

Paternalism and rural protest: the Rebecca riots and the landed interest of south-west Wales*

by Lowri Ann Rees

Abstract

The role of the landed interest in nineteenth-century rural protest movements was largely marginalised in earlier works. In recent years, however, historians have been redressing the balance, moving the focus to the experiences of authority figures. This article describes the involvement of the landed interest of south-west Wales in the Rebecca Riots, concentrating mainly on the summer and autumn months of 1843. The theme of paternalism is discussed in relation to the riots, followed by case studies of attacks made upon the landed interest by Rebecca and her daughters. The particular methods of intimidation employed by the rioters are considered, as well as the response of the elite to these attacks and their attempts at suppressing Rebecca. Letters sent by landlords to the Home Office and newspapers accounts are used to shed more light on the experiences and responses of the landed interest.

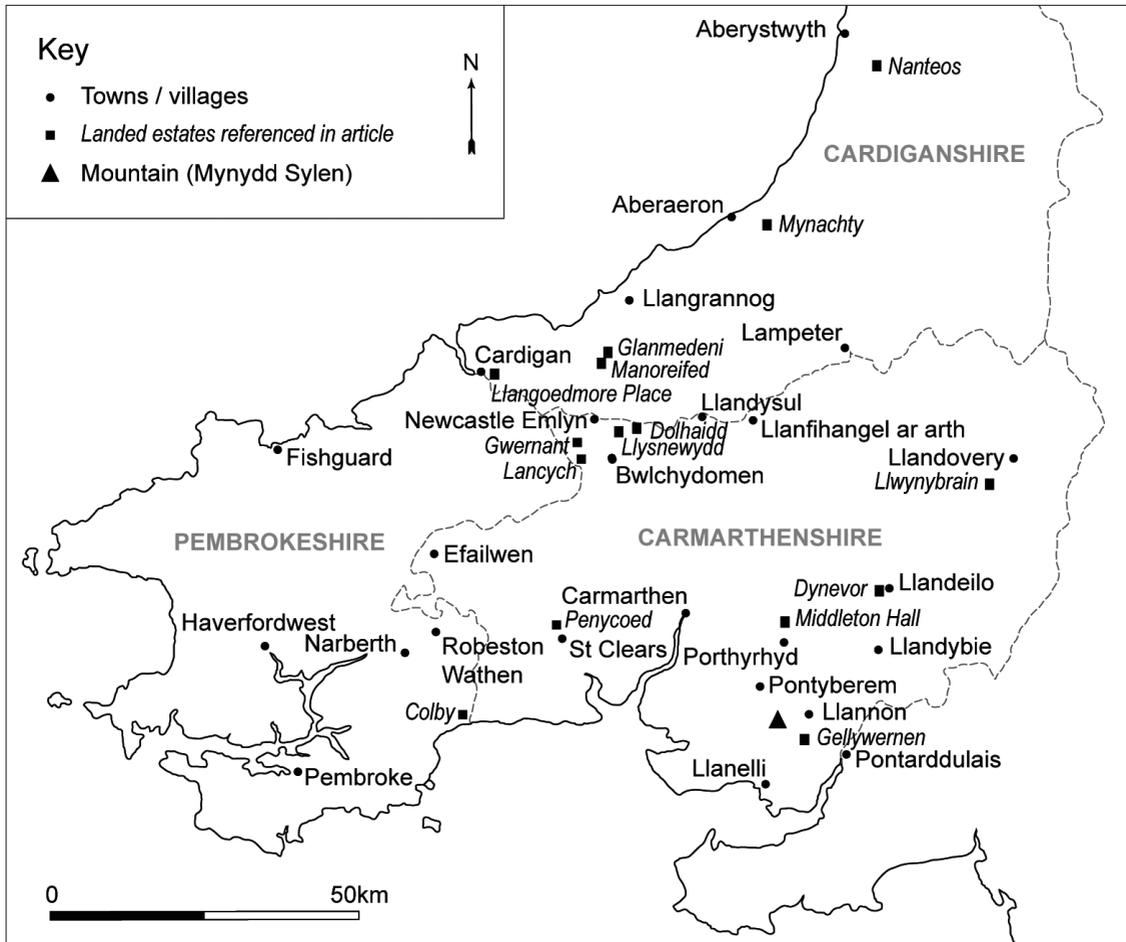
During the late 1830s and early 1840s, south-west Wales saw widespread rebellious activities by a band of men who called themselves the daughters of Rebecca. Their first recorded appearance was during the summer of 1839, when men disguised in women's clothing demolished a tollgate at Efailwen, on the border between Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. Rebecca and her daughters largely disappeared after that summer, only to re-emerge stronger than before during the winter of 1842, their nocturnal attacks continuing throughout 1843. Their presence was felt across the counties of the south-west, and, as Gwyn A. Williams claimed, 'within a few months south-west Wales had become ungovernable; there seemed to be no law west of Swansea'.¹ This outbreak of violence came as a great shock, especially as Wales had long been perceived as a peaceful and quiet nation, its inhabitants respectful of life and property. Indeed, in a speech to Parliament during the autumn of 1843, Queen Victoria declared Wales to have been, up until that point, 'the most loyal and obedient of her territories'.² The Queen feared her government had grossly 'underestimated' the riots and, whilst the increasingly violent

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¹ G. A. Williams, *When was Wales? A history of the Welsh* (1985), p. 193.

² D. J. V. Jones, 'Rebecca, crime and policing: a turning-point in nineteenth-century attitudes', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1990), p. 101.

However, the disturbances in Merthyr in 1831 and Newport in 1839, preceding the Rebecca riots, contradict this image, as do other instances of rural protest; therefore, Wales was not as law-abiding and subservient as contemporaries initially believed.



MAP 1. South-west Wales during the Rebecca Riots.

disturbances in Ireland were geographically further afield, the riots in south-west Wales were uncomfortably close. Importantly, they could damage the image of a stable and peaceful British Empire.³ In addition, the secrecy behind the movement provoked much fear, for, as David J. V. Jones wrote: ‘in Ireland one could expect opposition, but the behaviour, attitudes and language of Welsh people made it more difficult to anticipate unrest’.⁴

The Rebecca riots form a well-chronicled chapter in Welsh history, but a largely overlooked aspect of the disturbances is the experience of the elite. A considerable amount of the historiography focuses on the rioters themselves, including the socio-economic pressures which drove them to commit acts of destruction.⁵ This is attributed to the emergence of ‘history

³ Jones, ‘Rebecca, crime and policing’, p. 99.

⁴ D. J. V. Jones, ‘The Welsh and crime, 1801–1891’, in C. Emsley and James Walvin (eds), *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians, 1760–1860* (1985), p. 82.

⁵ The main works are D. J. V. Jones, *Rebecca’s Children: a study of rural society, crime, and protest* (1989) and D. Williams, *The Rebecca Riots* (1955).

from below' during the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the works of Eric Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson.⁶ In addition, the Rebecca riots were not a political movement in the same sense as Chartism was, and therefore have not been afforded attention in political histories. In the most comprehensive study of the riots, *Rebecca's Children* (1989), Jones sets out to place the riots in the wider context of the evolving rural society, but focusing on 'Rebecca's children, the peasantry of Wales'. He gives due attention to the experiences of the landed classes during the riots, but this is largely in relation to the rioters.⁷ In this respect, the reactions and responses of elites have been largely neglected. Adrian Randall and Edwina Newman have highlighted the way in which the landlord is largely missing from many works on nineteenth-century rural protest, including that of Roger Wells.⁸ However, recent works on protest history show a renewed interest in the experience of authority figures. Amongst the writers who have sought to place the figures of authority in a central position are Peter Jones, Katrina Navickas and Steve Poole.⁹

Following this trend in the historiography, this article will therefore consider the riots from a different perspective, that of the landed interest, specifically looking at those who acted as local figures of authority, such as landlords and magistrates, during the turbulent time of the Rebecca Riots. The article is structured as follows. The first section will discuss the idea of paternalism in relation to the riots, and in particular, the demands of the rioters. This will be followed by a study of the grievances voiced by the rioters, before detailing the methods of attack they employed when targeting the landed elite. There will then be an account of the response of the landed interest to these Rebecca attacks. Case studies of particular attacks will be considered thematically according to the method of intimidation employed in order to highlight patterns that emerge. The chronological range will be narrow in focus, concentrating mainly on the summer and autumn months of 1843, a period when attacks intensified and changed in nature, as David J. V. Jones explained: 'in the autumn of 1843 the use of the torch and the destruction of farm produce and private property seemed to be as popular as the removal of tollgates'.¹⁰ Out of more than 530 attacks carried out in Rebecca's name between 1839 and 1843, nearly half had nothing to do with the tollgates. Jones believes such attacks to be a central part of what is considered 'Rebeccaism', although they have been portrayed as sinister elements, demonstrating the movement straying from its original objective and taking an unsavoury slant.¹¹

⁶ E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (1962); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).

⁷ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*.

⁸ A. Randall and E. Newman, 'Protest, proletarians and paternalists: Social conflict in rural Wiltshire, 1830–1850', *Rural Hist.*, 6 (1995), p. 205.

⁹ P. Jones, 'Finding Captain Swing: Protest, parish relations, and the state of the public mind in 1830', *Int.*

Rev. of Social History, 54 (2009), pp. 429–58; K. Navickas, 'The search for "General Ludd": the mythology of Luddism', *Social Hist.*, 30 (2005), pp. 281–95; S. Poole, "'A lasting and salutary warning": Incendiarism, rural order and England's last scene of crime execution', *Rural Hist.*, 19 (2008), pp. 163–77.

¹⁰ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p. 256.

¹¹ Jones, 'Rebecca, crime and policing', pp. 104, 111.

