

HALL, BENJAMIN Lord Llanover (1802-1867), politician and reformer

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Name: Benjamin Hall

Date of birth: 1802

Date of death: 1867

Spouse: Augusta Hall (née Waddington)

Child: Augusta Charlotte Elizabeth Jones (née Hall)

Parent: Charlotte Hall (née Crawshay)

Parent: Benjamin Hall

Gender: Male

Occupation: politician and reformer

Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration

Author: Marion Löffler



Benjamin Hall, 1st Lord Llanover, was born in London on 8 November 1802, the eldest son of four of the industrialist **Benjamin Hall** (1778-1817) and his wife Charlotte (née Crawshay, 1784-1839). The family moved to live on the Aber-carn estate in Monmouthshire when Benjamin Hall was six years old. He attended Westminster School from 1814 to 1820, when he entered Christ Church College, Oxford, which he left in 1821 without having taken a degree.

Soon after, two events were to influence the course of his life. During a tour of England and Scotland in 1822 his visit to the New Lanark settlement founded by **Robert Owen** made him aware of the connection between the living conditions of the working classes and their mores, imbuing him with the reforming spirit which made him a successful Liberal politician. His marriage to **Augusta Waddington**, Lady Llanover, on 4 December 1823 made him part of an influential circle of patrons of Welsh culture and language who combined cultural nationalism with advocacy of a robust Protestantism.

Elected the Liberal MP for the Monmouth boroughs in 1831 he was unseated on petition, but was rightfully returned in 1832. He remained the member for Monmouth boroughs until 1837, when he was invited to stand for Marylebone, which he very successfully represented until 1859, making numerous speeches, of which his published *A Letter to his Grace of Canterbury* of 1850 greatly influenced the debate on Church reform. He was created baronet in 1838 and appointed President of the Board of Health in 1854. His active involvement in the treatment of the cholera epidemic which struck London a fortnight after his appointment, and successful piloting through Parliament of a health bill that resulted in the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works (the forerunner of the London County Council), brought him to the attention of the Queen, who appointed him First Commissioner of Works in 1855, a post he held until 1858. In 1855, he successfully campaigned for the opening of London parks to the public on Sundays as a means of improving public health, a scheme greatly enjoyed by thousands of people, despite Sabbatarian protests. The great clock of Westminster whose casting and erection he oversaw during his period of office, which overlapped with the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament, was called 'Big Ben' in recognition of his work, but also the fact that he was extremely tall, some say 6'7. He was raised to the peerage on 29 June 1859 during Palmerston's second administration, to considerable protest by those who considered him a political radical, became Baron Llanover of Llanover and Aber-carn, and took his seat in the House of Lords.

His marriage to **Lady Llanover** involved him in patronage of the Welsh language and culture, which he, perhaps more than she, combined with a concern for the religious welfare of Welsh speakers, especially the provision of Welsh-speaking Anglican clergy. This is the background to his controversy with **bishop Connop Thirlwall** on the state of the church in the diocese of St Davids. In 1842, he was one of a number of notable London Welshmen who discussed and patronised the provision of Welsh-language Anglican services in the capital. Having raised the money necessary to lease St Ethelreda's church and pay a clergyman, the first Welsh-language service at the Welsh Episcopal church, Ely Place, Holborn, was held in December 1843 and continued until 1874. At his home in Aber-carn, he built a church for Welsh-language services, which was consecrated in 1854. The frugality of the quotidian life and avowed temperance of Lord and **Lady Llanover** are illustrated nicely by Victorian graffiti daubed on the entrance gate to their estate, which proclaimed: 'A park without deer, a house without beer, Sir Benjamin Hall lives here'.

A keen hunter, Benjamin Hall suffered several horse riding accidents, and lost an eye in a shooting accident in 1848. He died in London on 27 April 1867 of a facial tumour caused by a shooting accident in November 1866. He was interred in the family tomb at St Bartholomew's Church, Llanover.

Author

Marion Löffler

Sources

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Further Reading

Coflein: [Llanover House](#)

Images

T. W. Harland, B. Hall: Member for the Borough of Marylebone

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