumental part in both the Cymreigyddion and Welsh Manuscript Societies fortunes.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Llanover Hall was intended to be a hub for cultural activity and there is no doubt that Lady Llanover either put herself at

⁶ Due to similarity of the women's names they shall hitherto be referred to by their bardic names.

the centre of, or facilitated connections, to make creative pursuits possible. Both the Cymreigyddion and Welsh manuscript societies were a priority to Lady Llanover and it is certain that she guaranteed for herself a part in decision-making processes. She partly achieved this by suggesting her home as a meeting point to plan the societies' events and publications. She also made sure that her friends could physically get to Llanover Hall by arranging transport. Both Carnhuanawc and ab Iolo received instructions from her on what time they should catch the train. She would more often than not send a carriage to meet them from the station. Thus she took control over when and where meetings were held and in this sense she acted as the catalyst for cultural activity. As one might expect it was almost impossible to refuse her hospitality under such circumstances. She wrote to ab Iolo in 1842: 'I have been taking it for granted that you will be able to come [to Llanover] as I perfectly agree with the remark in your last letter that the subjects to be considered can be more easily discussed by speaking than writing.'⁷

Commitment to the Cymreigyddion took its toll on Carnhuanawc who admitted to Lady Llanover in 1839 'had I foreseen that the society would have taken so much time and attention I certainly should have hesitated before joining it.'⁸ Lady Llanover's reply to Carnhuanawc remains a mystery but one might suppose she offered to help put his problems in order. She was clearly instrumental in the organisation of the cultural network, and from what is left of the Cymreigyddion letters it appears that she was the driving force when it came to securing money for Eisteddfod prizes.⁹ 'Her worth, as a patroness and fellow labourer with the committee, and the amazing influence which she possesse[d] and [brought] to bear'¹⁰ were important factors in the perceived success of Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau. Carnhuanawc was pleased when Lady Llanover secured the funds for the grand prize of 1838. In a letter to the Cymreigyddion society secretary, Caradawc, Carnhuanawc announced 'Y mae Gwenynen Gwent wedi llwyddo i gael arian... y

⁷ NLW MSS, 21273E (256) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 4 February 1842.

⁸ NLW MSS, 13183EI (260) Cymreigyddion Y Fenni letters, Carnhuanawc to Lady Llanover, 5 October 1839.

⁹ NLW MSS, 13183EI, Cymreigyddion Y Fenni letters.

¹⁰ *North Wales Chronicle*, 28 November 1843.

traethodau am y wobwr- £60' [The Bee of Gwent has managed to raise money... for the essays, a prize- £60].¹¹

So crucial were the efforts of Lady Llanover to the success of the 1845 Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod that calls were made to acknowledge her accomplishments officially, as was recorded in the *Monmouthshire Merlin*:

Mr Bruce Pryse rose to announce that a prize of 10 sovs was to be offered for an Englyn in praise of a person who could not be over praised – he meant Gwenynen Gwent: and he was sure they would all heartily respond to the mention of the name of one who had been such a firm and faithful friend of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion.¹²

Lord Llanover as president was the first to decline the offer of praise respectfully. 'He believed that the rules of the society precluded them from offering prizes for Englynion in favour of members of the society living within the boundaries of Gwent and Morganwg, and he hoped, therefore, they would not violate the rules in order to show a mark of respect to Lady Hall- who with himself was deeply impressed with their kind intentions.'¹³ Lord Llanover's protestation was defied and a popular motion carried to ignore the rule, to which he replied, 'well, you must take all the blame upon yourselves.'¹⁴ The meaning of his comment is unclear; perhaps he feared that the society might be accused of self-glorification but according to press reports Lord Llanover's modesty on behalf of his wife did not discourage admiration for her and one suspects that she enjoyed the attention.

Lady Llanover was again the centre of proceedings in the 1848 Eisteddfod. The event was apparently so popular that 'very many persons were disappointed in obtaining an entrance' to the Cymreigyddion Hall that had been purpose built for the previous Eisteddfod of 1845.¹⁵ In the Festival atmosphere, 'Abergavenny had proclaimed a holiday.' A of the *North Wales Chronicle* correspondent described the event:

¹¹ NLW MSS, 13183EI (254) Cymreigyddion Y Fenni letters, Carnhuanawc to Caradawc', [n.d].

¹² *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 25 October 1845.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 18 October 1848.

On Wednesday the streets of Abergavenny began to present a very lively appearance. The entrance of almost all the inns were decorated with flowers and evergreens and flags were suspended from the windows...before ten o'clock the streets were so crowded with people that one could hardly pass respectably attired men, apparently harpers, singers, bards and other literary and scientific characters, wearing leeks on their bosoms and some of them bending beneath a load of medals won on former occasions were here and there in the streets enjoying pleasant conversation.¹⁶

The procession was allegedly half a mile long and contained over forty carriages. According to the *North Wales Chronicle*'s correspondent the scene was so magnificent that it was rendered indescribable. Nevertheless he did manage to state: 'No language can depict, fancy or conceive, none but those who saw it can form an idea of its sublimity.'¹⁷ Lord Llanover was again on this occasion to be president but had fallen ill. The crowd and committee 'rejoiced that Gwenynen Gwent who was herself a host was there' and so once again her critical role was assured.¹⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, tribute was paid to her hard work. In reply to the praise mounted on her she announced to the crowd: 'Ladies and gentlemen my heart is in Abergavenny and in Wales. I thank you for the flattering manner in which you receive my name.'¹⁹

The point that needs emphasising is that as a prominent organiser of events Lady Llanover gained a significant element of control over the image and characteristics of the on-going Welsh cultural revival. The common factor in all of the Eisteddfod competitions is that they were designed to instil an all-embracing interest in Wales and her culture. The challenge was to provide a range of subject matter for competitions that were not only suitable for the intellectual set. A variety of competitions were based on local history, industry and interests. Therefore, cross-sections of people were encouraged to feel included in the celebrations. The Eisteddfod was in theory geared to engage the interest of a diverse Welsh society. To one foreign visitor to the Eisteddfod, Prince Ladislaus Czartoryski of Poland, seeing class interaction was for him the most rewarding aspect of the festival experience:

¹⁶ *North Wales Chronicle*, 17 October 1848.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 18 October 1848.

It was particularly pleasing for me to witness all classes-the aristocratic, the middle and lower, vying with each other in manifesting the most lively interest for the old histories, manners, literature, learning, language and customs of Wales. I shall never forget this day.²⁰

One might argue that the vast majority of the competitions were set by the higher classes and so did not reflect the real interests of the Welsh *Gwerin*. However, it would be hard to deny that the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod was at least in part designed to include and encourage the working classes to take a more proactive interest in their culture outside the remit of the chapel Eisteddfod. All the Eisteddfodau provided a chance for people from different levels of society to mix in the name of cultural celebration within a festival atmosphere, albeit on the gentry's terms. It was Lady Llanover's intent to partly use Eisteddfodau in order to consolidate the highly educated and culturally sophisticated image of the *Gwerin* but while a faithful few genuinely enjoyed competing in competitions set by Lady Llanover and were committed to using the Eisteddfod as an outlet for their talents; as we shall see in Chapter Five, the majority became unimpressed by Lady Llanover's attempt to control Eisteddfodau. It became a popular conception that the Cymreigyddion might civilise rough elements in Welsh society and some sections of the press wholeheartedly endorsed this view:

Amongst the institutions of Wales, the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion assumes the most prominent position, both as regards the influence of its patrons, and the magnitude of its effects. Possessing a firm hold of the affections of all true sons of the mountains, it sways their opinions on all national subjects of social interest...when the energies of the people are directed in the right channels, they tend to soothe political discord...In this light we view the influence of the Cymreigyddion, and despite the twaddle of a certain review on the connection (mysterious enough) of these societies with Chartism and Rebeccaism such will be the conclusion to which unprejudiced mind must arrive after an impartial consideration of the subject.²¹

²⁰ *Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent Report of the Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod*, October 1853, p. 9.

²¹ *Hereford Times*, 25 January 1845.

The Cymreigyddion hoped to consolidate a separate Welsh identity within the British context through the promotion of language, religion and culture, without delving too deeply into political and judicial wrangling. As the *Hereford Times* noted:

That English influence is creeping over the border there is no doubt, but it is not a matter of wonder that so many ages have done so little to eradicate Welsh habits. While the language and manners of London have radiated to the uttermost parts of the earth...²²

The society aimed to protect Welsh identity, religion and culture despite the dominance of English culture spreading across the world. Lady Llanover endeavoured to make this ambition a reality at her country estate.²³ The Welsh cultural enthusiasts hoped that they would be seen as a high brow, intellectual and non-threatening group. Despite this wish, their activities did not pass without criticism and one might argue that their pursuits conjured up an air of suspicion at a time when Wales was regarded by many in authority as a region of Britain in need of strict rule. As Geoffrey Powell put it, 'however conservative the intention and the practise, ...the Llanover strategy could not have avoided being seen as radical by English eyes.'²⁴ Yet, the *Hereford Times* supported the Cymreigyddion's aims and defended the organisation against the accusations of conspiracy theorists:

The purposes of the Cymreigyddion are the maintenance of the Welsh language and literature, the creation of a desire for historical research, and thus to advance the cause of education, the encouragement of the nature industry, the support of Welsh manufacture in woollens hats and the improvement of Welsh music-the recitation of old airs, to accomplish these end rewards are given varying from £1 to £100. Show us the man who can see treason in this, and we will unequivocally pronounce him a keen shrewd fellow, par excellence!²⁵

There can be little doubt that the Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod to some extent furthered the development of culture and education amongst all classes, yet it also furthered Lady Llanover's interests. What is more, the press picked up on the centrality of her

²² Ibid.

²³ This subject will be addressed in the Chapter Six.

²⁴ G. Powell, 'The Llanover Project: The European Dimension'

²⁵ *Hereford Times*, 25 January 1845.

role, as did attendees of the Eisteddfodau. She convinced other members of the aristocracy to act as benefactors to the Eisteddfod. As a result, while Lady Llanover was at her zenith she could control the nature of competitions and the calibre of awards.²⁶

Coupled with the patronage of the upper gentry the Cymreigyddion like other Welsh cultural societies and the Llanover circle generally thrived off the contributions of a core group of Welsh and European intellectuals who were made welcome at Llanover Hall and the neighbouring Ty Uchaf. As Lady Llanover communicated to her friend Arthur Johnes 'a Bard never was in want of a bed...in one of these houses...filled...with spirits worthy of the occasion.'²⁷ The Aberpergwm family, Carnhuanawc, Tegid, ab Iolo and Ysgafell could use Llanover Hall as a base during the Eisteddfod festivities and as a research centre of sorts.²⁸ Lady Llanover's brother in-law Baron Bunsen also stayed at Llanover. Experts in philology, foreign diplomats and in some cases royalty were made welcome and given access to their ever-expanding library along with a taste of Lady Llanover's Wales. As Geoffrey Powell has remarked, 'she was the centre of a group affirming the importance of maintaining Welsh language and culture at a time when other European countries were experiencing a similar awakening of national consciousness.'²⁹

Undoubtedly, the fortunes of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion society improved further when Lady Llanover's sister and brother in-law became involved with proceedings. For the first time since her initial departure some twenty years earlier,³⁰ Lady Llanover's eldest sister Frances Bunsen returned to Llanover. In a letter dated 5 September 1838 Madame Bunsen described her arrival to her husband:

We arrived safely. All possible pains were taken to welcome me. My sister rode out to meet me at Abergavenny, and fetched me in her own carriage with four horses and my dear mother was ready to revive me, with her carriage for the children and maids;

²⁶ NLW MSS, 13183EI, Cymreigyddion Y Fenni letters.

²⁷ NLW MSS, Glansevern 3690, Lady Llanover to Mr. Johnes, 3 September 1853.

²⁸ See M. Fraser, 'Lady Llanover and Her Circle', pp. 170-96.

²⁹ G. Powell, 'The Llanover Project: The European Dimension.'

³⁰ Frances Waddington left Britain following her marriage to Christian von Bunsen on 1 July 1817.

the bells rang at Abergavenny and Llanover, and at the entrance gates were garlands, and musicians, and people waiting.³¹

To Lady Llanover it was of vital importance that her eldest sister, who was experienced at moving in the most intellectual and royal of European circles, should return home to a fanfare reception. For the Cymreigyddion society the visit further enriched its European contacts many times over. By the commencement of the 1838 Eisteddfod Baron Bunsen had joined his wife at Llanover. Geoffrey Powell has suggested reasons for Bunsen's alignment with the society:

Bunsen would have noticed that German problems had things in common with Welsh. The language status and identity of the Germans was threatened by French cultural imperialism. While he was engaged in the cause of German cultural survival, therefore, it would have been easy for him to develop fellow-feeling for Lady Llanover and her Wales, for her little country under threat from English cultural imperialism, might have appeared to him as a Germany in microcosm.³²

Richard Lepsius³³, Carl Meyer³⁴ and Albert Schulz were among the scholars and intellectuals introduced to the Llanover set by Bunsen. Their contributions enhanced the level of linguistic studies into links between Welsh and other European and in some cases world languages and cultures. Moreover, their involvement strengthened the appeal to wider audiences, which Lady Llanover so keenly sought. All the Eisteddfodau fostered connections with representatives of other nations. These visitors were invariably guests of Lady Llanover and at Llanover Hall where they experienced her brand of Welsh hospitality.

Foreign guests of honour were a focus of attention and no more so than in 1838 when a Breton deputation attended. Ysgafell recorded Carnhuanawc's speech in the chronicle of his life. His tone exudes pride and a sense of confidence in the links made by the Llanover set, the Cymreigyddion society and the Breton contingent:

³¹ A. J. C. Hare, *The Life and Letters of Frances Baroness Bunsen Volume I*, Baroness Bunsen to Baron Bunsen, 5 September 1838, p.491.

³² G. Powell, 'The Llanover Project: The European Dimension'

³³ Prussian Egyptologist, linguist and Archaeologist.

³⁴ Egyptologist.

It is true that we frequently in our visions of the future harbour anticipations flattering to our selves but we had very little reason to hope that anything like this could be displayed in the Principality. When we consider the gloomy events that have befallen our race and the many centuries that have veiled their history in almost impenetrable obscurity, we cannot but view a scene like this with admiration and delight.³⁵

Romanticism of the past as always is attached to the imagery used in Carnhuanawc's speech, with a link being drawn between the diplomatic connections and patronisation of the bards that occurred within the upper echelons of Welsh society in the medieval period. The speech harks back to a time when the hybrid Norman-Welsh ruling classes had the opportunity to forge foreign friendships and support Welsh culture:

It is long since our countrymen have received in their halls the allies and representatives of other nations; but this very event and many others have come to pass. Armorica has sent a deputation to us. The sons of the most chivalrous lands in Europe, the sovereign of one of the most enlightened and powerful states in Europe, have sent over an envoy to our meeting. Some of the most learned and distinguished individuals in Europe have favoured us with their presence upon this occasion; and all in addition to this the descendent of Ifor Hael³⁶ occupies the presidency in order to show hospitality to our strangers.³⁷

Ysgafell noted that 'the deputation for Brittany consisted of the Comte de Villemarque,³⁸ and four other noblemen of that province whose mission was approved and countenanced by his Majesty King Louis Phillippe.'³⁹ The presence of respected members of the Breton aristocracy with the sanction of the French king aligned perfectly with the image that the Cymreigyddion were keen to project. Here was a perfect opportunity to show to the outside observer that the calibre of visitor to the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion society could not only be high from the intellectual point of view but also from the angle of social stature and what is more a monarch felt able to associate himself with a cultural movement well outside his own realm.

³⁵ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 235.

³⁶ Ifor Hael (Ifor the Generous) Ifor ap Lywelyn of Bassaleg was a chief patron of the bard Dafydd ap Gwilym.

³⁷ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 235.

³⁸ 1815-1895, Théodore Claude Henri, vicomte Hersart de la Villemarqué, Philologist and expert in Breton literature.

³⁹ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 236.

Perhaps it was hoped such a connection would further encourage the British royals to take an interest in cultural affairs within their own realm. As discussed in Chapter One, this certainly proved to be one of Lady Llanover's foremost hopes.

What linked the Welsh and Breton nations in their minds was a shared history, or at least what the Cymreigyddion and the Breton deputations perceived as a common ground based on an embattled past with neighbouring powerful cultures. These self appointed spokes-persons for the Breton and Welsh nations expressed a desire to defend their languages and identities. The Comte de Villemarque was as enthusiastic as Carnhuanawc, waxing lyrical on this special bond:

Two years ago I recalled all the ties of blood and of literature, which unite me and your fathers. I recounted our exploits during our united struggles in the past times against the Romans, the Saxons, the Normans, and down almost to our own days; and also the famous battle of St Just, when the Welsh and the Bretons, who served, the former in the English army, and the latter in that of the French, having recognised each other by their language, refused to fight, and remained spectators of the combat- and the battle, embraced each other while singing warlike songs in honour of their ancestors. I recalled all these actions, and my toast was received with unanimous applause. I then drank the health of the Welsh, though absent today, when I have the happiness to be among them, I drink again to our brothers in Wales.⁴⁰

An atmosphere of pomp and ceremony was present throughout proceedings with no shortage of speech making, expressions of unity and gratitude between the Welsh and Breton cultural enthusiasts. In recognition of the honour felt by the Cymreigyddion for the attendance of the Breton party a special gift was conferred upon Villemarque as their principal guest. A Corn Hirlas⁴¹ [*Horn of Plenty*], a reinvented symbol of bardic status, was especially made for the occasion and presented to the Bretons on behalf of the Cymreigyddion by Lord Llanover. The object was described in detail by Ysgafell.⁴² She did not reveal who funded the making of this highly decorated object.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 236-7.

⁴¹ The Corn Hirlas is today carried by the matron of the district in front of the gorsedd procession. It is not known when the Corn Hirlas was first used as a bardic symbol. Historically its use lies as a drinking vessel and possibly a battle horn.

⁴² Ysgafell described the object as 'a fine mottled horn, with silver hands around the top, middle and bottom.' It was edged with trefoil leaves wrought silver, and lined throughout with the same metal.

Presumably, the money to pay for the creation of the Corn Hirlas was raised from contributions of society members. As revealed in Chapter One, Lady Llanover was competent in organising funds. She is likely to have been very much involved and this may explain why her husband was given the honour of presenting it. What is known from the pen of Ysgafell is that 'the design was drawn and the mottoes chosen' by Carnhuanawc.

The Eisteddfod prize giving was often followed by the formality of an official ceremonial dinner. When the first day's proceedings were over the hall was used to hold such a dinner. At 6 o' clock around 250 members of the gentry sat down to a session of eating and speech making. The end of the second day was marked with a dance held at the Angel hotel in Abergavenny on the Thursday evening. To leave her own mark on the festivities Lady Llanover hosted another dance on Friday evening. The official length of the Eisteddfod was two days but with the festival air upon them and with the extension of proceeding to honour the Breton deposition culminating in a ball at Llanover, it seems the gentry were in party mood for longer than had been expected.

In most cases it was the grand prize that attracted the most attention from the European intellectuals. In the 1840 Eisteddfod the most coveted prize of £80 for the best essay on 'the effects that Welsh traditions have had on the literature of Germany and France and Brittany' was awarded to the German linguist Albert Schultz. He had written his essay whilst in Germany in the German language and had been convinced by his friend, the Baron Bunsen to enter the work. Lord Llanover's sister, Mrs Berrington later translated the essay into English. Carnhuanawc was delighted that the theory of Welsh influence on European folk literature had been proved by a great intellectual:

At a former period we ventured to suggest that the works of romance and imagination which have appeared from to time on the continent of Europe, found their origin in

Upon the upper hand was engraved, in the Welsh language; 'From the Cymreigyddion y Fenni to the Breton deputy of the King of the French, on occasion of his first visit to their anniversary festival, 10 October 1838.'

the legends of Wales, a foreigner, a profound scholar, says we are right, and traces the progress of the traditions of Wales through foreign lands.⁴³

In this case too, a Llanover family connection has been of paramount importance in the production and publication of this treatise, illustrating how valuable Lady Llanover's links and contacts often were. A two-year gap followed the 1840 Eisteddfod, which had rendered some poor entrants for the poetical competitions.⁴⁴ In the intervening time, work gathered steam behind the scenes. Proposals for competitions were sent to the society committee in order to be considered. The Bunsen branch of the family put forward a topic that was of European interest as shown in a letter written by Lady Llanover's sister to the Eisteddfod committee:

Bunsen is of the opinion that for another great prize it would be more advisable to state the subject thus. On the place, which, the Cymru language occupies among the languages of the Celtic family and together with other branches of the same among the languages of the Indo-European, race. The Cymreigyddion society would by putting this question take the lead, in one of the most important enquiries of the age...⁴⁵

The committee members dedicated much thought to the advancement of scholarly pursuits within the Cymreigyddion and Manuscript societies. To them it was imperative that the subject matter of competitions pushed the boundaries of current research. Baroness Bunsen believed that: 'the question proposed would at once be a subject of universal European interest and... if well answered, a decisive influence on the science and literature of Europe.'⁴⁶ Her suggestion was accepted. Appeals for support and monetary contributions to hold competitions was a constant battle, one which required perseverance and like her sister, Baroness Bunsen was determined to secure a prestigious prize that had to be 'at least not lower for than that of 1838.' According to her opinion 'the subject is still of a higher sphere and the question appears to men foremost in the learned world.'⁴⁷

⁴³ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 295.

⁴⁴ *Seren Gomer*, December 1840, Vol. XXII, No. 302, p. 361.

⁴⁵ NLW MSS, 13182E11, Cymreigyddion Y Fenni Letters, Madame Bunsen to the Cymreigyddion, 17 March 1841.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The 1842 Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod finally took place on 12 and 13 October. The president, Rhys Powell of Glunllech arrived to meet the procession in the Llanover carriage with Lord and Lady Llanover and they along with Cymreigyddion members in various other carriages followed on with the marching spectators to a marquee built especially for the occasion. In true Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod tradition the event was set in motion with a number of speeches. The main essay competition of 1842 was again won by a German entry. Carl Meyer received a 60-guinea prize for writing the best essay on the situation of the Welsh language amongst the other Celtic languages, which had been suggested by the Baroness Bunsen to the Eisteddfod committee over a year earlier. While the contributions of the European intellectuals were important, Welsh talent was mainly acknowledged in Eisteddfod meetings. Appropriately enough, the opportunity was taken at the 1842 meeting to announce the completion of publications including that of Albert Schultz's essay, a copy of *Liber Landavensis*, ab Iolo's completed version of the history of his father's invention of the so called bardic alphabet *Coelbren y Beirdd*. Important essays were later published the most famous of which was Thomas Stephens's work *The Literature of the Kymry* for which he won a prize in 1848.⁴⁸ Lady Llanover collected copies of all the fruits of Eisteddfodau along with the produce of the Welsh Manuscript Society.⁴⁹

The women of the Llanover circle also worked diligently. Baroness Bunsen had implied in her letter of 1841 to the Cymreigyddion committee that literary projects appealed to the intellect of gentlemen and yet, Charlotte Guest's Mabinogion was about to bring 'forward such a quality of legendary matter' and open 'a new field of literature' placing it 'in a new light.'⁵⁰ The society had been so productive in 1842 that Carnhuanawc was prompted to proudly assert, 'I have shown that the members of the Cymreigyddion have at least some right to the rank, which has been claimed for them in the literary world.'⁵¹ However, there is little doubt that Lady Llanover had been encouraging the work of the members by constantly enquiring about progress and arranging meetings to discuss their individual projects at Llanover. As Jane Aaron

⁴⁸ M. E. Thomas, *Afiaith yng Ngwent*, pp. 93-108.

⁴⁹ *The Cambrian*, 1 July 1919.

⁵⁰ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 295.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

has asserted 'had it not been for the incitement and encouragement she received from the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion and from her acquaintance with Lady Llanover, it may be doubted whether Charlotte Guest, for all her undeniable brilliance would have undertaken so prodigious a literary enterprise.'⁵²

Taking into account shining reports by the press of strong attendance at Eisteddfodau, the interest in competitions from people of diverse backgrounds, and the support for Welsh culture that apparently came from the aristocracy, it is difficult to ascertain why the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion festivities eventually came to an end. Despite *Seren Gomer*'s exhortation in 1842, it was no easy task to keep the members of the Cymreigyddion society motivated and supportive and as Ysgafell explained in her commentary on the Eisteddfodau, the Cymreigyddion had to bid for the attention of visitors and competitors when other Eisteddfodau were being held in towns across Wales. Rather than stubbornly holding an annual Eisteddfod, as no doubt had first been intended, long gaps began to appear between them and this was a symptom of the challenging atmosphere with which the committee had to contend. In her work Ysgafell noted the difficulties faced by the society:

It may be remarked that more immediate objects of the Cymreigyddion institution had, previous to 1840, been gradually lost sight of by the Abergavenny Committee. Subjects were no longer proposed and periodically discussed at the monthly meetings, and the local Eisteddfodau, which first arose out of the literary associations of the native townspeople had already in effect, though undesignedly, supplanted it.⁵³

Ultimately not all Welsh people could agree with the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion committee's interpretation of Welsh culture. As a consequence tensions developed around what could be called a genuine reflection of Welsh customs, tradition and identity. Further attention will be devoted to these issues in the next chapter. Yet, it needs establishing here that this disagreement partly damaged the popularity and reputation of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion, especially in view of the fact that other Eisteddfodau were beginning to vie for the same kind of audience.

⁵² J. Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity*, p. 72.

⁵³ J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 247.

Carnhuanawc found that he needed to defend the brand of Welsh culture promoted by the Cymreigyddion society in the press:

Certain writers ambitious of notoriety, and actuated by enmity to Cambrian usages and to their upholders, commenced, in the summer of 1845, a public attack upon both in the columns of two or three provincial newspapers. It was the evident intention of these vizored assailants to impugn and to disgrace the popular champions of Wales, and more especially to dismantle and destroy their local stronghold. Anxious to vindicate himself and his party, to convert and counteract all hostile purposes, and to convert his enemies into friends, by a dear exposition of the groundwork of his opinions, Mr Price was induced to publish a series of letters in answer to his impugners and opponents.⁵⁴

A factor that was certain to have contributed to the eventual break up of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion was the deaths of some of its most important supporters and therefore the number of faithful patrons to whom Lady Llanover could turn decreased, to the detriment of the society. Clearly the fate of the Llanover circle and the Cymreigyddion society were closely linked. By the time that preparations for the 1839 Eisteddfod came around, Lady Elisabeth Coffin Greenly had died after a prolonged period of illness.⁵⁵ Her death marked the first blow to the Llanover circle's membership as well as the Cymreigyddion. As noted in the previous chapter, she had been a key driving force amongst the cultural revivalists and a woman who had been such a source of inspiration not only to Lady Llanover but also to others who formed part of the Eisteddfod network.⁵⁶ In 1846, one of the most generous benefactors, Lord Tredegar died. Ab Iolo followed in 1847. The society was dealt another heavy blow when Lady Llanover's second major influence Carnhuanawc died. He saw his last Eisteddfod in 1848. Tegid, another great friend to Lady Llanover and a key member of her circle died in 1852. One might say that with the demise of her allies came a

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 300.

Carnhuanawc wrote letters to the *Monmouthshire Merlin* to endorse the Cymreigyddion society's promotion of Welsh symbols such as the triple harp, the promotion of wool production, the performance of national music and the virtue of the society itself. These letters have also been published in Ysgafell's biography of Carnhuanawc.

⁵⁵ Three years after her death, Tegid won the composition in memory of Llwydla and a medal valued at £21 was his reward.

Seren Gomer, October 1842 Vol. XXV No. 325. p. 315.

⁵⁶ S. R. Williams, 'Llwydla, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg', pp. 99-128.

reduction in Lady Llanover's power and influence within the cultural arena. Nevertheless as Maxwell Fraser has noted 'The Halls continued to hold glittering house parties for the Abergavenny Eisteddfod until the society was dissolved. They entertained great continental scholars like Professor Carl Lepsius, Professor Shultz, Dr Carl Meyer, Alexis Francis Rio and other German and Breton servants, not to mention various ambassadors, Henry Hallam,⁵⁷ the historian and other distinguished men.'⁵⁸

The final Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod of 1853 was held in the absence of many of its founding members. Even though it was to be the last celebration, reports on success of the Eisteddfod were such that no obvious indications of decline were conveyed. Lord Llanover made a speech that year that touched on the institutions humble beginnings:

I remember when the first time we met in this town it was at the old church, and I believed that the procession only consisted of Lady Hall, myself and about twenty other persons!.. We hoped and believe that a society founded on such good principles both national and useful, and which could not be possibly give offence to any one, must go on and prosper; and now on this day we find that the whole town of Abergavenny...has turned out to receive us.⁵⁹

High opinion of Lady Llanover remained strong to the last. One commentator declared: 'There is a lady connected with it [the Eisteddfod] whom we in North Wales, think of at all times with the greatest regard and esteem- I mean Gwenynen Gwent. We think this estimable and patriotic lady is the mainspring of your meetings here. May she live to see many more of them! As well as many other ladies now present.'⁶⁰

It may be that society members and the press were in denial, but it is highly likely that the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion would have fizzled out at an earlier date were it not for Lady Llanover's driving ambition to make each Eisteddfod meeting

⁵⁷ Henry Hallam (1777-1859)

⁵⁸ M. Fraser, 'Lady Llanover and Her Circle', pp. 170-96.

⁵⁹ *Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent Report of the Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod*, October 1853, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

more popular and ambitious than the last. By 1853 there simply were not enough proactive contributors to keep the meetings alive, in addition to the fact that the Eisteddfod as a Welsh cultural body had taken on a new set of supporters with different ideas to what Lady Llanover believed to be a true reflection of Welsh culture and identity. As will become clear in the following chapters, Lady Llanover felt the need to defend her view of culture. She began to refuse to lend her support to any regional Eisteddfodau, which did not adhere to the same principles by which she stood. Her foremost criticism was that the Eisteddfod in general was becoming Anglicised. Lady Llanover rebuked anyone who associated themselves with what she viewed as false Eisteddfodau, as a letter written to Betha Johnes ten years after the last Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod clearly demonstrates:

They are only for the purpose of extinguishing the Welsh language and to give an opportunity...to mount the platform and in a style of condescending pathos lament the inferiority of the Welsh (in the opinion of some wretched ignoramus of a jackass) and tell them to learn more English (The more they learn the worse they become) they have not ever ventured to apply to me to give them a prize- they knew very well (if they did) they would receive such an answer as the Mayor of Caernarfon did last year- to tell them the prizes offered are in opposition not in support of the principles on which Eisteddfodau are founded as to Mr. A. Johnes, I suppose he is gone over to the enemy or becomes superannuated!⁶¹

Lady Llanover feared that Betha might become embroiled in the same way as Arthur Johnes with the false Eisteddfod therefore, she warned her friend to be vigilant in 'the dangerous society into which you are going,' and to combat the gradual destruction of Welsh culture employing, 'moral courage and determination sufficient to resist all attempts to induce you to patronise anything which under the name of Welsh patriots may only be a trap to obtain your aid to its extinction.'⁶² Even though the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion ceased to operate, Lady Llanover never hesitated in using her powers of persuasion on friends to keep the celebration of Welsh customs and culture, in a way that she viewed as genuine and pure.

⁶¹ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 7 February 1863.

⁶² NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 9 September 1865.