I

Even before Rebecca turned her sights towards the property of the elite, many of the gentry were greatly alarmed by her activities. Mary Anne Rice, wife of Major Walter Rice of Llwynybrain, whilst holidaying at Ostend in September 1842, lamented the situation back home:

I hope peace will be restored soon, and that a bountiful harvest will not only give employment to the idle, and bread to the poor, but will also prove an inducement to peace and good will.¹²

The gentry strongly believed that ownership of property afforded them special rights and duties, which included ruling, helping and guiding the lower orders of society. Crimes against property were therefore dealt with harshly, magistrates believing they had to protect their own interests. In this climate the landed interest became far less tolerant of rural unrest. Sharon Howard describes a general European phenomenon, the ‘withdrawal of the upper classes’, which saw the elite distance themselves from any riotous activities that took place in their local communities. Especially after the outbreak of the Revolution in France, the elite ‘were far less likely to collude in any violent collective activity that involved criticism of their behaviour’.¹³ Across Britain, the deterioration of this tolerance was fuelled by a series of riots during the late eighteenth century, whilst the impact of the French Revolution shook the whole country. As Adrian Randall has argued, many historians have seen the era of the French Revolution as alarming to the ‘English *ancien regime*’, forcing them to adopt more stringent methods of social control.¹⁴ E. P. Thompson argued that this fear was amongst the main factors that changed the attitude of the elite towards their authority role.¹⁵

Central is the debate regarding the breakdown of deference in Wales. In one of the first full-length studies of the Rebecca riots, David Williams drew attention to the paternalism of the gentry, and its erosion, due partly to the growing number of absentee landowners. The distancing of the gentry and absence of educated leadership had a detrimental impact on the community. Traditionally the gentry expected those lower down the social scale to look up to them with respect, and as this deference was steadily eroded, the gentry lost faith in the people’s goodwill and honesty.¹⁶ David J. V. Jones’s work supports this theory, suggesting that the ties of paternalism were becoming strained by the turn of the nineteenth century. Jones explains that ‘the gentry were ... judged by the assistance which they gave to Bible societies, missionary work, and the poor’.¹⁷ This was the outward display of their paternalism, their concern for the less fortunate members of society, providing moral and religious guidance and support. However, amongst the areas of ideal behaviour being abandoned were, according to Jones, those involving direct social contact with the rest of society. The landed were accused of

¹² Carmarthenshire Record Office [hereafter CRO], Aberglasney 3, MSS 20/532, Mary Anne Rice, Ostend, to John Walters Philipps, Aberglasney, 19 Sept. 1842.

¹³ S. Howard, ‘Riotous community: crowds, politics and society in Wales, c.1700–1840’, *Welsh History Rev.*, 20 (2001), p. 673.

¹⁴ A. Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular protest in*

Hanoverian England (2006), p. 314.

¹⁵ E. P. Thompson, ‘The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century’, *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), p. 136.

¹⁶ D. Williams, *The Rebecca Riots* (1955, 1986 edn.), pp. 17–18.

¹⁷ Jones, *Rebecca’s Children*, p. 116.

growing distant, and of failing to invest their time and money in fostering the good relationship that had previously existed between landlord and tenant. Landlords were blamed for not taking a direct interest in farming, allowing agents to inspect their farms on their behalf. There was a feeling that the gentry were deliberately distancing themselves from the rest of society, with whom they had very little in common, most notably in terms of language and religion.¹⁸

Indeed, Rebecca and her daughters questioned the central role of the landed interest in rural society. In a letter, reprinted in the *Carmarthen Journal* in October 1843, Rebecca criticised those members of the elite who had moved away from more traditional methods of charitable bequests.¹⁹ Individual landlords were targeted by Rebecca, as shall be seen later in this article, an especial grievance being high levels of rent. Due to dire economic circumstances, it was increasingly difficult for tenants to pay their rent, with some landlords forced to tolerate arrears. With the drop in profits of agricultural produce, tenants sought a corresponding reduction in the level of rents, as much as 4s. in every pound. Whilst a small number of landlords were willing to reduce their rents, many stood their ground, only lowering their rents after a threat from Rebecca. Many contemporaries believed, as Jones explains, that 'it was the inflexibility of landowners which turned the crisis into confrontation'.²⁰

'Landlord tyranny', as Jones describes it, became a popular topic amongst those who opposed the landed interest, with many blaming landlords for turning deferential and peaceful tenants into violent rioters. Whilst absenteeism was blamed for the riotous behaviour, Jones claims that when evidence to the contrary surfaced, the blame was shifted to the newly wealthy landowners, who were said to be ignorant of such paternalistic customs.²¹ Roger Wells has argued that although the gentry's paternalistic role in rural society had severely deteriorated, they still expected obedience and deference from their tenants and dependents. Wells claimed that 'the final nail in the coffin of rural paternalism' was, amongst other factors, the elite's support of the New Poor Law, and the harsh punishments they imposed on Swing rioters, arguing that in its place there developed a new class consciousness amongst the agricultural labourers.²²

Conversely, Matthew Cragoe's model of the 'moral economy of the landed estate' sees landlord and tenant co-existing more harmoniously, with greater adherence to deferential and patriarchal codes. Cragoe believes that nonconformists and the Liberal press were behind the spreading of anti-landlord sentiments, exaggerating the impact of certain events, such as rural unrest, on the landlord-tenant relationship.²³ In support of Cragoe's theory, we see deferential practices prevailing well into the nineteenth century, even during the most turbulent era of the Rebecca riots. For example, the Middleton Hall agent, Thomas Herbert Cooke, whilst reflecting on the threats he had received from the rioters, was confident that his employer was safe:

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.

¹⁹ *Carmarthen J.*, 27 Oct. 1843; Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, pp. 116–17.

²⁰ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p. 149.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95–97.

²² R. Wells, 'Social protest, class, conflict and

consciousness in the English countryside, 1700–1880', in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds), *Class, conflict and protest in the English countryside, 1700–1880* (1990), p. 194.

²³ M. Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy: the moral economy of the landed estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832–1895* (1996).

Mr Adams' politics are a great safeguard to every matter & thing appertaining to him – he is more popular among them than I can well describe: the mob actually *wanted* to take the horses from his carriage, and to draw him into the town of Llandibie [sic] last week.²⁴

In line with Cragoe's thesis, Adrian Randall and Edwina Newman explain, in relation to the Swing riots, that the rioters thought they were right to protest, believing it was through these methods they would have their grievances addressed.²⁵ The same ethos can be applied to the Rebecca Riots: the protestors wanted the removal of the tollgates and the lowering of rents in order to alleviate the economic pressure on them, believing they could appeal to the ties of paternalism that bound rural society together.

Amongst the other factors driving Rebecca and her followers were the socio-economic problems and intense poverty. Other protest movements highlighting the plight of the poor included the Chartists, Luddites, Blanketeers, anti-Poor Law demonstrations and the Swing riots. According to G. E. Mingay, the Swing riots are the most notorious instance of rural unrest amongst agricultural workers in the history of modern England.²⁶ By the close of the eighteenth century, corn riots were prominent in Wales, and although food riots had been common throughout the century, Jones maintains the corn riots came to take on a much more dangerous dimension. Into the nineteenth century, although there were fewer instances of food riots, such disorders still took place, including the Carmarthen cheese riot of 1818, and a riot in Fishguard in 1827 in response to the export of corn.²⁷ In Cardiganshire, the enclosure riots sparked by Augustus Brackenbury's enclosure of common land, purchased in 1819 from the government, resulted in him being driven away by arson attacks and intimidation.²⁸ The Carmarthen riots of 1831 were spurred on by clashes between the lower and middling orders, who were anxious to see reform, and those predominantly of the landed orders, who opposed the reform bill. In addition, rising unemployment and low wages, especially amongst craftsmen, sailors and fishermen, intensified the violence.²⁹ Anti-poor law agitation in Wales was also fuelled by growing unemployment, with strong objections to the establishment of the workhouses. Therefore, with the memory of these riots still fresh in the mind of local magistrates and landowners, it is no wonder that they were anxious to silence Rebecca from the outset.

In his work on the moral economy, E. P. Thompson claimed riots were played out between those who wanted to maintain customary rights and the figures of authority who were charged with keeping order.³⁰ He argued that such riots were far from senseless acts of random violence, and were instead organised and disciplined, with threatening letters sent to warn wrongdoers, who, if they did not right their wrongs, faced punishment through a mechanism of community justice.³¹

A long-standing tradition of community justice influenced the Rebecca riots, as it did

²⁴ National Library of Wales [hereafter NLW], MSS 21209 C, Thomas Herbert Cooke, Llanddarog, to his mother, Northampton, 3 Sept. 1843.

²⁵ Randall and Newman, 'Protest, proletarians and paternalists', p. 209.

²⁶ G. E. Mingay, "'Rural War': the life and times of Captain Swing", in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Unquiet Countryside* (1989), p. 36.

²⁷ D. Jones, *Before Rebecca: Popular protest in Wales, 1793–1835* (1973), pp. 13, 206.

²⁸ E. Jones, *War of the Little Englishman: the enclosure riots on a lonely Welsh hillside* (2007).

²⁹ D. J. V. Jones, 'The Carmarthen riots of 1831', *Welsh History Rev.* 4 (1968), pp. 129–42.

³⁰ Thompson, 'Moral economy', pp. 76–136.

