



PENSHURST PLACE
AND GARDENS



Tudor Trail
Teacher's
Resource Pack

Penshurst Place has been my family's home since it was granted to Sir William Sidney by Edward VI in 1552. The house has seen many generations come and go, probably none so illustrious as those who served their Tudor monarchs so loyally. The family's presence at Court meant they were at the core of the Tudor government.

Penshurst has always been a happy home and this is apparent from the many letters written to each other by members of the family. Sir Philip, his brother Sir Robert and his sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke are all recognised as accomplished poets and writers of their time. Sir Philip had his own poetry 'circle' here and Mary one at Wilton House.

I hope that your visit to Penshurst Place will enable your pupils to bring the history of Tudor times alive.

Viscount, De L'Isle

CONTENTS

Chronology of Penshurst Place 1485—1603

The Barons Hall

- How the hall was used and daily life in Tudor times
- Food
- Tudor Music
- Armour

The West Solar (State Dining Room)

- A study of the portrait of Barbara Gamage and her children
- Family Life
- Education

The Buckingham Building

- The Queen Elizabeth Building
- The Tapestry Room

The Long Gallery

- The study of royal and family portraits

The Nether Gallery

- Arms and Armour

Tudor Monarchs

Worksheets

- Plan of the Barons Hall and Staterooms

- Picture of the Barons Hall

- Coat of Arms

Chronology

of Penshurst Place 1485—1603

- 1485 Henry Tudor becomes King Henry VII; Richard III defeated and killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field.
- 1491 Henry VIII born.
- 1509 Henry VII dies.
- 1513 Scottish invasion crushed at Flodden. Sir William Sidney commands the right flank of the Kings Army. He is knighted and becomes ‘Knight of the Body to King Henry VIII’.
- 1516 Mary Tudor born.
- 1519 Edward, 3rd Duke of Buckingham entertains Henry VIII at Penshurst Place, costing the equivalent of £1.2 million in today’s money.
- 1520 Sir William Sidney supports Henry VIII at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.
- 1521 King Henry VIII declared ‘Defender of the Faith’ by the Pope.
- 1521 King Henry VIII declares the Duke of Buckingham a traitor, has him thrown in the Tower of London and later beheaded. Penshurst is attainted by the Crown.
- 1531 Henry VIII declares himself head of the Church in England.
- 1533 Elizabeth I born. Henry VIII is excommunicated by the Pope.
- 1534 Act of Supremacy: Break with Rome, Anglican Church is established.
- 1536-9 Henry VIII dissolves the monasteries and abbeys, seizing church lands.

- 1537 Edward VI born.
- 1547 Henry VIII dies. His son Edward VI is crowned.
- 1552 Edward VI gives Penshurst Place to his chamberlain and steward, Sir William Sidney. Sir Henry Sidney marries Lady Mary Dudley.
- 1553 Edward VI dies. Mary I succeeds and England reverts to Roman Catholicism.
- 1554 Mary I marries King Philip II of Spain. Persecution of Protestants begin.
- 1554 Sir William Sidney dies and is succeeded by his son, Sir Henry Sidney. Most of the Tudor buildings at Penshurst were added during Sir Henry's lifetime.
- 1554 Sir Philip Sidney is born at Penshurst Place. He is named after his Godfather, Philip II of Spain.
- 1558 Mary I dies. Elizabeth I succeeds. Protestant Church re-established, causing enmity with Roman Catholic powers - especially Spain.
- 1577-8 Drake sets out to circumnavigate the world.
- 1580 Elizabeth I excommunicated by the Pope.
- 1586 Sir Philip Sidney dies shortly after his father and mother, Philip's brother, Robert Sidney, succeeds.
- 1587 The State funeral of Sir Philip Sidney takes place in old St Paul's Cathedral.
- 1587 Mary Queen of Scots executed after 19 years captivity.
- 1588 The Spanish Armada is scattered and destroyed.
- 1603 Elizabeth I dies. James VI of Scotland becomes King James I of England. The Stuart dynasty begins.

Tudor Trail at Penshurst Place

The Baron's Hall

The Baron's Hall was built in 1341 by the four times Mayor of London, Sir John de Pulteney. The hall height and width announced to visitors that this was a great household and the home of a wealthy and powerful family.