To fully understand the true ramifications of Lady Llanover's actions and obsession with her brand of Welsh culture one must also consider her influence on the people who operated within the Llanover cultural fold. The Llanover project was not a superficial attempt to gain the interest of outsiders; a deeper ambition to keep the culture of Wales alive and relevant was by far the most important aspect of this utopian ideal. Lady Llanover was instrumental in influencing and encouraging others to further their talents in order to enhance Welsh culture. The energy, which she inspired, was located at Llanover Hall amongst the Welsh cultural enthusiasts that visited and used the freedom of an encouraging atmosphere to work on projects and plan cultural events. Lady Llanover's talents lay in her ability to give inspiration and support to those who a creative aptitude in ways it seems that she did not.

In 1845 the *Hereford Times* enthusiastically acknowledged the achievement and contributions of the women that belonged to the circle:

On the platform in front sit the flower of Welsh nobility. There is Gwenynen Gwent, clad in Welsh costume, and perfectly happy; she is the main prop of the society; like her own land, she is beloved by every native of the principality. By her side is Lady Charlotte Guest, who has gained an everlasting renown by her 'Mabinogion' a work on the ancient romances of Wales, to collect the material for which required unconquerable perseverance and industry. She visited for the purpose some of the best libraries in Europe. Again, we see Miss Williams of Aberpergwm, in her beaver hat, decorated with the leek. This lady has devoted her time and attention to the improvement of the taste for music in Wales, and every lover of minstrels will be prepared to give her the full amount of praise which her preserving exertions so justly merit. One or two works emanated from her pen on this subject. Behind and around is a galaxy of wealth, beauty, and talent.⁶³

As Jane Aaron has highlighted 'Gwenynen Gwent seems to have been particularly eager to encourage other women's interests in patriotic and antiquarian activities.'⁶⁴ As we have seen Lady Charlotte Guest received encouragement and support from the Llanover circle in her quest to translate the Mabinogion. Maxwell Fraser pointed out that 'Lady Llanover with all her sharp intellect and keen grasp of affairs, could never

⁶³ *Hereford Times*, 25 January 1845.

⁶⁴ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity*, p. 67.

have achieved the brilliant feat of Lady Charlotte but she could and did admire it.’⁶⁵ The Welsh antiquarian Angharad Llwyd⁶⁶ was a welcome visitor to Llanover. She has been described by Jane Aaron as ‘that rare thing, an accomplished female antiquarian and historian of the early nineteenth century whom was steadfast and uncompromising in her patriotic commitment to Wales.’⁶⁷ On this basis she was the perfect guest to compliment the intellectual image of Llanover, though it is unlikely that Lady Llanover managed to press much influence on this woman who was already convinced of her patriotism and strong in her convictions.

However, Lady Llanover did stamp her influence on the work of some individuals. For instance, she admired the work of Llinos, whom it will be remembered won a prize for the best collection of Welsh airs in 1837. Llinos’s collection of Welsh airs was eventually published in 1844 with the encouragement of Lady Llanover and the aid of bards, Tegid and ab Iolo. The correspondence of Llinos illustrates how painstaking the process of publication was. She made numerous drafts and asked for advice from Tegid in order to ensure that her collection would be well received.⁶⁸ Her most serious dilemma was whether or not to have the words of traditional Welsh songs translated into English. In doing so she may increase her readership, but risk the Welsh words being sidelined in favour of the English translation. Tegid was happy to help Llinos in her work but as the following extract from a letter written by him to Llinos suggests, he was not altogether convinced that it would be beneficial to translate the Welsh material:

In forwarding the last corrected Welsh verses I cannot avoid but taking the liberty of offering my humble opinion that any versified English translation will not only detract from the originality and therefore from the value of the work but also materially injure instead of serving the cause, which, I believe, you have sincerely at heart.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ M. Fraser, ‘Lady Llanover and Lady Charlotte Guest’, p. 38.

⁶⁶ Angharad Llwyd (1789-1866).

⁶⁷ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity*, p. 61.

⁶⁸ NLW MSS, 13,778 D ‘Casgliad o Alawon Gwerin Miss Jane Williams Aberpergwm belonging to Philip Thomas.’

⁶⁹ NLW MSS, 447-4279,1160E, John Jones (Tegid) to Maria Jane Williams (Llinos), 6 January 1843.

As one might expect Lady Llanover was set against the notion of having the traditional Welsh airs translated and did everything in her power to make sure that the poets whom Llinos was bound to turn to for advice would discourage her strongly in her task to convert the words into English rhyme. In 1841 Lady Llanover wrote to ab Iolo in order to remind him of the promise he had made to make use of his influence in encouraging Llinos to publish as many Welsh words as possible. Llinos had recently told Lady Llanover that she intended on publishing her work in London as soon as possible, minus all the Welsh words. Lady Llanover entreated ab Iolo to put a stop to the venture:

Take an opportunity as speedily as possible of remedying this mistaken notion- for mistaken it certainly is, as I know that you perfectly coincided with my opinion that to act up to the permission requested and obtained by the Queen to dedicate the Welsh Airs with native words to her M[ajesty] Miss Wms was bound to publish as many with words as she possibly could and to add prose translations of all that would admit it. You will know that many are curious, some of a pastoral character, some of a Druidical character and you said that where it was needed, you would supply verses of your own. I cannot tell you how angered I shall be if words do not appear to the greater part and you are the only person who's opinion will bear any weight...This is all in cyfrinach [*secret*] act promptly. I never mention that I communicate with you on this subject.⁷⁰

Writing to ab Iolo in 1843 Lady Llanover again surreptitiously undermined Llinos's plans to translate:

Miss J Williams left me yesterday and I am sure...that you will be continually consulted and applied to during the process of her work. Let me entreat you be the reliance you place on my sincerity and judgement to set your face so much as possible against every versified English translation? I do assure you they will not only give a bad idea of the Welsh original but will actually vulgarise the Welsh.⁷¹

⁷⁰ NLW MSS, 21273E (247) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 25 March 1841.

⁷¹ NLW MSS, 21273E (264) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 23 January 1843.

Tegid's reluctance to translate echoed the sentiments, which Lady Llanover had conveyed to ab Iolo. The letters are dated within a few weeks of one another and so it seems that Lady Llanover was instrumental in almost sabotaging Llinos's connections with the very people who were most likely to take an interest in her work. Though it is equally possible that Tegid's reservations were the product of his own opinions, it is certain that Lady Llanover would be most pleased with the response given by Tegid in the second half of his letter to Llinos:

You are in a situation (both of rare talent and position) to be enabled to service your country, and by publishing their beautiful national Airs you are ensuring for yourself a lasting fame which time will increase for yourself instead of diminishing. And did I not truly believe that you will lower the character of your work...in the cause you cherish, by allowing the little vulgar stamps of common English Ballads to be impressed upon your rare and pure Welsh gold even I could not dare to offer my opinion.⁷²

Apparently, Tegid's words had some effect and a compromise was met. It was decided to only translate a sample of verses so that the English reader might 'judge how far the music and the subject of the words suit each other, as well as to record the circumstances under which the collector became acquainted with each air.'⁷³ A copy of the Welsh alphabet was also included in order to assist 'towards enabling persons unacquainted with the language, to acquire a correct pronunciation of the words.'⁷⁴ Evidently, Lady Llanover succeeded in her quest to avoid a complete translation of Llinos's work. In a letter to ab Iolo she sent her 'thanks for [his] kind endeavours to put an end to Miss J Wm's English translation.'⁷⁵ It seems that ab Iolo had tentatively tried to translate a few lines on behalf of Llinos, and one might infer from this that he saw no great harm in at least giving a sample of the Welsh songs to English readers. Lady Llanover assured him, 'your endeavours will not altogether be thrown away.'⁷⁶

⁷² NLW MSS, 447-4279,1160E, John Jones (Tegid) to Maria Jane Williams (Llinos) 6 January 1843.

⁷³ NLW MSS, 447-4279,1160E, Final draft introduction to, Maria Jane Williams', *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg* (Llandovery, 1844)

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ NLW MSS, 21273E (267) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 12 February 1843.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

She also advised him with perhaps a lofty tone 'I think you are too great a poet to be an unprejudiced judge in this matter.'⁷⁷ She continued:

The work is not intended to give the best specimens of Welsh poetry but to give National Airs sung by peasant with such words as could be got with them. Where there are words with original thoughts and imaginative expression 'well good' and still better where they give a plea for an informing note (your notes will be treasures don't be sparing of them).⁷⁸

Lady Llanover had placed herself at the centre of the creative process of publishing Llinos's Welsh Airs. The extract above illustrates how Lady Llanover balanced her kind and active encouragement to ab Iolo along with her more serious counsel that was in her view, geared toward guarding against the so-called vulgarisation of translating original Welsh words. Furthermore, she demonstrated a concern that genuine peasant words might be usurped in favour of the creative renditions of a bard, keen to make the work as poetically ornate as possible. Lady Llanover made it her business to make sure that the finished publication was according to her specifications an authentic product of Welsh traditional folk music. All this it seems was carried out in secrecy.

In all, forty-three songs were published in the final version and some of the airs collected are still sung today the most famous of which are 'Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn' and 'Clychau Aberdyfi.' Publishing the book had implications for cultural enthusiasts of the future. By selecting songs for the book, members of the Llanover circle had in a sense decided which peasant songs would be preserved for posterity. Recipients of the first publication are noted in the back. Some three hundred and eight people signed up to receive at least one copy of the music. Some, fifty-seven of these were from among the gentry and upper class. Many of the names were recognised members of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ NLW MSS, 447-4279,1160E, *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg* (Llandovery, 1844)

Lady Llanover also took a close interest in the work of the hitherto mentioned Ysgafell.⁸⁰ Evidence from letters suggest that by 1851 she was very much part of the Llanover literary contingent. She spent that Christmas at Llanover where she composed numerous verses. It seems that she felt comfortable to work and relax there. By 1852 Ysgafell's volume of Carnhuanawc's life work had made good progress. In a letter written to fellow cultural enthusiast Arthur Johnes (who eventually fell out of favour), Lady Llanover kept him up to date with Ysgafell's work saying, 'The 1st volume of Mr Price's life is quite ready for press and we only want to get the number of names to publish immediately. The 2nd vol. is far advanced.'⁸¹ Both Ysgafell and Lady Llanover were excited by Arthur Johnes's forthcoming publication of his work on Dafydd ap Gwilym. At Llanover, Ysgafell could always be sure that there would be plenty of literary matters to debate, as is illustrated by a story of a squabble between Lady Llanover and Ysgafell over the proposed publication of an English translated version of the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym. In a letter to the translator Arthur Johnes, Lady Llanover writes:

Miss Williams has had quite a fight with me because I will not let her send your translation of the 'ode to summer' by D ap G to the "Star of Gwent" ...as you are the only person with whom I ever was acquainted who rendered Welsh verse into English verse without disgracing the original. I would not allow any versified translations of Welsh poetry to appear in the Star of Gwent, being quite sure that if such a fashion was commenced, every English rhymers with a smattering of Welsh would think himself an Arthur Johnes, and we should have most ludicrous versions declared to be literal transcripts of the writings of the Welsh bards.⁸²

One might argue that the reason behind Lady Llanover's refusal to allow the translated copy to be put out into the public domain was based on a concern that such an action might diminish the appreciation of the original poetry, as well as belittle the level of skill needed to undertake the task of translation. In time Ysgafell received the full translated work through the hands of Lady Llanover as a letter written by Ysgafell to Arthur Johnes illustrates:

⁸⁰ See M. Fraser, 'Jane Williams (Ysgafell) 1806-1885', pp. 91-115.

⁸¹ NLW MSS, Glansevern (2), 3689, Lady Llanover to Arthur Johnes, 4 October 1852.

⁸² Ibid.

On Wednesday morn[ing] Lady Hall rec[eived] your packet of 4 elegantly ½ bound copies of your translation of Dafydd ap Gwilym's Poems. One of them she delivered to me and I beg to offer my sincere thanks for it. The volume is one, which gains by repeated perusal, bearing the immortal stamp of real poetry... You will be glad to learn that Lady Hall is in good health and spirits. Should I visit her hospitable home at Xmas, I hope I may have the pleasure of meeting you and showing you Mr Meyer's Essay in my translation.⁸³

Although Ysgafell did not compete in Eisteddfodau she was the author of a number of important works. As we have seen Lady Llanover illustrated Ysgafell's book on Carnhuanawc and also her children's book *The Paper People*. Consequently, Ysgafell was a regular visitor not only to Llanover but also to the London residence. In summer of 1869 Ysgafell wrote to Llinos, in order to keep her up to date with work and life:

We left Hereford on Thursday June 3rd for Abergavenny, where Lady Ll's carriage met us and we got here very comfortably by a different route...At present we are Lady Ll's only guests...With the exception of Sunday all mornings since I came hence have been given to my proof sheets and late in the dews of evening I have gone out with her Ladyship in the pony carriage.⁸⁴

What is clear through reading the various letters of those who belonged either to the Cymreigyddion or Welsh Manuscript Society is that life long friendships were established amongst members. Many of those members first encountered one another at Llanover. Therefore, Lady Llanover did not only make her home a forum for the discussion and creation of cultural projects she also made it possible for her mutual acquaintances to foster friendships beyond the meetings and balls held at Llanover Hall. In this sense, Lady Llanover again might claim another cultural victory if one considers the success she had in introducing some of the most culturally patriotic individuals in Wales to one another, thus reinforcing the cultural networks across the Principality.

⁸³ Ysgafell to Arthur Johnes, 12 November 1852. Quoted in M. H. Jones, 'The Letters of Arthur Johnes' *The National Library of Wales Journal* (1957-58), p. 350-1.

⁸⁴ NLW MSS, Aberpergwm (1), 275, Ysgafell to Llinos, 8 June 1869.

Lady Llanover set high standards for those around her. Because she was so involved in the organisation and output of the Manuscript Society she made it her priority to make sure that deadlines were met. When the society was formed there is no doubt that Lady Llanover was one of its most enthusiastic members. When plans were made to publish the work of ab Iolo and the Breton scholar Mr Rio, Lady Llanover could hardly contain her eagerness, writing to ab Iolo she told him, 'I beg to ...assure you of the pleasure I experience in hearing that the business is taken up in good earnest by yourself and Mr Williams Aberpergwm. I need scarcely say that we should of course be ready to join in.'⁸⁵ Apart from Lady Llanover, the society benefited from the membership of some of the foremost scholars and poets not only across Wales but also Europe. As might be expected Lady Llanover was only too happy to act as a mediating force between scholars. In her letter to ab Iolo she revealed her plans, confiding in him, 'it now strikes me the best way to turn to account these good dispositions in three scholarly parties to promote the honour of Wales would be to unite all our forces and after a well digested plan commence operations allotting to each individual the part they can best fulfil.'⁸⁶

It would seem from the surviving correspondence that in ab Iolo, Lady Llanover had a frustrating, yet good friend. They too worked together. Ab Iolo was to Lady Llanover, a mine of information and she would turn to him when in need of explanations, or advice on research. In 1841 she made such a request:

I am very sorry to add to your avocations, but I must apply for your aid in consequence of a book which is about to be published of all the gentlemen's residences in this county for which purpose sheets of queries are sent to every proprietor to be filled up with information as to the remarkable places in the neighbourhood, derivations of place names etc. Pray do not be alarmed by the idea that I am going to require all this at your hands but I request the favour briefly writing an answer to the questions that I now enclose, as I should be very sorry to lose the opportunity of having good information published especially with reference to this county, which has never had a tolerable historian on any one point.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ NLW MSS, 21273E (208) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 5 November 1836.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ NLW MSS, 21273E (241) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 6 March 1841.

In addition to Llanover Hall being a meeting place for the literary circle it was also a prime location to share research and view manuscripts. Ab Iolo apprehensively sent some manuscripts to Llanover. According to him: 'they have never before been from my sight, except at Aberpergwm since they came into my possession and they shall never again go beyond Llanover.'⁸⁸ Ab Iolo was however not renowned for turning in his work on time. Mair Elvet Thomas believed that he contributed nothing to the Manuscript Society, save his tendency to revel in his father's literary glory.⁸⁹ Part of the reason for this lack of output was due to ab Iolo's ill health. Lady Llanover sent medicines to him in an effort to keep him not only well but also in a position to complete his work.⁹⁰ On occasion she would mediate between parties that had requested work from ab Iolo. If deadlines or demands were not met then Lady Llanover might offer a gentle reminder to ab Iolo. When Sir Samuel Meyrick⁹¹ became agitated at his non-receipt of a *cywydd* apparently requested through Lady Llanover she was quick to ask ab Iolo for the *cywydd* again. She appealed: 'for my sake not to delay writing another post to Sir S. Meyrick about the matter relating to Lewys Dun which Sir S. has again sent me about and which he again calls "the Cywydd which ab Iolo mentioned to you".'⁹² Evidently, the influence, which Lady Llanover possessed, pushed ab Iolo into action and the *cywydd* was successfully sent.⁹³

As previously mentioned, Williams Rees of Llandovery was responsible for the publications of the Welsh Manuscript Society and William Williams of Aberpergwm, as one of the founding members of the Manuscript Society was also very much involved in the process of producing work for publication. Being as they were key members of the Llanover literary circle, Lady Llanover was regularly in

⁸⁸ NLW MSS, 21273E (232) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 21 April 1840.

⁸⁹ M. E. Thomas, *Afiaith yng Ngwent*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ NLW MSS, 21273E (257a) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Draft Letter from ab Iolo to Lady Llanover, 7 April 1842.

⁹¹ Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick (1783-1848)

⁹² NLW MSS, 21273E (238) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 18 February 1841.

⁹³ NLW MSS, 21273E (239) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 27 February 1841.

contact with them and as such she was privy to the problems.⁹⁴ As ab Iolo became increasingly ill and unreliable, these problems in relation to progress became ever more apparent. In December of 1841 Lady Llanover expressed concern surrounding the publication of ab Iolo's promised work. She was characteristically direct in her expression, saying in a letter to ab Iolo, 'I was at Llandovery about a fortnight ago and am much alarmed at the backward state of your volume.'⁹⁵ It transpired that the submission of ab Iolo's work was a long term problem as well as a source of obvious personal embarrassment to Lady Llanover who was so closely connected to the subscribers of the Manuscript Society:

I am sorry to say; I find it quite impossible to justify further delays, on part of the committee, toward the public. It is now, three whole years, since I advocated an apology to the subscribers, for its soon appearance, fresh apologies have been made annually, ever since, persons have been successively withdrawing their names from the society in consequence of the endless delays and disappointment thus organised, and I am now sure that you must see that it is now, absolutely necessary that a final arrangement is made, and as unfortunately your health has precluded your completing what you undertook, so many years ago, the committee must now at once proceed, to what very much owing to my advice has been to the great injury of the society, so long delayed, viz putting the remainder of the text, into other hands to complete the translations as well as they can, and publishing the volume immediately, as it is absolutely necessary to prevent the destruction of the society, by further delays.⁹⁶

Having shared out the remainder of the work between leading scholars, Lady Llanover told ab Iolo in June 1846 'I have the great pleasure of informing you that the translation of your volume is finished from the place you left off.'⁹⁷ The publication of the translated volume was fraught with difficulty and 'disagreement between persons involved.'⁹⁸ Lady Llanover confided in ab Iolo that the acting committee had 'not been a bed of roses,'⁹⁹ yet she managed to carve out a supervisory role in the

⁹⁴ See NLW MSS, 21273E (239) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters.

⁹⁵ NLW MSS, 21273E (252) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 23 December 1841.

⁹⁶ NLW MSS, 21273E (275) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 15 August 1845.

⁹⁷ NLW MSS, 21273E (279) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 13 June 1846.

⁹⁸ NLW MSS, 21273E (283) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, [n.d].

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Welsh Manuscript Society thus she was instrumental in the process of redistributing the tasks; moreover her interceding ensured that ab Iolo's efforts were not wasted. This tendency to take over in her self appointed role, as administrator and manager evidently made her feel unpopular at times. She complained to ab Iolo in 1843, 'I am like a target shot at everybody about all things.'¹⁰⁰ As we saw in the first chapter, Lady Llanover's single-minded personality determined that she could not do anything other than listen to her instincts, which in all cases she believed to be right and well meaning.

When ab Iolo died Lady Llanover was 'indeed quite grieved to hear of the death of her poor friend' yet in almost the same breath she begged 'that nothing may be finally arranged with regard to his MSS'.¹⁰¹ It transpired that ab Iolo wished that his manuscript collection be transferred to the British Museum and Lady Llanover wrote to the museum on behalf of the family. Although she had been disappointed with the lack of work produced by ab Iolo, Lady Llanover felt a great deal of sympathy for the Williams family. The prospect of impending poverty for ab Iolo's dependents weighed on her mind and in answer to this anxiety she managed to convince the Manuscript Society committee to be charitable. In a letter to ab Iolo's son she assured him that the full payment of the volume would be met:

Lady Hall pressed the necessity to deciding on what (if anything) should be given to his family beyond what has already been received by ab Iolo and although...the press has been kept waiting and subscriptions fallen off in consequence of the vol not being finished the committee are not bound to pay more, yet out of respect to his memory and in consideration of the unfortunate circumstances of his family they have decided to pay exactly in the same proportion as if the vol had been done to the original time, although their loses have been great from its non-completion.¹⁰²

With one good deed performed Lady Llanover strove to enact another. She enlisted the assistance of her brother in law in the hope of selling Iolo Morganwg's

¹⁰⁰ NLW MSS, 21273E (265) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to ab Iolo, 9 February 1843.

¹⁰¹ NLW MSS, 21273E (291) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to the widow of ab Iolo, 19 February 1847.

¹⁰² NLW MSS, 21273E (293) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to the son of ab Iolo, 12 March 1847.

collection of manuscripts to the British museum. Ab Iolo's son like his father before him was not adept at keeping deadlines. The non-appearance of a catalogue that would explain to the Museum exactly what was in the collection made it hard for Lady Llanover to tease out a positive response from the manuscript experts. Again, Lady Llanover candidly explained the matter to ab Iolo's son:

Lady Hall informs Mr E. Williams (ap Taliesin) that a great delay had taken place in her forwarding his catalogue of MSS in consequence of her wishing to obtain somebody of high influence, to transmit it to Sir F. Madden who is at the head of the British Museum, and she succeeded in securing the Chevalier Bunsen's assistance, and has kindly spoken to Sir F. Madden on the subject, and last week he took charge of the catalogue to transmit to Sir F. M and as soon as Lady Hall knows anything further, she will write again, but from what Sir F. M said to the Chev. B the latter fears the Museum will refuse to have anything to do with any MSS excepting those undoubtedly ancient, and of which they have no duplicates in the museum.¹⁰³

As predicted 'one of the chief managers of the affairs of the British Museum assured [Lady Llanover] positively that the committee had deliberated upon the ab Iolo MSS, and they completely decided to have nothing to do with them.'¹⁰⁴ Lady Llanover reiterated that despite her, and her contact's best efforts, 'it was utterly hopeless to reason with them'¹⁰⁵ yet she understood that it had been ab Iolo's express wish to offer the manuscripts to the museum 'in the hope and belief that it might not only prevent their being lost or destroyed but that his family would receive money for them and that they might ultimately be published like other MSS in the museum.'¹⁰⁶ The Williams's were in a predicament that had implications for the financial survival of the family and the heritage of the Welsh nation. Lady Llanover guaranteed that she would 'always be glad to assist ab Iolo's family with advice'¹⁰⁷ on the quandary presented to them.

¹⁰³ NLW MSS, 21273E (298) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to the son of ab Iolo, 19 December 1847.

¹⁰⁴ NLW MSS, 21273E (301) Iolo Morganwg: Taliesin ab Iolo Letters, Lady Llanover to the son of ab Iolo, 8 November 1848.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

One can only guess as to whether Lady Llanover was trying here to drop the most transparent of hints. What is known is that the Iolo Morganwg manuscripts found a home at Llanover Hall. No doubt Lady Llanover bought them at a price that bolstered the financial comfort of the Williams family. The situation was no doubt beneficial to all, and executors of ab Iolo's will were safe in the knowledge that his wish to safeguard the collection had been met. Llanover could not match the reputation of the British Museum but there can be no doubt that as a result of making the deal, (the details of which remain a mystery) Llanover Hall's library became the heart of scholarly exploration. In addition to the Iolo Morganwg collection, Lady Llanover collected Welsh periodicals and literature and as mentioned earlier the prize-winning entrants of the Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau along with society records found home in the library. According to *The Cambrian*, amongst the literary gems to be found at Llanover were 'copies of lost books of the great library at Raglan, which were all lost when the Parliamentarians burnt down' the castle.¹⁰⁸ Though, it must be remembered that Lady Llanover controlled whom and how often they had access to the library. In a letter to Betha Johnes, Lady Llanover explained the circumstances of how the Iolo Morganwg documents came into her possession as well as her security policy:

I am not aware that I have any MSS of Dafydd ap Gwilym's own writing- the greater part that I have are copies taken by that most trustworthy of Welshmen- Iolo Morganwg, whose son Taliesin ap Iolo, I knew well and circumstances having obliged his son to sell them, Lord Llanover bought them and you will believe that they are well locked up, but carefully aired with guardians in the room. I could not think of lending them, as I know too many instances of the sad results of lending MSS because the person who borrowed them with every intention of doing right may be victims of others – but if Professor Rhys, whom I know well, really wishes to have them seen himself or a friend, I would give them facilities for that purpose when I am at home myself...¹⁰⁹

Some people thought that she watched over her collections selfishly and others thought she showed a reluctance to divulge information about the manuscripts. In

¹⁰⁸ The copies were apparently made by Llewelyn John who visited Raglan in 1610. *The Cambrian*, 1 July 1910 Vol. 30 No. 12, p. 11.

¹⁰⁹ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 5 June 1894.

reference to an inquiry made about a long lost document one commentator wrote, after her death that ‘the Bee of Gwent was a magpie’. Because access to the collections was only granted to a privileged few, Lady Llanover was criticised for guarding her library so closely, thus she controlled who had access to ‘national treasure[s].’¹¹⁰ *The South Wales Daily News* also confirmed that Lady Llanover closely monitored her collections as the following extract from an obituary illustrates:

The Llanover Library contains a magnificent selection of old Welsh books and ancient MSS. Among the latter carefully stored in a large box, are a collection of the original Iolo MSS, which her Ladyship purchased many years ago from Ap Iolo, the son of the eccentric old antiquarian. Lady Llanover guarded these treasures most jealously and it is related that so great was her concern for their safety that upon one occasion not very long since she absolutely declined to lend them to Canon Silvan Evans, the well known Welsh lexicographer, who was anxious to have them by him for reference in the preparation of the Great Welsh dictionary, on which he is now engaged.¹¹¹

The press also highlighted her reputation as bibliophile and patron of literature. ‘She was gifted with literary tastes, and spent thousands of pounds upon the fostering of Welsh literature’ and befriended many Welsh men of letters.¹¹² ‘Nearly all Welsh newspapers and periodical were sent to Llanover, and the frequent references to their contents which are found in her letters denote that her Ladyship was a constant reader of the vernacular press, and kept herself well informed of the public movements in Wales.’¹¹³ Lady Llanover’s library was very much part of her utopian project and her plan to safeguard the nations literary assets was a reflection of her duty as a patron of culture and Welsh talent.¹¹⁴ Accessibility to the Llanover collections has improved somewhat. They are now held at the National Library of Wales where they are still closely guarded but it is now possible to view these

¹¹⁰ NLW, Aberpergwm 1 (72), Morien (Owen Morgan) Treforest, 18 January 1901.

¹¹¹ Cardiff MSS, 3771, Press cuttings, 1860-96 relating to Lord and Lady Llanover, *South Wales Daily News*, [n.d].

¹¹² *Reynold’s Newspaper* 26 January 1896.

¹¹³ Cardiff MSS, 3771, Press cuttings, 1860-96 relating to Lord and Lady Llanover, *South Wales Daily News*, [n.d].

¹¹⁴ Lady Llanover’s library collections were eventually transferred to the National Library of Wales where the public may view them.

‘treasures’ without having to pass Lady Llanover’s criteria or without having to be the most learned scholars of the Principality.

While, Lady Llanover fell short in her ability to create original literature, poetry and music, she recognised talent around her and never tired of pushing those who possessed an artistic flair to add to her perfect ideal of the Welsh nation’s culture. In a sense some cultural allies were caught up in the dynamism of the Llanover project. Once Lady Llanover had expressed an interest in the abilities of characters such as Llinos, Ysgafell and ab Iolo it was almost impossible to avoid her input as is revealed by the correspondence of a number of those who moved in her circle. It may be further argued that her determination to intervene significantly contributed to the most successful and active years of the Llanover set as well as the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion and Welsh Manuscript Societies.

By transforming her home into a focal point of hospitality, not only for bards and musicians, but also to aristocratic and foreign guests, curious to know more of Welsh culture, Lady Llanover created a platform from which to launch a festival atmosphere for the Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau. Doubtless it would have been an impressive start to commence the celebrations from the comfort of a mock Jacobean mansion. The ambitions of Lady Llanover and her friends reached far beyond Monmouthshire, Wales or Britain. This was a group of people who were able to share ideas within a European and even a World dimension. Therefore the culture and traditions of Wales were promoted on a wide scale by the Llanover circle during the first half of the nineteenth century. Lady Llanover and her allies identified certain symbols, which they viewed as characteristic and representative of the Welsh and their culture. Such symbols including the Welsh costume, the triple harp and the Welsh language were promoted through the Eisteddfod circuits. The battle to promote these symbols of Wales was for Lady Llanover the foundation of her cultural ambitions. In the next chapter we shall see how Lady Llanover campaigned to protect her image of Wales by promoting these cultural symbols.

Chapter 5 - Costumes, Triple Harps and Welsh Speaking Clergy: Lady Llanover's Symbolic Welshness

The historian Prys Morgan has rightly highlighted that Lady Llanover 'is in danger of being dismissed as a rich eccentric, whose role in Welsh culture was wholly decorative or ornamental.'¹ There is no question that she took an obsessive interest in the cultural image of Wales. This fixated passion led her to endorse and promote certain cultural symbols she believed would convey the essence of her Wales. Her position of power as a member of the aristocracy in Wales, and the wife of an M.P. did not guarantee that her cultural campaigns were free from opposition. In fact, one might argue that for Lady Llanover, life was characterised by multiple and recurrent battles to safeguard and to some extent recreate what she believed was an admirable vision of the Welsh nation through the promotion of her preferred cultural symbols.

It was stressed in the introduction that Lady Llanover's interests were wide and varied but she is perhaps best known for her battle to promote the Welsh costume and declining Welsh woollen industry. She is almost equally well known for her faithful patronage of the triple harp and musicians of Wales whilst her campaign to promote the Welsh language within the religious and educational institutions of Wales has an important relevance today. While one cannot deny that Lady Llanover attached a somewhat romantic value to these campaigns, it needs emphasising that behind her efforts there was more than eccentric patriotism. She devoted her time, money and energy toward protecting and promoting the costume, triple harp and Welsh language as specific cultural symbols unique to Wales.

This chapter is divided into three sub-sections that will explore Lady Llanover's struggles over the Welsh dress and woollen industry, the triple harp and Welsh music and to keep the Welsh language in use at religious and educational institutions in Wales. Each of the three aspects is treated separately in order to reveal Lady Llanover's breadth of influence and interests.

¹ P. Morgan, 'Lady Llanover (1802-1896)', 'Gwenynen Gwent', p. 94.