³¹ E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (1991), p. 224.

many other protest movements. Whilst the rituals varied from district to district, from the skimmington of south-west England, the rough music of the Midlands and the *ceffyl pren* (wooden horse) of Wales, they all exhibited similar features. Traditionally the *ceffyl pren* was a wooden prop, such as a ladder or cart, on to which the offender was placed and paraded around the vicinity to the accompaniment of rough music. Offenders were subjected to ritualised humiliation, beaten and abused, dragged from their homes, and pelted with mud and stones, before sometimes being immersed in a nearby pond or river. On occasion, an effigy was paraded instead and a sinister ‘execution’ acted out, whereby the effigy was either hung, shot, or burnt. These acts symbolised the notion of turning the world on its head, inverting the balance of power, all in the name of restoring a sense of communal normality. Rosemary Jones explains that the *ceffyl pren* was a particularly effective method of punishment due to the closeness of the rural community:

Those who threatened the social equilibrium invited punishment, and in a society where all members of the community were well-known to each other, public ridicule proved to be the most effective vehicle for the enforcement of social discipline.³²

She explains that attacks administered through the *ceffyl pren* were waged on authority figures in society when they failed to behave paternally towards those lower down the social scale, and it is through this that the link between the *ceffyl pren* and Rebecca is most prominent: ‘Rebecca was well-placed to deride the authorities and remind them, often in threatening tones, of their customary duties’.³³ As David Williams first proposed, many protest movements in early nineteenth century Wales could be seen as extensions of the *ceffyl pren* and its methods of community justice, stating: ‘it is particularly important to notice that these disorders [*ceffyl pren*] occurred in precisely the area which saw the beginning of the Rebecca Riots a few years later’.³⁴ Contemporaries also made the link between Rebecca and community justice, as enacted by the *ceffyl pren* tradition. Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, a barrister who sat on the Quarter Session and held radical political views, referred to the custom, concluding that the use of nocturnal violence to eradicate grievances was a familiar concept to the working class.³⁵ The Lord Lieutenant of Carmarthenshire, and son of Lord Dynevor, Colonel George Rice Trevor, also drew attention to the *ceffyl pren*: ‘These Cyffil [sic] Pren processions were the root of Rebeccaism so far as the *modus operandi* was concerned’.³⁶

³² R. A. N. Jones, ‘Popular culture, policing, and the “disappearance” of the *Ceffyl Pren* in Cardigan, c.1837–1850’, *Ceredigion*, 11 (1988–89), p. 22.

³³ Jones, ‘Popular culture’, pp. 26–7.

³⁴ Williams, *Rebecca Riots*, p. 53. More work needs to be done on the innovation evident in Rebecca in

relation to the *ceffyl pren* and the idea of community justice.

³⁵ TNA, HO 45/454, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, Emlyn Cottage, Newcastle Emlyn, to Sir James Graham, 15 June 1843.

³⁶ Jones, ‘Popular culture’, p. 21.

II

Whilst David Williams declared that ‘the riots were entirely an affair of the small farmers’, David J. V. Jones argued to the contrary.³⁷ Although many of the rioters were farmers, evidence shows that labourers and artisans were also amongst Rebecca’s daughters. These labourers and artisans typically took part in Rebecca activities based in the towns, such as demolishing tollgates at Carmarthen and Haverfordwest. Similarly we find examples of colliers and other non-agricultural labourers taking part in Rebecca activities in the mining districts of Llanon and Pontyberem. It appears, however, that many of the rioters active in the countryside were farmers and agricultural labourers. Of 86 cases of convicted Rebeccaites, where their occupation was stated, two thirds were farmers, labourers and farm servants, with a quarter being farmers. Nonetheless, also amongst this sample were craftsmen such as carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, masons and weavers, in addition to millers, blacksmiths, fishermen, publicans, colliers and other labourers (not including farm labourers). Regarding the age of the rioters, whilst there were exceptions, such as older men and even young boys in their early teens, most of the rioters were in their early twenties.³⁸ In his study of arson attacks during the Swing riots, Carl Griffin concludes that, in this case too, most protestors were in their early twenties, therefore ‘protest was a young man’s game’.³⁹

Initially, the most immediate grievances of the riots seem to have been the turnpikes and the burden of the tolls imposed. One incident that could only have enraged those who scraped together the toll money highlights the flagrant contempt with which some of the landed elite held the tolls. On 13 July 1843, the wife of Colonel Colby refused to pay the toll on passing through a gate near Narberth, and on the following day, one of her servants, William Harris, also refused to pay, but went a step further and broke the toll bar, allowing unrestricted passage. The Reverend Richard Buckley, who alerted the government to the incident, believed if an example were made of the lady, it would show the rioters that law and order always prevailed, regardless of the wealth and status of the individual. The general opinion in the area, according to the Reverend, was that ‘a rich man may do that with impunity for which a poor man would be punished’. The Home Office responded by alerting the magistrates of the district in order to make the matter public. Harris was duly arrested and brought before a Grand Jury, but was ultimately discharged. Whilst Harris’s misdeeds were made known in the press, Mrs Colby’s name was not, her reputation preserved.⁴⁰ However, there were deeper socio-economic elements than the tollgates driving the mob, and, as Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall explained, if the government ministers believed the riots to be ‘a mere local impatience of Turnpike Tolls’, they were greatly deceived.⁴¹ Hall believed the most disliked factors were tithes, followed by the poor rates and then the high level of rents.⁴²

Rental levels rose with prices, but very rarely fell with them. They were a heavy burden for

³⁷ Williams, *Rebecca Riots*, p. 75.

³⁸ Jones, *Rebecca’s Children*, pp. 242–43.

³⁹ C. J. Griffin, “‘The mystery of the fires’: ‘Captain Swing’ as incendiary”, *Southern Hist.*, 32 (2010), p. 40.

⁴⁰ TNA, HO 45/454, Rev. Richard Buckley, Begelly Rectory, Tenby, to Sir James Graham, 24 July 1843; *The*

Times, 21 Oct. 1843.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 15 June 1843.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 23 July 1843.

the tenants to bear, and considered by many as the greatest strain. Agitation about rents was not entirely seditious, and there is evidence that meetings were being called by the rioters to protest at rent levels, with Rebecca urging tenants to pay only what she deemed an appropriate price for the land, usually 20–30 per cent lower than the rent being asked.⁴³ Demands for the permanent reduction of rent to aid the poverty stricken farmers were especially heard in 1843. Whilst Jones explains that it is difficult to give exact figures on the rate and level of rents, his ‘conservative estimate’ is that, between 1793 and 1843, the level of rent in Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire rose by at least 100 per cent.⁴⁴ Rebecca believed that if farmers paid less rent, they would have more money available and could therefore employ more labourers, who were in desperate need of work.⁴⁵ During the nocturnal meetings, tenants were urged not to pay rents that were too high and where the landlord was resisting reducing the rental level. Therefore, farms let at a higher price than their worth fell under Rebecca’s gaze, and tenants foolish enough to take up undesirable leases were visited by the mob at night, often with disastrous consequences. *The Times* correspondent, Thomas Campbell Foster, reporting from south Wales, firmly believed that the gentry’s refusal to lower their rents was at the core of the riots.⁴⁶

The landed interest and the government, many of whose members were landed proprietors, were greatly concerned by this refusal to pay rents, especially considering that many landlords were reliant on their rental income to sustain their estates. Overall, some rents were indeed fair, whilst others were higher due to competition, with landowners believing the land was worth more than it actually was.⁴⁷ The Home Secretary, James Graham, whilst believing bad conduct on behalf of landlords did much to agitate the people to rebellion, also acknowledged that rents had to be collected, and if tenants refused on the grounds set out by Rebecca, then they had to be ejected. Nonetheless, the landlords had a difficult situation on their hands, for if they evicted tenants for refusing to pay their rent, they then had to find replacements, which often proved difficult, as the prospect of a mob of rioters descending on the farm in retaliation was all too real.⁴⁸ Poverty and unemployment were certainly at the root of the riots, and some of the elite recognised this. Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall rather dramatically imparted his opinion:

the men feel that they cannot be worse off and therefore become reckless in exhibiting the real state of their feelings towards their landlords and others to whom in more prosperous times they were accustomed to crouch like the slaves of Jamaica to the planters and overseers.⁴⁹

However, there were also examples of landlords who refused to acknowledge the intense destitution. Edward Lloyd Williams of Gwernant believed the working classes were actually

⁴³ Jones, *Rebecca’s Children*, p. 277.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴⁵ TNA, HO 45/454, ‘A literal translation of a notice in Welsh, on the door of a public house in the parish of Penboyr’, signed Becca, 15 Sept. 1843.

⁴⁶ *The Times*, 17 Nov. 1843; Jones, *Rebecca’s Children*, p. 276.

⁴⁷ D. W. Howell and C. Baber, ‘Wales’, in F. M. L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge social history of Britain, 1750–1950* (3 vols, 1990), I, p. 385.

⁴⁸ Jones, ‘Rebecca, crime and policing’, pp. 112–13.

⁴⁹ TNA, HO 45/454, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 23 July 1843.

better off when compared to ten years previously, holding that bread and butter were at nearly half the prices of 1832.⁵⁰ Ultimately, as David Williams suggests, the socio-economic difficulties often stemmed from problems of government and rural administration in south-west Wales, coupled with the ever-growing population applying uncomfortable pressure on the rural economy.⁵¹

Another grievance which aggravated the rioters was the increasing number of negligent magistrates. The administrative duties on the county level were largely undertaken by the landed classes. Whilst there were certainly examples of competent and fair magistrates, corruption and carelessness were also to be found. Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall felt 'that the further you go westward in this district the more incompetent the magistrates appear to be', and that he believed little confidence was invested in the capabilities of most of the local magistrates.⁵² There is a long history of attacks made upon the character of magistrates, with examples of harsh punishments for petty offences, and even magistrates passing judgements before court hearings took place. It is difficult to ascertain whether the accusations were well founded, but there is evidence to suggest that some magistrates were swayed by financial incentives and bribery.