Traditionally the Hall was the centre of the household and the estate that fed and clothed it. Although by the late 16th century the Sidneys had numerous private rooms, the Hall was still the home of servants, a dining hall for the household and where important visitors were welcomed and entertained.

The following description by Sir Robert Sidney of a visit by Queen Elizabeth I sums up how the Great Hall was used:

“Her highness hath done honour to my poor house by visiting me, and seemed much pleased at what we did to please her. My son made her a fair speech, to which she did give most gracious reply. The women did dance before her, whilst the cornets did salute from the gallery, and she did vouchsafe to eat two morsels of rich comfit-cake and drank a small cordial from a golden cup.”

The Hall's shape, size and furnishings provide useful clues to its use and life in Tudor England.

In the 16th century the countryside around Penshurst was dominated by the forest, called the Weald. There would have been a mixture of farming, both crops and animals. Forest based industries such as timber and charcoal making were important and supported the mining and refining of iron ore.



The Baron's Hall
© Penshurst Place & Gardens

The Fireplace

In the centre of the Hall is a huge octagonal fireplace designed to burn wood from the surrounding forest. It was the only source of heat in the Hall. The smoke from the fire would rise up to the roof and escape through a smoke louvre. You can still see some smoke damaged timbers in the roof above the fire where the vent used to be.

The great timbers in the roof are chestnut and might have come from English lands in France. Wood was very important to the Tudors. They used it for heat, furniture and to build their homes. Only great houses such as Penshurst Place would have used stone because it was expensive to quarry and transport.

Most Tudor houses were very small, like cottages, and built around a wooden frame with walls of wattle and daub. Spanish visitors to England in the 1550's complained that the houses were mostly made of mud and sticks!

The Barons Hall is built of local sandstone. It has streaks of brown in it, which is iron ore trapped in the stone. This part of Kent and nearby Sussex had an abundance of forest. It provided the large amount of wood to be turned into charcoal, which was used to smelt the iron ore to produce iron and then steel. Kent was famous in Elizabethan times for metal-working to produce tools, weapons and especially cannon.

Lighting the Barons Hall

In the daytime the Hall is lit by natural light from the large windows. During Tudor times the Hall would have been lit at night by candles; you can see some modern candles by the windows. Tudor people had two main types of artificial light. One was cheap rushlights made of reed and animal fats; the other was expensive candles made from beeswax. The beeswax candles gave a stronger light and smelled better than the rushlights, so they would have been used to light the important rooms, such as the hall and the state-rooms beyond.



How Candles and Rushlights were made

Bees build their hives from beeswax which was then collected to make candles. The beeswax was heated in a jug until it melted. The wick, which is a piece of coarse thread, was dipped into the liquid wax, removed and hung upon a purpose made wooden frame to set. The dipping process was repeated until the candle was thick enough to burn for a long time.

Rushlights, used by the majority of the people, were made by extracting the inner section (pith) from the rush and dipping it into animal fat left over from the cooking. This was a laborious chore as many hundreds of rushlights were needed for the long winter months and each rushlight lasted for only a short time. Therefore the household rose at dawn and went to bed early.

The Long Tables

The two long trestle tables on either side of the hall are more than 8 metres long. They are over 400 years old and are the only surviving tables of their kind in the country.

The servants would have sat at these tables to eat. Their meals were served on simple wooden plates or flat loaves sliced in two. After their meal the servants would have removed the tops of the tables, carried them outside and washed them down. Once the tabletops were dry they were reassembled ready for the next meal.

They may also have been moved to allow more sleeping space at night.

The Sidneys and their important guests would have sat at tables on the dais at the far end of the hall. Other guests and officers of the household sat near them on the long tables. The servants sat at the far end of the table. closest to the entrance, the kitchens, the draughts and the smells

Eating in the Baron's Hall

How food was displayed and eaten was important. The hall would have seen great feasts with a wide selection of foods carefully spiced and flavoured, decorated and presented with great care. Perhaps the most famous feast given at Penshurst was when the 3rd Duke of Buckingham entertained Henry VIII during a visit. So vast was the expenditure that Henry VIII feared the Duke's power and influence. As a result he later had him tried for treason and beheaded.

