

SIDNEY, Sir HENRY (1529 - 1586), of Penshurst, Kent, president of Wales from 1559 to his death

Name: Henry Sidney
Date of birth: 1529
Date of death: 1586
Child: Mary Herbert (née Sidney)
Child: Robert Sidney
Child: Philip Sidney
Gender: Male
Occupation: president of Wales
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

He is memorable both for the length of his administration and for the combination of competence, firmness, and sympathy that marked it. He established good relations with the Welsh gentry. His interest in national culture and antiquities appears in his zeal in the preservation and collation of records at Ludlow, used by **David Powel** (with his strong encouragement) to supplement the collections of **Humphrey Llwyd** as a basis for his *Historie of Cambria*, 1584, whilst his care for the country's material welfare was demonstrated in his experiments in developing the iron industry of south-east Wales with the aid of imported German skilled labour (c. 1560), and in extracting copper from Mynydd Parys, Anglesey, by precipitation. He tried to patch up the quarrel between his brother-in-law the earl of Leicester and **Sir Richard Bulkeley** over the forest of Snowdon, in which **Bulkeley** was supported by several Caernarvonshire squires of popish sympathies, while Sidney himself was at this time censured for slackness in proceeding against recusants - which is perhaps why his rule was remembered with affection even by religious and political opponents like **Hugh Owen** of Plas-du. He was absent on diplomatic service in 1562 and in Ireland for most of 1565-71 and 1575-8, but was kept in touch by the vice-presidents who deputized for him, the arrangement working smoothly under William Gerard (1562) but less well under bishop Whitgift; and the efficiency of Sidney's administration certainly suffered from these interruptions and cross-purposes. While on duty he lived mainly at Ludlow castle, to which (as also to that of Montgomery) he made many structural improvements, and where he brought up his family. He had far greater satisfaction in his work here than in Ireland, as appears in his tribute 'A better country to govern Europe holdeth not,' and (symbolically) in the injunction, carried out when he died and was buried at Penshurst, that his heart should be buried at Ludlow.

The connection with Wales was maintained by his family. His heir (Sir) PHILIP SIDNEY (1554 - 1586) was presented at 12 to the lay rectory of Whitford, Flintshire, worth £60 a year. His second son and ultimate heir ROBERT SIDNEY (1563 - 1626), later earl of Leicester, married (23 September 1584) **Barbara Gamage**, heiress of the Glamorgan estate of Coety, and became Member of Parliament (1585 and 1592) and Justice of the Peace (1625) for the county; and the estate was inherited by Leicester's descendants, of whom his grandson, the well-known historical figure, ALGERNON SIDNEY (1622 - 1683) was elected on 17 July 1646, to replace the Royalist member for Cardiff (slain at Edgehill), and sat on several Glamorgan county committees. Finally Sir Henry's daughter MARY SIDNEY (1561 - 1621) married **Henry Herbert, 2nd earl of Pembroke**.

Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

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Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Henry Sidney](#)

Images

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