Rebecca Riots

The Rebecca Riots happened between 1839 and 1842. They were a protest against the high tolls having to be paid on the Turnpike Roads.

This protest takes its name from the manner in which the protest was conducted. The first of the 'Rebecca' riots was on 6 June 1839. Here a group of Welsh farmers attacked a Toll House. They tore down the tollgate, smashed up the toll keeper’s house and burnt it to the ground.

So why the Rebecca Riots then?

The leader of this protest, Twn Carnabwth, reputedly wore women’s clothes as a disguise when this attack was made (you could be hung for rioting in those days). Legend has it that these clothes were borrowed from a lady called Rebecca, hence the name Rebecca Riots.

Other people look at a passage in the bible where it says, "And they blessed Rebecca, and said unto her, Thou art our sister. Be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gates of those that hate them."

Nobody is entirely sure which reason for the name is true, but both could be the right reason!

The riots flared up over the period 1839 to 1842, they stopped after two of the ringleaders were captured. They were both found guilty and, instead of being sentenced to death, they were sentenced to transportation: they were sent to Australia, which was a 'prison island' at the time. According to local legend, the men laughed when they were given this punishment.

SOURCE: http://www.schoolshistory.org.uk/rebeccariots.htm