Lady Llanover and the Welsh Costume

No study of Lady Llanover can ignore her connection with the national costume of Wales, which by now is sealed in popular legend.² As Christine Stevens has observed, 'the influence of Lady Llanover still resonates today, in terms of conceptions of what constitutes Welsh national dress, and of many misconceptions that have grown around the subject.'³ The purpose of this section is not to address the multifaceted questions that arise from Lady Llanover's costume legacy, it deals primarily with how and why Lady Llanover promoted her version of the Welsh costume. A woman in Welsh costume is a celebrated and stereotypical picture post card image of Wales. As early as 1894 the *Western Mail* published 'Punch' illustrations of 'Dame Wales.' The stout, jolly woman in the tall beaver hat who represented the opinions of the country as portrayed by the newspaper. It may be argued that the woman in Welsh costume represents a more inclusive all embracing view of Wales, neither being affiliated with the south or the north, the industrial or the agricultural. She is the image of Welsh culture, associated with the myth of the *gwerin*. Lady Llanover has been more often than not glorified or in some cases blamed for what is now regarded as the national dress of Welsh women. According to Prys Morgan:

In 1834 she was not even clear as to what a national costume was, but she was sure there ought to be a costume, which would be distinctive and picturesque for the tourists to look at. Within a very short time she and her friends had evolved a homogenised national costume from the various Welsh peasant dresses.⁴

To say that Lady Llanover invented the Welsh costume as it is known today may be overstepping the evidence in favour of recognising a popular myth. Because of convenience, and sentimental charm, the presumption has long been, despite a lack

² See F. G. Payne, *Welsh Peasant Costumes* (Cardiff, 1964).

K. Etheridge *Welsh Costume in the 18th & 19th Century* (Swansea, 1977).

H. Roberts, *Pais a Becon Gŵn Stwff a Het Silc* (Ynys Mon, 2006).

C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume and the Influence of Lady Llanover', National Library of Wales Web Site, <http://www.llgc.org.uk/gwyb/cyfeillion/stevensc-welsh-costume.pdf>.

C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume: The Survival of Tradition or National Icon?', *Folk Life* Vol. 3, (2004,2005), pp. 56-70.

³ C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume: The Survival of Tradition or National Icon?', p. 61.

⁴ P. Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', p. 80.

of unequivocal evidence, that Lady Llanover literally and purposefully invented the national Welsh costume. It is not the purpose of this work to delve into this debate but one cannot deny that Lady Llanover was instrumental in making the concept of having an identifiable national costume popular. As we shall see what began as a battle to preserve the traditional industry and dress of the Welsh turned into a project to find and in many cases reinvent regional costumes. Since the nineteenth century the symbolic significance and cultural purpose of the Welsh costume has been a subject of debate. When Lady Llanover died, the *Liverpool Mercury* commented on what it saw as Lady Llanover's peculiar attachment to the Welsh costume:

Her somewhat eccentric conservatism in the matter of dress- for it was her pleasure always to wear the tall beaver hat, the shawl, the firm kirtle and the buckled shoes, which formed the national, costume of Wales half a century ago- attracted and fascinated the popular imagination.⁵

It was suggested by the *Liverpool Mercury* that Lady Llanover's insistence upon wearing and promoting the Welsh costume 'served to obscure the real mission of her life, and to throw discredit on the sane and scientific method by which she strove to accomplish it.'⁶ The Welsh costume remains a controversial subject. The feminist historian Deirdre Beddoe, would in all probability agree that the costume as a symbol of Wales was an empty statement. She regards the image of the woman in Welsh costume as a gimmick at best and at worst an offensive and inaccurate portrayal of the Welsh working class female. She is sceptical of the costume as a genuine icon of Wales and this clearly demonstrates that debate on the relevance of this symbol is still a subject of contention:

What Lady Llanover did was to produce a "twee" version of what was really the gear of working women. Today the image of the lady in Welsh costume – she is far too genteel, far too demure to be a woman-is far too sweet, decorative and innocuous. The visual images of these ladies compound this by always showing them sitting or standing and smiling, or most singing or playing the harp. The donning of national costume seems to have rendered their limbs useless and reduce them to the status of

⁵ *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 January 1886.

⁶ Ibid.

ornament. The lady in Welsh costume, as a symbol of Wales is interchangeable with the daffodil.⁷

No photographs of Lady Llanover in Welsh costume have so far been found. As the *South Wales Daily News* uncovered, 'on one occasion only, and that many years ago did she face the photographic artist, and the result was by no means satisfactory. Copies of that photograph never left Llanover court, but only once was her portrait painted after her marriage.'⁸ There is some historic comfort in the fact that Charles Augustus Momewicke painted a now iconic image of her wearing Welsh costume in 1862.⁹ The painting shows Lady Llanover wearing a black beaver hat decorated with a pearl and silk leek. The red cloak around her shoulders obscures the detail of her costume.¹⁰ However, on viewing this portrait it is hard to argue against the case that Lady Llanover helped to shape the image of Wales.¹¹

Lady Llanover contributed to the introduction and development of a 'traditional' costume of Wales on a number of fronts, including most notably her prize-winning essay of 1834 in which she advocated the continuation of wearing traditional Welsh dress. More striking still, sets of regional costume designs have been attributed to her. Along more practical lines she established Gwenffrwd woollen mill on the Llanover estate in order to support the local woollen industry. She also offered prizes for fabric competitions in the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau and as will be touched upon later she wore her version of the Welsh costume and ruled that her female staff should do the same. Lady Llanover expected her tenants to follow suit and encouraged her aristocratic peers to wear the national costume with pride at cultural and social events. Furthermore she promoted Welsh fabrics amongst her contacts abroad and so promoted the Welsh woollen industry further a field, outside its natural boundary of interest. As in all her cultural pursuits she stood against the sceptics and remained undeterred by those who increasingly found her attachment to the national costume of Wales outdated and ridiculous. This

⁷ D. Beddoe, 'Images of Welsh Women', pp. 225-238, p. 233.

⁸ *South Wales Daily News*, 20 January 1896.

⁹ P. Lord, *Delweddu'r Genedl/ Imaging the Nation* (Caerdydd, 2000) p. 251.

See appendix for examples of post cards.

¹⁰ Lady Llanover gave red cloaks to girls on the estate who had done well at Sunday school.

¹¹ See Appendix, Plate 1: Lady Llanover. See also Plate 7: Tea Drinking in Costume.

section will discuss the ways noted above Lady Llanover contributed to the national costume of Wales.

There are a number of factors to consider in getting to grips with Lady Llanover's 'battle' for the traditional dress of Wales. The term traditional rather than national seems a more appropriate use of words in that Lady Llanover's first motive was to preserve the traditional modes of dress for Welsh women. As in the case of all her cultural battles, Lady Llanover and her peers were reacting against a particular set of historical circumstances when they began promoting the fabrics and costumes of Wales. Such forms of dress were fast disappearing by the 1820s and 1830s and what is more, the decline was common to other countries that had experienced the suffocating pressure of dominant cultures upon them:

In common with many European countries, the style of the so-called 'Welsh costume' derives from clothing worn during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Europe, this can often be explained by the loss of independence and identity of many of the smaller nations particularly during the Napoleonic period.¹²

The Welsh costume was therefore 'based upon archaic elements of rural occupational dress,'¹³ made up mainly of open fronted woollen bedgowns and men's hats that had continued to be made and used in some form or another in the more conservative areas of rural Wales since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁴ On this basis 'there was nothing intrinsically Welsh about most of these garments. They were a type worn by countrywomen throughout Britain.'¹⁵ Early examples of the traditional Welsh dress are hard to come by, given that they were literally work wear and so became worn out. Later, when the concept of a costume had developed the garments became reserved for special occasions; therefore examples of the national costume rather than the traditional costume used at work tend to appear with more frequency in museum collections.¹⁶ As will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six, the Welsh dress was tirelessly promoted at Llanover and in a sense this policy was

¹² C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume: The Survival of Tradition or National Icon?', p. 56.

¹³ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of Welsh costume see K. Etheridge, *Welsh Costume in the 18th & 19th Century*.

¹⁵ C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume: The Survival of Tradition or National Icon?', p. 58.

¹⁶ See collection at St Fagans.

part of the battle to keep the so-called traditional modes of dress in use and relevant to daily life. It must however be acknowledged that factors other than Lady Llanover's personal efforts, such as tourism and commercialism, reserved a place for the Welsh costume in the popular imagination of not just the Welsh people but also outside observers of Wales.

To establish her influence on the Welsh costume one must again examine the prize-winning essay, already mentioned in Chapter Three as a developing stage in her progression as a leading cultural enthusiast. Curiously, Lady Llanover did not interpret the wearing of traditional clothing an expression of nationality in her prize-winning essay of 1834, though she connected both the Welsh language and Christian religion, with the expression of patriotism. As inexplicable as her interest may be, the influence of Lady Greenly and Carnhuanawc is sure to have carried the most weight. Her fellow romantics demonstrated a great deal of interest in the woollen industry and costumes. As in the case of the Welsh language, the promotion of Welsh fabrics was an early passion for Lady Llanover and again she, along with her most prominent friends, sought to negotiate sales of Welsh produce which, the following letter written by Lady Llanover to Lady Greenly whilst visiting Baroness Bunsen in Rome demonstrates:

What you say of your successful efforts in the cause of country manufacture quite rejoices me. It is astonishing how small, but repeated our attempts tell at last. A great deal of Welsh manufacture was sold before I left home, but I believe not a yard has been disposed of that does not owe its destination to yourself, Mr Price or me, tho perhaps the wearers are not all aware of it.¹⁷

As has been frequently emphasised in this thesis, Lady Llanover was in a unique position to make such a strong stand for what she believed in because she was able to put money and power behind her campaigns. With the Welsh woollen industry falling into decline in the face of what Lady Llanover believed to be the 'tyranny'¹⁸ of new cotton fashions, she took it upon herself to try and reverse the industry's demise. In her prize-winning essay of 1834, she argued passionately not

¹⁷ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser, CB/6(i), Lady Llanover to Lady Greenly, 23 November 1834.

¹⁸ Gwenynen Gwent, 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of the Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales', p. 10.

only for the patronage of local industry but also for the practical benefit of choosing wool over cotton. The Welsh costume was in her opinion 'adapted for active employment' but had 'fallen greatly into disuse' of late, this being a symptom of a 'false standard of respectability.'¹⁹ More alarmingly to her, the new cotton fashions were 'utterly incompatible with a proper discharge of household and agricultural duties' thus the standard of work in the home and farmstead declined as it became secondary to the fads of fashion. Flimsy cotton fabrics were no match for Welsh weather. Lady Llanover lamented in her essay:

How frequently do we now see the hale and robust mother of fifty, and even grandmother of eighty, returning from church or market secure from the storm. Under the protection of the warm woollen gown, and comfortable cloak... with a neat serviceable beaver hat, and black woollen stockings, pursuing her homeward path unobstructed by the influence of cold or wet, while the delicate cotton clad daughter or grand-daughter, with perhaps the symptoms of consumption on her cheek is shivering with the rain,...²⁰

To Lady Llanover's mind turning away from mass manufacture in favour of homespun cloth was a matter of honour. The skills employed in making clothes were a virtue of the working classes and something to be proud of. This pride had given way to vanity and impracticality:

There was a time when the garment of the home made manufacture formed the boast of the wearer, and was allowed to reflect honour on the house and family in which it was fabricated, ...how circumstances have changed!²¹

Saying nothing in the way of describing Welsh costumes beyond that they were predominantly made of woollen material, Lady Llanover firstly exhorted the upper classes to influence society for the better and to 'set an example' by wearing native fabrics:

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

²¹ Ibid., p. 10.

Let us endeavour to impress our minds of those whose characters and stations in life enable them to extend their influence over their fellow countrymen, the necessity of making use of the invaluable privileges which they possess for the benefit of the community at large.²²

There is a suggestion in the tone of the essay that working women taking enjoyment out of new fashions was tantamount to reaching beyond their natural station and in doing so they detrimentally effected the economy of the home. In Lady Llanover's words, 'as artificial wants are multiplied, real and substantial comforts are diminished.'²³ On analysing Lady Llanover's essay of 1834, Jane Aaron highlighted the narrow-minded view put forward by Lady Llanover regarding the role of Welsh women in her book on women's writing in Wales. She observed that the message of Lady Llanover's essay 'would keep all Welsh women, of middling 'freehold' class as well as wives of tenant holders, artisans and labourers, tied to the kitchen sink.' Lady Llanover seems to have placed 'Welsh women firmly within domestic boundaries.' Nevertheless, according to Aaron, the essay 'does posit an image of an ideal Wales as freed not only from the potential sedition of the working class, but also from the aspirations of an ascendant middle class, thus eradicating all threat to the supremacy of Lady Llanover's own class, the landed gentry.'²⁴ Aaron's writing on the matter demonstrates the complexity of analysing Lady Llanover's essay out of the time context and audience for which it was originally written. Aaron's conclusions also reflect how hard it can be to make sense of the work of a woman such as Lady Llanover who obviously held complex and some times contradictory opinions.

There is an assumption that Lady Llanover promoted the Welsh dress in order to appeal to the tourist industry. While she was undoubtedly aware that the curious ways of the Welsh were a selling point, she denied that this had any bearing on her true motives, as is stated clearly in one of the last paragraphs of her essay. This may explain why some of the prints attributed to Lady Llanover were signed under a completely different name, in a bid to protect her from possible accusations of hypocrisy:

²² Ibid., p. 12.

²³ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁴ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity*, p. 69.

We have endeavoured throughout this Essay to adhere to solid reasoning, not to work upon the feelings by appeals to vanity or sentimentality- We have *not* enlarged upon the loss Artists would experience by the destruction of the costumes of Wales, or on the traveller, after the *Picturesque*... We feel that our arguments for their support are *better* founded on the firm basis of health and industry, which are the first steps to happiness and prosperity, and the best preventatives of poverty and immorality.²⁵

It is difficult to assess whether Lady Llanover's essay made any real impact on the drive to preserve the Welsh dress and woollen industry. As already discussed, it was not widely circulated though an extract was republished in the February edition of *Y Gymraes* in 1850. The first edition of *Y Gymraes* features an address to the women of Wales by 'Gwenllian Gwent.' Her message correlates so closely with the principles set out in 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of The Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales' that again it has been supposed that the author of the address was in fact Lady Llanover. The overall message of the piece maintained that the act of fostering patriotism was a fundamental part of a mother's duty. Only through her would the next generation take pride in the Welsh language and only she could guard the morality and tranquillity of the home. 'She was proud of her Welshness, wearing at all times the native dress of Welsh flannel and a beaver hat.'²⁶

Arferwch eich gwlanenni Cenedlaethol, y rhai sydd wedi bod er amser anghofadwy yn wisgoedd ein cenedl...²⁷ Cyn gadael y gwisgoedd yr wyf am ddywedyd gair am Het Cymru wrth fy nghydwladessau. Yr wyf yn eich cymell yn awr i adfer y gorchudd priodol hwn i'r pen, hon sy'n briodol gyda gwn gwlanen dda...²⁸ GYMRUESAU CYMRU! Bydded i chwi astudio a gwir ddeall cenedlgarwch; mawrhewch a meithrinwch ef ym mhob dull yn eich gallu drwy eich bywyd.²⁹

[accustom yourselves to wearing the national woollens, those that have for a time been forgotten in the dress of our nation. Before leavening the costume I intend to say a word about the Welsh hat to my fellow countrywomen. I recommend that you now

²⁵ Gwenynen Gwent, 'Advantages Resulting From the Preservation of the Welsh Language and the National Costumes of Wales', pp. 12-13.

²⁶ S. R. Williams, 'Women's Nineteenth Century Periodicals', p. 73.

²⁷ *Y Gymraes*, January 1850, Vol, I No. I, p. 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

wear this appropriate headgear with an appropriate, good woollen gown. Women of Wales! You must undertake to study and truly understand patriotism; magnify and nurture it in every way possible throughout your lives.]

There seems no plausible explanation as to why Lady Llanover would have used a pseudonym but for the reason of distancing her class from charges of preaching to workingwomen. Nevertheless, as Sian Rhiannon Williams has pointed out ‘whether or not she was the author of the address referred to, Lady Llanover was an important figure in the creation of the image of the ideal ‘Cymraes.’³⁰

The symbolic value of wearing the costumes of Wales, as a mark of patriotism is not mentioned in the essay. Nor does it tell the reader much about the variety of the costumes of Wales. As a visual representation of the costumes the essay is of no use because little is offered in way of description yet it is widely believed that Lady Llanover designed a number of costumes to correlate with some of the counties of Wales, including 6 for Gwent, 3 for Gower, 2 for Cardiganshire and 2 for Pembrokeshire.³¹ These images were published in 3 editions in 1834, 1835 and 1910.³² The current curator of Aberystwyth Museum, Michael Freeman, has raised a question of authorship. Two of the thirteen drawings of women in Welsh costume were signed by an, ‘A Cadwalader’ and another two by ‘A Cadwallader’. All of the watercolours appear to be in the same hand; therefore according to Freeman this could imply that none of them were the work of Lady Llanover. In spite of the controversy of authorship, the watercolours were almost certainly commissioned by her. A similar watercolour design exists in an album once belonging to Lady Llanover’s close acquaintance, Angharad Llwyd. Illustration number 109 is of a woman wearing a Welsh hat, red skirt and blue betgwn with a red and black check apron entitled, E Madocs of Tre-Madoc, dated 1842 and signed Augusta Hall.³³ This would indicate at

³⁰ S. R. Williams, ‘Women’s Nineteenth Century Periodicals’, p. 73.

³¹ See appendices for copies of the costumes attributed to Lady Llanover.

³² An album entitled ‘National Costumes of Wales’ known to have been in Lady Llanover’s collections, containing 15 watercolours representing the costumes of parts of Wales plus two pencil drawings and a watercolour of a woman in a court dress has been studied closely by Freeman in connection with his work on the Welsh hat.

For further details see M. Freeman, ‘Lady Llanover and the Welsh Costume Prints’ *The National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2. (2007), pp. 237-251.

³³ NLW MSS, 781A ‘The Album of Angharad Llwyd.’

least that Lady Llanover harboured an interest in recording the regional variations on the costume in Wales.

The questions uncovered by Freeman will in all probability remain unanswered but in the absence of another credible artist to whom these now iconic costume designs can conclusively be attributed, it seems reasonable to credit Lady Llanover with the legend now preserved by the National Library of Wales. The costume designs now cherished by the National Library of Wales and are displayed for all to see on their website. This provides the most convincing evidence that Lady Llanover's determination to promote the costumes of Wales has attained some form of victory in the digital age.³⁴ Perhaps realising the historic significance of these designs, the prints were also published as post cards.³⁵ The drawings 'contained elements of fashionable dress of the period, such as high waistlines, puffed sleeves and caps with lappets,'³⁶ and this is of no surprise if one considers that Lady Llanover undoubtedly desired that the national costumes of Wales should appeal to the aristocracy as well as the working classes. A balance of fashion was needed to make the appeal as wide ranging as possible. All the styles appear quite different from the more dowdy, heavy looking national costume familiar today but as Christine Stevens has remarked, part of the reason why the concept of having a national dress was taken up and accepted by the wider population was because Lady Llanover 'based her ideas on a form of dress which was actually being worn by Welsh women, rather than trying to invent a completely spurious outfit.'³⁷ Since the national costume was a recognisable form of dress to the Welsh people there was nothing ridiculous in its appearance in the opinion of those who took pride in wearing it. Even so it eventually became 'fancy dress when radical change in everyday life left it far behind.'³⁸

Lady Llanover contributed to the domestic growth of the Welsh woollen industry by creating on her estate a demand for the produce of Gwenffrwd woollen

³⁴ For a digital image of the costume designs see www.digidol.llgc.org.uk/METS/FFU00001/frames?div=0&subdiv=0&locale=en&mode=thumbnail
For the originals see: NLW, Drawing Vol. 299, PA8137.

³⁵ See appendix.

³⁶ C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume: The Survival of Tradition or National Icon?', p. 63.

³⁷ C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume and the Influence of Lady Llanover'
<http://www.llgc.org.uk/gwyb/cyfeillion/stevensc-welsh-costume.pdf>.

³⁸ Ibid.

mill. This, it may be argued represented her most direct action in the campaign to promote Welsh costume and fabrics. There had been a mill on the estate prior to 1865 but in that year the lease was renewed and the mill extended.³⁹ Under the Harries family the mill 'did attain some fame'⁴⁰ and provided materials for clothes to be made for estate workers until its closure in the early 1950s. Fabric produced at the mill was used to make the costume of Lady Llanover's domestic servants. The Harries family produced many examples of prize-winning checks and coloured fabrics entered in Eisteddfod or domestic competitions sponsored by Lady Llanover. The mill also produced clothes that Lady Llanover donated to the poor. Therefore the mill served the needs of the estate workers but it also played an important part in the invention of so called tradition check patterns that were given a platform by the Eisteddfod. Although Lady Llanover's dress code was regarded, especially in later years, as out of the ordinary, it must be noted that it was not only at Llanover that a dress rule was observed during the nineteenth century. A small number of landowners promoted a costume uniform. Servants at the Williams family estate in Aberpergwm were under orders to wear a red and black ensemble and Lord Stanley of Anglesey is also reputed to have made it a condition of tenancy that all women on his estate wore Welsh costume.⁴¹

Lady Llanover's policy of promoting the Welsh costume marks the point where functionalism met romanticism. She encouraged the wearing of Welsh woollens on an everyday basis but, as Prys Morgan has emphasised there was a romantic ideal behind the research and costume designs. Although there appears now to be some doubt about crediting Lady Llanover alone with the invention of the Welsh costumes it is certain that her romantic creativity stretched to inventing a costume for her male harpist. According to Christine Stevens's description, 'this consisted of a tunic in brightly checked linsey wolsey with matching flannel stole, velvet breeches and a rather Scottish influenced tam o'shanter.'⁴² Once again, there was nothing uniquely Welsh in the design. To the untrained eye Llanover's harpist, Gruffydd could easily be mistaken for a stereotypical Scotsman. What is most noteworthy is that Lady Llanover had no misgivings about promoting Gruffydd's special costume as

³⁹ Gwent Record Office, D.433, 38/41, Lease of Llanover woollen mill.

⁴⁰ J. G. Jenkins, *The Welsh Woollen Industry* (Cardiff, 1969), p. 325.

⁴¹ H. Roberts, *Pais a Becon Gŵn Stwff a Het Silc* (Ynys Mon, 2006), p. 51.

⁴² C. Stevens, 'Welsh Costume: The Survival of Tradition or National Icon?', p. 64.

an apparently 'genuine' form of ancient dress that was reputedly worn at Welsh courts across the principality.

This romantic creativity was an outlet for spectacle and nowhere was this more apparent than at Eisteddfodau. It was the primary stage on which to exhibit the Welsh costume and bardic dress. Promotion of the Welsh costume, especially amongst the aristocracy was made even more effective when an element of glamour was also added. In her earlier years, Lady Llanover made the costumes of Wales doubly appealing not only by promoting pictures of romantic costume designs but also by wearing them. We have seen in Chapter Three that following the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod of 1837 Lady Llanover held a ball at the newly built Llanover hall. The press found this event all the more striking because many of the female guests wore a form of regional Welsh costume, some of which were reputedly based on Lady Llanover's drawings. She successfully used her influence to convince the gentry to appear in Welsh costume by making it a theme for the ball. 'Among the numerous admirable dress which appeared on this occasion... those in Welsh costume' included, Mrs Leigh of Pontypool, who appeared in the costume of Neath. Mrs. Scudamore of Ketchurch was 'in strictly correct Cardigan costume' and Lady Charlotte Guest 'in a correct Merthyr costume.' Lady Llanover's sister in law, Mrs Berrington opted for a Camarthenshire costume. 'The misses Williams of Aberpergwm were beautifully attired in the costume of Cwm Nedd, of 100 years ago' and Lady Llanover's young daughter, Miss Hall (Gwenynen Fach) [Little Bee] wore a Pembrokeshire costume of brown satins. The costumes of Wales had been successfully promoted more as fancy dress than as fashion amongst some of the aristocracy and cultural elite. As the press noted the costume was worn with pride by Lady Llanover and her most illustrious of guests, who were respected across Wales:

Miss Angharad Llwyd (the celebrated Bardes of North Wales) appeared in the green and white colours of her country, and in full costume. The appearance of this talented distinguished Cambrian Lady at the Cymreigyddion Y Fenni was considered one of the highest honours it could receive... Mrs Hall of Llanover (Gwenynen Gwent) was in the costume of Gwent, executed in satins: in her hat she wore a diamond leek, surrounded by the Rose, Thistle and Shamrock in diamonds, and a velvet band around

her throat was confined by a diamond clasp, with the cipher G.G, and the prize ring suspended, won on a former occasion.⁴³

The costumes described above bore little resemblance to the work wear on which the Welsh costumes were supposedly based. At the Llanover ball there was less mention of the woollen fabrics familiar to the working classes. Satins were preferred amongst the honoured guest at Llanover. Evidently, this was an event that required the upper classes to display their finery. No true regional peasant costume was ever made from satin, however Lady Llanover would have had far less success in encouraging her peers to wear hot, itchy woollens. Conversely, it is the hot itchy woollens and not the sleek satins, which were the mainstay of Lady Llanover's campaign. In 1853 Lady Llanover insisted that all female guests staying at Llanover to attend the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod should wear the Welsh costume but some guests refused as the memoir of Lady Mary Elizabeth Lucy reveals:

There was a knock at the door and Lady Hall's maid entered carrying two frightful linstey petticoats and bodies, two Welsh chimneypot black hats with coarse mob caps and said, "If you please, her Ladyship wishes you and Miss Lucy to wear these Welsh costumes today at the Eisteddfod," laid the things down and before I could give an answer for laughing, she went off. Tizzard exclaimed,

"Oh! Ma'am you will surely never put on such ugly things and take off your own beautiful dress and pretty new bonnet! And Miss Lucy, Oh! She must not make herself such a guy."

"No, no" I cried, "we will not." But Carry (who never thought of herself) said, "Oh! Never mind, Mamma, we had better do as Lady Hall wishes and perhaps all the other ladies will be dressed in these costumes."

I replied, "Tizzard, go and ask," so she did and came back saying all the ladies were furious but were putting on the dress etc. which Lady Hall had sent to each of them. So Carr and I took off our pretty dresses and put on the fights. ...I never was more uncomfortable, and vowed I would never wear such horrible things again to please any Lady Hall nor did I, and all the other ladies agreed with me and we returned our linsteyes and hats etc. to her Ladyship that same evening and made her very angry.⁴⁴

⁴³ NLW MSS, 1464 D. Unidentified press cutting from a 'book of essays and press cuttings made by Carnhuanawc'.

⁴⁴ Mary Elizabeth Lucy, *Mistress of Charlecote: The Memoirs of Mary Elizabeth Lucy 1803-1889*, pp. 95-96.

When staying at Llanover either as a guest or employee her Ladyship's rules applied. She came to believe firmly that the Welsh costume was an expression of patriotism and an elegantly civilised national symbol to be proud of. When abroad Lady Llanover took sample fabrics to show her acquaintances. Writing to Lady Greenly in 1834 she confessed; 'I smuggled over a piece of Welsh stuff-brown, with orange silk stripes, which is now making up for my sister by a French milliner, who admires it extremely.'⁴⁵ It would appear that Lady Llanover capitalised on every given opportunity to promote Welsh fabrics at home and abroad, amongst the working and upper classes alike.

Despite the controversy surrounding its symbolism and the complexities of determining its origins of invention the Welsh costume is in part a female contribution toward the cultural image and identity of Wales and there is plenty of weight behind the argument that by promoting the Welsh costume through the methods cited above, Lady Llanover played an instrumental part in the creation of a cultural icon that has to a certain extent shaped a sense of nationhood.⁴⁶ As Juliette Wood explained in an article that appeared in the *Western Mail* in 2007, 'Lady Llanover understood the link between clothes and national identity.'⁴⁷ She helped make popular what folklorists call public displays of identity⁴⁸ and it should be remembered that to some the Welsh costume was fancy dress but for all those who regarded the costume as a cultural joke there were plenty of women who proudly and whole heartedly adopted the costume as a serious and unique expression of cultural identity. The debate on whether the costume is a useful symbol and whether or not it reflects today's Wales is one, which appears with frequency especially in the context of Eisteddfodau or St. David's day.⁴⁹ Some people believe that the costume is too old fashioned to serve any purpose in reflecting a modern Welsh identity, moreover it must be remembered that no corresponding costume for men exists. Although much more can be said on this subject it is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss current opinions on the Welsh costume. What is important is that Lady Llanover chose the costume as a symbol of

⁴⁵ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/6(i), Lady Llanover to Lady Greenly, 23 November 1834.

⁴⁶ See J. Aaron, *Nineteenth Century Women's Writing in Wales* (Cardiff, 2007).

⁴⁷ *Western Mail*, 31 March 2007.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Western Mail*, 1 March 2006.

Wales and she was in all probability one of the first to lead the way in propagating its promotion, just as she did in her struggle to attain a place of cultural recognition for the triple harp as will be addressed in the next section.

Lady Llanover's Campaign for the Preservation of the Triple Harp

Lady Llanover has been credited with saving the triple harp almost from extinction as the national instrument of Wales.⁵⁰ At the Liverpool and Birkenhead Eisteddfod of 1873 the harpist and musician Brinley Richards announced 'I really think that were it not for the efforts of Lady Llanover we should long since have merited the reproach of having lost one of the most interesting national instruments in the world.'⁵¹ Her campaign to uphold the triple harp as a respected and 'traditional' instrument of the Principality has been regarded as one of her most far-reaching legacies.⁵² 'She made it her business by every means of power to revive its use.'⁵³ This 'battle' was strategically fought on a number of fronts. She remained a faithful advocate of the triple harp throughout her life, rejecting any other instrument in its favour. It is generally agreed by most music historians that the triple harp was Italian in origin and based on the baroque instrument, thus its ancient origins were not as genuine as the cultural revivalists had supposed.⁵⁴ The harp was most likely to have been adopted by the Welsh from the mid seventeenth century onward. Yet, Lady Llanover thought the triple harp's connection with Wales was rooted much further back, laying 'claim to an ancestry as old as our hills.'⁵⁵ It was her ignorance of, or refusal to believe in, its true history that most likely helped to safeguard it.⁵⁶

Keeping the triple harp in vogue required its supporters to thicken the mythology surrounding its supposed early, almost primordial association with the Welsh people and their traditional music.⁵⁷ The triple harp was particularly popular in the north Wales and once again the Eisteddfod networks were an obvious and

⁵⁰ See appendix, Plate 6: Harpist and Triple Harp.

⁵¹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 December 1873.

⁵² See R. Ley, *Arglwyddes Llanofer-Gwenynen Gwent* (Caernarfon, 2001).

⁵³ *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 December 1873.

⁵⁴ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 127.

⁵⁵ NLW MSS, 1902 B, 'The Welsh Harp (press cuttings)' Brinley Richards, 8 March 1869.