Corruption was rife, with magistrates rewarding friends and supporters with offers of comfortable offices. A report appeared in *The Welshman*, in late August 1843, highlighting the illegal activities of the Turnpike Trust and magistrates of Aberystwyth. Hall believed this report would lead to more difficulties, as well as reinforcing the popular opinion that magistrates were 'omnipotent', doing as they pleased, regardless of any laws.⁵³ Another landed proprietor harsh in her condemnation of lax magistrates was Miss Jane Walters of Glanmedeni, who was convinced there were too many examples of magistrates abusing their powers. She asserted that if the magistrates had taken a stricter approach to quelling the riots from the outset, the violence would not have escalated.⁵⁴ Although justices were selective in the laws they upheld, with particular focus on the laws that protected property and the propertied class, there was conversely a strong belief that they had a social obligation to the local community and thus carried out their duties as justices. As Cragoe argues, this paternalistic ethos pervaded the landed gentry's outlook on life, in their capacity as landlords, law enforcers, political representatives and heads of country houses.⁵⁵

The Vice Lieutenant of Carmarthenshire believed that virtually anyone who dared stand in Rebecca's way could fall prey to her. In other instances of rural protest, landlords fell victims, but were usually not the predominant target group. Hobsbawm and Rudé, in their influential study of Captain Swing, claim that, as a group, farmers were more often targeted than landlords during the Swing riots. For example, out of 202 arson cases connected with

⁵⁰ Ibid., printed notice issued by Edward Lloyd Williams, Gwernant, near Newcastle Emlyn, entitled 'To the person calling himself Rebecca and to those unlawfully conspiring with him, naming themselves the daughters of Rebecca', 9 July 1843.

⁵¹ Williams, *Rebecca Riots*, p. viii.

⁵² TNA, HO 45/454, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 8 Sept. 1843; Dr Walter D. Jones,

Lancych, Newcastle Emlyn, to Sir James Graham, 7 Aug. 1843.

⁵³ Ibid., Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 2 Sept. 1843.

⁵⁴ See especially Ibid., Jane Walters, Newcastle Emlyn, to the Home Office, 20 Sept. 1843.

⁵⁵ Cragoe, *Anglican aristocracy*, p. 2.

these riots, where the identity of victims were largely verified, a staggering 132 cases involved farmers, with only 36 involving landlords.⁵⁶ However, Roger Wells has argued that whist ‘Swing rocked the foundations of English landed society’, attacks on landlords were less important than previously thought. Indeed, the grievances during the Swing riots predominantly focused on employment and the dissatisfaction with the threshing machines, wages and inadequate welfare provisions.⁵⁷

Whilst similar cases of protests and attacks were taking place in the English countryside, interestingly, no direct connection was made between the two areas. However, contemporaries drew parallels between the situation in Wales and the situation in Ireland, due to the similar protest methods employed, namely mass meetings, incendiarism, violence and even murder. Nonetheless, most contemporaries acknowledged that whilst there were similarities, the ‘movements were at different stages of development and intensity’. In addition, the Rebecca Riots were not a separatist movement, and there were no religious similarities, with Rebecca fearing Catholics in the same way as the nonconformists did.⁵⁸

In south-west Wales, tenant farmers were punished for taking up leases against Rebecca’s commands. The victims of Rebecca’s wrath were varied and so were the motives of attack. In surveying Rebecca attacks not connected to the tollgates, of which there were approximately 235, Jones explained that around 55 per cent of these attacks were against property, and the remaining 45 per cent against people. Attacks on individuals could be spurred on by a sense of community justice, in the style of the *ceffyl pren*, whereby Rebecca was punishing those who disturbed the social equilibrium. Other attacks were launched upon bailiffs, agents, tithe collectors and pound keepers, to name but a few, for their actions linked to their occupation. Even unpopular people within the locality could receive a visit from Rebecca and her daughters, although why exactly they were unpopular is not always clear.⁵⁹ As well as magistrates, other figures of law and order were victimised. During an attack on two gates in the parish of Llanfihangel ar arth, the special constables in charge of protecting the gates were threatened at gunpoint. One of the constables was even ordered to start destroying the gate, which he did, in fear for his life. To add insult to injury, he was ordered to take away the gate posts the following day, thus finishing the work he had been forced to start the night before.⁶⁰ As well as targeting figures of authority or tenants breaking her stand on unjust leases, Rebecca also acted as a moral guardian, including forcing fathers to recognise their offspring in bastardy cases. Their methods were enough to strike fear into the hearts of those men, with Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall declaring quite dramatically: ‘this appears to be decidedly the Lynch law of America’.⁶¹ Clergymen were also under attack during the riots, for a variety of reasons, most notably for preaching against Rebecca. Reverend Eleazar Evans of Llangrannog

⁵⁶ E. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (1969, 2001 edn.), pp. 229, 236.

⁵⁷ R. Wells, ‘Historical trajectories: English social welfare systems, rural riots, popular politics, agrarian trade unions, and allotment provision, 1793–1896’, *Southern Hist.*, 25 (2003), pp. 98–99.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Rebecca’s Children*, pp. 342–43.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁶⁰ TNA, HO 45/454, note from George Rice Trevor, Carmarthen, accompanying a letter to the Home Office, 30 June 1843.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 20 Aug. 1843.

considered resigning his living, selling up and leaving the country for his native England, after receiving several threatening letters from Rebecca.⁶²

III

Members of the landed elite were targeted by Rebecca in their capacity as landlords, but also as magistrates. As landlords they were accused of demanding high levels of rent, and treating or dismissing tenants unfairly. We have also seen how the magistrates were held to be corrupt and partial towards their friends. In their magisterial duties they were charged with acting too harshly, especially when it came to sentencing rioters who had been captured. However, a gentleman, in his capacity as either landlord or indeed magistrate, could enflame Rebecca and her followers by denouncing their activities publicly. Many landlords received anonymous letters threatening an attack directed at their property, or even person, in retaliation for some wrongdoing they had supposedly committed. This was a tactic that could unsettle the recipient of the letter without much danger of the writer being identified and punished, as Jane Walters lamented: 'the threatening letters which they [the landlords] receive reminds them that their lives their families and their property is in danger every moment'.⁶³ There are numerous examples of both landlords and prominent gentlemen receiving such letters during 1843. For example, threatening letters were sent to the Lord Lieutenant of Carmarthenshire, Colonel Trevor, and his father, Lord Dynevor, 'vowing the destruction by fire of their property and lives'.⁶⁴ As Chairman of the Llanelli Union, William Chambers received a letter from Rebecca ordering him to release the poor from the workhouse before 24 June or Rebecca's children 'will clean it out when they come'.⁶⁵

Several landlords received anonymous letters ordering them to lower their rents. Alban L. Gwynne of Mynachty wrote to the Home Office on 12 August 1843 after receiving a threatening letter ordering him to reduce his rents by 30 per cent.⁶⁶ Another demand was for landlords to reimburse tenants who had paid too much rent, sometimes referring to individuals, as in the following example. The Deputy Lieutenant of Cardiganshire, S. R. P. Wagner of Manoreifed, near Newcastle Emlyn, received a letter signed by 'Becca' demanding a late tenant, John Thomas, be reimbursed the sum of £41; accusing Wagner and his like of 'savagness [sic] towards tenants', concluding 'you know that it is no lost [sic] to me if you all should be burnt'.⁶⁷ Becca also sent a letter to one of Wagner's servants, explaining that, if his master failed to pay back the tenant, Rebecca and her daughters would tear down his country seat in less than three quarters of an hour, with his life being placed in jeopardy.⁶⁸ Some were called upon to reimburse servants, such as Jane Walters of Glanmedeni, who received a letter,

⁶² Ibid., Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 8 Sept. 1843.

⁶³ Ibid., Jane Walters, to the Home Office, 20 Sept. 1843.

⁶⁴ Ibid., J. Lloyd Davies, Allt yr Odin, Carmarthen, to the Home Office, 14 June 1843.

⁶⁵ Ibid., William Chambers, Llanelli House, Carmarthenshire, to Sir James Graham, 25 June 1843.

⁶⁶ Ibid., A. L. Gwynne, to Sir James Graham, 12 Aug. 1843.

⁶⁷ Ibid., copy of a letter sent to S. R. P. Wagner, Manoreifed, near Newcastle Emlyn, signed Becca, 3 Aug. 1843; Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 19 Aug. 1843.

⁶⁸ Ibid., copy of a letter sent to S. R. P. Wagner's servant, signed Becca, 3 Aug. 1843.

signed by Rebecca, requesting she pay one of her late father's former servants, Dina Davies of Rhydyentre, the owed sum of £1, in addition to the interest generated over the past twenty years. The letter finished with a threat of a visit from Rebecca if the money was not paid by 20 September.⁶⁹ Other letters called for the landlord to reimburse not only individual tenants, but all tenants who had paid a high rental on their property. The landlord of Gwernant, near Newcastle Emlyn, Edward Lloyd Williams, issued a printed notice addressing the rioters, having received a threatening letter demanding he reimburse all his tenants 5s. in every pound before the next rent day. If he failed to comply, Rebecca and her daughters vowed to maim his livestock, and attack his farms and even his house.⁷⁰

In addition to threatening letters addressed to specific individuals, there were also instances of the rioters pinning up notices for public display, warning of impending attacks. The night before a Petty Sessions meeting, a threatening notice written in Welsh was left at Bwlchydomen, vowing that the nearby bridge would be demolished in order to intercept communications and stop the following day's proceedings; if the magistrates dared retaliate, 'fire would be applied to Property, the lives of the magistrates in jeopardy'.⁷¹ The communicator of this news, J. Lloyd Davies, was not perturbed by the threat to property; nonetheless, this was in April 1843, and up until then, little damage had been done to private property. Perhaps his reaction would have been slightly more alarmed had events taken place later in that year. Therefore, Davies's nonchalant response begs the question, did these letters actually have the desired effect? Jones suggests that as with all anonymous letters received in rural areas, 'those of Rebecca had to be taken seriously'.⁷² But it is virtually impossible to discover what feelings these letters evoked in the hearts of their recipients. One can assume fear was the predominant emotion, but some must have felt shame and embarrassment at being singled out. Others exhibited disbelief, or were even suspicious, such as Edward Lloyd Williams, who appeared to doubt whether his letter was actually from the Rebeccaites, thinking 'some cowardly rascal' had used Becca's name for effect.⁷³ However, it seems Rebecca's demands to lower rents did have an impact on some, with Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall claiming that, locally, landlords were returning between 5 and 20 per cent of their rents, he himself even acting on behalf of his father, who had received a Rebecca letter, demanding tenants be reimbursed.⁷⁴

What followed the verbal attacks in the threatening letters and notices were usually physical attacks upon private property. However, it is difficult to conclude how frequently threats were followed up with direct action and whether all recipients of letters fell under attack. Nonetheless, many landlords lost crops to fires, found livestock maimed, and even whole farm buildings ablaze. According to Jones, during the nineteenth century 'perhaps the most feared act of vandalism was arson'.⁷⁵ Indeed, during the Swing riots, it was arson and not

⁶⁹ CRO, Aberglasney 4, MSS 24/570a, letter signed 'Rebecca' to Jane Walters, Glan Medeni, 1 Sept. 1843.