Some food for the hall would have been imported, but most was supplied by the estate farms, orchards, gardens, fishponds and Deer Park. This food was prepared in the two rooms by the entrance, the Pantry and the Buttery. The pantry was the domain of the 'Pantner' derived from the French word for bread (pain). The Butler supervised the Buttery, which comes from the word 'bouteillerie' (bottlery). The original kitchens were built of wood at the



rear of the building with a long passage to the Hall to keep the smells away.

In the Middle Ages the pantry was where bread and cakes were made and stored. By Tudor times it was a general kitchen and storeroom where a wide variety of food was made ready before being carried into the hall. Next door was the Buttery where butts of drinks were kept, ready to be served. This room would have been full of wooden barrels containing wines, cider, ale and mead. Also honey and spices to flavour the drinks in the winter when they would be mulled (warmed) before being drunk.

A wide variety of fish, both fresh and saltwater was eaten. Sea fish was smoked and salted before it was carried inland and traded for local produce or money. Fish such as carp, pike, salmon, herring and mackerel would have been a regular part of the diet at Penshurst Place.

There were many 'fish days' in the Tudor calendar, during which the eating of meat (except heron) was banned. Governments hoped that this would provide regular work for fishermen and their boats, ensuring England had many sailors for the Navy in times of war.

On meat days they ate many types of birds; everything from ducks and chickens to

pigeons, herons and, for special feasts, swans and peacocks. Even small songbirds were trapped and made into pies. (As portrayed in the nursery rhyme 'Four and twenty blackbirds')

The farms and woods around Penshurst provided grazing for cattle, sheep, pigs and rabbits (kept in warrens). Most meat would have been eaten soon after the animals were slaughtered, as the Tudors did not grow the root crops that sustained the animals through the winter. Meat not immediately consumed was salted or smoked to preserve it for the winter months

Livestock was very important as most parts were used either for food, clothing or light. The hides were turned into leather and the fats into candles. One meat that was strictly preserved for rich landowners was venison from the deer in the park. The antlers on the far wall are a useful reminder that much of the diet in Tudor times was hunted and caught.

The diet was not all meat and fish in the 16th century. We know from letters and estate accounts that a wide range of vegetables was grown like peas, beans, leeks, lettuce, cabbage, carrots, onions, parsley and radishes



A common dish was a 'pottage', a meat and vegetable stew thickened with oatmeal. Vegetable dishes in the 16th century were not considered as important to health as they are in the 20th century and thought of as 'poor mans food'.

The Barons Hall was a very public dining room where tables manners were considered very important. The following contemporary description of how to behave at the table would have been appropriate for dinner guests at the long tables:

*"Sup not loud of thy pottage, no time in all thy life
Dip not thy meat in the saltcellar, but tackle it with thy knife
Scratch not thy head with thy fingers when thou art at thy meat
Nor spit you over the table board, see thou dost not this forget
Pick not thy teeth with thy knife, nor with thy fingers end
But take a stick, or some clean thing, then do you not offend"*

See an example of a medieval recipe on the next page

The Minstrels Gallery

Tudor feasts were usually accompanied by music and the grand musicians gallery shows how important music was in the life of the Barons Hall.

Great houses like Penshurst often employed musicians, both to entertain and teach music. These musicians would be skilled on the Lute, Virginals (a keyboard instrument), or play on the 'chest' of Viol (a bowed instrument played in groups of four or six).

The resident musician would have been a man who could read and write and sing at sight. He might have other duties such as tutoring the children of the family, or

great houses would hire groups of musicians for royal visits and banquets, who were employed to play professionally in cities like York and Norwich for the entertainment of all. These musicians were known as 'Waits'. The Waits of London were especially famous. You could hire them to play at special occasions, perhaps a wedding or a feast. In London they played the music in the theatres, such as the Globe, Rose, Swan and Curtain.

The Waits sometimes played for Queen Elizabeth, and the Court also employed the very finest musicians from England and all over Europe. Cornets, Sackbuts, sets of Shawms and Recorders as well as Lutes, Viols, Organs and Virginals were played by the Waits and Court musicians. Apart from these special musicians, many trades people were associated with certain types of musical instruments. For example, Carters played on small recorders or whistles as they drove their carts, while milkmaids sang songs in harmony as they carried their pails to the dairy. Shepherds played on the bagpipes and the bearward made his bear dance to the pipe and tabor.

