

Cymdeithas  
Gwenynen Gwent

Lady Llanover Society



December 2003

laith Enaid ar ei thannau

**W**elcome to the first newsletter from Cymdeithas Gwenynen Gwent / Lady Llanover Society. More than 600 people came to the memorable launch of the society on 12<sup>th</sup> October. Everyone was able to enjoy the traditional dancing performed by over 40 members of Cwmni Dawns Werin Caerdydd, and the sound of the Triple Harp Ensemble, Y Rhes Ganol. Three generations of Lady Llanover's descendants were present. Elizabeth Murray expressed delight to receive, on behalf of the Society, a shield bearing the arms of Llandovery College, which Augusta Waddington was instrumental in founding in 1847.

**T**he Society looks forward to seeing as many of our members as possible at our AGM and lecture on the Anniversary of Lady Llanover's Birthday in March 2004. In the meantime we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



## CHRISTMAS AT LLANOVER in 1837

**T**he Christmas season was ushered in by the celebration of the Hall's wedding anniversary on the 4<sup>th</sup> December. This they always shared with their friends and servants, and kept up with feasting and dancing. The week before Christmas, they delighted in the Mari Lwyd, providing plenty of refreshments for the participants who ended their round at Llanover Court. Benjamin, Augusta and their guests retired early in order to be up for the 6 o'clock plygain service in the church, but before going to bed, they all "went to see the potatoes in the cellar".



The service was only the prelude to a day of feasting and merriment. The Great Hall at Llanover was beautifully decorated with holly, mistletoe and other evergreens and Welsh mottoes. Dinner was always on the table by 1.30 pm prompt. A typical feast consisted of six tables for the tenants, who had the choice between two shoulders of mutton roasted, five shoulders of mutton baked, and two legs of mutton roasted on a spit before the fire.

There were also four half rounds of baked beef, weighing 24lb. each, two rounds of boiled beef, weighing 38lb. each, one enormous piece of beef, roasted on a spit, seven roasted spare ribs, seven geese, five gible pie, fifty plum puddings, and 240 mince pies. The pies were made from a special Llanover recipe, which in the original included currants, lemon juice and peel, sugar, sweet almonds, cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, apples and marrow. Later the recipe was adapted to changing tastes by omitting the marrow, and adding chopped beef, raisins, beef suet, candied lemon peel, citron and wine. The size of the puddings can be gauged by the recipe "sufficient for 20 puddings". The ingredients were 34 lb. of flour, 10 lb. suet, 10 lb. split raisins, 7 lb. currants, and 6 lb. of sugar, together with spice and candied lemons. Another recipe gives equal quantities of everything, with candied lemon and citron to taste.

The guests were also served with ten rice puddings, made with chopped suet, rice, eggs and sugar, and split or chopped raisins; ten apple tarts, ten currant cakes, and ten seed cakes. There were also piles of oranges, gingerbreads, apples and nuts on the tables, from which the guests could help themselves.

While this meal was being digested, the harpist played for the more gifted servants and villagers to sing, and prizes were presented to the singers. Those who were too old or too ill to come to the house were sent joints, pies and provisions, and if need be, firing and clothing.

After the entertainment, prizes were presented for the competitions, which had been carefully designed to allow even the humblest cottager to have the chance of winning something. They ranged over the best flocks of Welsh sheep, black or white; best turnips and other vegetables; the best whitewashed cottage (including the outhouses and the pigsties), and the best gardens of flowers or of vegetables.

This was followed by a bumper tea for the children, with plenty of cakes and jellies, and dancing, which began at six o'clock, and went on until midnight, with intervals for more songs. Merry Welsh jigs and folk-dance, and Welsh reels, sped the evening by, and this was the origin of the Llanover eight-handed reel, now one of the most popular of those recorded, and printed by the Welsh Folk-Dance Society.

Five days later, there were the Twelfth Night festivities, with a big Twelfth Night cake, and the ceremonial taking down of the Christmas decorations.

*Abridged from an article written by Maxwell Fraser M.A.*

## **Society AGM and Inaugural Lecture - Sunday March 21<sup>st</sup> 2004**

Ty Uchaf Gardens open 2-5pm in Aid of NGS, extensive collection of Magnolias, spring bulbs and Camellias. Home made Teas. Welsh Folk Dancing performed by Gwerinwyr Gwent.

AGM - 5.30pm at The Angel Hotel, Abergavenny. All members very welcome.

Inaugural Lecture - 6.00pm at The Angel Hotel given by Emeritus Professor Hywel Teifi Edwards "ABERGAVENNY & ITS EISTEDDFODAU"  
Members: Free, Non-members: £3.00

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