⁷⁰ TNA, HO 45/454, printed notice issued by Edward Lloyd Williams, entitled 'To the person calling himself Rebecca and to those unlawfully conspiring with him, naming themselves the daughters of Rebecca', 9 July 1843.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, J. Lloyd Davies, Carmarthen, to the Home

Office, 21 April 1843.

⁷² Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p. 263.

⁷³ TNA, HO 45/454, printed notice issued by Edward Lloyd Williams, 9 July 1843.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 26 Aug. 1843.

⁷⁵ Jones, 'The Welsh and crime', p. 97.

machine-breaking that caused the most damage to property.⁷⁶ S. R. P. Wagner predicted that as soon as the harvest was completed, the rioters would commit ‘a series of agrarian outrages’.⁷⁷ True to Wagner’s prediction, towards the end of August and into September, there were several arson attacks whereby landlords lost valuable crops. On the night of 10 September 1843, a disastrous attack was launched on three homesteads belonging to William Chamber, where hay ricks, three corn stacks and even an outbuilding were destroyed by fire. This was the fourth or fifth arson attack made upon Chamber’s property since, as George Rice Trevor claimed, he had ‘acted zealously as a magistrate’.⁷⁸ Two days later, whilst returning home from a Quarter Sessions meeting, Edward Abadam saw a fire blazing in the distance, in the direction of his home, Middleton Hall. On arrival he found two large hayricks ablaze in the farmyard, the woods surrounding his mansion full of men, and his family cowering in fear within the house. It appeared the attackers had removed the plugs from the fish ponds in order to hinder any attempts at extinguishing the fires. These haystacks, containing about sixty tons of hay, worth upwards of £200, a substantial loss to the landlord. Four days later they were still smouldering.⁷⁹ It seems the attack on Abadam’s property stood as retaliation for his actions as a magistrate, dealing with Rebeccaites in court harshly, and for his continual refusal to lower his rents. Not even the powerful Dynevor family could escape the wrath of Rebecca, as on 30 August and 8 September, wheat mows on the estate were set ablaze.⁸⁰ The military commander sent to south Wales, Colonel Love, foresaw that further attacks were imminent.⁸¹ Jones elaborated, ‘as the later stages of the Rebecca riots indicate, in the days before the belated arrival of trade unionism in Wales arson was a useful form of protest and intimidation’.⁸²

In addition to destroying crops, the rioters also targeted livestock. Whilst away at his seaside retreat, Wervilbrook, Mr Beynon’s cattle were moved under cover of night. The farm bailiff, on realising the cattle were gone, and fearing they may have escaped and trampled the corn, called the coachman to help him look for the herd. Whilst searching, the coachman ran into a tall, well-built man in disguise, with blackened face and a gun slung over his shoulder. The man called out in Welsh to the bailiff ‘Halloa here’s Becca’ and then disappeared into the night.⁸³

Whilst the destruction of crops and the taking or maiming of livestock were a financial blow to the landlord, the cutting down of plantations was a much more permanent method of disfiguring the landscape. In comparison with broken windows, which could be quickly mended, it would take years to replant and cultivate damaged woodlands. Therefore, damaging the plantations of the landed elite held more sinister connotations. Carl Griffin refers to the practise of plant maiming as ‘an important tool of rural terror’.⁸⁴ He explains that the aim

⁷⁶ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 223.

⁷⁷ TNA, HO 45/454, S. R. P. Wagner, to Sir James Graham, 26 Aug. 1843.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, George Rice Trevor, to Sir James Graham, 11 Sept. 1843.

⁷⁹ *The Welshman*, 15 Sept. 1843; *Carmarthen J.* 15 Sept. 1843; TNA, HO 45/454, George Rice Trevor, to the Home Office, 13 Sept. 1843.

⁸⁰ *Carmarthen J.* 1 Sept. 1843; *The Welshman*, 15 Sept. 1843; TNA, HO 45/454, George Rice Trevor, to Sir James

Graham, 31 Aug. 1843.

⁸¹ TNA, HO 45/453, Colonel Love, Carmarthen, to the Right Hon Sutton, 31 Aug. 1843.

⁸² Jones, ‘The Welsh and crime’, p. 98.

⁸³ TNA, HO 45/454, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 2 Sept. 1843.

⁸⁴ C. J. Griffin, ‘“Cut down by some cowardly miscreants”: Plant maiming, or the malicious cutting of flora, as an act of protest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rural England’, *Rural Hist.* 19 (2008), p. 45.

was to inflict a 'financial as well as a psychological wound upon the target'.⁸⁵ Plant maiming was usually used in conjunction with another method of protest, usually incendiarism. Maiming plants was more time consuming and more effort was required than lighting fires, for example, tree maiming required equipment, such as knives and axes. Therefore, these activities usually took place on the plantations and woodlands of the gentry rather than the orchards of farmsteads, which were in closer proximity to the house. Naturally, as with arson attacks, these activities took place under the cover of night.⁸⁶

Earlier in May 1843, the plantation on Timothy Powell's Penycloed estate was set ablaze and, due to the direction of the wind, four acres of valuable yew trees were lost before further help could be sought. However, the loss could have been much greater: if the gorse cut away the previous winter had been left, thirty acres of woodland would have been reduced to cinders.⁸⁷ Powell was not a popular figure due to his work on the bench and his opposition to Rebecca, and he was beaten for attempting to apprehend a rioter after the demolition of gateposts at St Clears.⁸⁸ David Davies of Green Hall near Carmarthen reported to the Home Office how a mob, 'more than 200', descended upon his estate and destroyed a plantation which belonged to him.⁸⁹ As plant maiming caused such grief to the landed interest, harsh punishments were given to those caught. Under an amendment to the Preservation of Timber Trees Act of 1766, those convicted of the willful maiming of plants in private gardens and woodlands could be sentenced to transportation for seven years.⁹⁰

By early August 1843, a growing number of threats were issued, warning of attacks on the houses of the gentry. Colonel Herbert Vaughan of Llangoedmore Place reflected on the state of affairs, convinced that only with the adoption of more 'stringent measures' would attacks on private properties be deterred.⁹¹ One well-documented attack was made upon Dr Walter D. Jones of Lancych, near Newcastle Emlyn, when he was staying at his coastal farmhouse, Pennar. On the evening of 4 August, Dr Jones and his wife retired to bed, but around midnight were woken by the sound of windows crashing all around the house. Finding his gun near his bed, the doctor took aim out of the window, but was fired at, the shot just missing him. On later inspection he found five holes in the glass of the window, a black streak of powder on the left side of his nightshirt, and three of the five slugs embedded in the wall behind where he had stood. He estimated the attack only lasted about three minutes, and inspecting the damage found many of the downstairs windows and frames smashed to pieces, the floor of the drawing room littered with debris, including bullets made of cast iron and a large piece of ash, probably part of a makeshift club. Dr Jones had been urging people to continue paying the tolls, even where gates and bars had been demolished. More dangerous were his claims that he would alert the authorities of the identity of anyone he suspected of being involved in the rioting. Here was a man who had little sympathy for the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 35–37, 41.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, 17 May 1843.

⁸⁸ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, pp. 221, 300.

⁸⁹ It is difficult to ascertain exact numbers as they were often exaggerated for effect. TNA, HO 45/454, David Davies, Green Hall, near Carmarthen, to Sir

James Graham, 12 June 1843.

⁹⁰ Griffin, "Cut down by some cowardly miscreants", pp. 38–39.