In every town the ballad singer 'hawked' his latest song sheet on street corners and would sing in a 'high squeaking treble' or 'ale-blown bass'. These ballads, like our newspapers today, told all the sensational news of court and country, love and war.



MEDIEVAL RECIPES

Gyngerbrede

- 2 cups honey
- 1 tsp. cinnamon (canelle)
- ½ tsp. white pepper
- pinch saffron
- 18 cups bread crumbs (about 2 loaves)
- cinnamon and red sandalwood to coat

Bring the honey to a boil, reduce heat, and allow to simmer for 5 or 10 minutes, skimming off any scum that forms on the surface. Remove from heat and add saffron, pepper, cinnamon, and bread crumbs (adding bread crumbs a cup at a time). Mix well and scoop out into half inch sized portions. Form into small balls and coat with a mix of 2 parts sandalwood to 1 part cinnamon.

(Source – Two Fifteenth Century Cookbooks – T. Austin)



Mutton in Beer

- 2lb (900g) leg of lamb or mutton
- 1 pint (575 ml) brown ale
- 1 large or 2 small onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tsp (5ml) salt
- Pepper to taste
- 1oz (25g) butter
- Bread slices cut into crustless cubes to serve.

Bone the meat, trim off the skin and excess fat, and cut into thin slices across the grain.

Place in a heavy pan with the beer and onions, cover and simmer for an hour before adding salt, pepper and butter.

Simmer for a further 20-30 minutes until tender.

Serve on cubes of crustless bread and in a deep dish.

(Source—A Proper New Book of Cookery)

The Armour

In Tudor England every man between 16 and 60 could be called to military service in times of civil unrest or threatened invasion. The 16th century armour on display on the long tables is the sort a special group of soldiers, called Pikemen, would have worn.

The armour consists of a helmet to protect the head, a gorget to protect the throat and back and breastplates to protect the chest. Tassets, the long, slightly curved pieces of metal hanging down from the back and breast, were worn to protect the lower parts of the body. Pikemen were also armed with a long spear between 16ft – 18ft long, called a pike, plus a simple sword. In battle, the pike was used to keep cavalry (the horse) at a distance and for driving off infantry by charging them ‘at push of pike’.

By law every Tudor household had to have a supply of weapons to defend their community. A poor family living in a cottage was expected to equip a potential soldier with a bill (a short spear with an axehead and spearpoint), a padded doublet called a ‘jack’ to protect him or perhaps a longbow and a quiver of arrows.

Wealthy families like the Sidneys were expected to equip cavalymen with almost a full set of armour, as well as provide a strong horse to carry him. They would also have to supply arms and armour for their servants.

Arms were stored in a special room called an armoury. You can see such a collection later on in the tour.



The West Solar (State Dining Room)

The Solar is the first of the private rooms. The Mediaeval Hall was built with an east solar and a west solar (in the shape of a letter H). It was a room used by the women of the household to ‘withdraw’ to, away from the boisterous public atmosphere of the Great Hall. It was originally a very light room but further building extensions cut out some of the windows.

The great fireplace was a ‘modern’ improvement when it was built in the 16th century. It has a decorated iron fire-back to protect the brickwork from the fire and to deflect the heat back into the room. The Solar was altogether warmer and less smoky than the Barons Hall.

The shaped ironwork in front of the fire is called a ‘Posset Dog’. These were designed to hold metal cups in which drinks, such as heated milk, wine, or beer could be warmed. Tea and coffee were not drunk in Tudor times. Flavourings such as honey, cinnamon and ginger were often used. Eggs were sometimes added to thicken the mixture – making a 16th century snack!

On the opposite wall is a ‘squint’ or spyhole. From here the ladies could keep an eye on the proceedings below, without enduring the boisterous behaviour.

In the Solar hangs a famous painting thought to have been painted in 1581 by an unknown artist.

It shows Sir Philip Sidney by the fireplace watching Queen Elizabeth I dance La Volta with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, his uncle. The room bears a striking resemblance to the Solar.