⁵⁶ P. Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p. 125.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

significant means of sustaining its use and relevance in the field of Welsh culture,⁵⁸ preserving predominance of the triple harp as the national instrument of Wales from the late eighteenth century onwards. Lady Llanover and her associates made great efforts to increment the number of triple harp competitions and ensure that they were rewarded with most prestigious of prizes. Despite the perceived ascendancy of the triple harp amongst these shapers of a national culture, its acceptance as a cultural symbol was contested. Some musicians favoured the pedal harp and as its popularity increased, so the triple harp began to lose ground in Eisteddfodau. A decline in the number of competent triple harpists led to a reduction in the number of instruments being produced and therefore, performances upon the triple harp in front of public and private audiences became a rarity. This is why Lady Llanover embarked on a public battle to reverse the drift away using her wealth and her personal influence both privately and within the press to protect the status of the triple harp as the national instrument of Wales. At Llanover the triple harp superseded all other instruments. Here, Lady Llanover had the control to elevate the triple harp to its 'rightful place.' In September of 1885 the *Western Mail* correspondent Morien described 'Gwenynen Gwent [as] the foster mother of the melodies of...the princes of Wales.' He went on to say that she was 'endowed with the courage of Boadicea' and that had 'stood by the Welsh language and the telyn of the Cymru! And has made their detractors ashamed', he continued: 'In the princely halls of Llanover the ancient spirit of Wales yet lives, and there Cambria is still enthroned.'⁵⁹

Content in her imagined role as the archetypal gentile Welsh woman, Lady Llanover famously employed her own harpists, 'as in former days [when] the Welsh harp was an important feature in the mansion of every nobleman and gentleman in the Principality' and 'formed the attraction of every social gathering and was met with in most places of entertainment where travellers resorted.'⁶⁰ Seeing that the dominance of the triple harp was under threat Lady Llanover made provisions for the future. She arranged a number of harp festivals outside of what she regarded as the ever increasingly 'polluted' official Eisteddfod arena, haranguing them in the process for their 'betrayals'. She continued to buy triple harps from her favourite harp makers and

⁵⁸ For a history of the Harp and Welsh harpists see A. Rosser, *Telyn a Thelynor* (Pen y Bont, 1981).

⁵⁹ *Western Mail*, 29 September 1885.

⁶⁰ NLW MSS, 1904 B, The Welsh Harp (press cuttings) Brinley Richards letter, 8 March 1869.

carpenters that included, Basset Jones and Elias Francis. She also provided scholarships for young harpists. At Llanover, the triple harp would remain safe under her reign as would the Welsh language and costume. The remainder of this section traces Lady Llanover's battle for the triple harp in Wales by firstly considering what influenced her love of the instrument before moving on to consider the role of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod in its fortunes. Finally this chapter will evaluate Lady Llanover's personal efforts in attempting to bring back the triple harp to the forefront as the national instrument of Wales.

Lady Llanover's lifelong interest and patronage of the triple harp again owes something to the influence of her great friend Carnhuanawc. He took a scholarly interest in the instrument and in the harpists themselves. Carnhuanawc chronicled his admiration for the musicians and his study of the triple harp in a number of scrapbooks.⁶¹ He also protested strongly against the criticism for its policy of positive discrimination against the pedal harp. In answer to a complaint against the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion society's refusal to allow the pedal harp to be played in competitions Carnhuanawc declared:

To this I reply, that I certainly always have used my endeavours to that effect, and for the following reasons: In the first place, it would be contrary to the principles of the society, whose object is the cultivation, not of music absolutely, but of national music exclusively, and as the pedal harp is not the national instrument of the Welsh, it does not come within the limits of the society's operations.⁶²

To abandon the triple harp would 'contribute not only to the extinction of national music, but also the deterioration of every other.'⁶³ In addition the pedal harp was more expensive to produce, thus discriminating against poor musicians, with the result that this the lower classes would turn to cruder forms of music and amusement:

So if the triple harp were abandoned, and in its place not supplied by the pedal, as people must and will have music of some quality or other, that recreation would be

⁶¹ NLW MSS, 1464 D, A book of essays and press by Carnhuanawc on the triple harp.

⁶² J. Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Revd. T Price Carnhuanawc Vol II*, p. 302.

⁶³ Ibid.

sought in the fiddle, the herdy gurdy, and the grinding organ and then our music would really deserve some of the epithets which Cattwg has bestowed on it.⁶⁴

On a practical note, the pedal harp was too heavy and cumbersome to move thus begging the question, 'How is a poor harper in the country to carry such a load upon his shoulders across mountains, in the exercise of his minstrel avocations?'⁶⁵ Furthermore, the pedal harp was 'liable to be out of order'⁶⁶ or detune after transportation. Ultimately, the campaign to secure the future of the triple harp was a reflection of similar battles occurring in the European context. The drive to preserve traditional costume that was happening on a wider scale across a changing Europe was accompanied by the impulse to preserve traditional instruments that were also seemingly under threat. Carnhuanawc believed Ireland and Scotland too were at risk of squandering their traditional instruments and music but with the assistance of people such as himself and Lady Llanover the Welsh people might be convinced that the triple harp was worth preserving as a matter of patriotic principle:

It is a national instrument and I look upon it with pride as an honourable national distinction. Were its merits even less conspicuous, I should nevertheless endeavour to preserve it, and that from feelings of nationality; and I believe my countrymen are not singular in their reticulations with regard to their national instrument; similar predilections exist in other counties and even fostered with anxiety. I feel assured that if any one of the civilized countries of Europe possessed such a national instrument as the triple harp, it would be cherished with pride and affection and every encouragement given to its cultivation, and every exertion made for its preservation.⁶⁷

Carhuanawc's protestations were well entrenched in Lady Llanover's mind. Unlike Carnhuanawc, Lady Llanover was in a position to employ her own harpists at her home. Again, she was a rarity amongst the aristocracy in her staunch support for the triple harp. She first employed John Wood Jones as her harpist.⁶⁸ He had set up a school for harpers in Camarthen in collaboration with Carnhuanawc. The ability to

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 303.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 304.

⁶⁸ John Woods Jones (1800-1844).

trace one's pupil-teacher lineage was a matter of pride and status to harpists.⁶⁹ John Wood Jones could link his gypsy roots through an unbroken student teacher relationship stretching back to John Parry (blind Parry), legendary harpist to the Williams Wynne family of Wynnstay.⁷⁰ Lady Llanover later employed John Jones's pupil, Thomas Gruffydd, a blind harpist who became famous through his association with Llanover.⁷¹ He was admired for his talent and accomplishments as a harpist, as the following biographical information noted in a nineteenth century publication of Welsh airs illustrates:

When only three years old he accidentally fell on an axe, which caused the loss of his right eye. As if to crown his early misfortune, fate added yet another cruel blow. While at school he was struck by a ball which nearly destroyed the left also, thus leaving him almost totally blind, and heavily handicapped in the struggle of life. But he had a brave heart as his future career abundantly proves. Having given early proofs of his musical talent, and evinced a special desire to learn the harp, he was at the age of 14 placed under the tuition of Mr. John Jones, of Dolgellau, a noted Welsh harpist then living in Brecon, who subsequently became family harpist at Llanover Court.⁷²

Lady Llanover's harpists were key members of the household and a source of great pride to her.⁷³ Guests could be sure of a musical rendition from them as they were always on hand to entertain. The harpist's eagerness to do so in a variety of settings was played out to great effect on 27 July 1843 when the triple harpists of Llanover and Tredegar performed for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at Buckingham Palace.⁷⁴ The musicians were accompanied by Carnhuanawc who diligently explained the 'structure and powers' of the triple harp to the Queen and Prince Consort. Their performance for the royal audience was documented in the press.⁷⁵ Thus, the Llanover harpist exercised a perfect opportunity to gain publicity for their instruments and their craft. 'Attired in picturesque garments of their country, with the silver harp and medals gained in various trials of the skill in which they had

⁶⁹ A. Bennett, *A Bennett's Collection of Old Welsh Airs* (London, 1896), pp. i-xviii.

⁷⁰ John Parry 'The Blind Harpist' (1710?-1782).

⁷¹ Thomas Gruffydd (1815-1887).

⁷² A. Bennett, *A Bennett's Collection of Old Welsh Airs*, p. ix.

⁷³ Walter Wakins of Cwmdru was also a Llanover harpist as was Thomas Gruffydd's daughter, Susanna Berrington Griffith Richards.

⁷⁴ John Jones was harper to Sir Benjamin Hall and Thomas Gruffydd was harper to Lord Tredegar

⁷⁵ *Bristol Mercury*, 5 August 1843.

been engaged,'⁷⁶ there could be no doubt that the Welsh possessed a distinct and romantic national instrument. What is more, they had managed to capture the attention of the head of state. In gratitude for the opportunity of performing for a Royal audience, the Prince of Wales was given a highly decorated harp made by Basset Jones of Cardiff as a gift.⁷⁷

The harpists employed at Llanover made their reputations by winning triple harp competitions. In March 1869 Williams Rees reflected on the crucial role of 'The Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society [which] did much to encourage the extension of the use of the triple harp by giving prizes of well made-triple harps. He recalled that 'five or six of such instruments were triennially bestowed.'⁷⁸ However the number of competitors for the triple harp competitions declined. At the last Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod in 1853 the prize of 10 guineas for the best player of an ancient Welsh air upon the triple harp, a competition that was 'open to all the world' attracted just six competitors. Gruffydd of Llanover was victorious but a young contender, Williams Roberts, who had apparently displayed considerable talent, also charmed the audience and adjudicator. In the spirit of encouraging the future generation Lady Llanover's daughter gave him a harp originally set aside for blind female competitors (of which there had been none). Thus, 'the youth was brought forward and presented by Mrs. Herbert of Llanarth, with the Arianwen Harp amid the most defining cheers. He seemed quite thunderstruck at his success, and bore away his harp with a countenance beaming with joy and gratitude.'⁷⁹ The scenario was again repeated in the under 21 category when Lady Llanover's husband and president of the 1853 Eisteddfod awarded John Lloyd a harp again set aside for blind competitors.⁸⁰ There had been only two competitors therefore they were both awarded for their efforts.

⁷⁶ *Morning Herald*, 31 July 1843.

⁷⁷ Bassett Jones (1809-1869).

Basset Jones made most of the harps offered as prizes in the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau competitions. An example of his work is on display at St Fagans.

⁷⁸ NLW MSS, 1904 B, 'The Welsh Harp (press cuttings) Letters on the Triple harp which appeared in the Caernarfon Herald' letter from Williams Rees, *Caernarvon Herald*, 22 March 1869.

⁷⁹ *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent*, Report of the Abergavenny Eisteddfod Held on 12 and 13 October 1853, p. 16.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The Llanover family patently understood that the survival of the triple harp rested on encouraging future musicians to play the national instrument. Students of the triple harp were therefore sponsored by Lady Llanover and taught by her own harpists. In April and May of 1884 Lady Llanover requested that John Gruffydd test Edward Davies for her Welsh harp scholarship. Davies was successful and the scholarship was offered to him on the condition that he was 'sober, obedient and respectful,' and that he kept good company and spent his Sundays correctly, namely in religious observance.⁸¹ Lady Llanover's campaign to promote the use of the Welsh harp also took on a practical dimension. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, Llanover tenants were encouraged to practise their skills.⁸² This was at any rate the instrument of the 'Gwerin' and harpers were in a position to entertain those of their own class at home or in the temperance hall as well perform for the gentry.

It appears that to own a harp associated with Llanover was a mark of quality and also authenticity. Brinley Richards remarked in the press that the Llanover harps were of superior quality.⁸³ Gruffydd played a harp that had once belonged to Carnhuanawc. Lady Llanover loaned another of Carnhuanawc's harps to the Duke of Edinburgh for his collection of musical instruments. This turned out to be a short-term arrangement and again, making provisions for the future, Lady Llanover presented the same harp to the South Kensington Museum where it was still to be seen in 1876.⁸⁴ Consigning the national instrument of Wales to a museum should not be interpreted as an admission of defeat on Lady Llanover's part. In all probability it was another carefully considered initiative to promote the triple harp outside of Wales. Llanover harps were sought after because of their reputation. In September 1883 Robert Griffith, then of Manchester, wrote to Lady Llanover in order to declare his interest in buying a harp, his only problem being that he had to sell his old instrument to raise the funds and make room for the new Llanover harp:

⁸¹ Gwent Record Office, D1210.8202, Correspondence and copies re Edward Davies to be tested by John Gruffydd for Lady Llanover's Welsh harp scholarship.

⁸² A. H. Jones, *His Lordship's Obedient Servant* (Llandysul, 1987), p.123.

⁸³ *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 December 1873.

⁸⁴ *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 September 1876.

Gyda llawenydd y deallais for Telyn Deir-res i'w chael o le mor enwog a Llys Llanover. Y mae y ffaith ei bod ym meddiant eich Harglwyddiaeth yn ddigon o brawf i mi ei bod yn un dda....Y mae fy mhalchder yn fawr yn y gobaith o feddiannu Telyn Deir-res henafol Gymru.⁸⁵

[With great pleasure I learned that there is a triple stringed harp available from a place as famous as Llanover Hall. The fact that it is in your Ladyship's possession is proof to me that it is of good quality... I am greatly pleased by the prospect of owning an ancient Welsh triple stringed harp.]

Even though her attendance at Eisteddfodau became increasingly rare, especially following the death of her husband in 1867, Lady Llanover continued to offer up prizes for triple harp competitions. Her decision to stay away is difficult to explain. It may be that she no longer felt it appropriate to attend the Eisteddfod meetings as her influence slipped away from the Eisteddfodau committees. She also continued to send her harpist Gruffydd and later his pupil and daughter Susanna Berrington Gruffydd Richards, along with the Llanover choir to various Eisteddfodau at her expense.⁸⁶ In a sense she sustained her influence on the Eisteddfod scene by allowing her musicians to attend. Her 'musical missionaries' also attended various celebrations and meetings of the Society of Ancient Britons, adding flavour to the St. David's Day celebrations.⁸⁷ Yet, the most effective method by far of promoting the triple harp was through her personal control and this was achieved by setting up competitions at Llanover and by arranging concerts. In some cases Lady Llanover directly rivalled the national Eisteddfod by holding separate harp festivals. When a small Eisteddfod was organised by her to counterbalance what she regarded as sham

⁸⁵ NLW MSS, Calvinistic Methodist Archives 2 14404 b, Robert Griffith to Lady Llanover re. Triple harp, 18 September 1883.

⁸⁶ The press reported that Lady Llanover offered prizes for the triple harp in the following Eisteddfodau:

Conwy Eisteddfod, *North Wales Chronicle*, 21 August 1861.

Aberystwyth Eisteddfod, *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 September 1865.

Swansea Eisteddfod, *Western Mail*, 8 June 1870.

Llandovery Eisteddfod, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 31 January 1872.

Llandovery music festival, *North Wales Chronicle*, 8 June 1872.

Llanrwst Eisteddfod, *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 July 1876

Mountain Ash Eisteddfod, *Western Mail*, 26 December 1877.

Llanrwst Eisteddfod, *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 August 1878.

⁸⁷ Gruffydd entertained the Society of Ancient Britons on St David's Day as reported in: *Daily News*, 2 March 1872.

North Wales Chronicle, 9 March 1879.

cultural festivals held in the Eisteddfod's name, Lady Llanover could not hide her pleasant surprise at the enthusiasm expressed:

I had supposed they were only going to have 3 or 4 little prizes-and we gave two just to amuse our own people, but it appears that the old fire broke out amongst some of the old survivors at Abergavenny-and they insisted on giving their money for more prizes-our jolly vicar was made Llywydd- and I am really alarmed at the magnitude of the programme- No date fixed but Hydref 1864.⁸⁸

Lady Llanover's confidence in her ability to offer an alternative form of cultural expression never diminished and if anything this self-belief increased with age as did her obstinacy. In 1869 there was a debate on the validity of the triple harp as the national instrument of Wales was raised in the press.⁸⁹ Indeed, the question of whether the triple harp was worth preserving was raised, given that so few could claim to play it with any proficiency. Brinley Richards, a long-term advocate, lamented its demise and expressed great surprise that neither the 'instrument nor the harper could be met with, even in so large a city as London.' He therefore resolved to offer a harp as well as a monetary prize in the next Eisteddfod believing that 'by this means we should in a few years witness a restoration of the instrument of which every Welshman has just reason to be proud.'⁹⁰ The harpist Thomas Ellis was more sceptical, replying in an open letter: 'You may depend on it that the restoration of the Welsh harp does not remain with the Eisteddfod alone, but with the Welsh people themselves. However patriotic a Pencerdd or Eos may be, they cannot stand against the force of national stagnation.'⁹¹

In response to this debate Lady Llanover called a meeting of Welsh harpers at Llanover in autumn 1869. She offered a triple harp as a reward for the best performer. The competition was advertised in the press that summer as being solely for those who had set aside the pedal harp in favour of the triple stringed version.⁹² Gruffydd

⁸⁸ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 15 August 1864.

⁸⁹ NLW MSS 1904 B, The debate was followed by Lady Llanover and the press cutting were collected in a scrap book.

⁹⁰ NLW MSS, 1904 B, The Welsh Harp (press cuttings) Letters on the Triple harp which appeared in the Caernarvon Herald, letter from Brinley Richards, 8 March 1869.

⁹¹ NLW MSS, 1904 B, The Welsh Harp (press cuttings) Letters on the Triple harp which appeared in the Caernarvon Herald, letter from Ellis Roberts, [n.d].

⁹² *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 June 1869.

adjudicated the competition in the full splendour and ceremony of Llanover Hall. However, the event appears to have been marred by a palpable air of scepticism as is evident from the opinion of an anonymous commentator. In a letter to the *Cambrian* he argued that ‘the gentry as a rule in Wales know nothing of the Welsh language, and very little more of their music. As for the harp it is “indeed truth” a “Welsh-rare bit” – would it were as palatable to the national taste.’⁹³ To this writer, Lady Llanover’s vision of Welsh culture was nothing but an invention, baring little resemblance to the reality of Welsh life:

The “play” at Llanover Court...becomes a Welsh farce, with the lady of the house as principal actress, assisted by a few favoured guests, a packed audience consisting of men of Glamorgan and pretty women of “Gwent” whose picturesque dresses gave to the Eisteddfod an aspect of novelty and romance which well contrasted with the rough and ready Welsh farmer, who in his enthusiasm rushed from his plough to rescue from its untoward doom his dearly-beloved triple harp.⁹⁴

Lady Llanover’s expressed her own opinions and intentions before the assembled audience of ‘followers’ at the event and they recorded by the *Cambrian*. Her address is worth quoting from at length as a crucial piece of evidence.

My friends and fellow countrymen-but more especially you, you true and real harpers of Wales who play upon the harp of three rows of strings, the harp of our country,- the chief object of my invitation to you Telynorion Cymru (harpers of Wales) is to give support and encouragement to the most perfect of national instruments in the world, and grieved am I to say that through the discouragement that noble instrument has received for the space of fifteen or sixteen years past, it has diminished and gone down so much that in the judgement of our well known and eminent musical countrymen Mr. Brinley Richards (here present this day), he felt it was a necessary duty to call attention of the entire Principality... I shall not say much upon this occasion about those meetings which have been and are mis called “Eisteddfodau” but for they are in truth Ffug Eisteddfodau (false Eisteddfodau) and have been very injurious to Wales by the discouragement given to the real Welsh harps, to real Welsh music, and to many other Welsh things besides; but yet the false Eisteddfodau would

⁹³ *Cambrian*, 19 November 1869.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

have been unable to do so much harm if all the harpers of Wales had stood staunchly together, and determined never to abandon, and not to be seduced from their national instrument....In conclusion I must say I do not believe there is one person here present who has not from their hearts, a true and sincere desire for the restoration of the triple stringed harp of Wales to its proper place, and to see it replaced in the hands, and on many hearths in the Principality of Wales. I see around me Welsh farmers, Welsh tenants of my own, who take an interest in this competition, and proud indeed I should be to see a Welsh harp in each of their houses,...⁹⁵

After such impassioned oration in defence of the triple harp, it was perhaps rather disappointing to the devotees that so few competitors came forward from across Wales. The anonymous 'sceptic' pointed out, 'If we accept an occasional "spurt" of national enthusiasm, such as the late patriotic effort at Llanover, the "real" Welsh harp may be said to be literally a dead letter. From Bardsey Island to Saint David only six real Welsh harpers could be found to compete!⁹⁶ Yet despite the fact that triple harpists seemed to be an endangered species the spirits of the protectors of the Welsh harp remained buoyant and 'Lady Llanover's munificence would not allow any of the competitors to go away empty handed.'⁹⁷ The following year another harp concert was arranged to coincide with Christmas, at which two more triple harpists were presented with their own specially made harps. On receiving their prize they were beseeched, or perhaps warned, by Lady Llanover 'never to abandon the genuine music of Wales or to desert the finest national instrument in the world.'⁹⁸

In 1870 as Carnhuanawc had done some thirty-seven years earlier, Lady Llanover arranged a concert of harp music, including a piece written by Handel, to be played in front of a royal audience. The concert took place with the assistance of her ally Brinley Richards at her London home in Great Stanhope Street, Mayfair. The object of the entertainment was described as being 'to show the value and powers of the national instrument of Wales.'⁹⁹ The event appears to have been yet another successful exercise in publicity and perhaps more importantly an opportunity to

⁹⁵ *Cambrian*, 22 October 1869.

The Event was also recorded in the *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 October 1869, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 17 November 1869, *Western Mail*, 18 October 1869.

⁹⁶ *Cambrian*, 19 November 1869.

⁹⁷ *Western Mail*, 18 October 1869.

⁹⁸ *Western Mail*, 30 December 1870.

⁹⁹ *Western Mail*, 20 July 1870.

network with the royals. Lady Llanover's daughter and grandchildren were also present as was Llinos. The friends and family of Lady Llanover mingled with the likes of the Duchess of Cambridge, the Grand Duke and Duchess of Mechlenburg-Streiltz, the Princess Mary Adelaide and the Prince of Teck. The audience was not as esteemed as that at the 1843 concert when the Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales were entertained, but the later venture was also a success; 'the Royal family withdrew at late hour, having expressed much interest and satisfaction in the performance of genuine Welsh music.'

Lady Llanover's waning influence at Eisteddfodau led to conflict over the predominance of the triple harp. It was the cause of an altercation with the Cardiff Eisteddfod committee of 1883. In this case she had flexed her monetary muscle a little too forcefully for the committee's liking. Whilst it was glad of her contributions, it felt the stipulations and conditions that came with her donations impinged on its powers. In August 1883 the question was raised in the *Western Mail* as to why Lady Llanover's prize had been turned down. Initially the official excuse was that the offer arrived too late to be announced to the public. However another more pressing reason later came to light. Lady Llanover had requested that Dr Joseph Parry adjudicate the competition rather than the committee's choice and that there should be a rule that no pedal harpists could compete.¹⁰⁰ The Eisteddfod committee deemed the conditions unacceptable. A letter to the *Western Mail* from the secretary, the Revd. D Howell Vicar of Wrexham, expresses this in no uncertain terms:

If every donor of a prize were allowed to name his own adjudicator and confine the competition to a select few, the Eisteddfod would become a mere vehicle for the dissemination of the whims and fantasies of every crazed person who happens to possess money.¹⁰¹

Perhaps typically, Lady Llanover's response to this rejection was to yet again support a separate triple harp competition held in Swansea. The *Western Mail* commented that 'the harp competition may be said to have its origin in the refusal of the committee of the last National Eisteddfod to accept Lady Llanover's offer of a

¹⁰⁰ *Western Mail*, 25 August 1883.

¹⁰¹ *Western Mail*, 27 August 1883.

prize for a harp contest, from which players on the pedal harp were excluded.'¹⁰² The counter competition came off successfully with contributions being made by other noble families including the Vivan, Bute, Johnes and Llanarth families. Such families were bound to bow to the influence of Lady Llanover for it was mainly she who secured their regular patronage of Eisteddfodau. Though she was unable to attend the event she sent a telegram of congratulation infused with perhaps inaccurate though undeniably romantic historical rhetoric. She declared, 'this is an auspicious day. It is the anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt, when Harry of Monmouth was victorious, and the sound of the Welsh harp resounded through Wales and Monmouth.'¹⁰³ Lady Llanover continued along with the third Marquis of Bute to support separate triple harp competitions to the dismay of an anonymous harpist who complained that 'to restrict those who have played on the pedal harp from competing is an odd way of displaying one's nationality.'¹⁰⁴

For those around her, it seemed remarkable that Lady Llanover's passion and energy had not weakened with age. As the *Western Mail* reported in 1883 when Lady Llanover had reached her eighty-first year, 'she is now old and feeble but her love of country has not diminished, and she exhibits great value in the national character of Wales.'¹⁰⁵ Her influence by this point may not have carried favour with the national Eisteddfod committee but the Marquis of Bute, also regarded as an eccentric, was happy to indulge the elderly Lady Llanover's patriotic whims. A concert of triple harp music was held in the banqueting hall at Cardiff Castle under her suggestion. As always, Gruffydd was on hand to headline the event. The fantasists and the romantics would surely have been glad to see that he wore his specially designed 'quaint dress of the ancient harpist of Wales' although not pleased with the comment that he looked 'very much like a relic of days long past.'¹⁰⁶ The concert was, to be sure another publicity coup on behalf of the triple harp.

The 1883 concert was more than a celebration of Welsh music. It gained further symbolic resonance since the Marquis of Bute chose the event to publicly

¹⁰² *Western Mail*, 26 October 1883.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Western Mail*, 21 March 1885.

¹⁰⁵ *Western Mail*, 11 August 1883.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

congratulate Lady Llanover on her efforts to promote Welsh culture by in effect re-enacting the prize giving ceremony of 1834. As was explained in Chapter Three, at the Cardiff Eisteddfod of 1834 she won a ring presented to her by the third Marquis's father. This scene marked the public acknowledgement of Lady Llanover as a key protector of Welsh tradition. Echoing the proceedings of fifty years past before a new audience of cultural allies, Lady Llanover again received a ring commissioned by the third Marquis decorated with a bee made from gold, pearl and diamonds in recognition of her celebrated and famous alias 'Gwenynen Gwent.' The third Marquis evidently made Lady Llanover very happy by bestowing this 'unexpected' honour. More significantly the gift symbolised a kind of aristocratic partnership. Here was proof that the third Marquis would follow Lady Llanover by example. He was the 'new blood' amongst the aristocratic Welsh cultural protectionists and he understood the urgency of protecting the national symbols of Wales as a patriotic Scotsman:

Nis gallwn lai theimlo fod esiampyl rhagorol wedi ei gosod gan Ardalydd Bute disgynydd o deulu brenhinol yr Alban ac efe ei hun yn esiampyl i foneddigion Cymru; a gobeithio y bydd iddynt ei ddilyn yn ei nawdd haelionus i lenyddioaeth a cherddoriaeth ein gwlad.¹⁰⁷

[We cannot feel less that the Marquis of Bute has set an excellent example, a descendent of the Scottish Royal family and he himself is an example to the gentry of Wales; it is hoped that they will follow in his generous patronage of our literature and music.]

No doubt Lady Llanover would have been saddened had she been able to see into the future. Her aristocratic ally was not destined to fight the long battles and maintain the level of patronage she had wished, for Lord Bute outlived Lady Llanover by only four years and so had little time to carry her mantle.

Finally by far the biggest setback to Lady Llanover's campaign for the triple harp was the death of her much-loved friend and resident harpist, Gruffydd. He had travelled wherever Lady Llanover had sent him to display the professed delights of traditional Welsh music. One might argue that Gruffydd and Lady Llanover had

¹⁰⁷ *Y Goleuad*, 25 August 1883, Vol. XIII No. 721.

become equally famous, each feeding off the reputation of the other. There is no question that Lady Llanover in her last years was deeply aware that much of what she had set out to do regarding the triple harp, as with so many other things, was being diluted and displaced. As she grew older so she outlived many of her friends and fellow supporters of Welsh culture.¹⁰⁸ In November 1893 another musician, 'Lewis Williams, one of the best remaining harpers died.'¹⁰⁹

Lady Llanover remained convinced of the triple harp's value as the national instrument of Wales and stood almost alone in its promotion. She and some other aristocratic peers continued to sponsor its use through the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau. After the society disbanded she continued to offer money for triple harp prizes on the Eisteddfod circuit. Harpists associated with Llanover Hall strengthened their reputations by performing, competing and adjudicating at Eisteddfodau all over Wales. To Lady Llanover the active rejection of the pedal harp was vital to the survival of the triple harp as the so-called national instrument of Wales. When Eisteddfodau committees of the latter half of the nineteenth century increasingly refused to enact this policy of positive discrimination in the name of symbolic patriotism, Lady Llanover used her wealth and her reputation to promote separate competitions. At Llanover the triple harp was always safe but seeing that the next generation of harpers could only be guaranteed by formulating a training scheme under her watchful eye, Lady Llanover at least provided the opportunity for a few privileged scholars to study in her Welsh haven. Lady Llanover's daughter and heir 'Gwenynen Gwent yr ail' [the second bee of Gwent] continued in her mother's footsteps, as did her grandson to some extent. Eventually with the loss of Lady Llanover's influence, the triple harps of Llanover became silent and the skills cultivated in this musical endeavour set aside. The battle was hard fought but as the sceptics rightly pointed out the triple harp could only be saved by the

¹⁰⁸ In 1887 Lady Llanover dictated a letter to her friend Betha Johnes telling of Gruffydd's death. 'My dearest Betha, Lady Llanover begs me to tell you that poor Gruffydd died this morning at ½ past 5 o' clock. She saw him Saturday,...he was evidently... glad to see her again. He has been failing for the last month and unable to leave the house. She went down to see him yesterday, but he was sleeping and she did not expect his end would be so soon...Lady Llanover begs you will not think of writing to her yet. She says you know what she feels'.

¹⁰⁹ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 21 November 1893.

people of Wales and outside the cultural utopia the triple harp was little known until the romantics of the next age revived its use once again.¹¹⁰

Lady Llanover's Struggle to Protect the Welsh Language within Religious and Educational Institutions in Wales

Perhaps Lady Llanover's most significant battle was her effort to protect the Welsh language. We have already seen she took an early and passionate interest in the Welsh language and the intensity of her commitment never faded. We shall see later how Lady Llanover resorted to a form of social engineering to keep the Welsh language flourishing at Llanover. This section, however, is concerned with discussing how and why she made it her urgent priority to uphold the status of the Welsh language firstly within the Anglican Church in Wales and secondly within two of Wales's educational institutions, Llandover and Lampeter colleges.

Lady Llanover is perhaps most admired today for her defence of the Welsh language. As Jane Aaron has identified, even 'at the time her contribution particularly to the survival of the Welsh language, was important.'¹¹¹ As mentioned previously, her resolute aspiration to make Welsh institutions aware of the need to adopt a positive attitude toward the use and teaching of Welsh was not only practically unheard of amongst the aristocracy of the time but also extraordinarily progressive. In Chapter Three it was argued that her reasons for being so concerned for the future of the Welsh language will in all likelihood never be fully explained but one can state with confidence that she only saw benefits in preserving the Welsh language. One might argue that she believed the Welsh language to be another important symbol of the Welsh nation but she also saw it was a tool that could be used to facilitate greater devotion to the Christian religion, as well as the means to educate young men, perhaps for a future in the Church. What will become clear is that in Lady Llanover's opinion this particular crusade was in need of a long-term approach.

¹¹⁰ Some members of the Gwenynen Gwent society are harpists who promote the triple harp perform on the instrument.

¹¹¹ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth Century Women's Writing in Wales*, p. 73.