⁹¹ TNA, HO 45/454, Col Herbert Vaughan, Llangoedmore Place, near Cardigan, to Sir James Graham, 8 Aug. 1843.

lower orders and, as a Poor Law Guardian, believed the men who came before him for help were spending too much of their wages on alcohol.⁹²

There were other, perhaps less dramatic, violations of country houses. Having attacked the home of the estate's agent and keeper, the rioters marched past Gellywernen mansion, where they broke 30 pieces of glass in the windows before their leader, posing as Rebecca, ordered the mob to cease the attack until the order was given. Whilst the mansion was empty on that occasion, the landlord, Rees Goring-Thomas, had let it to a gentleman who was to stay there during the hunting season.⁹³ A band of rioters visited Middleton Hall by night demanding to see the butler, who had fled from the house, and was cowering amongst some nearby bushes. He remained there for two hours whilst the rioters taunted the only (female) servant in the house. However, the rioters never crossed the threshold, remaining outside the hall, and left without causing any physical harm to the property or its inhabitants.⁹⁴

Not even the employees of the landed elite were safe as they carried out their master's orders. Most notably it was those of a higher station, such as land agents and bailiffs, who fell victims to the rioters. A crowd disguised in women's clothing and with blackened faces, carrying lamps, firing guns and blowing horns were led by a figure on horseback to the house of Rees Goring Thomas's agent, John Edwards. Edwards was infirm in bed, but, though he had suspected an impending attack, he had declined the offer of military protection. The mob smashed all the windows, and on hearing the agent was in bed, fired shots through his bedroom window, even after pleas from his wife and daughter to leave. The mob continued their destruction by moving to the garden, partly destroying the kitchen garden, green houses, plants, and herbs, and scarring the fruit trees. They then turned their sights towards the gamekeeper, Williams Bassett's house, breaking in and smashing his furniture, and burning the family's clothes. Bassett and his family fled the mob, who fired at them, injuring one of the children in its mother's arms.⁹⁵

Tactics of intimidation were important, as Andy Wood, in reference to the enclosure riots, states: 'historians have often stressed the relative lack of violence in enclosure riots; yet such crowd action could be terrifying to witness'.⁹⁶ This was indeed true of the Rebecca riots, as the Middleton Hall agent found out one night. Having spent the evening transacting business with his employer, when returning home at around midnight, Cooke crossed paths with a group of about 40 rioters. They stood motionless and silent in a narrow lane, armed with guns or long poles, all dressed in white, their faces concealed by veils. Cooke was forced to direct his horse with great difficulty through the eerily silent crowd. In a letter to his mother, he remarked that:

Several of them were so near me, that I could have struck them with my stick, but I thought it more prudent to thrash my horse instead of them, and was glad to get off so cheaply.⁹⁷

⁹² Ibid., Dr Walter D. Jones, to Sir James Graham, 7 Aug. 1843.

⁹³ *The Times*, 26 Aug. 1843.

⁹⁴ NLW, MSS 21209 C, Thomas Herbert Cooke, to his mother, 23 July 1843.

⁹⁵ TNA, HO 45/454, George Rice Trevor, to Sir James Graham, 24 Aug. 1843; HO 45/453, printed notice issued

by George Rice Trevor, regarding the attack on John Edward, Gellywernen, 20 Aug. 1843; *The Times*, 26 Aug. 1843.

⁹⁶ A. Wood, *Riot, rebellion and popular politics in early modern England* (2002), p. 103.

⁹⁷ NLW, MSS 21209 C, Thomas Herbert Cooke, to his mother, 6 Aug. 1843.

When discussing eighteenth-century food riots, Thompson claimed that physical assault very rarely occurred.⁹⁸ This is largely true of the tumultuous years of the Rebecca riots, and certainly true in the case of the landed interest. Whilst attacks on farm produce and private property were more common, examples of actual physical assault rarely reveal themselves. In addition, in some instances it is unclear whether they were actually instigated by Rebecca's children in retaliation for misdeeds, or were merely random acts of violence. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that the following example was indeed a Rebecca attack. At around half past ten one evening, the notoriously harsh magistrate and Chairman of the Board of Guardians, Reverend James James of Robeston Wathen near Narberth, Pembrokeshire, fell under attack. In the dressing room of his home, preparing for bed, he was fired at through the window and wounded in the arm. The bullet passed through the shutter, window and his dressing gown, striking him below the armpit of his right arm, and, on passing through his arm, the bullet lodged in the wall behind him. James then heard the assailants run away, and on the arrival of the police an hour later, there were no signs of the attackers. James was probably targeted as he was to be the committing magistrate at a forthcoming Rebecca trial.⁹⁹

The next example is less clear, and could have been a random attack not undertaken under Rebecca's name. The famously short-tempered Captain Lloyd of Dolhaidd was attending a church service one Sunday, having only just returned to the county from an 18-month absence in France for the benefit of his grandchildren's health. The reason for his return was to oversee the sale of a property of which he was trustee, and he planned to return to France within the fortnight. On his arrival, possibly unaware of the seriousness of the situation in the county, he publicly condemned Rebecca and her followers. On that Sunday, whilst in the churchyard of the Newcastle Emlyn church, Captain Lloyd was struck by a stone. In a fury, he demanded that bystanders tell him what they had just seen. Some claimed a small boy had thrown the stone from a nearby garden before running away, pledging they did not recognise him and assuring the Captain it must have been an accident. This pacified Lloyd somewhat, but he was still agitated enough to threaten those gathered before him that he usually carried pistols and would have no reservations in shooting the first man that dared attempt to injure him. Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, who had arrived upon the scene after the stone was thrown, was suspicious of the local people, believing them to be lying to protect the true identity of the assailant.¹⁰⁰

IV

Virtually all the recorded responses to the Rebecca attacks (whether on tollgates or the property of the elite) were from the landed interest, and take the form of personal accounts (private letters or diaries), official accounts (letters to the Home Office, or to local figures of authority, for example, magistrates or the Lord Lieutenant), or printed addresses placed on public display

⁹⁸ Thompson, *Customs in common*, pp. 188, 224.

⁹⁹ TNA, HO 45/454, Colonel Hankey, Haverfordwest, to Captain O'Brien, Home Office, 19 Oct. 1843; Colonel Hankey, Narberth, to Colonel Owen, Tredegar,

Newport, Monmouthshire, 20 Dec. 1843.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 22 Sept. 1843.

or reproduced in the press. Only the landed elite were in a position to organise the prosecution of Rebecca and her daughters. Therefore, this section focuses specifically on the responses of the elites, the people who had the power to suppress Rebecca and her supporters. What follows is the identification of a general pattern of behaviour by the landed interest following threats or attacks from Rebecca. The focus is on the particular methods of suppression the elite proposed and indeed chose to deploy in their attempts to quell further unrest and apprehend the rioters; some were more traditional, such as issuing addresses appealing for the restoration of law and order, whilst other methods were unorthodox and violent.

In early 1843, when the rioters were still predominantly focused on the destruction of tollgates, magistrates were already beginning to fear that if attacks continued unchecked, they would only intensify, and worse still, their own property and even lives would be put at risk. With the change in nature of attacks to focus upon private property, we can see a pattern in the response of the landed interest. Usually the first response to a Rebecca attack was to call upon the government for help, mainly for military assistance to quell the riots, as magistrates found the existing law enforcement in the counties woefully inadequate. Several resolutions were put forward on how to maintain law and order in the counties. For example, in response to a letter from the Mayor of Carmarthen, the Home Office suggested a yeomanry or some regular force be stationed in the town in order to stop the lawlessness.¹⁰¹ In June 1843, it was proposed at a meeting of the magistrates in Lampeter that all landowners should call upon their tenants and dependants to enrol as special constables at their district's petty sessions.¹⁰² Alternatively, Dr Jones of Lancyh suggested that Welsh speakers should be sworn in as special constables so that they could spy on the people, learn their secrets and inform the authorities, believing it to be the only way to end the disorder.¹⁰³

The presence of the military was reassuring, but some magistrates were concerned about the way they dealt with the situation and there was considerable uncertainty amongst them as to how to respond to attacks. Some, such as J. Rees of Llettymaenllwyd, Llanelli, sought clarification from the Home Office. He asked how he should respond on encountering a band of men in disguise. If he found them in the act of destroying private property, such as a house, would he be right to order the military to fire at them?¹⁰⁴ Such were the concerns of the magistrates, fearful that the wrong direction could inflame the rioters and incite further violence. Trying too hard to be helpful, and fretting over the worst possible outcome, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall urged the Home Office to warn troops quartered in local public houses to be particularly careful of their weapons, in case some of the 'country people', appearing only to frequent the place for some ale, should overpower them and steal their weapons.¹⁰⁵ Some landlords also feared that the mere presence of the military in the locality could excite the rioters, resulting in more attacks.

As the violence escalated and the number of attacks made upon private property rose, it was resolved at a meeting of magistrates in September 1843 that yet more troops were

¹⁰¹ Ibid., E. H. Stacey, Mayor of Carmarthen, to Sir James Graham, 12 June 1843.

¹⁰² Ibid., Col Powell, Lampeter, to Sir James Graham, 29 June 1843.

¹⁰³ Ibid., Dr Walter D. Jones, to Sir James Graham, 7

Aug. 1843.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., J. Rees, Llettymaenllwyd, Llanelli, to Sir James Graham, 31 Aug. 1843.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to the Home Office, 30 June 1843.

needed. The Vice Lieutenant of Carmarthenshire, feared that, if attacks on property did not subside, magistrates would become 'disheartened'.¹⁰⁶ Initially, the government did not take the cries for help from the magistrates of south-west Wales as seriously as they should have done, their opinions of the leaders of the counties of Carmarthen, Pembroke and Cardigan being far from favourable, they were convinced they were ultimately to blame for the riots having escalated. However, with the intensifying violence and change of focus from tollgates to private property during the summer and autumn of 1843, the government was forced to react. Following the infamous attack on the Carmarthen workhouse, on 19 June 1843, the military assistance sent to south-west Wales increased dramatically, with over a thousand troops posted and 150 Metropolitan Police seconded to the district. By the late autumn of 1843, Robert Peel and James Graham, reflecting on how dangerous the situation had become, firmly believed that the establishment of a professional police force in south-west Wales was essential. Indeed, James Graham's response to the numerous letters from south-west Wales was to send help, as long as the magistrates agreed to establish a local police force.¹⁰⁷ A resolution was drawn up by Hugh Owen, acting as chairman for a meeting of the magistrates of Pembrokeshire, calling for a centrally located military force, armed and trained by competent leaders.¹⁰⁸ The magistrates of the Cardigan Quarter Session went further, and were unanimous in their opinion that, if rioters were punished by transportation, fear would deter others from breaking the law.¹⁰⁹