On the wall above the squint is a painting of Barbara Gamage and her six children. Barbara, a Welsh heiress who had lived at court, married Robert Sidney in 1582. It was a very happy marriage and Robert once wrote to her:

“ Sweet Barbara, as you love me do not discomfort yourself, you are one of the greatest joys of my life”

Barbara is resting her hands on her two sons, William and Robert. Sadly only Robert reached adulthood. In the painting the boys are dressed in skirts like their sisters. Once boys reached the age of 7 or 8 they were ‘breeched’, i.e., put into breeches, the 16th century equivalent of trousers. You can also see a portrait of the two brothers nearby.



Barbara Gamage and her Children
Image © Viscount De L'Isle
Penshurst Place & Gardens

Family Life

Land was the major source of economic wealth, usually obtained through inheritance or marriage rather than purchase. When a woman married she had a dowry – a gift of land or goods for her husband’s family. By making a good marriage a family could gain land and become related to a family which was already powerful. When a landowner died, the eldest son inherited the estate. Only if there were no sons would a daughter inherit land.

Tudor society expected women to marry, to have children and support their husbands by running the household. Many aristocratic and upper class families arranged suitable marriages for their daughters – even Queen Elizabeth I was under pressure to marry for reasons of state. Elizabeth once said to her Parliament:

“If I were a milkmaid with a pail on my arm, whereby my private person might be a little set by, I would not forsake that poor and single state to match with the greatest monarch”.



Queen Elizabeth I dancing La Volta with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester
Image © Viscount De L’Isle
Penshurst Place & Gardens

Infant mortality was much higher in the 16th century than it is today. Most families would lose children to death and disease, especially in the plague years.

Families like the Sidneys owed loyalty to the Crown and children were taught to obey their parents. The Prayer Book of 1559 summed up how households in England should be governed: Tudor people were urged

“to love, honour and succour thy father and mother; to honour and obey the King and all that are put in authority under him. To submit thyself to all thy governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters; to order thyself comely and reverently to all thy betters... to learn and labour truly to get thine own living, to do thy duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me”.

Education

The young boys and girls in the portrait would have been taught to read, write, play a musical instrument and to dance. By the age of 10, they began to receive a more specialised education, to prepare them for their clearly defined roles in Tudor society.

The mother, who would equip them with the skills and experience necessary to make a good marriage and run a great household, would closely supervise the girls. They were also taught quieter pastimes like spinning, weaving and embroidery – probably practised in a room like the Solar.

The sons of families like the Sidneys had close links with the royal governments of Edward VI and Elizabeth I, which meant

that they needed an education that would equip them to serve their monarch.

Consequently, the boys received a much broader education, which could include time away at school, university and perhaps the Inns of Court in London. They also learned to ride, hunt and fight on horseback. The basis of their education would be time spent with a carefully selected tutor living in the house. You can see a painting of one such tutor, Hubert Languet, in the Page's Room. He was tutor and mentor to Sir Philip Sidney and they travelled across Europe together.

It was believed that the well-being of the country depended on the skills and quality of the Crown's servants. The ideal education was summarised by Roger Ascham, Tutor to Elizabeth I. He wrote:

'young men should learn modern languages plus Latin and Greek, study mathematics and philosophy. But this should be enhanced with training "to ride comlie: to run fair at the tilt or ring: to plaie at all weapons: to shoot fair in bow, or surely in gun: to vault lustily: to run: to leap: to wrestle: to swim: to dance comlie: to sing, to play of instrument cunnyngly: to hawke: to hunt: to play at tennis and all pastimes generally, which be joined in labor, used in open space and on the day light, containing some fit exercise for war or some pleasant pastime for peace'.

Tudor women were generally only taught skills to become good wives. Elizabeth I was highly educated and a few significant families also considered the education of the daughters to be important. The Sidneys were such a family. Sir Henry's sister, Frances, married Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex. Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge was founded in 1596 by Frances' executors, so the students may be her children in perpetuity.

Perhaps the most famous was Sir Philip Sidney's sister, Mary, Countess of Pembroke. Together they translated the psalms into English. She lived at Wilton House near Salisbury and as well as being an authoress in her own right, she was a patron of the arts listing Sir Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson among her circle. You can see her portrait in the Long Gallery.