Nineteenth century Wales was unquestionably dominated by a religious culture. Lady Llanover was a devoted Christian and conformed to the doctrine of the Anglican Church, moreover her concern for adherence to Christian principles was not confined to those dwelling on her estate. What they regarded as the spiritual well being of the Welsh nation was a priority to both Lady and Lord Llanover.¹¹² They made it abundantly clear that the Dissenter denominations were fulfilling their obligations to the Welsh flock far more successfully than the Established Church. As a consequence, the Dissenting denominations and more especially the Methodists received Lady Llanover's admiration. Far from accepting the Established Church's apparent neglect of Welsh parishioners, Lady and Lord Llanover maintained pressure on the bishopric to revise their policies with regard to Wales. Lady Llanover believed that the failings of the Established Church were far from irreversible, which is why she battled continually to have the bishopric address the needs of the Welsh flock. The chief problem in her view was that Wales had suffered a sequence of ill-conceived appointments to the most important posts within the Church.¹¹³ She believed Anglo-centric bishops had lost touch with the needs of the Welsh and the only way to remedy the Church's predicament was to appoint well-educated Welsh bishops who were familiar to their flocks. The *North Wales Chronicle* concurred with this view, stating in 1859, 'even the dissenters admit that they would not have been eight-tenths what they are' had the Established Church listened to the pleas of those who wished to see native bishops appointed:

Much has been written on the cause of dissent in Wales, we agree with those who maintain that the appointing of bishops alien in blood and feelings, and the consequent infusion of Saxon clergy among us, has been the primary cause of the estrangement of the Welsh from the Establishment.¹¹⁴

As Sian Rhiannon Williams rightly pointed out, conflict was the central feature of Lady Llanover's entanglement with the bishopric and clergy.¹¹⁵ The campaign to appoint Welsh speaking, highly educated bishops to the dioceses of

¹¹² Lord Llanover was instrumental in establishing Ely Chapel the Welsh Metropolitan Church in 1843. See *North Wales Chronicle*, 11 March 1865 and 16 March 1865.

¹¹³ R. T. Jones, 'Yr Eglwysi a'r Iaith Gymraeg yn y Bedwawredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg', in G. H. Jenkins, (ed.) *Gwnewch Bopeth yn Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1999), pp. 229- 50.

¹¹⁴ *North Wales Chronicle*, 1 October 1859.

¹¹⁵ S. R. Williams, *Oes Y Byd I'r Iaith Gymraeg*, p. 60.

Wales was a long fought battle, one of harsh words on their part. When it was suggested to her in around 1850 that her husband had not done enough to raise awareness of the issue in parliament she could hardly contain her 'scorn for those of her countrymen who could quietly revise and repeat such a libel against the man to whom they owe[d] ...gratitude.' In a letter to the accuser, Mr A. James, Lady Llanover defended her husband's actions:

Lady Hall must now allude to the most extraordinary question, comments & allegations entertained in the latter part of Mr James's letter with respect to the question "How it is that Sir B Hall takes no active part in the agitation for Welsh Bishops" she can only express her regret that Mr James has evidently not pursued any of the five Welsh & three London papers which for the last six months have contained the most convincing proof that Sir B Hall is the only man in Wales who has dared single handed not only to declare publicly that he will not directly or indirectly be party to the disgraceful attempt to record false testimony as true (with regard to the conduct of the late Bishop at Ll[andaff]: with reference to his Welsh flock)- but who had dedicated his time and money to a collection of evidence from diocese- parish by parish....the result of which has been the total amount of one thousand one hundred & twelve Welsh services provided seven days by the Dissenters of that diocese...Lady Hall will undertake to say that this is the most effectual blow...given yet to the Anglo Welsh B[ishops] ...There is not a single Welshman in Wales who would dare them to speak the truth & then dare to prove it & publish the result...the opinion is daily gaining ground that Wales has a right to native B[ishops] & will obtain them.¹¹⁶

Her anger regarding this issue was perhaps justified. As early as 1836, Lord Llanover made a speech in parliament, highlighting the problem of nepotism and corruption amongst the bishopric.¹¹⁷ It could be argued that his criticism of the Established Church is partly what distinguished him in parliament. According to Maxwell Fraser, 'it became obvious that a number of the Members of Parliament, including the Minister of State, were so closely related to the bishops Sir Benjamin

¹¹⁶ NLW MSS, Letters from Llanbadarn Fawr Parish Chest 1842-1856, Lady Llanover to Mr. James, [n.d] c. 1850.

¹¹⁷ *North Wales Chronicle*, (letter by Henry Richard addressing the subject of Religion and Politics in Wales) 21 February 1888.

was criticising that they did not at all relish his revelations.¹¹⁸ Lady and Lord Llanover believed passionately that the Established Church had lost ground because of corrupt elements within it that advocated the abuse of Church patronage and the management of ecclesiastical buildings.¹¹⁹ The issue of the Welsh language crystallised their concerns.

As mentioned previously, Lord and Lady Llanover both had a long running stormy relationship with the Bishop of St David's, Connop Thirlwall. He had learnt to preach in Welsh within six months of his appointment as Bishop. 'The only fault was that his Welsh was scholars' Welsh and not the popular Welsh of the lower classes.'¹²⁰ Thus, Thirlwall was not able to communicate adequately with his clergy or his congregations. Try as he might he 'did not conform to the ideal of the bishop which was coming into being, with efficiency measured mainly in terms of speech and motion.'¹²¹ Moreover, according to M. A. Crowther, 'Thirlwall had the additional disadvantage of being an Englishman at a time when Welsh nationalists were demanding the appointment of Welsh bishops.'¹²² In Crowther's view Lady Llanover was one of these nationalists and he describes the Hall's as Thirlwall's enemies. It is hard to disagree with this view since Lady Llanover was so candid about his supposed shortcomings. As explained in Chapter One, the reviled Bishop shared a close platonic relationship with Betha Johnes, Lady Llanover's most valued companion. Betha's loyalty to Thirlwall frustrated Lady Llanover greatly and the women patently

¹¹⁸ M. Fraser, 'Sir Benjamin Hall in Parliament in the 1850's Part I- 1850-1852' *The National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XV, No. 1 (1967), pp. 72-88, p. 75.

¹¹⁹ Lord Llanover published his feeling on ecclesiastical matters in a series of letters and pamphlets. See Sir B. Hall, *A letter addressed to the Right Reverend the Bishop of Llandaff / by Sir B. Hall, in reply to a letter published by the Archdeacon of Llandaff, in which it was proposed to build ten new churches as the best means of improving the state of the Diocese* (London, 1850).

Sir B. Hall, *A letter to his grace the Archbishop of Canterbury on the state of the Church / by Sir Benjamin Hall* (London, 1850).

Sir B. Hall, *Letters of Sir Benjamin Hall Bart, M.P, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of St Davids* (London, 1851).

C. Thirlwall, *A letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, on statements of Sir Benjamin Hall with regard to the Collegiate Church of Brecon / by Connop Thirlwall* (London, 1851).

C. Thirlwall, *A second letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in reply to the statements of Sir Benjamin Hall with regard to the Collegiate Church of Brecon / from Connop Thirlwall* (London, 1851).

Sir B. Hall, *A letter to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, in reply to statements made by the Bishop of St. David's, Dean and Treasurer of the Collegiate Church of Brecon, respecting the state and condition of that institution / by Sir B Hall* (London, 1851).

¹²⁰ *North Wales Chronicle*, 23 November 1878.

¹²¹ M. A. Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England* (Devon, 1970), p. 182.

¹²² *Ibid.*

disagreed about the value of his contributions to the 'Welsh cause.' After he had served twenty-four years in the post of Bishop, Lady Llanover expressed her disgust toward Thirlwall in a letter to Betha:

What does he deserve praise for? What Oh! What has he done for Wales, but help the extinction of the language by having appointed many clergymen unqualified in Welsh?¹²³

Connop Thirlwall was by no means the only target of Lady Llanover's criticism. When the Bishop of Llandaff, Alfred Ollivant¹²⁴ (who had been nominated for the See in 1849 on the basis of his knowledge of the Welsh language) dined at Abercarn following the opening of the church there Betha Johnes noted in a letter to her father that, 'Lady H & His Lordship had an animated discussion during dinner' on the ever contentious subject, namely the appointment of Welsh clergy:

Bishop: "I do not know where to find qualified Welsh clergymen can you inform me where they are had?"

Lady Hall: "My lord were I Bishop of Llandaff I should be able to reply to your Lordship's question."¹²⁵

Having made unsatisfactory progress in convincing the Bishopric to provide a greater number of responsible Welsh speaking clergy, Lady and Lord Llanover made their strongest personal protest by building a new church at Abercarn for Welsh speaking worshippers. The church was opened in 1854, a year after the last Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod. Again, writing to her father in 1854 Betha described the new church as 'plain, in excellent proportion and taste.'¹²⁶ The opening of the church warranted some celebration and Lady Llanover fittingly invited her cultural allies to be part of the event in order that they might mount extra pressure upon the ecclesiastic officials to address the Welsh language issue. Lady Llanover

¹²³ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, [n.d] c. 1864.

¹²⁴ Alfred Ollivant (1798-1882).

In 1827 Alfred Ollivant was appointed vice chancellor of St David's College, Lampeter. During his time in Ceredigion he learnt Welsh.

¹²⁵ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence Abstract of letters to be destroyed written by Betha Johnes to her father, 16 November 1854.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

confided in Betha that she might have been over ambitious in inviting so many guests and that this began to play on her mind:

There was so much perplexity beforehand about beds owing to the number of clergymen, & the small means of accommodation, that the subject disturbed Lady H by night as well as by day, & she dreamt that they had all come to the conclusion that there could be no impropriety in two women & a man sleeping together & that Sir Benjamin & herself were busy arranging who should be the third occupant of their bed when she awoke with the question undecided...¹²⁷

Her anxiety manifested itself with comic effect on this occasion. However, the church at Abercarn became the subject of further unease some eight years later.

In 1862 a quarrel broke out between Lord Llanover and the vicar of Mynyddislwyn Revd. T. Griffiths. When the curate officiating at Abercarn left, the vicar of Mynyddislwyn was asked by Lord Llanover to nominate a replacement. Griffiths agreed to do so on the condition that a Sunday service would henceforth be conducted in the English language. Such a request opposed the fundamental principles on which the church had been founded, namely to conduct religious services in Welsh only, and on this basis Lord Llanover refused to compromise. Feeling it was his duty to provide an English service to parishioners the Revd. Griffiths also refused to give way.¹²⁸ An appeal was made to the Bishop of Llandaff on the matter to no avail. In a letter to Betha Johnes, Lady Llanover once again conveyed her antipathy toward the Bishop, declaring, 'the intimation of blame and the incumbent and falls upon us! However, it is not the first Episcopal battle we have engaged in for the rights of the Welsh.'¹²⁹ Canon William Evans was asked by the Bishop of Llandaff to mediate between the two parties. Lord Llanover apparently offered to build a separate chapel for the English language congregation but Griffiths refused the offer. Canon Evans also 'knew that no power on earth would move Lord Llanover one step away from his Welsh point of view.'¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ NLW MSS, Daniel Parry Jones 38, 'Study of the Prayer Book of the Methodists Church of Abercarn, Monmouthshire' pp. 13-14.

¹²⁹ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, ? 1862.

¹³⁰ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB 24, 'Translation of Extracts for the Biography of Canon Williams Evans of Rhymney by T. J. Jones M.A rector of Gelliager' [n.d].

The controversy at Abercarn was never resolved; indeed it created a remarkable situation. In the wake of the deadlock between Griffiths and Lord Llanover 'his lordship did in 1862 appoint a Calvinistic minister to officiate in the said chapel, upon the curious condition that the minister should use the liturgy of the Established Church.'¹³¹ On the one hand this decision was a symbolic gesture of approval for the Methodists who had strong association with the Welsh language.¹³² A minister of high calibre,¹³³ Revd. David Charles of Trefecca was appointed with some added conditions that were to make religious services in Abercarn church a unique experience in Wales. Services had to be conducted in the Welsh language only and the Anglican liturgy expressly followed. The minister had to be clean-shaven and wear the Anglican robes. No chanting or musical instruments could be part of the service.¹³⁴ One might say this was essentially Anglicanism without the vicar.

Lady Llanover lived long enough to oversee a succession of ministers at Abercarn.¹³⁵ According to Morien, of the *Western Mail*, 'the church was at once one of the most desirable pastorates in Wales.'¹³⁶ A further church was established under Lady Llanover's patronage at Rhyd-y-Meirch, Llanover. The rigid rules she imposed upon it are enshrined in the deeds of trust, in which, it is 'declared that the said Augusta Baroness Llanover shall have exclusive power during her life by writing under her hand to make additional or substantial rules for the better government of the said chapel.'¹³⁷ Again the church was reserved 'exclusively for the use of the Welsh Trinitarian Christian Presbyterian body (often incorrectly called the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists).'¹³⁸

¹³¹ NLW MSS, Daniel Parry Jones 38, 'Study of the Prayer Book of the Methodists Church of Abercarn, Monmouthshire', p. 14.

¹³² R. T. Jones, 'Ymneilltuaeth a'r Iaith Gymraeg yn y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg' in G. H. Jenkins, (ed.) *Gwnewch Bopeth yn Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1999), pp. 207-228.

¹³³ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 29 October 1862.

¹³⁴ *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

¹³⁵ Dr. David Charles 1863-68, Dr. David Saunders 1868-73, Revd. David Jones 1873-80, Revd Geo. E. Watson 1880-84, Revd. T. C. Phillips 1885-90, Revd. John Evans 1891-1916.

¹³⁶ *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

¹³⁷ NLW MSS, Calvinistic Methodist Archives 7A E21/125/1-2, A typescript copy of two deeds of trust, 28 October 1887 and 31 December 1894, relating to the Welsh Presbyterian Church, Rhyd-y-Meirch Llanover and a copy of draft answers by the Trustees, c-1920s to questions put by the church secretary.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

On studying the wording of the document it is clear that Lady Llanover did not regard the Methodists as being outside the Established Church, rather they represented the true Church in Wales. In the deed they are referred to as the 'Hen Corph, but who were never Dissenters.' Again Lady Llanover's language rule applied; services were to be 'conducted in the Welsh language without any admixture of English.' Every Minister appointed in the chapel had to 'be a Minister of the said Welsh Presbyterian body duly chosen and regularly ordained by the Synod.' The minister's wife had to be of 'irreproachable character and conduct' and 'able to speak the Welsh language fluently and naturally' as well as 'read such language correctly.' She could not be 'engaged in any business whatever' and he was to make himself 'generally useful to the district,' wear a black gown during public worship and ensure no eating or drinking occurred within the walls. The liturgy was to be 'solemnly read and not chanted or intoned.' The singing of Welsh hymns was permitted but without the accompaniment of music or instruments.¹³⁹

By the 1920s Lady Llanover's rules had become practically impossible to keep at Rhyd-y-Meirch. The church secretary inquired as to the possibility of bringing 'Welsh speaking Welshmen into the district [as] was the usual custom in days gone by.' The secretary asked for funding, permission to conduct services in English and use of a piano or organ in the service. To these questions the trustees answered:

...Naturally we view these facts with great concern and express deep regret at the alarming decrease in membership of the Church. Nevertheless the duty of the trustees is to see the conditions of the Deeds of Trust are carried out and, even though it is recognised that the state of the church is due in part to the restrictions imposed by the Deed, it is not within the power to vary those restrictions in any way...it will be appreciated that the hands of the trustees are completely tied.'¹⁴⁰

Although the linguistic makeup of the Llanover and Abercarn estates began to shift by the 1920s, Lady Llanover was unyielding in her adherence to the original guidelines. This is perhaps yet another example of her almost overbearing maternal and protective instinct toward the Welsh speakers of her estate. Though her ideals may

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

seem stubborn and short-sighted because they clashed with the needs of the congregation, one might also argue that Lady Llanover foresaw that the Welsh speaking congregation would be displaced at a much faster rate after English services were allowed. On this principle therefore, it was better to have separate chapels for separate language groups.

At Abercarn the Welsh Baptist chapel made multiple appeals to Lady Llanover to secure land and revenue to build a new church. The request was made before a devastating mining explosion at Abercarn in 1878. Two years later the chapel community had recovered from the loss and the appeal for funds was renewed:

...fe ddaeth y ddamwain alarus sef y tanchwa ofnadwy yn Abercarn i'n cyfarfod yn yr hon y collasom rhai aelodau gorau- Ond erbyn hyn yr ydym gwedi adnewyddu ac yn bwriadu dechrau adeiladu ar unwaith yn ol cynllun ein Arglwyddes...¹⁴¹

[A grievous accident occurred namely the awful explosion at Abercarn, in which we lost some of our best members. But now we have renewed and are ready to start building immediately according to your Ladyship's plans.]

What should have been a relatively straightforward state of affairs became complicated by the Baptists's readiness to conduct services in English and also to hold an English-medium Sunday School. Lady Llanover took exception to this and in a letter to the Welsh Baptist Church expressed her unwillingness to make any concession on the language rule:

...maent yn bwriadu cael Saeseng a Chymraeg yn gymysg- Yr hwn sydd yn un or achosion mwyaf niwed i grefydd yng Nghymru yn ogystal a chenedligrwydd,...nid ydyw Arglwyddes Llanover wedi cyfenewid ei thelerau pa rhai sydd wedi sylfaenu ar egwyddorion cadarn er lles wir Cymry.¹⁴²

[they intend to have English and Welsh mixed- this is one of the caused of most harm to religion in Wales as well as nationality...Lady Llanover has not changed her

¹⁴¹ Gwent Record Office, D.1210.695.2, Correspondence re Welsh Baptist Chapel Abercarn 1878-1881, John Daniel Jones to Lady Llanover, 24 August 1880.

¹⁴² Gwent Record Office, D.1210.695.2, Correspondence re Welsh Baptist Chapel Abercarn 1878-1881, Lady Llanover to Welsh Baptists of Abercarn, 16 April 1881.

terms, those that have been founded upon firm principle for the sake of the true Welsh.]

Lady Llanover's immovable concern continued to be what she regarded as true Welsh people prevailed at the expense of those who did not share the opinion that language groups could not and should not be mixed. But she was swimming against the tide in the closing decades of the nineteenth century it became harder to maintain the Welsh language as a defining symbol of Welsh patriotism and identity, especially in Monmouthshire. Eventually she herself had to admit that outside help was needed to sustain the impression that there was a real and popular demand for Welsh-only religious services at Llanover:

I must... beg that Mrs. Johnes, yourself and Sir James come here on Tuesday 20th Nov not merely to meet the Bishop of Llandaff and Mrs. Lewis but mainly to contribute to the maintenance and strength of the Welsh cause- as the Bishop comes here to do what I believe never has been done in memory of man- not only to hold a confirmation in the Hen Eglwys Llanover (which has never been done before) but a purely Welsh confirmation without admixture of English in the service. Pray come...you must see and feel that I ought to have friends to meet the Bishop who he will know and feel have really Welsh feeling as well as Welsh speaking and understanding.¹⁴³

Her letter is perhaps further evidence that generally in later life Lady Llanover was forced to live out her ideals almost alone. The number of allies who could assist her campaigns to promote her Welsh cultural symbols decreased steadily. The impression is that only a faithful few were trusted by Lady Llanover and able to 'contribute to the maintenance and strength of [her] Welsh cause.'¹⁴⁴

Lady Llanover's complex relationship with the Established Church became well known in Wales. The press commented on her religious standpoint and what was seen as the remarkable church at Abercarn with some frequency.¹⁴⁵ For much of the nineteenth century the Dissenting denominations and the Established Church were

¹⁴³ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 3 February 1890.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ *Western Mail*, 27 January 1880.

Western Mail, 23 August 1890.

bitterly opposed. Henry Richard M.P.¹⁴⁶ believed that ‘the Church of England in Wales has been throughout its whole history an alien church’ and argued that; ‘it has been used by English rulers as a political instrument for anti-national purposes.’¹⁴⁷ As Dissenting religion and liberal politics became part of the Welsh national identity it is little wonder that the issue of disestablishing the English Church in Wales became a theme of contention within Welsh society. It was a hotly debated topic that engaged the interest of Lady Llanover’s own tenants. At Cloch Gobaith in Abercarn, a temperance inn that was owned by Lady Llanover, a meeting was held in 1885 to debate disestablishment. When Lady Llanover learned of the meeting she felt obliged to make her position on the issue perfectly clear. A draft version of the Welsh speech has survived¹⁴⁸ and her words were also translated into English and published by the *Western Mail* on 28 February 1885 under the title ‘Lady Llanover on Disestablishment’:

I have only within the last few hours received a printed placard announcing that a meeting will be held tomorrow, at the Cloch Gobaith, on Disestablishment and lest the fact of the Cloch Gobaith belonging to me should create any misunderstanding with regard to my estates, I request you, as agent of my estates to read this letter to the meeting. My sentiments will also be delivered in Welsh to the same effect. I wish it to be known that I disapprove of the Disestablishment of the Church, and the cause of religion and morality of any Trinitarian Christian denomination to attack any other holding the same faith for the purpose of wrenching from them what has been left to them by good men in past times in the firm belief that the same laws by which they were protected and maintained: and I am thoroughly convinced that if such a dereliction of principle is once legalised every denomination will here after bitterly regret the precedent, and will find that whenever any Dissenting body possesses more that is agreeable to another denomination they will endeavour to act the same towards each other which the supporters of disestablishment of the Church are now recommending, and instead of the Christian harmony which I have been happy in promoting among ministers of various denominations in Abercarn we shall have to mourn over perpetual strife and irreligious contentions.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Henry Richard, Calvinistic Minister and Liberal M.P. known as ‘the member for Wales’ (1812-1888).

¹⁴⁷ *Daily News*, 21 February 1888.

¹⁴⁸ Gwent Record Office, D.1210.820.1, Opinion of Lady Llanover on the Disestablishment of the Church Draft (Welsh) [n.d.].

¹⁴⁹ *Western Mail*, 28 February 1885.

As the *Western Mail* commented: 'It need hardly be said that the letter electrified some of the radical Dissenters as they thought her Ladyship coincided with their views on the subject.'¹⁵⁰ Thus, for all Lady Llanover's disputes and hostile exchanges with the bishopric and despite the outright antipathy expressed, she remained loyal to the Established Church as the symbol of a united nation, namely the islands of Britain. She did everything within her power to protect the use of the Welsh language within the Established Church and applauded the Dissenters for upholding its status. Yet as stressed elsewhere in this thesis, Lady Llanover was a 'unionist nationalist',¹⁵¹ therefore in her view the break up of the church was tantamount to the disestablishment of an order as old the arrival of religion in Britain. She believed that Disestablishment would lead to political instability and perhaps the break up of Britain and feared that campaigners for disestablishment were 'wolves in sheep's clothing' that had been 'winding people up into a frenzy.' She declared 'it is Ireland over again.'¹⁵² Writing to a friend in 1885 Lady Llanover remarked:

It must make you and many others who are of a real Christian spirit ashamed of those who so truly represent certain individuals denounced in St Paul's Epistle, and it is giving us a foretaste of what the state of Great Britain will be if the Church is Disestablished and every chapel fighting to seize his neighbour's goods.¹⁵³

As history would have it, Lady Llanover had no need to be concerned. Kenneth O. Morgan has highlighted the distinction between the Irish and Welsh situation: 'it is highly significant of the difference between Irish and Welsh nationalism that the Irish concentrated their major effort on separation and home rule, whereas the central passion of the Welsh was disestablishment, an issue that left the Union and the basic political fabric of the United Kingdom quite untouched.'¹⁵⁴

Lady Llanover's preoccupation with religious benefaction marked a new era in her cultural battles. As one Nonconformist commentator wrote; in 1880 'Her

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ C. Williams, 'Wales's Unionist-Nationalist': Sir Thomas Phillips (1801-67)'.
¹⁵² Letter quoted in the *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ K. O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 40.

Ladyship has withdrawn her patronage from the Eisteddfod of Wales and extended it to the religion of Wales.’¹⁵⁵ Or as Jane Aaron put it, ‘the forces of antiquarianism united with those of Dissent to further a new epoch of Welsh nation-building.’¹⁵⁶ Lady Llanover dedicated a lifetime to the promotion of the Welsh language as a cultural symbol and an essential part of Welsh national identity. She believed that religion and education were a key factor in keeping this cultural symbol in the forefront of people’s minds. One might say that all three elements, religion, education and the Welsh language, had a symbiotic existence and their interdependence was obvious to Lady Llanover.

Lady Llanover believed that a long-term strategy was needed in order to rectify the problems within the Church as she saw them. In her view offering education through the medium of Welsh was the key to ensuring that in future there would be no excuses to refusing to employ Welsh speaking clergy on the grounds of inadequate instruction. As the *Liverpool Mercury* commented, ‘Lady Llanover had a true perception of the needs of the Welsh. She believed that education, to be effective in Wales, must be on Welsh lines.’¹⁵⁷ Lady Llanover was part of a pioneering group that believed that there was an intrinsic scholarly value to the Welsh language. Here again her attitude was completely different to most member of her class, who on the whole equated the primary use of English in the education with progress and perhaps even sophistication. The major focus in this regard was St. David’s College, Lampeter again with mixed results.

St. David’s College, Lampeter¹⁵⁸ was established in 1822 by Bishop Thomas Burgess and opened its gates to students in 1827 to prepare native Welshmen for a career in the clergy. Lady Llanover felt the teaching of Welsh there had been neglected. In the words of D. T. Price who chronicled the college’s history, ‘the College at Lampeter appeared to be running counter to the development of the Welsh nationalism, tying itself to the apron strings of unpopular English prelates.’¹⁵⁹ Criticism from the Llanover set was chiefly directed toward the Vice Principals

¹⁵⁵ *Western Mail*, 8 October 1880.

¹⁵⁶ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth Century Women’s Writing in Wales*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁷ *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 January 1896.

¹⁵⁸ St. David’s College, Lampeter was founded in 1822 by Bishop Thomas Burgess (1756-1837).

¹⁵⁹ D. T. W. Price, *A History of Saint David’s University College, Volume 1* (Cardiff, 1977), p. 79.

Alfred Ollivant (who later become bishop of Llandaff) and Rowland Williams,¹⁶⁰ a Welsh speaker whom Lady Llanover came to regard as a traitor¹⁶¹ and a person who could not be trusted for he was 'sold entirely to St. David's and Llandaff to the concealment of Lampeter.'¹⁶² Despite the efforts of early professors at the college to inspire students by offering prizes and encouraging English students to also learn Welsh, it seems that the institution suffered from not only a lack of endowments but also an ambiguous Welsh language policy and conflict over the quality of education.¹⁶³

The situation at Lampeter had become intolerable to Lady Llanover as early as 1847 and inevitably this resulted in further conflict with the Bishopric. Yet typically perhaps, she remained confident that her influence would in time remedy the situation. In March of 1847 she wrote a letter to an associate, the aforementioned Mr James, asking him to consider an appointment to a new Welsh professorship at Lampeter:¹⁶⁴

Lady Hall presents her compliments to Mr. James & is entrusted with a confidential inquiry- viz if Mr. James would accept a Welsh Professorship & to reside at Lampeter. If such a situation were offered him [he would receive] an endowment of £150 per annum without liberty to take clerical duty except close to the spot. There is an intention (as yet un-announced) by a private individual to endow a Welsh professorship & have it attached to Lampeter college where doubtless Mr. James is aware there is a professorship called "Welsh" already- but the professor is not resident...The subject of Lady Hall's find is to have a bonafide Welsh professor of his own institution in the hope of raising Welsh scholarship to the place it ought to occupy. Would Mr. James accept it – Were it offered?¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Rowland Williams, (1817-1870) Church of England clergyman who became a Bishop. Vice chancellor of St David's College Lampeter (1850-58).

¹⁶¹ D. T. W. Price, *A History of Saint David's University College, Volume 1*, p. 97.

¹⁶² NLW MSS, Letters from Llanbadarn Fawr Parish Chest 1842-1856, quoted in M. A. Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England* (Devon, 1970), p. 86.

¹⁶³ D. T. W. Price, *A History of Saint David's University College, Volume 1*, p. 57.

¹⁶⁴ Lady Llanover later wrote to Mr. James on the subject of her husband's dedication toward highlighting the problems with non Welsh speaking clergyman being appointed to Welsh posts in parliament.

¹⁶⁵ NLW MSS, Letters from Llanbadarn Fawr Parish Chest 1842-1856, Lady Llanover to Mr James, 31 March 1847.

A month later the campaign had taken on a new, more exciting direction. In a letter marked 'private' Lady Llanover told Mr. James of plans to establish a 'rival institution at Llandovery, something between a grammar school and a university.' She and her fellow critics 'thought that the teaching at Lampeter was too English in character and neglected Welsh culture.'¹⁶⁶

After a lengthened correspondence the B[ishop] of St David's had declared that "very little if any good can result from a Welsh professorship at St David's college" (you are probably aware that the Welsh professorship belonging to the college is virtually extinguished as there is not even a nominal holder) In consequence of this decided opposition to any aid toward the position of the Welsh clergy there (tho his lordship declares at the same time he shall subject every candidate in order to the most stringent & searching of exam in Welsh in his own presence my friend has determined on appropriating his money in an independent manner & establishing a learned school where the charter shall be a Welsh clergymen in full order & where the most thorough Welsh...shall be given prizes as well as Greek, Latin [and] English. Not a word of this is known beyond two or three persons for there is a building with a cottage where the national school was held at Llandovery which is now abandoned & which we hope to obtain for a trifle & if the Dean had an idea of it he might outbid...nothing would be more disturbing to his feeling than to have a flourishing Welsh grammar school within 21 miles of his college...¹⁶⁷

Lady Llanover was clearly energised by the prospect of establishing a new educational institution and most anxious to keep her plans secret lest they should be foiled by non-sympathisers.¹⁶⁸ At the same time Lord Llanover continued to draw parliament's attention to the perceived shortcomings of Lampeter.¹⁶⁹ Lady Llanover became fundamentally involved in the practicalities of setting up what became Llandovery College from the outset. According to press reports following her death she allegedly persuaded Thomas Phillips¹⁷⁰ to transfer his money from the endowment of the chair in Welsh at Lampeter into establishment of Llandovery

¹⁶⁶ M. A. Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁷ NLW MSS, Letters from Llanbadarn Fawr Parish Chest 1842-1856, Lady Llanover to Mr James, May 1847.

¹⁶⁸ See W. G. Evans, *A History of Llandovery College* (Cardiff, 1981).

¹⁶⁹ *North Wales Chronicle*, 18 June 1852.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Phillips (1760-1851) founder of Llandovery College.

College.¹⁷¹ Whether or not this is entirely true one can be sure that Lady Llanover wanted to set up the school as a counter balance to what she believed to be the failings of St. David's College, Lampeter. She herself presented the freehold of a field on which the college was established and thus she helped implement what was regarded as 'one of the boldest and most successful experiments in the history of Welsh education.'¹⁷²

The original trustees included Lady Llanover and a number of her cultural allies, including Carnhuanawc, Williams Rees of Llandovery and later Betha Johnes's father, John Johnes and her husband Sir James Hills-Johnes. They set out a number of guidelines, the most important of which was that 'the primary intention and object of the founder (which is instruction and education in the Welsh language) shall be faithfully observed.'¹⁷³ The master was to give lectures in Welsh on philological and scientific subjects and the Welsh language was to be 'taught exclusively during one hour every school day, and be the sole medium of communication in the school and shall be used at all other convenient periods as the language of the schools so as to familiarise the scholars with its use as a colloquial language.'¹⁷⁴ As the Llandovery College's most longstanding trustee Lady Llanover offered it financial support that enabled important additions to be made to the buildings.¹⁷⁵ Annual prizes usually totalling £14 were offered for Welsh scholarship.¹⁷⁶ A portrait of Lady Llanover was presented to the college in 1861 no doubt as a reminder of her role as a generous trustee. It seems her aim was to stimulate interest in Welsh history and culture as well as the Welsh language but in her later years her prizes were ignored. Thus suggesting that the teaching staff may have been incapable of conducting lessons in Welsh but more significantly had little or no interest in promoting Lady Llanover's cultural ethos or the principles on which the trustees established the college.