Another call on the government was for financial assistance, namely the offering of rewards for the apprehension of rioters. Colonel W. E. Powell of Nanteos requested the government to send someone to assist the magistrates of the three counties of Carmarthen, Pembroke and Cardigan in the issuing of rewards for information.¹¹⁰ Offering a reward was a common tactic employed by men of property who fell victim to attack. For example, Rees Goring Thomas proposed offering a reward of £250 for the conviction of the main offenders who attacked the homes of his steward and gamekeeper on condition that the government matched this sum. The government agreed to this.¹¹¹ However, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall doubted whether promises of rewards would entice locals to come forward to betray their fellow men, stating that 'the offer of a reward however great has I believe never been known to produce any effect in this country'.¹¹² Hugh Owen believed the reward would have to be substantial in order to induce a Welshman to come forwards with evidence and betray a fellow countryman.¹¹³

Some wanted to see laws passed to help quell the riots by imposing harsh punishments for large gatherings of men assembled in disguise. Proposals for more extreme methods of defence were put forward to the Home Office. The Deputy Lieutenant of Cardiganshire, S. R. P. Wagner,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, George Rice Trevor, to Sir James Graham, 13 Sept. 1843.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, 'Rebecca, crime and policing', pp. 99–104.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, HO 45/454, resolutions drawn up by Hugh Owen, Chairman, at a meeting of the magistrates of Pembrokeshire, held on 28 June 1843. It also sought rewards for the apprehension of offenders.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, resolution of magistrates of the Cardigan Quarter Session, meeting on 27 June 1843.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Col. W. E. Powell, Carmarthen, to Sir James Graham, 25 June 1843.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, George Rice Trevor, to Sir James Graham, 30 Aug. 1843.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 15 June 1843.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, resolutions drawn up by Hugh Owen, Chairman, at a meeting of the magistrates of Pembrokeshire, held on 28 June 1843.

asked whether the government would supply magistrates with hand grenades which could be thrown amongst the rioters, and so defend their houses against attack 'as they would strike terror in the minds of these mobs who are entirely ignorant of the existence of such missiles'.¹¹⁴ Other landlords responded to the unrest in a more controlled and temperate manner by attending public meetings, especially meetings dealing with such issues as rent reductions, tithe levels and matters relating to the turnpike trust. It has been recorded that the landed elite were present at approximately a third of these gatherings, however, not all would stay for the duration of the meeting, with some leaving if the atmosphere became fiery.¹¹⁵ A meeting was held at Newcastle Emlyn on 23 June 1843 between the magistrates and farmers of the area concerning the attacks at Cardigan and Newcastle Emlyn. Amongst the magistrates present were Lewis Morris, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall and Colonel George Rice Trevor. These men spoke out against Rebecca and the violent acts committed in her name, but at the same time pledged to listen to the grievances of the people. In a letter to the Home Office, Colonel Trevor confided his low opinion of Hall, convinced that Hall believed he possessed more influence than he actually did. However, this prejudice may have been due to their differing political opinions, with Hall a radical in his politics and a supporter of the secret ballot, whilst Trevor was a staunch Tory, who had opposed reform.¹¹⁶ Another landlord who addressed a meeting of his tenants and spoke out vehemently against the attacks on his property was Edward Abadam of Middleton Hall, who also held radical political views. On 22 August 1843, Abadam was present at a meeting in Porthyrhyd, attended by about 150 of what his agent, Thomas Herbert Cooke, called 'Rebeccaites'. Abadam dared not risk attending unarmed, therefore he, Cooke and the butler were present 'armed to the teeth ... our pockets literally cramed [sic] with hostile weapons'.¹¹⁷ The fiery tone of the landlord's temper soon emerged, with his agent imagining his master's voice could be heard a quarter of a mile away, such was his fury at being singled out by the rioters. However, addressing the locality was not universally condoned, and even Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall himself was wary that such meetings could take a turn for the worse, exclaiming:

I hope not mischief may occur. One injudicious remark may act like the spark to a barrel of gunpowder & then there will be no answering for the consequences.¹¹⁸

In addition to these meetings, addresses could appear in printed form, in both English and Welsh, placed on public display, distributed as handbills, or printed in local newspapers. Such addresses followed a general pattern, usually appealing to the common sense of the people, urging them to seek lawful means of expressing their grievances, namely by laying complaints before the magistrates; but whether the landed interest listened to or acted on these complaints is another matter. As we have seen earlier, some landlords did indeed attempt to ameliorate the grievances of the rioters, most notably in lowering their rents, whilst others were less inclined to meet the demands of Rebecca and her daughters. In addition to appealing to the people to

¹¹⁴ Ibid., S. R. P. Wagner, to Sir James Graham, 26 Aug. 1843.

¹¹⁵ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p. 325.

¹¹⁶ TNA, HO 45/454, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 23 June 1843; George Rice Trevor, to

the Home Office, 25 June 1843.

¹¹⁷ NLW, MSS 21209 C, Thomas Herbert Cooke, to his mother, 24 Aug. 1843.

¹¹⁸ TNA, HO 45/454, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 25 June 1843.

confide in the local figures of authority, the addresses also warned of the serious consequences and punishment that awaited those who continued to break the law. After the attack on his coastal retreat, Dr Jones issued a printed address in Welsh appealing for information. He could not understand how Welshmen had committed such an act of violence, believing they were being led by outside forces and used as fodder. Indeed, many magistrates and landowners shared Dr Jones's opinion, believing the people were being influenced by outsiders, and were in fact, due to their naturally deferential character, not capable of leading such a rebellion. He remarked that by moving their target from tollgates to private property, they would drive the gentry out of the country.¹¹⁹ Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall believed Dr Jones's address had soothed the public mind and would save him from further attack, summing up the gentry's belief in the healing properties of these printed addresses.¹²⁰ On being invited to preside over the public meeting at Mynydd Sylen, William Chambers Jun. issued a printed address to the inhabitants of Llanelli, reinforcing his willingness to help the people to redress grievances, but only if they adopted law-abiding methods. In his role as magistrate, he would have to oppose all illegal proceedings and put an end to the nightly violence. However, he was convinced the people of Llanelli, amongst whom he had lived for fifteen years, would stand united against any attack on private property or persons, declaring:

I shall persevere unflinchingly in doing my duty, and no threats against my person nor property shall in the least deter me. Should my property be destroyed, I am secured from loss by an insurance office, and by my remedy against the hundred; and should my person be attacked, my assailants will not do so with impunity.¹²¹

Some magistrates felt they had to give the impression that life carried on as normal, with law and order prevailing in the face of the night-time marauders. On being asked by a fellow magistrate whether the committee to review the Turnpike Trust's accounts was to meet the following week, in light of the nearby Cardigan gates being demolished, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall firmly replied that they would, of course, be meeting. The magistrates did not want the rioters to see how unsettled they were by the threats, therefore they carried on with their duties as normal.¹²² There were even fears amongst the magistracy that several influential and wealthy people were not taking the riots seriously. Some were even suspected of over-reacting. Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall was accused of posing as 'the "O'Connell" of these Counties' by a fellow magistrate, who believed he was agitating the people with his talks of redressing grievances and voting by ballot, doing more harm than good, being of the opinion that: 'the Welch [sic] are a very lawless people when excited whether by intoxication or the advice of their superiors in status'.¹²³

Faults in the way law and order were administered in the counties were emphasised when nearly a quarter of active magistrates fled and became absentees. Over 80 years later, Herbert

¹¹⁹ Ibid., printed notice from Dr Walter D. Jones, Lanchych, addressed to the persons who attacked his house, 8 Aug. 1843.

¹²⁰ Ibid., Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 1 Sept. 1843.

¹²¹ Ibid., copy of printed address to the inhabitants

of Llanelli by William Chambers, Jun., Llanelli, 9 Sept. 1843.

¹²² Ibid., Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 25 June 1843.

¹²³ Ibid., E. Laws, Pembroke, to Sir James Graham, 26 June 1843.

M. Vaughan reflected on the degree of absenteeism during the years of Rebecca's tyranny: 'a good many of the local magistrates showed the white feather on this occasion and held aloof from the movement altogether'.¹²⁴ After meeting with the magistrates at Lampeter, Colonel Powell planned to travel to Aberystwyth the following day, happy in the knowledge that he was soon to escape to London.¹²⁵ On receiving a threatening letter demanding that he reimburse a tenant, Edward Lloyd Williams of Gwernant issued a printed notice. In this notice he threatened that if any attempts were made to injure him or his property, he would become an absentee. He would employ an attorney to collect his rents, spending the money elsewhere instead of employing upwards of 30 or 40 local men and women all year round.¹²⁶ The departure of the landlord certainly had an impact on the local area, as Williams highlighted, for employment in the locality would fall and the figure of authority and leadership would disappear. Williams warned: 'by continuing your lawless acts, you will induce the Gentry of this country to become absentees, and in that respect make this country like Ireland'.¹²⁷ In September 1843, even the resolute Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall was so disturbed by the state of the country that he was making arrangements for his family to be sent to England at short notice.¹²⁸ However, he was not alone, as in late September and early October, several gentlemen were getting ready to send their families away for their safety.¹²⁹ One can easily denounce those landlords and magistrates who escaped, as Vaughan did, labelling them cowards, but they often fled in fear of their lives. There was no way for them to know the course the riots would take, and whether the sudden turn of attacks from gates to private property was only the beginning of a much more militant phase. Undertaking their duties had become increasingly difficult and perilous, and without a professional police force to enforce the law, they were largely 'powerless'.¹³⁰

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During the turbulent years of the riots, and in particular 1843, many of the landed classes of south-west Wales lived in fear, waiting, as J. Lloyd Davies described, for the 'indiscriminate destruction of property if not life'. A. J. Gwynne lamented: 'threats of incendiarism and even murder are constantly received by those in a heighar [sic] class of life who exert themselves in repressing any rebellious [sic] proceedings'.¹³¹ Some even predicted the riots would escalate to a full-blown revolution; S. R. P. Wagner believed: 'matters are assuming a very serious aspect here and something must be done and that speedily or there will be an open rebellion here in a very short time'.¹³² In light of the French Revolution of the previous century and various

¹²⁴ H. M. Vaughan, *The south Wales Squires: a Welsh picture of social life* (1926), pp. 16–17.