¹⁷¹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 January 1896.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Western Mail*, 27 July 1878.

Gwent Record Office, D1210.820.4, Newspaper report of Prize Giving at Llandovery College, 1 August 1884.

¹⁷⁶ Gwent Record Office, D.1210.7971, Report on necessary work to be done at Llandovery College, August 1877.

See *Western Mail*, 28 July 1876 & *Western Mail*, 29 July 1885.

However in the early years of its existence the first warden, Archdeacon John Williams dedicated himself to establishing Llandovery as a college that proudly conveyed the language and history of Wales to its pupils. He was associated with the Welsh manuscript society and thus was known to the trustees of the college and carried favour with Lord and Lady Llanover.¹⁷⁷ The trustees also vetted potential successors to the wardenship after Williams left the post. Lady Llanover used all her influence to sway votes for candidates that were well known for their Welsh rather than classical scholarship. Until 1875 Lady Llanover had been relatively successful in making sure that the Welsh language policy was upheld through the authority and curriculum of the warden. It is truly ironic that she appointed the very person who dismantled the college's connection with its Welsh roots. Alfred George Edwards¹⁷⁸ who became the Bishop of St. Asaph in 1889 was chosen by Lady Llanover the basis of his knowledge of the Welsh language. As W. G. Edwards has written the new warden's attitude did not correlate with Lady Llanover's vision for the school:

He regarded Llandovery as an English speaking public school and his attitude to the Welsh language is to be explained within this context. He regarded academic successes as measured in terms of Oxbridge awards as irreconcilable with the teaching and study of the Welsh language. To compete in terms with English public schools necessitated casting aside Llandovery's responsibilities to the Welsh language. In pursuing such a policy, Llandovery College was mirroring the attitude of a large section of the Welsh community who thought that little benefit would accrue from the study of Welsh as a specific subject. The wardenship was certainly a major turning point for the language at Llandovery...¹⁷⁹

At the jubilee celebration of the school's foundation conducted in 1897 Edwards, then Bishop of St. Asaph, related an anecdote about Lady Llanover's role in his appointment:

He was afraid that the candidate and the trustee lapsed into that vulgar speech called English (laughter) but just before starting back on his journey she asked him whether he would like some tea. He replied in admirable Welsh that the "pentrylliad" had

¹⁷⁷ W. G. Evans, *A History of Llandovery College*, pp. 25-30.

¹⁷⁸ Alfred George Edwards (1848-1937).

¹⁷⁹ W. G. Evans, *A History of Llandovery College*, p. 45.

offered him a cup...This little circumstance made a great impression upon her ladyship and she wrote stating that the man must be a very great Welsh scholar.¹⁸⁰

Thus when Alfred George Edwards succeeded to the wardenship on the understanding that he would carry the language policy forward he ironically undid the college's devotion to the Welsh language and so, 'the pious founder's wishes though scarcely 30 years old were ignored.' 'This caused rupture with Lady Llanover and though she remained a trustee in name to the end, she had for years past taken but a languid interest in the institution with whose early fortunes she was so closely and so honourably connected.'¹⁸¹ Maintaining the college's dedication to educating boys in Welsh transpired to be impossible in the long term, yet Lady Llanover's battle to protect what she perceived as the rights of the Welsh in religion and education always remained for her a driving principle.

Lady Llanover singled out the costume, triple harp and Welsh language as identifiable and unique symbols that were part of the cultural character of the Welsh nation. It is significant that all of her battles to maintain the popularity of these cultural symbols required a long-term strategy of protection. It was her wish that the people of Wales would take pride in their culture and feel comfortable with their patriotism, but only as long as they conformed to her ideals. All three cultural symbols were for various reasons dismissed in one form or another during the nineteenth century by those in Welsh society who argued that to uphold the costume, triple harp and Welsh language was not relevant to the newly emerging character of modern Wales. Despite opposition to her ideas Lady Llanover vigorously promoted the symbols of her Wales and was admired later by some for doing so. Maxwell Fraser was one such admirer, who said: 'Lady Llanover gave steady unremitting and untiring service throughout her life to the Welsh cause and even when she was very old and ill and tired, any threat to the Welsh language and culture roused her like a bugle call to action.'¹⁸² Lady Llanover's determination to defend her construction of Welsh culture and identity was unshakable but what is also evident is that she ultimately misunderstood that the will and power to shape culture in the end belongs to the masses, which is precisely why

¹⁸⁰ *Western Mail*, 9 January 1897.

¹⁸¹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 January 1896.

¹⁸² M. Fraser, 'Lady Llanover and Lady Charlotte Guest', p. 38.

she used her powers of personal control to entrench the symbols of her Wales at Llanover. In the face of opposition her fervent credo was imposed on the people of her estate, where she had the power to enforce her ideas. The final chapter analyses life on the Llanover estate to reveal Lady Llanover's attempt to shape Llanover into a Welsh colony and an ideal Welsh community.

Chapter 6 - Life on the Llanover Estate: Lady Llanover's 'Welsh Colony'

As was reported by *The South Wales Daily News*, following her death 'it would seem as if Lady Llanover made it the object of her life to keep the Welsh language and customs of Wales alive and flourishing. Llanover became a sort of Welsh colony.'¹ It may be argued that according to Lady Llanover's vision this community was to have a wholesome, moral, and religious image and was to be enriched by the Welsh language and its cultural traditions, wrapped up in the myths of yesterday's Wales. Her concept was summarised succinctly by Augustus Hare² who, on visiting Llanover in March 1877 remarked in his journal:

Her great idea is Wales-that she lives in Wales, and that the people must be kept Welsh, and she has Welsh schools, Welsh services, a Welsh harper, always talks Welsh to her servants, and wears a Welsh costume at church.³

Lady Llanover's aim was to set an example to the ruling classes and lead the way in establishing her idealised view of Welsh communities of old. She did this in the hope that aspects of her ideal community would be absorbed into the rest of Welsh society. As has been stressed throughout this thesis, Lady Llanover continually promoted her version of Welsh culture and her endeavours became an ongoing battle. When her influence in the wider Principality began to wane and as her ideas came to be regarded as being ever more eccentric, she ensured that under her authority her estate remained a perfect reflection of her Wales, relatively untouched by the influences of modernity and uninhibited by the pressures of Anglicisation. As a correspondent of the Welsh-American newspaper the *Druid* put it 'the result is a delightfully old-world atmosphere.'⁴ The cultural principles by which Lady Llanover stood and the image of Wales that she became so famous for promoting became enshrined in the safe haven of Llanover and there is no doubt that she strove to portray her estate as an untouched

¹ Cardiff MSS, 3771, Press cuttings, 1860-96 relating to Lord and Lady Llanover, *South Wales Daily News*, [n.d].

² At the time Hare was researching a biography of Lady Llanover's sister the Baroness Bunsen.

³ A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of my Life Vol.5*, p. 3.

⁴ *Druid*, 21 September 1911.

gem of Wales, reflecting a specific and inexorably romantic image of its Welsh, agricultural past.

To understand the Welsh colony at Llanover, the physical geography of the area, characteristics of the estate, as well as Llanover Hall need to be considered as important facets of the project. In addition one needs to consider how the estate was utilised and managed with a view to protecting the symbols of Lady Llanover's Wales. This chapter also explores the way in which Welsh culture and identity affected the people of Llanover and how it influenced their lives. A fundamental question that needs to be addressed is how the Llanover estate was different because of Lady Llanover's personal authority. Attention is also given to how the customs and traditions of Wales were upheld and lived out at Llanover. Finally the chapter draws on Lady Llanover's own work, *The First Principles of Good Cookery*, perhaps the most interesting source of all that was published in the year of Lord Llanover's death 1867. Surprisingly little attention has been afforded to this source in most examinations of Lady Llanover's life and work but here it will be subject to closer analysis.

A range of other sources, relating to life on the estate has survived including personal accounts of former residents and also letters between Lady Llanover and her under agent. The journal of a former maid to Lady Llanover, Margaret Davies, offers a detailed picture of life at the mansion-house during the time she spent there between September 1861 and October 1862. The reliability of source material connected with the estate is often difficult to substantiate and therefore using it to better understand the Llanover project is in itself complicated. Some of the testimonies left behind are of a nostalgic and romantic nature, others are retrospective yet scathing accounts, tinged with mockery. Contemporary reports found in newspapers and Welsh language publications tend to portray the Llanover project with a certain admiration. Thus it needs to be made clear that no single and firm idea of Llanover can emerge. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, Lady Llanover's image and her quest to recreate her view of Wales have been deeply mythologised in almost all relevant original sources. Nevertheless surviving evidence does afford some insight into what life was like under the 'reign' of Lady Llanover.

Llanover is situated roughly 4 miles south east of Abergavenny on the western bank of the river Usk. The tall stone estate walls of Llanover Park remain today and can be clearly seen from the A4042 road, leading to the more substantial market town of Abergavenny, which as we have seen became the site of numerous Eisteddfodau and cultural activities. The physical geography of the area is very scenic not least because of the Bloreng, Skirrid and Sugar Loaf mountains that add to the natural beauty of the backdrop of what was once Lady Llanover's country home. There is no question that Llanover's fame, as a self contained, isolated and romantic 'island of Welsh culture in an encroaching sea of Englishness'⁵ has remained very much intact. Though 'the waves of televised Anglo-American pop culture in recent decades have almost wholly washed away all traces of that Welsh bastion,'⁶ the experiment in holding back time and Anglicisation inspired the interest of travel writers and journalist alike. It is easy to see why they have singled out Llanover with its intriguing past and its dictatorial landowner as worthy of comment.⁷

The central feature of the estate was the grand mansion that was commissioned by Lord and Lady Llanover during early and ambitious years when Lord Llanover was carving for himself a place in London politics and Lady Llanover was transforming herself into a leading figure of the Welsh cultural revival of the 1830s and 1840s. The architect, Thomas Hopper, was given the task of creating a home worthy of powerful landed gentry. Llanover Hall,⁸ completed in 1837 was Lady Llanover's principle home for the rest of her life, situated just under a quarter of a mile north of Lady Llanover's original childhood home, Ty Uchaf. The new mansion was a symbol of wealth, power and authority and in the opinion of Herbert Vaughan,⁹ it was also a 'huge barrack' and a 'pompous edifice' that testified 'to the grandiose notions and ambitions of the nineteenth century.'¹⁰ Photographs taken of the exterior from various angles point to a stately home of great proportions.¹¹ Unfortunately, photographs of the interior are rare though an interior picture of the drawing room

⁵ A. H. Jones, *His Lordship's Obedient Servant*, p. 120.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See C. Barber, *Llanover Country* (Pontypool, 2004).

⁸ Llanover Hall was primarily known by its equivalent Welsh translation Llys Llanover.

⁹ Herbert Millingcham Vaughan was a former High Sheriff of Cardiganshire who undertook a study of the *South Wales Squires* in a book of the same title, which was published in 1926. He was one of Lady Llanover's harshest critics.

¹⁰ H. M. Vaughan, *South Wales Squires* (London, 1926) p.158.

¹¹ See Appendix, Plate 4: Llanover Hall.

survives. A detailed description of the rooms appeared in the *Illustrated World News* of 1860 and is well worth quoting from extensively:

After passing through the porch the entrance leads to a great hall, under a music gallery at the north end of the apartment. This apartment is considered by connoisseurs to be a model of architectural proportions. It is two stories high, the walls are panelled with oak and the ceiling, which is coved, is laid out in compartments richly carved, the grounds of which are coloured in blue and red, the mouldings and pendants being relieved with gilding. In the centre of the west side of the room, and opposite the great bay window is a magnificent fireplace elaborately carved in stone, about fourteen feet high; and in different parts of the hall are casts of full sized figures from antique, and from all the works of Canova, whilst in the recess of the bay window is a very fine specimen of the "Dying Gladiator of the Capitol" of the full size of the original.

At the south end of the great hall is a large Library, in which there is a good collection of books and pictures, and adjoining this room is a drawing room, fifty-two feet long, having a southern and western aspect. In this room there is also some fine pictures. Opening into this room and facing the west is the breakfast-room, and adjacent to this, and immediately opposite the entrance, which passes under the music gallery, is the staircase hall, and in the centre of which is a very fine cast of the colossal figure of Dina and the stag. On a bracket in the window is a bust of the Queen of which a copy in marble was given by Lord Llanover to the Reform Club in 1842, and which is placed in the central saloon of that club.

Leading out of the hall, under the music gallery at the north end, is the dining room, which has a very large bay window, corresponding to that in the hall, and a ceiling in oak, very similar to that in the Chapel-Royal at St James's. At the end of this room is an arched recess for the sideboard, the back of which rises nearly to the ceiling and is laid out in compartments of plate glass, with divisions of elaborately carved oak.

On the north side of the staircase are private rooms, adjoining those appropriated to the office. The kitchen is twenty-nine feet square, with bay windows; and the stable court is entered under an archway flanked by two towers.¹²

¹² *Illustrated News of the World*, 25 February 1860.

Although the description helps in some way to envisage the structural magnificence of Llanover Hall, it tells nothing of the Welsh imagery that was known to be present in the rooms. Indeed, it almost seems as though any reference to Welsh culture was purposefully left out of the account. It tells us nothing of the book, picture and sculpture collection contained in the house. As we have already seen the library at Llanover became renowned and access to it was restricted to the most scholarly and trustworthy of patrons.

All that remains of Llanover Hall is the stable block and North Lodge or Porth Mawr. The Stables are located to the north of what was Llanover Hall and were presumably designed also by Hopper though they are now dilapidated. However, enough of the structure of the Hall has survived to suggest its former grandiosity. It was built some three stories high with long narrow windows. The two small towers flanking either side have weathervanes on their tapered tops. The North Lodge, which is located to the northwest section of the park, was modelled on a similar design at the Herbert family's mansion at Crickhowell.¹³ The vision of the Welsh colony was literally inscribed in stone. On both the entrance and exit sides of the lodge the prize-winning verses at the 1837 Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod, won by the Revd. Walter Davies, Manafon, were inscribed above the gateway. The words have since eroded, however it is known that the verses read as follows:

Mynedfa	[Entrance]
Pwy wyt ti Ddyfodwr?	[Who art thou comer?]
Os cyfaill, croeso cabu iti:	[If a friend, the welcome of the heart to thee]
Os dieithr, Llety garwch a therys:	[If a stranger hospitality shall meet thee]
O gelyn, Addfwynder a garchara	[If an enemy, courtesy shall imprison thee]
Allanfa	[Exit]
Ymawadydd hynaws, gad fendith	[Departing guest, leave a blessing]
Ar dy ol; a bendithier dithau blessed:]	[On thy footsteps, and May'st thou art blessed:]
Lechyd a hoen it' ar y daith, journey]	[Health and prosperity be with thee on thy journey]

¹³ See appendix.

A dedwydd ddychweliad.

[And happiness on thy return]

Perhaps in keeping with the aims and strategies of her Welsh cultural project, the official entrance was built in order to overawe visitors and reinforce the image of Lord and Lady Llanover as hospitable and honourable landed gentry. One might view it as a symbol of the reinstatement of the Welsh nobility; that is to say non-absentee landowners, proud of their Welsh connections and loyal patrons of the arts. Not all observers were impressed; Herbert Vaughan alternatively, much preferred the eighteenth century built birthplace of Lady Llanover, which survived the great Llanover Hall.¹⁴ He was of the opinion that 'Ty Uchaf is a good specimen of the older and simpler Welsh country-house, and it offers a striking and agreeable contrast with the huge baronial pile that has risen up beside it.'¹⁵ In passing it might be mentioned that despite Llanover Hall being the main residence, Lady Llanover's mother Georgina Waddington occupied Ty Uchaf until her death in 1850. Subsequently the house was kept in a state of readiness for relatives and guests who travelled to visit eisteddfodau and other social events.¹⁶

The same principles of grandeur and a particular construction of Welshness that were embodied in the Hall also applied to the village. In 1951 Olive Phillips remarked on the picturesque characters of the village saying, 'Llanover is a place to explore. There are the Welsh names on cottages; there are the puzzling dates on old buildings, including the early congregational Chapel; there is the church by the secluded river, and the delight of the countryside.'¹⁷ Remnants of the nineteenth century remain on the estate, including a spherical stone pigsty within the walls of 'Well Cottage,' and a drinking trough for horses located next to the main road. A dovecote survives in Llanover Park, as have a few out buildings of Llanover Hall. These small curiosities are easy to overlook, but in a sense they echo what was once a working country Victorian estate. On the surface it would seem that Llanover was like any other Welsh country estate, but the intervention of Lady Llanover imposed on it a specially prescribed, Welsh identity. Almost all writers who comment on Llanover

¹⁴ Llanover Hall was demolished in 1936 probably due to taxation considerations.

¹⁵ H. M. Vaughan, *South Wales Squires*, p.159.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.161.

The smaller property, Ty Uchaf has remained in good order and is occupied by Lady Llanover's decedents.

¹⁷ O. Phillips, *The Country Books, Monmouthshire* (London, 1951), p. 150.

mention Lady Llanover's 'enthusiasm for all things Welsh.'¹⁸ However there is danger of dismissing Lady Llanover's obsession with her perceived image of Wales as simply peculiar eccentricity. The level of control she exercised on her estate was directed toward rekindling Welsh culture and identity and Llanover needs to be seen as an active, deliberate and all-encompassing project that directly shaped peoples lives.

As one might expect, Lady Llanover had set ideas about how the village ought to look. The visual appearance of the buildings and forty-seven acres of parkland was an outlet for her authority, designs and also preoccupations and an important opportunity to portray Llanover as a 'traditional' Welsh village, and a place that reflected Lady Llanover's romantic vision. Lady Llanover introduced some traditions that by the late nineteenth century were typically practised outside of Monmouthshire and applied them to her estate. One such example was the use of coracles, a type of fishing boat normally found in use on the Tywi and Teifi Rivers. In 1879 Augustus Hare was 'taken to the lake to see two coracles, in which Ivor and Arthur Herbert besported themselves'¹⁹ and in November 1894 Lady Llanover wrote to Betha Johnes telling her of the most severe floods to hit Llanover for seventeen years, she added that: 'the chief means of communication of those near the river has been by coracles.'²⁰ Lady Llanover clearly had a romantic attachment to these boats, even sketching some of her guests on board coracles.²¹ One might argue that Lady Llanover attempted to portray Llanover as her version of Wales in miniature as such she picked out what she perhaps found romantic and traditional and applied her patchwork of ideas to her estate. This process was also an opportunity to reverse what she regarded as the undesirable aspects of the Principality.

The Anglicisation of place names, a development that became even more widespread in conjunction with the arrival of the rail networks in Wales,²² particularly irritated Lady Llanover and so she made sure that signs on her estate were always

¹⁸ C. Barber, *Llanover Country*, p. 47.

¹⁹ A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of my Life Vol.5*, p. 227.

²⁰ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 15 November 1894.

²¹ NLW MSS, 781A The Album of Angharad Llwyd, picture (101) 'Steering Coracles on the River' Lord Stafford and Mr Meyer, 2 November 1843.

²² S. R. Williams, *Oes Y Byd I'r Iaith Gymraeg*, p. 31.

written in Welsh.²³ Residents were under obligation to adhere to the estate policies and perhaps one of the most well known regulations was that all houses including the church and Ty Uchaf were to be white washed.²⁴ Older male residents were able to earn a pension by whitewashing the stones on the edge of the village paths, making it easier to follow at nightfall.²⁵ Every farm had, or was given a Welsh name such as Ty Coch [Red House], Ty Gwyn [White House], Llwyn Celyn [Holly Bush], Bryn Hyfryd [Beautiful Hill]. These dwellings were reserved for Welsh speaking tenants only. Whilst buildings on the estate were white, the animals of the estate were decidedly black.²⁶ The black wool of Llanover sheep was put to further use at Gwenffrwd woollen mill, where black stockings were made amongst other more elaborate 'Welsh check' materials.²⁷ The innovation of using black wool meant that the product had no need to be dyed. As will be remembered, a new mill had been established by Lady Llanover in 1865 and was still in use during the 1920s and 1930s. Arthur Herbert Jones detailed the benefits of wearing the locally produced cloth in his memoir:

We did better with the home-made cloth. The large walled-in park was dotted with his Lordship's Black Welsh Mountain Sheep, whose wool went to his water-driven mill at Gwenffrwd, tenanted and run by Jones the Weaver and his family. There, after washing, carding and spinning, it was woven into an un-dyed cloth, which came out a dark russet colour. From this cloth his Lordship had his country suits made. And so did I. As the pure wool was not subjected to refining by industrial process the cloth retained much of the natural oil, which made it almost waterproof....It was so long-lasting that suits were discarded for shabbiness, not for reasons of wear.²⁸

The establishing of the woollen mill gave a practical boost to the ever-dwindling Welsh woollen industry mourned in Lady Llanover's prize-winning essay of 1834, as

²³ S. R. Williams, 'Llwydilas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg', pp. 99- 127, p. 125.

²⁴ St Fagans, 1810/1-6, (5) Darlith ar Llanover gan T.A. Williams, p. 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ According to an unidentified press report found at Abergavenny Museum the nursery rhyme *ba ba black sheep* 'is said to have popularised by her desire, and used to advertise the merits of the black coated Welsh sheep'

I have found no firm evidence to support this.

Abergavenny Museum, A/3-77(48) Newspaper clippings- Llanover and Herbert Family [n.d] c. 1960s.

²⁸ A. H. Jones, *His Lordship's Obedient Servant*, p. 133.

we have seen. There was a clear connection between the principles Lady Llanover articulated on paper and the type of industry that flourished at Llanover. She used her personal authority to design the character of the estate and on examining the testimony of a former resident, T. A. Williams, it appears the community was aware of the estate's special distinction and took a sense of pride in it:

Gwyddai pawb am y lle ac er mor fychan yw chwareuodd le mawr yn hanes ein cenedl ar hyd gydol y ganrif ddiwetha!

[Everybody knows of the place, despite it being so small it has played a large part in the history of our nation throughout the last century!]²⁹

Unsurprisingly, religious and temperance were a central element of Llanover. There were two principle places of worship in the village namely St Bartholomew's church, which Lady Llanover attended every Sunday clad in Welsh costume and Hanover Chapel of the Methodist denomination. By the time Augustus Hare stayed at Llanover in March 1877 Lady Llanover's Welsh chaplain was conducting the Sunday services in the kitchen at Ty Uchaf. According to Hare, Lady Llanover and 'her people' would not go to church for the clergyman was 'undesirable,' yet Sunday worship continued to be elaborately celebrated:

Lady Llanover on Sundays is even more Welsh than on week-days. She wears a regular man's tall hat and short petticoats like her people, and very becoming the dress is to her, and very touching the earnestness of the whole congregation in their national costume, joining so fervently- like one person-in the service, especially in the singing, which is exquisitely beautiful.³⁰

As we have seen, when Lady Llanover found herself at odds with the Church she would take action against them and in this case Lady Llanover chose oppose the objectionable vicar by conducting the service at her home. The romanticism attached to the event was not lost on Hare, who went on to comment:

²⁹ St Fagans, 1810/1-6, (5) Darlith ar Llanofer gan T.A. Williams, p. 4.

³⁰ A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of my Life Vol.5*, p. 3.

I suppose it may be only the novelty, but this earnest service, these humble prayers on the worn benches in the brick-floored kitchen, with the incidents of manual labour in the background and the farmhouse scenes outside the windows, seemed more of a direct appeal to God than any formal prayers I ever heard in a church-the building called a church.³¹

So impressed was he by Lady Llanover's service, he declared 'I feel more and that I shall probably end my days a Dissenter!'³² Even after Lady Llanover's death it was expected that villagers should respect the Sabbath and attend a place of worship. For one newcomer to the village this was far from an ideal situation. He complained that, 'what most rankled within me was their Sabbatarianism. The proper degree of Sunday observance, I felt, should be left to one's conscience.'³³ Arthur Herbert Jones, between 1927 and 1934 was clerk to Lady Llanover's grandson Lord Treowen. He recalled the religious zeal of Llanover residents in his memoir that was published under the title *His Lordship's Obedient Servant*:

One summer Sunday evening after my landlord Pedr James, and his kindly wife had left for chapel I thought I would do them a good turn and, taking a hoe, began weeding their large vegetable garden. I had been at it for only a few minutes when a passing group of chapel-goers shouted at me to put away my tool and behave like a Christian! Shocked I still carried on and what I later, received from Pedr James was not gratitude but a rebuke.³⁴

In the case of religious observance 'the Welsh pattern, so firmly established by Lady Llanover in her lifetime, was still effecting behaviour there thirty-one years after her death.'³⁵ The same can be said of Lady Llanover's enforcing of temperance on her estate. Along with farmsteads, cottages, a boathouse and a mill, Llanover could also boast 7 public houses at one stage. However this element of estate failed to reflect the desired temperate image, that as a teetotalter, Lady Llanover required of her tenants. In response, Lord and Lady Llanover gradually bought up what they saw as these

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ A. H. Jones, *His Lordship's Obedient Servant*, p. 120.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

dens of iniquity and only the Goose and Cuckoo escaped a takeover.³⁶ T. A. Williams recalled how the 'Nags Head' had been popular with navvies working on the railway between Pontypool, Abergavenny and Hereford. Although Lord and Lady Llanover made an offer to buy the establishment it was initially turned down because business flourished, but when work for the navvies dried up the owner's attitude duly changed and the public house was sold and converted into 'Y Llythrdy' [*the post office*]. This was apparently a cause of some disappointment to locals since 'The Nags Head' was renowned for selling the best quality beer. The 'Lion' public house was also purchased and renamed 'Gwesty Dirwestol' [*The Temperance Hotel*]. All the remaining public houses, bar the Goose and Cuckoo were either transformed into private dwellings or coffee taverns and so all that could physically be done to enforce sobriety was indeed done.³⁷ Lady Llanover and her husband are still remembered for their practical and some might argue extreme temperance activity. The teetotal policy was unwelcome to some, as Lady Lucy observed on her visit to Llanover in 1853 'some wag wrote on their entrance gate, "A park without deer, a house without cheer, a cellar without beer; Sir Benjamin Hall lives here"'.³⁸ Satire of the gentry tends to be transmitted orally as is indeed the case here. The saying has survived for generations.³⁹

Her interests were never restricted to the Llanover bubble; and she hoped that the Llanover life would permeate into the rest of Welsh society. Lady Llanover desired the rejection of alcohol on a wider scale than merely her estate which reminds us she applauded the supposed temperate attitude of the Welsh and seems to have genuinely believed that a special quality of conduct belonged to the Welsh partly because of their attachment to religion, as a letter written to Betha Johnes in 1858 reveals:

³⁶ At Abercarn many public houses underwent the same transformation.

³⁷ St Fagans, 1810/1-6, (5) Darlith ar Llanofar gan T.A. Williams, p. 4.

³⁸ M. E. Lucy Mistress of Charlecote: The Memoirs of Mary Elizabeth Lucy 1803-1889, p. 95.

³⁹ This saying is still well known and was independently told to me by Carl Gurden (born 1923) who worked as an errand boy in the Llanover area.

...walking out at night as easily as into ones own garden- without drunkenness or bad company is a luxury unknown to the Saxons, and our dear Welsh are all Methodists they are not tried in that way and can't throw off in the same way!⁴⁰

Yet Lady Llanover clearly felt the need to protect her tenants from the perceived evils of alcohol abuse, so perhaps she did not truly believe that the image she articulated here was accurate. When the Welsh press debated the practicalities of implementing a Welsh Sunday Closing Act, Lady Llanover always spoke in favour of it becoming law. In practise the Act would have no effect on Llanover, because the legislation did not include Monmouthshire and besides at Llanover there were no public houses to visit on any day of the week. Nevertheless, Lady Llanover was passionately in favour of the Act being passed. She castigated those opposed to the Act for suggesting that it was a hopeless piece of legislation due to the exclusion of Monmouthshire from the Bill.⁴¹ In a letter published by the *Western Mail* she wrote a stern riposte to the Conservative, defeatist attitudes:

It is evident that the opponents of the Sunday Closing Bill for Wales are fully aware their cause is materially assisted by debarring the county of Monmouth from participating in action of the Bill for Wales, but this does not in the slightest degree disprove her being a portion of the Principality of Wales upon incontrovertible ground...⁴²

While Lady Llanover could limit the availability of drink on her land she was unable to extend the same control into the rest of Monmouthshire. It is evident that the fact that a law that reflected her sentiments would not apply to the county of her residence frustrated her greatly. In debating the purpose of the new law her argument was twofold. Firstly she believed that the law reflected the requirements of the Welsh people and secondly Lady Llanover wished to make perfectly clear that Monmouthshire and thus Llanover was by law part of the Principality irrespective of the county's connection to the Oxford assize circuit.⁴³

⁴⁰ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 4 August 1858.

⁴¹ Many Conservative MPs rejected the Bill on the basis that a trip across the Monmouthshire county border was all that was needed to be able drink perfectly legally on the Sabbath.

⁴² *Western Mail*, 27 May 1881.

⁴³ G. Williams, *Renewal and Reformation: Wales c. 1415- 1642* (Oxford, 1987), p. 271.

As discussed in the previous chapter, in all likelihood Lady Llanover is most admired today for her steadfast commitment to the Welsh language. Her efforts to promote and preserve it were beyond the understanding of some, as the *Western Mail* acknowledged by noting that ‘the Anglicised Cymry, a class thoroughly detested [by Lady Llanover] smiled loftily at her efforts to reserve the old wine of Wales, and would have it, the “bee” alluding to her Nom de Plume was “in her bonnet.”’⁴⁴ As we have seen some Welsh speaking communities survived in Monmouthshire despite the county being heavily Anglicised during the industrialisation process of the nineteenth century and it was against this complex and often changing linguistic backdrop that Lady Llanover created her own form of Welsh culture and identity on the Llanover estate.⁴⁵

Yet, one of Lady Llanover’s fundamental and most famous rules was that all who were employed on the Llanover estate be they staff or tenants, should be able to speak Welsh. It was a matter of pride for her and duty that she ensured that her tenants had the freedom to speak their native language.⁴⁶ When the number of Welsh speakers in Llanover eventually fell due to Anglicisation of the area, she adopted a form of social engineering. As W. R. T. Pryce observes ‘the language... tended to die with the people.’⁴⁷ In response Lady Llanover drafted native Welsh speakers from north and west of Wales, where in-migration from England was less prominent. She also recruited the aid of friends and associates in the quest to supplement her Welsh colony, by looking out for more Welsh speakers. This confirms that Lady Llanover was unable to act alone in her language policy for the estate but it also verifies that she managed to spark interest in it. In 1875 David Howell, then vicar of Wrexham alerted Lady Llanover to a rare find: ‘Madam I have this afternoon discovered an absolute uniaith Welsh woman in the midst of a colony of English, two miles on the Cheshire side of Wrexham. She has five children who are exclusively Welsh, as her self.’ He added: ‘This is to me a wonder.’⁴⁸ The discovery of a family of monoglot

⁴⁴ *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

⁴⁵ For more details on this subject see Chapter Two.