¹²⁵ TNA, HO 45/454, Col Powell, to Sir James Graham, 29 June 1843.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, printed notice issued by Edward Lloyd Williams, entitled 'To the person calling himself Rebecca and to those unlawfully conspiring with him, naming themselves the daughters of Rebecca', 9 July 1843.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, printed notice issued by Edward Lloyd Williams, 9 July 1843.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 22 Sept. 1843.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to Sir James Graham, 6 Oct. 1843.

¹³⁰ Jones, 'Rebecca, crime and policing', p. 114.

¹³¹ TNA, HO 45/454, A. J. Gwynne, Aberaeron, Cardiganshire, to Sir James Graham, 25 Aug. 1843.

¹³² *Ibid.*, S. R. P. Wagner, to Sir James Graham, 26 Aug. 1843.

instances of rural protests, this threat was a chilling one indeed. Perhaps the most alarming prediction was that of *The Times* correspondent, Thomas Campbell Foster, sent to south-west Wales to report tales of the riots to London, who wrote in August 1843 that 12 country houses had been targeted and that more would fall by the end of the year.¹³³ With such apocalyptic images of the fate of the gentry, many landlords fled with their families, whilst others remained and placed all their trust in the military protection they warranted as magistrates.

Many landlords badgered the Home Office with letters, including updates of the very latest events, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant. One gentleman who took it upon himself to report, in minute detail, the state of the country was Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, who rather worriedly wrote on 30 June 1843:

I have received no acknowledgements of the receipts of my several letters to you of the 22nd, 23rd, 25th and 26th instant. Should they not duly have come to hand I will send you duplicates.¹³⁴

Such was Hall's determination to be of service to the Home Office in their enquiries that he even pledged to forward, on a daily basis, the minutes of the meetings held by the committee auditing the accounts of the Turnpike Trust. Another regular letter writer was Miss Jane Walters of Glanmedeni, who sent frequent reports of the state of the county and even pledged to donate three acres of land for the building of barracks to house troops in Cardiganshire.¹³⁵ There was an intense fear amongst landed proprietors that if the riots were not stopped, they would only escalate and intensify. Thompson, in his studies of food riots, suggests that magistrates often acted out fear, not only fear of what the mob would do next, but also fear of further attacks in the future. As Wood summarises: 'so paternalism was conditional upon the possession of social power; and the distribution of social power stemmed from local-political conflict'.¹³⁶

It is no wonder that the landed classes were targeted by Rebecca and her daughters, especially when considering the grievances felt by the rioters, namely the tolls and high level of rents. Some of the gentry held administrative posts on the Turnpike Trusts, and clearly, it was they who had the power to address the rental situation. In addition, they were the figures of authority within the counties, acting as magistrates and responsible for reading the Riot Act, which had been passed in 1715 to increase the powers of local authority figures. In other cases of Turnpike riots, for instance in the West Riding of Yorkshire, near Bristol, and between Ledbury and Gloucester during the eighteenth century, landlords also received the blame for failing to undertake their duties as trustees, and maintaining the roads. Protestors believed the elite were avoiding their financial obligations by pressurising the wider community to fund the maintenance of the roads. Accusations of corruption were widespread, and violence ensued, with tollgates torn down and set alight by bands of men.¹³⁷

¹³³ *The Times*, 26 Aug. 1843.

¹³⁴ TNA, HO 45/454, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, to the Home Office, 30 June 1843.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, Jane Walters, to the Home Office, 23 March 1844; a fuller account of Jane Walters's encounter with the rioters can be found in L. A. Rees, "The Wail of

Miss Jane": the Rebecca Riots and Jane Walters of Glanmedeni, 1843-44', *Ceredigion*, 15 (2007), pp.37-68.

¹³⁶ Wood, *Riot, rebellion and popular politics*, p.100.

¹³⁷ Jones, 'Rebecca, crime and policing', pp.113, 159-66.

However, after the turbulent summer and autumn months of 1843 passed, the number of Rebecca attacks decreased. By 1844 she had largely disappeared. David J.V. Jones explains that the Rebecca riots were a regional movement, and once the immediate goals were met, the movement quickly ended; however, the ethos of the movement lived on, and we see forms of Rebeccanism prevailing in rural society as late as the 1860s. There were still instances of community justice being administered, with the *ceffyl pren* used to punish those who had broken social or moral codes for several decades after Rebecca.¹³⁸ Arson attacks still took place even after Rebecca and her daughters had disappeared. William Chambers of Llanelli, who had fallen victim to Rebecca during the height of the riots, later had one of his farms and its cottages set alight during the spring of 1845. These fires were usually preceded by a threatening letter, some even signed 'Rebecca', usually in retaliation to such grievances as church rates, tithes, poaching laws and other hardships.¹³⁹ However, Jones explained that: 'Although Rebeccanism appeared in a variety of guises during the 1850s and 1860s, it was not on the scale of the early 1840s'.¹⁴⁰

Did Rebecca and her daughters disappear for the most part because their demands were met? In reality, rural society was largely unchanged in the wake of the Rebecca Riots, with the landed interest maintaining their elevated position of power. Although Rebecca sought a permanent reduction in the level of rents, the landlords never yielded this. During the late 1840s and early 1850s the agricultural economy worsened again, but not to the same extent as 1843. What fortunately followed was a period of prosperity, which drew attention away from the issue of rent. Indeed, in this climate of profit making, some landlords increased their rent by as much as double. On average, the wages of agricultural workers rose by up to 50 per cent between 1843 and 1867. They could afford to be more demanding, as there was always the possibility of earning higher wages in the rapidly growing industrial centres.¹⁴¹ This was a different economic climate. On the local level, the gentry continued investing in educating the children of the poor and funding the building and upkeep of churches and chapels, in the hope that education would deter such lawbreaking and riots occurring on the same scale again.

However, there were some changes following the riots. Following a report on the administration of the Turnpike Trusts in south Wales, an act ('Lord Cawdor's Act') was passed in 1844 to amend the laws relating to the trusts in that district. Turnpike roads were henceforth managed by the County and District Roads Boards and the rate of tolls equalised. However, the members of these boards were nominated by the magistrates at Quarter Sessions, and so the landed interest still held a degree of power over the way the tolls were administered and roads and bridges maintained. Nonetheless, slowly but surely, the condition of the roads improved over the following 30 years.¹⁴²

It was the increasing instances of attacks made upon the homes and properties of magistrates and landlords that signalled a change in attitudes towards the establishment of a police force in the counties of south-west Wales, but opinion was divided. Whilst some magistrates were anxious for military aid to be sent, they were largely opposed to the idea of establishing a new

¹³⁸ Jones, 'Popular culture', chronicles cases of *ceffyl pren* activities in Cardiganshire from c.1837–50.

¹³⁹ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, pp. 345, 371–73.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 364–65, 368.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 347; Williams, *Rebecca Riots*, p. 281.

police force. Conversely, several Lord Lieutenants were supportive of the idea, for example, George Rice Trevor in Carmarthenshire and Hugh Owen in Pembrokeshire. Nonetheless, by the end of 1843, Carmarthenshire had a chief constable, and after much deliberation, in 1844, superintending constables were employed in Pembrokeshire to work with the part time parish constables. Meanwhile, the threat from the government to remove the military force in Cardiganshire led to the passing of a motion in the January 1844 Quarter Sessions to establish a new county police force.¹⁴³

The landed interest had been shaken by the activities of Rebecca and her daughters, and in the decades to follow, attempted to present a unified front, feeling the need 'to demonstrate the extent of their legitimate power, worried as they were by the long-term prospect of tenant independence and political change'.¹⁴⁴ Previously, during riots in the eighteenth century, there had been an expectation that landlords would show support, but times were changing, and the landed interest was distancing itself from any involvement with Rebecca's cause. For example, Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall was invited to attend a meeting of the Rebeccaites but was instructed to come along disguised and armed. Another landlord invited to a meeting was Edward Abadam, the meeting to be held on a hilltop on Abadam's land, organised in order to send a petition to the Queen complaining about the new Poor Law, high taxes, rents and tithes. However, neither landlord attended the meetings. In response, Hall issued a printed address, in both English and Welsh, firmly declining the invitation to partake in any violent acts. As a magistrate, he vowed to help the people, but only within the confines of the law.¹⁴⁵ According to his agent, Abadam had 'no desire to compromise his interest, and seems but little disposed to reduce his Rents, which would follow as a matter of course if he countenances such meetings'.¹⁴⁶ The fact that the gentry in south-west Wales declined to lend their support to the rioters fits in with Jones and Williams's arguments revolving around the deterioration of a paternalistic relationship, and the idea of the 'withdrawal of the upper classes', as explained by Sharon Howard.¹⁴⁷ Nonetheless, for the time being, the landed interest remained a powerful force within the counties, and it was not until the late nineteenth century that we see its status seriously threatened, with the curtailment of its political and administrative powers by the Reform Acts and the Local Government Act of 1888.

¹⁴³ Jones, 'Rebecca, crime and policing', p. 100.

¹⁴⁴ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p. 376.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, HO 45/454, printed notice issued by Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, entitled 'To Rebecca and her daughters', 20 June 1843.

¹⁴⁶ NLW, MSS 21209 C, Thomas Herbert Cooke, to his mother, 3 Sept. 1843.

¹⁴⁷ Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p. 376; Williams, *Rebecca Riots*, pp. 17–18; Howard, 'Riotous community', p. 673.