⁴⁶ See R. J. Morre-Colyer, ‘Tirfeddaianwyr, Ffermwyr ac Iaith yn y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg’ G. H. Jenkins, (ed.) *Gwnewch Bopeth yn Gymraeg* (Caerdydd, 1999), pp. 99-129.

⁴⁷ W. R. T. Pryce, ‘Language Shift in Gwent’ in N. Coupland & A. R. Thomas (ed.) *English in Wales: Diversity, Conflict and Change* (Clevedon, 1990) p. 48.

⁴⁸ NLW MSS, Daniel Parry Jones 38, Study of the Prayer Book of the Methodist Welsh Church of Abercarn Monmouthshire, D Howell to Lady Llanover, 20 June 1875’.

Welsh speakers would have been a matter of real interest to Lady Llanover. It is unknown whether this particular family were approached with the proposition of living at Llanover, although it can be assumed she would have regarded them as a welcome addition to her Welsh cultural utopia.

Welsh speakers were her 'chosen people' and as head of the estate she was at liberty to run it as she pleased, even if this was to the disadvantage of either English migrants or non-Welsh speaking natives. Far from ever relaxing the stipulation that all Llanover staff should speak Welsh, Lady Llanover continued to vet personally her workers and make certain that they were able to integrate into her Welsh community. Her critics viewed her language strategy with a certain amount of contempt:

Like most aliens of a fanatical nature, Lady Llanover ruthlessly indicted her new fad on all and sundry. As the countryside around Llanover was wholly Anglicised, she met this difficulty by importing a number of monoglot – Welsh speaking Methodists...⁴⁹

Whenever possible Lady Llanover personally interviewed all candidates in Welsh,⁵⁰ although in at least one case she relied upon long-term companion Betha Johnes to ensure that a Welsh-speaking candidate secured a job on the estate. When a position at Lady Llanover's mill became vacant, her Ladyship had no misgivings about actively discriminating against English applicants in favour of Betha's man:

...one of my great troubles has been nothing but English applicants for our Mill. Pray dear Robin send your man over instantly...let him go to Rhys Edwards my Welsh Bailiff to see the mill, then if he likes it, go at once to Mr Llewelyn to settle for it...Oh! That you should have sent him sooner- I have been in agonies lest that mill should get into English hands.⁵¹

The letter is a valuable piece of evidence regarding Lady Llanover's determination to preserve work on her estate for Welsh speakers. Its emotional tone reveals a real

⁴⁹ H. M. Vaughan, *South Wales Squires*, p. 163-4

⁵⁰ So close was this Supervision that she insisted upon personal interviews with candidates for farms on her estate, and one such interview was fixed for the afternoon of the day she died.
South Wales Daily News, 20 January 1896.

⁵¹ NLW MSS, Dolaucothi Correspondence, Lady Llanover to Betha Johnes, 7 February 1863.

anxiety facing the prospect of giving in to Anglicisation. A similar situation occurred in 1883, when it came to finding a suitable housekeeper. Candidates that spoke Welsh were hard to come by so Lady Llanover entrusted George Watson, then minister at Abercarn church to carry out the search far beyond the Llanover area. In her letter to him on this matter her sense of urgency is once more apparent. She implored: 'Pray do not cease enquiring-I wish I could get some one belonging to the Deheudir'.⁵² The episode shows how hard it was to come by local Welsh speakers by this time and how long the process could take.

Religion, temperance and the Welsh language were all central components of the Llanover estate's character but there was certainly more. In 1861, at the age of nineteen Margaret Davies was brought to Llanover from the Mostyn estate in north Wales by her father to serve in the household. While she lived at Llanover, Margaret kept a detailed journal of events that she found interesting or important thus creating a unique source that reveals something of what it was like to be a servant of the household. Moreover, it provides valuable evidence for the cultural experience and Welsh identity that Lady Llanover prescribed for, and imposed on her tenants through estate regulations. Margaret's initial interview had been conducted via letter. Margaret had passed the first test; she wrote in her journal that she 'received a letter from Lady Llanover, stating that she was very pleased with the letter [written] to her answering her questions.'⁵³ Having been granted permission by her parents Margaret wrote back to say that she would arrive accompanied by her father, a bailiff to Lord Mostyn, on 19 September. Her first impressions recorded on arriving at Llanover described entering through 'Porth Mawr, the name of one of the lodges.' She was 'very much amused to see the women dressed in hats and bobtails and stiff aprons.'⁵⁴

In the account of her arrival Margaret noted the members of staff with whom she came into contact. Her father recognised the first person they saw, a Mr. Manuel as having been a resident of Holywell. Margaret later went on to learn to her surprise that there were numerous other natives of North Wales working at Llanover Hall and on the estate thus indicating that Lady Llanover's policy of social engineering had

⁵² NLW MSS, Calvinistic Methodist Archives 2, 14,380-14,404, Lady Llanover to George Watson, 21 December 1883.

⁵³ NLWMSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 9 September 1861.

⁵⁴ NLWMSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 19 September 1861.

begun to be implemented at least as early as 1861. Margaret and her father were directed by the butler to the housekeeper's room, where Mrs. Evan Jones,⁵⁵ secretary to Lady Llanover was preparing to go home. They took tea with the housekeeper and Jane the still maid. Again to Margaret's surprise, Jane 'was dressed in Welsh costume...all the other servants were the same.'⁵⁶ It appears that Lady Llanover had no shortage of servants as her recruitment drive spanned the whole of Wales. Many of them became seasoned performers as Margaret revealed in her writings. She noted with admiration that 'Lady Llanover...allowed Mr. Griffiths her harper to play in the hall.'⁵⁷ Accompanying him 'was a young girl...singing some of the Welsh airs' and oh sweet and natural she sang.' After some more singing there was a dance.⁵⁸ The servants often danced the Llanover reel. The art of dancing was regularly called upon especially if guests were present.

In all Margaret was made to feel welcome by the household staff and formed strong friendships with fellow servants in the household, Elisabeth Manuel and Mr Rees, whom Margaret initially 'could not imagine what way he was connected to the house but he turned out to be... the scripture reader.'⁵⁹ Margaret was not the only person recruited that week. Apparently Rees had just returned from his formal interview with Lady Llanover when he met Margaret for the first time. Like, Rees, Margaret was given two days to settle in before she was given a formal interview:

About teatime Lady Llanover sent for me. Mrs. Davies took me to the breakfast room, there to await her coming. I was only there a few minutes before she came. She was quite a different Lady to what I pictured her to be. She looked at me very scrutinising I thought. She spoke to me very kind, but still with strong determination, not to deviate from any of her accustomed rules. She spoke to me also on subjects that I did not expect she would and moved me even to tears whilst she did so. She then dismissed me kindly.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Widow of Evan Jones (Ieuan Gwynedd) 1820-1852.

⁵⁶ NLWMSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 19 September 1861.

⁵⁷ NLWMSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 20 September 1861.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ NLWMSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 19 September 1861.

⁶⁰ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 21 September 1861.

The impression of the Llanover estate that Margaret portrays is one of a self-contained, picturesque and friendly community, but one that had a prescribed set of rules geared toward protecting Lady Llanover's favourite cultural symbols. To live at Llanover was to take on the lifestyle that Lady Llanover deemed appropriate in her Welsh cultural utopia and perhaps this is why there was a period of two days designated before an interview was given. Perhaps Lady Llanover wanted her prospective staff to form their own opinions on their suitability to Llanover, or perhaps she was convinced they would be overawed by it and want to subscribe to it.

Margaret quickly became familiar with the residents and their responsibilities on the estate not only as part of the workforce, but also in their role as the harpers, singers and dancers that performed for Lady Llanover and her their guests:

After tea I went out with Mrs Webber towards Yr Hen Persondy, where Elizabeth Manuel lived. We just met her going up to the Hall, but however she kindly took us in and went with us towards the river to see Mrs. Griffiths (the Harper's) who was very glad to see us, and told us, and told me she would be glad to see me any time....She lived in a little cottage on the banks of the river Usk, but not to my taste such a picturesque one as the Boat House which quite overhung the river, here old Morgan James lived, his son John was leader of her Ladyship's choir, and his daughter Margaret, was one of the singers.⁶¹

Because everyone was required to live out Lady Llanover's cultural experience, servants and residents were fully expected to learn, to either play the triple harp, sing, or dance the Welsh reels. Tenants who could not afford their own instruments were loaned them by Lady Llanover. In 1888 Elizabeth James wrote to Lady Llanover to acknowledge the receipt of a triple harp which her son Pedr James⁶² was given to practise on.⁶³ Attending choir practice and dancing were rituals the servants apparently enjoyed. This dedication toward performing the Welsh reels and airs may well have strengthened the servants' sense of solidarity and self-fulfilment as well as being an opportunity to impress their employers:

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² A. H. Jones lodged with Pedr James in the 1930s.

⁶³ Gwent Record Office, D1210.820.2, Elizabeth James to Lady Llanover, 1 February 1888.

...some of the singers had arrived and were practising after their supper. They were ordered to the gallery above the front hall, where they sang to the company below, some three or four select beautiful hymns. It was really grand; their voices echoed splendidly through the place...it quite surpassed everything I had yet heard. After singing about, 10 o' clock, a bell rang and all the house servants walked in order to the front hall, where her Ladyship read the evening prayers.⁶⁴

Margaret remarked with some frequency in her journal that the Llanover staff had performed on special occasions and after dinner parties, always wearing Welsh costume. Lady Llanover's enthusiasm for entertaining her guests is also corroborated in other sources. Augustus Hare made a second visit to Llanover in September 1879. On this occasion the Grand Duke of Baden was also present and as special guest the Duke was treated to Welsh entertainment:

After dinner we all went into the hall, when from the curtains at the end, all the servants tripped in, each footman leading a maid by each hand, in most picturesque Welsh costumes, made obeisance to the Prince, went backwards, and then danced the complicated and picturesque of reels with ever varying figures. Lady Llanover's own maid was the great performer, and nothing could exceed her consummate grace and dignity. Then a board was brought in and placed in the centre of the floor and three candles upon it, round and between which the footmen and harper's boys performed the wonderful candle dance with the greatest agility.⁶⁵

Lady Llanover evidently made sure that all visitors witnessed a performance at Llanover Hall. From what Margaret Davies and Augustus Hare reveal it seems that the Llanover staff were accomplished and well practised in their skills. In 1887, Cadwgan, a correspondent for the Welsh women's periodical *Y Frythones*, visited Llanover and described the experience as well as the unmistakable influence of Lady Llanover. Cadwgan was certain that the authority of her Ladyship touched everything.⁶⁶ Lady Llanover apparently greeted Cadwgan with the words:

Y mae i chwi groesaw i'r tŷ hwn, croesaw i aros heno eto i weled rhywbeth arall nad ydych wedi ei weled.

⁶⁴ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 22 September 1861.

⁶⁵ A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of my Life Vol.5*, p. 226.

⁶⁶ *Y Frythones*, August 1887, Vol. 9 No. 8. p. 241.

*[You are Welcome in this house, welcome to stay tonight to witness something you have not yet seen.]*⁶⁷

The report suggests that Lady Llanover was fully aware her hospitality offered the outside visitor an extraordinary experience and this view was further promoted by press correspondents. One might gather that for the tenants, life on the estate was also an extraordinary experience. In reminiscing on life at Llanover during the 1920s and 1930s the former resident A. H. Jones remarked, 'I am amazed on looking back, by our self-sufficiency as a community. The Estate was a Kingdom in miniature.'⁶⁸ He came to regard Llanover as 'one of the loveliest parts of Wales and, from a cultural point of view, a place of exceptional interest.'⁶⁹ According to him the older residents of Llanover held on to the image of the Welsh colony. A. H. Jones tells in his memoirs of how his colleagues once began to sing whilst at work, prompting him to wonder if 'that impromptu concert in an office during work hours could have taken place in any other part of the British Isles for it [seemed]... that the scene captured the essence of something which was typically Welsh.'⁷⁰ By the twentieth century the language rule had been set aside. Jones was unable to speak Welsh but appreciated what he viewed as the estate's special character. In his writing there is a sense that he was witness to the last years of the Welsh colony's existence:

In 1927 her [Lady Llanover] harpist, Gruffydd, had been dead many years but his daughter, Mrs Gruffydd Roberts, was still living there and, although blind, playing her father's harp, the silent, stood in the corner of my sitting room. Reuben Lewis, the house carpenter at the mansion where he employed his manual skills as a cabinet maker, then aged, but still active bodily and mentally, was also a minor poet and had earned the bardic title, Madoc Mon, having been born and brought up in Anglesey...⁷¹

Lady Llanover also explicitly moulded the identities of her tenants in other ways. The experience of having lived under her rule stayed with them. Lady Llanover

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 240.

⁶⁸ A. H. Jones, *His Lordship's Obedient Servant*, p. 131.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 124.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 123.

believed that one way of galvanising her staff's Welsh identity was to give them unmistakeably Welsh names that reflected their occupation or perhaps their place of birth. This process occurred as a matter of course in many Welsh communities in these years but the act of renaming staff and tenants was deemed peculiar and noted by the press as yet another of her eccentricities:

To all the servants were attached distinctive Welsh appellations, usually indicating the town or village from which he came. For instance, John Jones, the woodman, who came from Camarthen, would no longer be known as John Jones once he had entered the service of Lady Llanover, the boy would be addressed by the title "Blaen Blodau". A young man from Pentyrch, who acted as under-agent was always referred to by her ladyship as "Blaen Briallu" Another agent from North Wales was called "Coed Moelfach".⁷²

The house keeper was called "Teuluyddes," and one of the lady's maids, who hailed from Glandovey, was called "Sian Dyfi;" the cook was known as "Sian y Gegin," and a little girl employed about the house was dubbed "Sian Fach."⁷³

As Margaret Davies explained in her journal the staff and tenants of Llanover not only had to sound Welsh they needed to look the part too. In Lady Llanover's view the Welsh costume was a signifier of Welsh identity. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Lady Llanover helped to re-cultivate an image of the Welsh working class woman in costume, which was accepted by some as a respectable version of identity. This image of the Welsh female was dominant at Llanover. Female employees were under strict instructions to don the 'National dress,' a concept that struck Margaret as strange;⁷⁴ indeed she felt antipathy toward the Welsh dress in general. The tall hat and wool garments were obviously not young Margaret's idea of high fashion. Tenants endeavoured to please their mistress by wearing the compulsory Welsh dress, although it may be that this was something of a farce. Margaret suspected that the tall hat was dug out only when absolutely necessary:

⁷² *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

⁷³ Cardiff MSS, 3771, Press cuttings, 1860-96 relating to Lord and Lady Llanover, *South Wales Daily News*, [n.d.].

⁷⁴ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 19 September 1861.

We distributed clothing to above a 100 of the surrounding poor. Some of them came in their Welsh dress, evidently they had not worn it since the last time they came for their clothing, there was one curious high hat it actually haunted me, for days, I was fancying it like some great chimney falling on me, for it looked so rickety on the woman's head..⁷⁵

As we have seen in Chapter One, Lady Llanover took her responsibility as the lady of the estate seriously and in her self designated role as potentate often took it upon herself to care for the sick and shelter her tenants from poverty. This charity took a Welsh dimension, be it at Abercarn or Llanover. Lists of presents to the poor were made in Welsh noting names, marital status and occupation, as well as the number of children, church denomination and gifts received.⁷⁶ Lady Llanover was in a sense the mother of the estate and this is reflected by her desire to be part of her tenant's lives.⁷⁷ The whole charitable process was an extensive operation that involved much time and effort, on her part and that of her staff, as Margaret Davies testifies:

We are very busy these days the charity goods having arrived. The Servant's Hall was like a warehouse and we are all like 'counter jumpers,' measuring and cutting and making up bundles and labelling them. After that process was finished we were two days giving out the bundles for their respective owners. Her Ladyship and her little grandchildren gave them away, each individual called in from the yard by Mr. Rees and ushered in by Elizabeth to the servants hall, and the person's name called out by Mrs. Manuel and I had to find the bundles to give her Ladyship, who spoke Welsh to each and was very particular in noticing that each was dressed in the Welsh style.⁷⁸

Here the significance is clear; in order to receive charitable offerings the tenants had to adhere to Lady Llanover's prescribed dress code. It has already been suggested that the Welsh dress was not the natural choice of residents and there is no way of knowing for certain if Welsh language was the natural language either. Though Margaret Davies does not directly make the connection there is room to surmise that

⁷⁵ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 20 December 1861.

⁷⁶ Cardiff MSS, 4.643, Lady Llanover's Presents to the Poor (1839-83).

⁷⁷ On Lady Llanover's death one tenants is said to have commented that 'she was a mother to us all' *South Wales Daily News*, 20 January 1896.

⁷⁸ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 29 November 1861.

by conducting such an intensive charity programme Lady Llanover was able to inspect her tenants, and perhaps even test the intensity of their allegiance to her ideals. Surviving sources regarding the tenants that resided at Llanover reveal that her Ladyship's will effected their lives. In no sense was she an absentee landowner. Her workers were personally picked in order to fit into the Llanover community. Being part of this ideal Welsh society meant adhering to the forms of Welsh romantic culture that she had set in place. It also meant accepting her authority even in personal matter.

To be Welsh in the sense that Lady Llanover understood it, the community also needed to adopt what she regarded as a traditionally Welsh way of life. Customs played an important role in this. Many such traditions had practically died out by the nineteenth century. Of those traditions that had continued to be practised regional differences were often apparent and celebrations did not always occur across Wales on the same days. As industrialisation progressed during the nineteenth century rural customs such the *Plygain* and *Mari Llwyd* became less important. Yet in the new industrial towns, new customs were adapted from the old and so popular culture and customs were reinvented to fit the new circumstances.⁷⁹ At Llanover the upkeep of traditional customs was an important means of marking out the community as a distinctive place that had held on to its sense of identity. As with all aspects of culture Lady Llanover edited out what she found unacceptable, and promoted what fell within the boundaries of her criteria. Therefore, at Llanover, fairs, festival days and some of those fast disappearing Welsh customs were given a priority, whereas on most Welsh estates the majority of landowners would have had minimal interest in such matters.

As we have seen, Lady Llanover and her associates had always been aware of the decline in popularity of Welsh customs. Part of the purpose of many of Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfod competitions had been to encourage interest in researching and recording the history of Welsh customs.⁸⁰ However, to Lady Llanover, researching the traditions of Wales was only half the challenge; she also

⁷⁹ T. M. Owen, *The Customs and Traditions of Wales* (Cardiff, 1991).

T. M. Owen, *Welsh Folk Customs* (Llandysul, 1994).

A. Ross, *Folklore of Wales* (Gloucestershire, 2001).

⁸⁰ W. Roberts, *Crefydd yr Oesoedd Tywyll neu Henafiaethau Defodol Chwareuyddol a Choelgrefyddol yn cynnwys Traethawd Gwobrwyol yn Eisteddfod Y Fenni Ar Mari Llwyd* (Caerfyrddin, 1852).

wanted to keep these customs alive. Scholars have long debated the exact origins and meaning of Welsh customs,⁸¹ it seems that to Lady Llanover but as with all romantics, a group to which one can safely say Lady Llanover belonged, the accuracy or authenticity of the customs was secondary to the need for pageantry.

Festive celebrations at Llanover were elaborate affairs that apparently included the community as a whole. The traditions of sending Christmas cards and having a Christmas tree were set in place from the mid-Victorian period onward. Lady Llanover took these new aspects of Christmas culture on board but they were amalgamated with some of the older Welsh festive customs. The religious observance of Christmas was coupled with a pagan element that Lady Llanover found acceptable due its ancient origins. Margaret Davies wrote a detailed account of her experience of Christmas at Llanover in 1861. As one might expect the servants were all 'remarkably busy preparing for Christmas day.'⁸² She noted that the household staff made flags to decorate the hall 'and the gardeners dressed it with holly and mistletoe very beautifully.'⁸³ On Christmas eve 'the finished flags were put up [in] the servants hall' and after supper they were again 'all very busy dressing up candlesticks with coloured paper to be ready to go to the *Plygain* the next morning, it was almost morning when [they] got to bed.'⁸⁴

I got up about 1/2 5 o' clock and found everybody stirring and the Church bells ringing very merrily. I lit my decorated candle and sallied out into the darkness with the others, the path down to the Church was quite illuminated by the many candles. Her Ladyship too went down carrying her lighted candle. The Church looked very bright when we all arrived with our candles.⁸⁵

The *Plygain* procession made its way to St Bartholomew's church where the congregation would take part in an early church service that involved singing carols and listening to a Christmas sermon. The ceremony is thought to have its origins in the pre-reformation period. It developed and continued to be observed during the

⁸¹ See T. G. Jones, *Welsh folk law and folk customs* (London, 1930).

⁸² NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 21 December 1861.

⁸³ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 22 December 1861.

⁸⁴ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 24 December 1861.

⁸⁵ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 25 December 1861.

Protestant era and is an aspect of culture that survived the impact of Nonconformity.⁸⁶ In most cases the decorated candles were lit every Sunday until they had melted away but Margaret reveals in her journal that she and her companions brought their candles back to the house. Proud of the way Christmas was spent at Llanover, Lady Llanover sent an account of the celebrations to D. Silvan Evans, who wrote back to explain regional variation on the *Plygain* celebrated in his locality:

I am obliged to your Ladyship for the very interesting account of the way that Christmas day was spent at Llanover. We have here a “Plygain” on Hen Nadolig (yesterday) as well, but it is in the evening, and ought to be called “Gosper” but the name among the natives is “Plygain Nos” which of course is a contradiction in terms.⁸⁷

The *Plygain* tradition brought everyone together in the early hour of Christmas morning to sing Christmas carols and songs composed especially for the occasion and represented the first stage of celebrating a community Christmas rather than the private affair Christmas later became. As Silvan Evans’s account illustrates the customs of Christmas and New Year were not necessarily celebrated on the same day across Wales, such customs were more important at a local, village level rather than at a national level.

After the *Plygain* and early morning worship the party returned home to Llanover Hall for breakfast. The rest of the morning was taken up with preparations for a Christmas dinner for 200 guests, which included tenants and workmen of both the Llanover and Abercarn estates. For all involved, especially at preparation level, Christmas day dinner was a special occasion full of festive ceremony familiar to all Llanover occasions:

...we looked very smart in our new flannel gowns that her Ladyship gave us, and indeed had given all the in the house. At 1 o’clock the big bell rang and about 100 sat

⁸⁶ T. M. Owen, *Welsh Folk Customs*, pp. 31-33.

⁸⁷ NLW MSS, Daniel Parry Jones 38, Study of the Prayer Book of the Methodist Welsh Church of Abercarn Monmouthshire, D. Silvan. Evans to Lady Llanover, 7 January 1876.

down, grace was sung before and after dinner by her Ladyships choir and after the first 100 had done justice to dinner, the others did the same..⁸⁸

Hardly surprisingly given Lady Llanover's support for temperance, the tradition of drinking alcoholic beverages at Christmas could not be part of the Llanover celebrations. Margaret noted this, remarking that 'the tables were laid out nicely, without a drop of intoxicating drinks.'⁸⁹ One might almost say that the Christmas echoed an Eisteddfod atmosphere. Margaret Davies later commented that during the subsequent days 'we were all very merry all the next days, dancing and games being held in the hall every night.'⁹⁰

A decade later Christmas at Llanover was still being celebrated in the most traditional form possible. This earned the curiosity of the religious Welsh language publication *Y Goleuad*, which published detailed accounts of Christmas at Llanover in both 1871 and 1872. The festivities of 1871 again began with the *Plygain* held at 6am. Christmas day that year fell on the Sabbath therefore, the annual worker's Christmas dinner was postponed until the following day but was no less elaborate. At 2 o'clock the dinner commenced in the hall that had been highly decorated with evergreens, banners, Welsh coats of arms and symbols. Some 150 people sat down to a feast of roast lamb, beef and goose, the routine of proceedings being the same previously noted by Margaret Davies, with a further addition. *Y Goleuad* noted that Lady Llanover gave prizes to her tenants but not for the composition of poetry, or singing to the accompaniment of the harp, or any other cultural competition, which she was so famous for patronising. Rather, these competitions were aimed at rewarding the good practice of agrarian life. Edward Jones of Cwrt Llanover won a prize of 3p[ounds] for the best herd of truly Welsh breed and Samuel Harris of Gwenffrwd won a prize of 1p[ound] 10s for the largest number of inhabited bee hives.⁹¹

Y Goleuad again recorded competitions of the same nature the following year.⁹² Clearly, Lady Llanover encouraged her tenants to take pride in the traditional

⁸⁸ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 25 December 1861.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 27 December 1861.

⁹¹ *Y Goleuad*, 7 January 1871, Vol. II No. 63, p. 6.

⁹² *Y Goleuad*, 6 January 1872, Vol. III No. 115, p. 5.

Welsh agrarian lifestyle by offering prizes as an incentive. This attempt to develop and hold on to farming traditions that Lady Llanover believed to reflect Welsh identity was a fundamental element of her attempts to create a Welsh cultural utopia. As we shall see shortly this dimension became so important that it inspired her to address agricultural practices in her recipe book. *Y Goleuad*'s accounts served to promote the festivities at Llanover across Wales as an example of how a traditional Welsh Christmas should be celebrated at a community level. In both articles of 1871 and 1872 the celebration of Christmas customs en masse at Llanover instigated remarks on how 'special' Llanover was. Speeches during the Christmas meal celebrations also echoed the patriotic rhetoric that was a central feature of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau.

At Llanover, recognition of the Welsh New Year was also celebrated with enthusiasm. A popular form of wassailing in Wales was that of the *Mari Lwyd*.⁹³ At Llanover the *Mari Lwyd* procession was acted out with enthusiasm and again was an aspect of celebration that could involve the whole village. In 1861 Margaret Davies took part in the *Mari Lwyd* procession at Llanover Hall:

Some of these next days we got up a Mari Lwyd amongst ourselves. I think it was on the evening of the 10 January that the horse head was exhibited. Mary Vaughan acted as the horse, Lemmy as hostler, Richard as Punch and John as Judy. The harp played under the library window after tea so as to attract his Lordship's notice to the play that was going on outside. I never heard of such a thing before. It was very amusing.⁹⁴

This custom was deemed charming and worthy enough to be commemorated in the village in the form of a painting, hung on the wall of Llanover post office. It was probably put on display around 1860 and testifies to Lady Llanover's seemingly conscious effort to remind villagers of their heritage and customs. The *Mari Lwyd* was

⁹³ The *Mari Lwyd* has to some extent been revived through historical re-enactment in the main. The *Mari Lwyd* was made from the skull a horse with a pole inserted. One person carried the head and took responsibility of clapping the jaws of the skull together. Another person formed the body of the horse under a sheet. Accompanying the horse would be a procession consisting of three main characters. They included a leader, a Punch and Judy. As a group they would visit villagers, knocking at the door and singing a verse with the inhabitants singing a verse back in response. Upon gaining admittance to the house the horse was made to snap and chase the people, and most especially the women around room, to the tune of a violin.

⁹⁴ NLW MSS, 23511A, Journal of Margaret Davies, 1 January 1861.

no doubt an annual highlight of the New Year at Llanover Hall. In the catalogue of sale of Llanover Hall in 1932 'two carved wood, horses heads, as used in the old Welsh Christmas custom, known as Mari Lwyd' were listed in lot 52.⁹⁵

Christmas, Easter and St. David's Day presented an opportunity to bring Abercarn and Llanover together in celebration. Dinners and garden parties were held annually for estates workers. Some lists of attendees survive from the latter period.⁹⁶ Lady Llanover marked St. David's day by examining the proficiency of school children in the Welsh language. The highest achievers were rewarded with a Welsh costume. Whilst gifts of red wool and a red cloak were given to those who attended Sunday school regularly and those who had not missed a Sunday school session respectively. Lady Llanover's presence was crucial to these events. When she was taken ill in March of 1862, St David's day was not quite the same as Margaret Davies testified:

Our 1st March... came in like a lion and no mistake. We all wore leeks and had a regular "Welsh dinner", it was also the usual day for school children to come up and be examined, but her Ladyship was not well enough.⁹⁷

Lady Llanover's all-encompassing project at Llanover was intrusive and perhaps excessive. She used radical means to uphold an essentially conservative lifestyle. By the mid twentieth century Maxwell Fraser's attempt to liberate Lady Llanover from her tyrannical image⁹⁸ had promoted a sympathetic outlook on her intentions as, an extract from a television advertisement for a programme on her implies:

Many have regarded her as a wealthy eccentric... but much of what she did was of value, though again much of it was autocratic and imposed by almost feudal decree amongst her villages and tenants. It is probably true to say that she was like some female Canute, in her part of Monmouthshire during her lifetime.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Gwent Record Office, Misc MSS 1332, Llanover House Sale Catalogue 1934, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁶ Cardiff MSS, 4.645, Lady Llanover's Garden Parties 1863-83.

⁹⁷ NLW MSS, 23511A Journal of Margaret Davies, 1 March 1862.

⁹⁸ A. V. John, *Lady Charlotte- A Biography of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 104.

⁹⁹ Abergavenny Museum, A/3-77(48) Newspaper clippings- Llanover and Herbert Family, 'Radio Times TV advertisement, BBC Wales The Legend and the Lady'

Far from being seen only as an eccentric Lady Llanover's life and work should be regarded as an overarching philosophy. This is evident from what she sought to achieve on her estate in all its facets, including using Welsh names for people and places, encouraging religious observance and temperance as well as ensuring that her tenants spoke Welsh and dressed in the Welsh costume. There is one source above all which is helpful in conveying the ethos on which Lady Llanover's cultural ideals were founded and no doubt carried out. A broad insight into Lady Llanover's management policies may be gained by studying what was essentially her own manual, *The First Principles of Good Cookery*, published in 1867. This book is one of the most illuminating sources left behind by Lady Llanover but so far historians have paid little attention to it. As Jane Aaron succinctly explained 'present day realities seem always to have represented only obstacles to overcome for Gwenynen Gwent in her pursuit of her own particular version of the Welsh dream.'¹⁰⁰ This may be why Lady Llanover wrote and published her manifesto against what she saw as the foolishness of the modern world.

In spite of its unimaginative title, this is no ordinary recipe book by today's standards. It was written with a view to make 'public practical instructions which are the result of many years individual experience, in matters universally admitted to require an entire reform, which are little understood by the poor, and even less comprehended by the rich.'¹⁰¹ As a cookbook the manuscript is confusing because in reality it is a handbook for country living and an advertisement for Lady Llanover's conception of the perfect Welsh community. Information for the reader is conveyed by means of a conversation between a traveller, who represents the ignorance of the new generation, and a hermit, a man of ancient Welsh descent who keeps a harpist and represents the repository of tried and tested knowledge. Or to be more precise, the familiar voice of Lady Llanover.

Interestingly, the main characters of the book are both male. Women are represented in the form of two Welsh widows who act as assistants in the Hermit's kitchen. Through the characters' interaction Lady Llanover delivers her thesis. It is

¹⁰⁰ J. Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales*, p. 68.

¹⁰¹ Lady Llanover, *The First Principles of Good Cookery* (Tregaron, 1991), p. xi.

possible that she used this method of expression as an attempt to distance herself from accusations of self-righteousness. After all, the book was apparently aimed at setting an example to those in her social class, though it is unknown how popular or successful the book actually became.¹⁰² A strong element of criticism is present throughout the book in which she vilifies women whom she believed had lost the skills of yesteryear, especially those of making clothes. In the opening stages of the narrative the Hermit asks the traveller:

“Everything in your appearance denotes civilised life. May I ask what dexterous fingers plied the needle which executed the numerous plaits in what used in the last century to be called a shirt, but in my youth there was far more needlework required than I perceive in the specimen before me?” The Traveller again appeared embarrassed and perplexed. “I know not,” said he, “whether it is made by man or woman or machine! All I know is that there is not a single family of my acquaintance, and my connexions are extensive, where there is a single female who can either cut or make a shirt!”¹⁰³

The basic tone of the book indicates that Lady Llanover’s aim in writing was to protest against the new fangled ideas of an increasingly industrialised society. She clearly states that in her view the advances in technology and mechanisation of the industrial age were no substitute for old methods of household organisation, cooking conservation and husbandry. In a sense the book attempts to stem the encroachment of mass production against the traditional way of life that was protected and made compulsory for the residents of Llanover.

As the narrative unfolds the traveller, who essentially becomes a student of the Hermit, exchanges his knowledge of modern society for a crash course in how to right the wrongs of perceived recent misguided management in the kitchen. As the following extract shows the traveller is made to appear keen to learn from the wisdom of old:

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 10.

Every hour tended to strengthen the conviction of the wanderer, that he had at last found a man who practised what he understood, and who had not been led away by any theory to give credence to that which was not demonstrated by the results.¹⁰⁴

Predictably, the traveller conveys no valid or rational defence of modern life. Though Lady Llanover adds a little humour to the dialogue, she is careful to make sure that the conversation is not completely one sided. By exposing the inadequacies of modern living as she saw them, and by answering the questions posed by the traveller, Lady Llanover gives the historian a valuable insight into her perception of the agrarian traditions of Wales, all be it disguised in her guide for the improving nineteenth century cooking.

Lady Llanover clearly states in the introduction to her work that the writing of the book is in direct response to numerous enquiries made by friends 'for information about certain simple dishes, which they had, in the course of their travels, tasted at the board of her friend the Hermit of Gover's Cell.'¹⁰⁵ One can infer from this that one of her purposes in writing was to note the recipes that guests had sampled at her table. According to the introduction the volume was supposed to be a helpful book of recipes and not a work written out of self-gratification. It nevertheless reads more like a defensive manifesto of her management methods, possibly written in some part at least to justify the way Llanover was run, as well as to publicise her system so that it might be taken up by other Welsh landowners.

The First Principles of Good Cookery also reinforces what is known of how Lady Llanover's estate was comprised. The principles related in the book were put into practice on the Llanover estate as part of her attempt to make her vision of an ideal Welsh community a reality and accounts of life at Llanover that have already been discussed in this thesis support this interpretation. The book also promotes an array of Lady Llanover's personal campaigns and interests. One of her interests was the breeding of animals. A section of the book deals with the advantages of goat breeding. Lady Llanover was something of an expert on rearing goats, as it had been a hobby of hers since childhood. According to her findings not only did a goat make a

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p .x.

good pet but also it produced a fine quality of milk for cheese making, and what is more, 'kids are always marketable, being excellent food, and their skins very valuable.'¹⁰⁶ Significantly in terms of her promotion of a Welsh dimension, she saw the preservation of the Welsh breed as of the greatest importance:

It is surprising that no specimen of the real Welsh goat is kept in the Zoological Gardens. The Welsh being aboriginal of Britain, ought to be specially protected. Whereas it appears that the breed is likely to become extinct. The gallant regiment of the Welsh Fusiliers ought to protest against this neglect of an animal, which has always been associated with the Welsh regiments and the Principality of Wales.¹⁰⁷

The finer points of bee keeping are also a feature of the work, with detailed illustrations of the various hives. Again, Lady Llanover was a specialist in this area as her *nom de plume* suggests. Lady Llanover famously demanded that Welsh livestock should be reared on the estate's farms¹⁰⁸ and this too is discussed in the book. She found the process of overfeeding livestock abhorrent on the grounds that the practice could be detrimental to the animal's health and quality of life. Aside from the cruelty of the method, the quality of meat suffered because of an overabundance of fat deposits within the flesh, thus significantly reducing its nutritional value:¹⁰⁹

The Hermit maintained that the best breeds for symmetry ought to be encouraged, without any artificial fattening, and prizes given to preserve or restore all those races which are specially and variously adapted for different localities, different climates, and consequently, different pastures.¹¹⁰

As mentioned earlier the pedigree sheep, cows and pigs tended to be black as this was thought by Lady Llanover to be once typical of Welsh breeds. Using the voice of the traveller, she gives a detailed romantic and ultimately overblown description of a Welsh sheep:

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 351.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 349-50.

¹⁰⁸ St Fagans, 1810/1-6, (5) Darlith ar Llanofer gan T.A. Williams, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Lady Llanover, *The First Principles of Good Cookery*, p. 320.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 203.

The Welsh sheep certainly is one of the most symmetrical animals I ever beheld, and appears to particular advantage when black, their arched necks, slender legs, small, compact, and well-proportioned bodies, their long graceful tails, and picturesque curling horns, with their soft dark fleeces and brilliant dark eyes, would render them fit studies for Rosa Bonheur.¹¹¹

Lady Llanover's aim was to invite the reader to believe that the Welsh way of life was intrinsically special and therefore should be striven toward. It would appear that everything that is recommended in the book was formalised at Llanover. Her devotion toward the Welsh woollen industry was well known by 1867, but in the book it is reiterated:

It must also be remembered that the Welsh wool is of a very fine quality, and peculiarly well adapted for cloth as well as flannel, and those native Welsh cottages who are still wise enough to make use of their wool-wheels, produce a home spun cloth which like the brocades of old, is so durable that they may almost be considered as heir-looms.¹¹²

Lady Llanover had used the same justifications for promoting the production of wool in her prize-winning essay. In *The First Principles of Good Cookery*, the Hermit had the wool of his flock woven just as Lady Llanover had her wool woven at Gwenffrwd. She makes plain her hostility towards the era of mass manufacturer, which in her opinion represented the exploitation of poor and hardworking people. To illustrate the point the Hermit takes the traveller to visit a Welsh weaver:

This Welsh mountain weaver had a water wheel to work his spinning-jenny and wove with his loom: the manufacture is almost indestructible, and although not of a romantic turn of mind, the Traveller could not help saying to himself, he hoped the evils of large manufactories might long be averted from that happy region where a troop of thriving merry children repaired to the weaver's from the neighbouring cottages, to pick wool in a healthy atmosphere, for their daily wages and after a fine

¹¹¹ Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899) a French born artist and one of the foremost animal painters of her day. Lady Llanover, *The First Principles of Good Cookery*, p. 349.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 347.

walk returned in the evening, through pure air and fine scenery, as merry and happy as they went.¹¹³

It is highly likely what Lady Llanover had in mind here was a description of life at Llanover, it highlights that she wanted outside observers to believe that life on her estate was idyllic. The 'happy region' mentioned in the extract was her creation. Her cultural utopia did not only exist on the pages of her book, to her mind it was real. In her ideal Welsh community depicted in the cookbook the Welsh language was held in high esteem and in life Lady Llanover expressed a sense of personal fulfilment and delight in communicating with her tenants in the vernacular.¹¹⁴ It seems she was aware of the innate snobbery displayed by the higher-ranking classes when it came to using the Celtic languages in every day life and this is dismissed forcefully in her cookbook:

He [the traveller] exclaimed that he had no doubt that he would have learned much quicker if it had not been for the Hermit's obstinacy in always speaking Welsh to the widows, although they could understand English enough to obey the few directions that they required.....the Hermit... replied, with the greatest of good humour, that he considered that every soul had as absolute right to use his own language as the beast and birds, and that if he had not been the countryman of his servants, he would still be proud to speak as much of their language as he was able to acquire; but that he knew well that the Welsh diminished in value (as human beings) in exact proportion as they became indifferent to their own land, which indifference was always produced more or less by the abandonment of their own native tongue, and that he would never promote the deterioration of intellectual beings... It was absurd and barbarous to suppose that different nations on the face of the earth, created by the Almighty with various talents and various tongues, could be improved by the extinction of any noble language... The Hermit added that he spoke Welsh to the Welsh as a duty as well as a pleasure...¹¹⁵ Any man would be considered insane out of these islands, if he convened meetings to the purpose that all nations should only agree to learn one common language, but that each should abandon its own tongue for the purpose of better cultivation of the human intellect, the preservation and diffusion of literature,

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 201-202.

¹¹⁴ *Western Mail*, 18 January 1896.

¹¹⁵ Lady Llanover, *The First Principles of Good Cookery*, pp. 261-262.

and the maintenance of that nationality which is the mainstay of religion morality, and the support of the throne!’¹¹⁶

We have seen that precisely the same sentiments were articulated in Lady Llanover’s prize-winning essay of 1834. The principles and ethos behind her earlier writing are those which she conveyed in her book some thirty years later. Every attempt was made by her to promote her viewpoint for the sake of what she believed was social solidarity. Lady Llanover’s attitude on matters of charity and self-help are further commended to the reader in a section on the poor laws to be found in *The First Principles of Good Cookery*. Much emphasis was put on community spirit as an important virtue, which, the Welsh possessed in abundance, if the voice of the traveller is to be believed:

It appears that the Welsh have such a horror of the workhouse, and are also naturally kind-hearted, that numerous instances occur of peasants and their wives, who earn their daily bread by hard labour, with children of their own, who have brought up other children who have been put out to nurse with them after their parents have died...rather than surrender them to the parish to be placed in a workhouse.¹¹⁷

Lady Llanover was adept at constructing her own myths in relation to the character of the Welsh people. Nevertheless, one must consider that her tendency to exaggerate their merits had an underlying motive. When Lady Llanover sang the praises of the Welsh people, in this case through the voice of the traveller in her cookbook, she is in part setting out her own standards. Her faith in the good nature of the Welsh people was unshakable. She commented in her work that ‘It now strikes me that friends and relations of persons who are sent to the workhouse would exert themselves in nine cases out of ten, for the liberation of those within its walls.’¹¹⁸ The real message here is that Lady Llanover expected families and friends within tight knit circles to pull together in times of hardship thus preventing the break-up of families and communities. It seems that this too was part and parcel of her utopian ideal.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 263.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 297-98.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 302.

The First Principles of Good Cookery offers perhaps the best and most unambiguous evidence that Lady Llanover set out to recreate Llanover as a Welsh cultural utopia and that she understood the implications of her actions. It is true that Lady Llanover's own words are rare but her cookbook, should not be dismissed, its pages reveal that she had a blueprint for her purpose in life to create and then defend her notion of an ideal Welsh existence. The work clearly sets out the standards she laid down for her estate and perhaps for Wales as a whole. The themes tackled in the work unequivocally match features of life on the Llanover estate. As mentioned previously, it is difficult to measure the book's impact if indeed it had any at all. It was written just before Lord Llanover's death and in her preoccupation with nursing him it seems plausible that promotion of the book and the ideas it contained within were not given priority. Its popularity at the time of publication is not known but that does not diminish its value as an historical source, which expressly conveys Lady Llanover most passionate opinions.

Lady Llanover was part of the modern world yet she was reluctant to take a direct interest in it. In the latter half of her cookbook she exclaimed 'there is certainly no progress made as yet towards inclining the Hermit to the belief that the nineteenth century is an age of remarkable intelligence or special improvement.'¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that the Llanover family fortunes were made through the mass production and global links of the coal and iron industries. The family profits made from the heavy industries enabled the creation of Lady Llanover's cultural utopia. Much of what Lady Llanover found deplorable, be it what she saw as social dysfunction or a loss of culture, was in her mind connected with the processes of urbanisation and industrialisation. Out of this process a new image of Wales and the Welsh formed and it was this new image, which Lady Llanover found difficult to accept. It was this hostility towards the new industrialised society in Wales that led Lady Llanover to make a sustained effort to peel back any hint of Anglicisation on her estate and replace it with her version of what was characteristically Welsh. Her project was all encompassing: It included building a new home as a focal point to nurture Welsh culture in the style of the former landed Welsh gentry. Furthermore she guaranteed that her country estate was a haven in which to live out the traditions of

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 377.

Wales. When the indigenous Welsh speaking population depleted she extended the 'special privilege' of living in Llanover to the wider Welsh speaking population of the Principality. To keep her community in order and to fulfil her maternal duty to her staff and tenants she took a great interest in the welfare and lifestyle of her people and the determination with which she strove for her goals became legendary; according to the South Wales Daily News in 1896:

..and when asked how it was that she almost invariably attained the ends for which she strove, "By remembering my mothers advice," was her reply, "never to lose sight of your object or any other opportunity of furthering it."¹²⁰

Unlike others in her social position Lady Llanover would never accept the notion that Monmouthshire was part of England; and the fact that some commentators believed this to be the case testifies as to why the identity of the county was accordingly split. Certainly by the late nineteenth century Lady Llanover's views were becoming marginalized. For a person to possess a dual Anglo-Welsh identity was acceptable and normal.¹²¹ Yet Lady Llanover maintained her resolve to ensure that the cultural symbols and customs of her Wales were protected. The use of the Welsh language, costume, performances on the triple harp and the practice of the *Mari Llwyd* may have been declining features of typical Welsh life but not so in Llanover, and this by decree of 'one of the most striking and picturesque figures of the age.'¹²² Certainly, at Llanover the full power and influence of *Gwenynen Gwent* was felt. Every aspect of life was governed and driven toward acting out an ideal Welsh life.¹²³ The cultural symbols of Wales that Lady Llanover had obsessively promoted throughout her life were made relevant to her tenant's lives.

¹²⁰ Cardiff MSS, 3771, Press cuttings, 1860-96 relating to Lord and Lady Llanover, *South Wales Daily News*, undated.

¹²¹ See N. Coupland & A. R. Thomas (ed.) *English in Wales: Diversity, Conflict and Change* (Clevedon, 1990)

¹²² *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 January 1896.

¹²³ S. R. Williams, 'Llwydlas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg', p. 120.

Conclusion

During Lady Llanover's long life it was perhaps inevitable that the prescribed Welsh character of the Llanover estate would erode following the death of its inventor. The residents of Llanover eventually stopped acting out the Welsh life. On 17 January 1896 the aged matriarch suffered what was in all probability a stroke, much to the distress of one of her maids who in a letter to her sister recalled the last hours of Lady Llanover:

I saw a change in her face, rushing to her and at the same time calling for Miss T & Miss Evans, I lifted her up in my arms to get her to breathe as I supposed and asked her Arglwyddes annwyl to speak to me, she groaned and was not seen breathing hardly after. Miss T was there when she moaned her last, but we not believing it was over held her up for more than [an] hour and 30 minutes.¹

It took some time for her servants to accept that their mistress was dead. Even though two months short of her ninety-fourth birthday, given their acute awareness of her Ladyship's tenacious personality perhaps the servants thought she might begin to breathe again. Lady Llanover's maid told her own sister 'it was what we expected – but oh it came so sudden.' They had to finally recognize, 'Mae 'ein Arglwyddes hannwyl wedi mynd'² [*Our dear Lady has gone*]. The death of Lady Llanover marked the end of an era. In a letter to her cousin, Betha Johnes leaves one in no doubt of that fact. She said of Lady Llanover 'no one can replace the dear old friend in her old home. But it is best she should be at peace, and at the age of 94, she died as she had lived, a worker.'³ With Lady Llanover's death came the end of her cultural dream.

Augustus Hare said of Lady Llanover, 'the Queen of England gets her own way sometimes- the Queen of South Wales, always!'⁴ In all likelihood his statement was not far from the truth. In Chapter One we saw how Lady Llanover's forceful personality was a critical factor in the creation of her Welsh cultural utopia. It seems

¹ NLW MSS, J.M Howell 15I, Letter to Mrs Jones? Re. The last hours of Lady Llanover' [n.d].

² Ibid.

³ NLW MSS, Maxwell Fraser CB/10 (iii) Betha-Johnes letters to Norman MacColl and to 'Uncle' 25 January 1896.

⁴ A. J. C. Hare, *The Story of My Life Volume 5*, p. 228.

she did not realise that the desire to protect one's culture and identity must come from a mass base if it is to survive. One might argue that Lady Llanover, though ambitious and steadfast in her convictions was also in denial of the state of her concept of Wales especially in the latter half of her life. Llanover was transformed into a Welsh colony of her own design because she could not resign herself to where the national culture and identity of Wales was moving. As was discussed in detail in Chapter Two, life at Llanover was geared toward counteracting what Lady Llanover found unacceptable in the new age be it in its cultural or social form. She always looked backed to an older and more romantic life that in reality only existed in its perfect form in her own mind.

Chapter Three argued that Lady Llanover's opinions and cultural campaigns were shaped by a number of factors rather than a single cultural conversion. Her influences included an idyllic country upbringing. But of far more significance were the friendships that she formed in the early part of her life. Lady Greenly and Carnhuanawc undoubtedly inspired and encouraged her to take an interest in the cultural heritage of her country. It is they who successfully alerted her to her position of power and her value as an important contributor to the nineteenth century Welsh cultural revival. Enthused by their work ethic, Lady Llanover was persuaded into joining their circle and this became the stimulus that enabled her to produce her own work on the campaigns that weighed foremost on her mind and closest to her heart. The 1834 Eisteddfod signalled her public arrival as a leading cultural, pragmatic enthusiast among the Eisteddfod circle. Her prize winning essay of that Eisteddfod gave her the opportunity to make public her thoughts on the preservation of the Welsh dress and language and to also air her opinions on religion, patriotism and nationality. Lady Llanover's ideas were developed further by the friendships which she forged through membership of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Society and later, the Welsh manuscript society. Between 1834 and 1853 she took a leading role in the preparation of Eisteddfodau and the arrangement of competitions and prizes. Being aware of her public profile as the wife of an MP and being affluent enough, thanks to her husband's business interests in the coal and iron industry, the couple were able to build a new residence at Llanover. This venue secured for Lady Llanover an influential role within her literary circle of friends. Llanover Hall was deliberately modelled to reflect the age of the landed gentry and Lady Llanover was in her element

as the great hostess, taking pleasure in holding grand dinner dances and celebrations that coincided with the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion Eisteddfodau.

We saw in Chapter Four how Lady Llanover's position as Queen Bee was a reflection of her *nom de plume* as well as her personality. The second half of the thesis has stressed the centrality of Lady Llanover's position in her cultural circle. She made sure that her home became a meeting place for intellectuals of the highest calibre and guests of high social status from all over Britain and Europe. The reputation that Llanover gained as a centre for Welsh scholarship and culture relied on high profile family connections and the ability of Lady Llanover to entertain her guests and motivate interest in Wales. She also took on the responsibility of encouraging the cultural endeavours of those who surrounded her, including the likes of Ysgafell, Llinos and ab Iolo. When one looks closely at the cultural output of her circle it becomes obvious that by using tactics of pressure and manipulation Lady Llanover carved out a place for herself as the main instigator of research and scholarship amongst her friends. The promotion of Llanover Hall as an important focal point for Wales's culture and scholarship was an ambitious venture, one that demanded the acquisition of a great library. Llanover's profile was assured in Wales when Lady Llanover who was something of a bibliophile acquired the famous collection of Iolo Morganwg manuscripts from ab Iolo's poverty stricken widow together with other valuable collections.

Lady Llanover used the Eisteddfod as a vehicle to promote certain cultural symbols as being indicative of Welsh identity. The Welsh costume, triple harp and the Welsh language were examples of desirable and acceptable signifiers of Welsh identity and, as such, she and her cultural allies Lady Greenly and Carnhuanawc promoted them early on through Eisteddfod competitions. By the latter half of the nineteenth century the majority of Lady Llanover's original circle had died. In these changing circumstances she believed that the responsibility had primarily been left to her to maintain the legacy of patronage. Though Lady Llanover did not always act entirely alone it was always she who took the lead in opposing those who believed that there was no longer any value to these aspects of Welsh culture.

In Chapter Five we saw how she made a name for herself in the Principality as one who battled directly against what she saw as the foolish betrayal of Welsh culture. One might say that she wanted to save what she perceived as civilising cultural symbols for the sake of Welsh people. She sought to protect the Welsh costume in order to boost the woollen industry and to give the Welsh people a visible sign and public expression of Welsh identity. In doing so the quaint, respectable image of simple innocence that she wished to attach to the Welsh could also be preserved. The promotion of the triple stringed harp was an opportunity to showcase Welsh musical talent. The instrument was a romantic symbol of her perception of Welsh working class sophistication and in her opinion the most worthy of all instruments to warrant national status. Another important symbol was the Welsh language. In Lady Llanover's mind it was deeply connected to the advancement of religion in Wales. Moreover these were elements of Welsh identity that kept people morally incorruptible, as she saw it. In her bid to strengthen support among the Welsh people for the Established Church, Lady Llanover sought to alert the bishopric to the advantages of harnessing the power of the Welsh language within the church. Failure to appoint native Welsh speaking bishops was excused by a lack of suitable candidates and Lady Llanover's remedy lay in the foundation of Welsh educational institutions. When the teaching of Welsh at St. David's College, Lampeter failed, Lady Llanover played an instrumental part in the foundation of what was intended to be the solution to the language problem, Llandovery College. In time this institution failed in its language obligations but undeterred by these disappointments, Lady Llanover saw that she had the power at Llanover to protect all that was being culturally dismantled in Wales during the nineteenth century.

Under her guidance Lady Llanover's estate became a sanctuary for the symbols of Gwenynen Gwent's Wales. The final chapter of this thesis argued that Lady Llanover believed the only way to save her concept of Wales was to apply all her principles to her estate, where her power was absolute. Llanover, especially in the late nineteenth century became a focus of curiosity for many outside. Here old Wales was artificially kept alive by order of its autocratic ruler. Though some regarded the concept of Llanover as absurd, others derived great pleasure from either living on the estate or being welcomed as a visitor. Nowhere else in southeast Wales was it possible to hear the Welsh language being spoken by Welsh people in Welsh costume

going about their daily lives. Llanover was made a talking point in the Welsh press, which was enchanted by the prospect of estate staff that danced reels to the triple harp and sang traditional airs in Llanover Hall's choir. The Llanover residents were an intrinsic part of this ideal life that fostered a religious outlook and clean living. Llanover gradually turned into a Welsh-speaking colony because when the numbers of local Welsh speaking inhabitants diminished, people from across the Principality were drafted in to replace them, thus adding a national dimension to life at the cultural utopia of Llanover.

Many Welsh people had adopted a new and varied culture in the wake of changes brought about by the nineteenth century but the Llanover estate became almost a living museum. Some of Lady Llanover's ideas about Wales were based on myth and even misconception. Llanover was in essence an imagined community.⁵ Lady Llanover's Welsh colony may have been conceived as an ideal community and social paradise, but one might just as easily describe it as a never-never land or an unattainable dream.⁶ Nevertheless, her quest for her Welsh cultural utopia created debate amongst Welsh people on the nature of Welsh culture, customs and identity. The image of Wales and its culture was to some extent reformed by Lady Llanover and her allies but it was perhaps inevitable that as Wales changed around them, these earlier shapers of Welsh culture fell out of step with popular opinion. Lady Llanover's unyielding attitude meant that she could not relinquish or compromise on any of her principles. To her the success of her project was crucial. To what extent one can measure this success is a matter of debate and opinion. What this thesis has sought to argue is that the process of constructing her version of a perfect Welsh community, and the events and influences that led up to it, was not an accidental combination of individual obsessions on her part, but rather an all-inclusive project of long term ambition.

The complex yet absorbing history of one of the most extraordinary personalities of the nineteenth century has been highlighted in this study but it should be remembered that other women of high social status were to share Lady Llanover's

⁵ See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

⁶ The utopian concept covers all such definitions and that is why the term is present in the title of this work.

passion for Wales and the Welsh people. The intensity of Lady Llanover's project certainly marks her out as unique but other women came to share her interests in Welsh culture and carried some of her campaigns into the twentieth century. Gwendoline and Margaret Davies⁷ whose fortune derived from the industrial business interests of their paternal grandfather David Davies MP, turned their grand mansion at Gregynnog⁸ into a centre for art and music. A press was also established there and so the sisters played an important role in the patronage of art⁹ and literature their collections being bequeathed to the national institutions of Wales in their will. Both women were brought up to respect Methodist and teetotal principles. Their philanthropic works and intellectual social circles would no doubt have met with the approval of Lady Llanover.¹⁰

Comparably, Winifred Coombe Tennant,¹¹ like Lady Llanover before her was an avid Eisteddfod supporter and a member of the gorsedd of the bards. Akin to Lady Llanover she developed a sense of Welsh identity that was of great importance to her. Perhaps her closest connection to Lady Llanover was her love of the Welsh costume. In her diary of 1924 Winifred Coombe Tennant mused, 'If only I can get the robes committee [of the gorsedd] to establish a recognised design and materials and save the Welsh costume from modernising 'fancy dress' deterioration.'¹² No doubt Tennant made this a priority when she was elected to the post of mistress of the robes in 1931.¹³ The lives of such women were also strongly linked with Wales and its cultural identity and so it would seem that the spirit in which Lady Llanover made Wales her life's prime concern had faint echoes in the twentieth century. Into the twenty first century others have continued to promote Lady Llanover's interests and have drawn attention with the assistance of the World Wide Web to her life.¹⁴

⁷ Gwendoline Elizabeth Davies (1882-1951).

Margaret Sidney Davies (1884-1963).

⁸ Gregynnog was conveyed to the University of Wales.

⁹ The sisters bequeathed their art collection to the National Museum of Wales.

¹⁰ www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39573?docPos=3

¹¹ Winifred Margaret Coombe Tennant (1874-1956).

¹² Diary of Winifred Margaret Coombe Tennant, 2 July 1924. Quoted from exhibition information sheet 'National Museum of Wales Cardiff - Winifred Coombe Tennant: A Life Through Art' 26 July-9 November 2008.

Also See P. Lord, *Winifred Coombe Tennant: A Life Through Art* (Cardiff, 2007).

¹³ www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70091?docPos=3

¹⁴ See Lady Llanover Society Website, www.ladyllanover.org.uk

Lady Llanover website by Helen Forder, web.ukonline.co.uk/gwenynnen.gwent/Home.htm

Updated Lady Llanover website by Helen Forder, web.ukonline.co.uk/h.forder/

Tantalising questions concerning Lady Llanover remain unanswered. One can surmise that she would have approved of some of the activities of the women exemplified above. However the research for this work has not uncovered the attitude of Lady Llanover to a number of interesting subjects. It would be invaluable to know Lady Llanover's reaction to the Suffrage movement and the Welsh colony at Patagonia. One might suppose that Lady Llanover was not an advocate of women's suffrage. There is little or no evidence to indicate that she took an interest in suffrage either in a positive or a negative sense but what is known is that Lady Llanover was conservative in her outlook toward the role of women. Her view was that the responsibility of women was to run the family home and keep the traditional customs, language and identity of the Welsh alive and relevant. As was highlighted earlier in this thesis, any advancement of women out of their so-called traditional sphere seems to have been met with disapproval in her writing.

It would be equally rewarding to know what Lady Llanover made of Michael D Jones's¹⁵ Welsh colony at Chubut in Patagonia. The first settlers arrived in July 1865 and unfortunately no evidence has come to light to suggest that Lady Llanover was either in favour or against the prospect of Welsh people settling in Patagonia. It is puzzling that her opinion on the subject was not been articulated in the Welsh press or in her correspondence. Her knowledge of Welsh affairs was comprehensive and so it is almost impossible to imagine that Lady Llanover was unaware of *Y Wladfa*. Michael D. Jones was also concerned about the erosion of Welsh identity as was Lady Llanover. He came to believe that by relocating an entirely Welsh community to a new and isolated setting, free from the external influences of Anglo-centric culture, the Welsh community might flourish. It is feasible to draw parallels between Lady Llanover's endeavours and that of Michael D. Jones's ambition to secure Welsh culture and identity abroad. Both projects were based on a utopian ideal but Lady Llanover stood firm in her belief that Welsh people should have the means and the freedom to express their culture and identity in their homeland. The Llanover estate was a small section of the Principality reserved for the Welsh who matched Lady Llanover's criteria for inclusion. Certainly the few who emigrated to America from

the Llanover estate to the USA did not go with her Ladyship's full blessing. With so little evidence left behind on Lady Llanover's views on emigration one can only infer that her passions were not raised sufficiently to warrant comment on the Welsh community at Patagonia but instinct might lead one to tentatively suggest that she did not approve of the Welsh abandoning their motherland.

Since Lady Llanover was voluble in her opinions it is tempting to hypothesise on her reaction to events in Wales following her death. Her grandson could not help but do the same when in 1904-05 Wales was immersed in the excitement of perhaps its most famous and most noteworthy of religious revivals. He told *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* that Lady Llanover had foreseen the event. He told the newspaper how she desired to experience a religious revival as fervent as was seen in the time of John Wesley.¹⁶ It is with the religious revival that the guesswork must end. So many events have altered Wales in the last hundred or so years that one can say with certainty that Lady Llanover would not understand or recognise today's Wales. Still, she does not seem to have been rendered to historical oblivion, her opinions and contributions are debated today as Wales and its people constantly reassess their culture, identity and place in the world. Revisiting the contributions of Lady Llanover to the cultural revival of the nineteenth century is all the more relevant as Wales and Britain embrace a new epoch in the development of its culture and identity in the wake of devolution.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 22 February 1905.

¹⁷ On 25 August 2008 the BBC aired a 'Panorama' programme that debated the nature of British identity.

See Panorama: True Brits.

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/7577539.stm

Appendix



Plate 1: Lady Llanover
Oil Painting by Charles Augustus Mornewick (1863).



Plate 2: Lady Llanover
Sketch reproduced from Llanover and Herbert family album. Gwent Record Office, Misc MSS 1931.



Plate 3: Lord Llanover

Photograph reproduced from Llanover and Herbert family album. Gwent Record Office, Misc MSS 1931.



Plate 4: Llanover Hall

Photograph reproduced from Llanover and Herbert family album. Gwent Record Office, Misc MSS 1931.

117



Cambrian Costumes by Lady Llanover.
No. I. Welsh girl in the costume of part of Gwent.
Printed at the National Library of Wales

118



Cambrian Costumes by Lady Llanover.
No. II. Welsh girl in the costume of part of Gwent.
Printed at the National Library of Wales

125



Cambrian Costumes by Lady Llanover.
No. IX. Welsh girl in the costume of part of Gwent.
Printed at the National Library of Wales

126



Cambrian Costumes by Lady Llanover.
No. X. Welsh girl in the costume of part of Gwent.
Printed at the National Library of Wales

Plate 5: Examples of Costume Designs Accredited to Lady Llanover
Reproduced from post cards printed by the National Library of Wales



Plate 6: Harpist and Triple Harp

Photograph reproduced from Llanover and Herbert family album. Gwent Record Office, Misc MSS 1931.



Plate 7: Tea Drinking in Costume

Photograph reproduced from Llanover and Herbert family album. Gwent Record Office, Misc MSS 1931.



Plate 8: Mrs Herbert and Betha Johnes

Mrs Herbert (Lady Llanover's daughter) stands centre and Betha Johnes is seated studying the picture.

Photograph reproduced from Llanover and Herbert family album. Gwent Record Office, Misc MSS 1931.

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