Sir Robert Sidney's daughter, Lady Mary Wroth, whose portrait hangs in the Solar, was also a gifted musician and wrote verse. Her play *'Love's Victory'* is acclaimed as an early feminist work.



The Buckingham Building

The Buckingham Building was the first architectural addition to the Baron's Hall. It was called after the Stafford Dukes of Buckingham who lived at Penshurst Place at the end of the 15th century.

When it was first built it consisted one large first floor hall, similar in appearance to the Barons Hall. Sir Henry Sidney later divided it into two rooms following the fashion in Tudor times to have smaller rooms. An attic floor or 'barracks' was also created at this time obscuring the high vaulted ceiling.

The Queen Elizabeth Room

Although she never stayed at Penshurst, Queen Elizabeth I was a frequent visitor. Most of the summer months were spent travelling with her court (anything up to 1,000 people) around her realm, known as her 'progresses', returning to London for the winter season. This room would have been used as the great chamber where she gave audience during a visit.

Above the fireplace can be seen the coat of arms of Sir Henry Sidney and his wife, Lady Mary Dudley. The Sidney family crest is the porcupine and the Dudley family crest is the bear and ragged staff.

Mary Dudley was lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth I and spent much of her time at court. She nursed the Queen through smallpox then contracted the disease herself. Although the Queen fully recovered, Mary Dudley was so disfigured she retired from court life and lived behind a veil at Penshurst.

Her husband, in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham wrote: "*I left her(Mary) a full fair lady, in mine eyes at least the fairest, and when I returned I found her as foul a lady as the smallpox could make her*".

You will also see various examples of musical instruments in this room, an arch lute, thought to be similar to the one in the portrait of Mary Wroth in the Solar, a 16th century harpsichord and a harp.

As well as a fashion for smaller rooms in the 16th century, wood panelling around the walls was commonplace. The wood panelling in the Queen Elizabeth Room, although of a later period, is linen-fold, a popular design from the Tudor age.

The Tapestry Room

This is the second half of the Buckingham building, with a small Page's Room adjoining, where pages would retire to in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The tapestry hanging on the north wall is a 16th century Bordeaux tapestry depicting an interior of a Court with a King and Queen in the foreground, attended by ladies-in-waiting, courtiers and soldiers.



Arms of Viscount De L'Isle

The Long Gallery

Contains portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, Edward VI and important members of the Sidney Family

This wing was built by Sir Robert Sidney and his wife Barbara Gamage starting in 1599. Long galleries were very fashionable at the time, used for taking exercise and showing off portraits, tapestries and furniture. The Long Gallery was the centre and showpiece of the great house. Relatives, visitors, tutors, dancing masters, chaplains and secretaries would meet here to preambule in bad weather, sew, play backgammon, practice fencing, play musical instruments and sing. They doubtless held hands and whispered love sonnets in the window seats.

This Long Gallery is unusual in being lit on three sides and the fine panelling is original. The ceiling is a 20th century exact replacement for the original and you can see many typical Tudor symbols like the portcullis and the pineapple, a sign of welcome and hospitality in Tudor England.

The Queen Elizabeth Portrait

This portrait of Queen Elizabeth I given to either Sir Philip Sidney or Sir Henry Sidney, is one of the many ‘officially approved images’ of the Queen that were given to foreign ambassadors, important officials and loyal servants. Elizabeth’s portrait, like her many progresses, (summer journeys with her Court) was designed to introduce the world outside London to the power and importance of her government.

In honour of a royal visit, the gift of a title or a portrait was often presented to the host

as a sign of the Queen’s grace and goodwill. The portrait would be hung where family, visitors and neighbours could see them.



The Death Mask of Elizabeth I

Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603 after a reign of 45 years, which had brought stability and prosperity to England in spite of a long war with Spain.

Elizabeth’s remains were sealed in a coffin of wood and lead and interred in Westminster Abbey. A life-like statue of the Queen was laid on top, dressed in her “Parliament Robes” wearing a crown and holding the symbol of kingship, the orb and sceptre.

It is believed that this mask, made of lead, is based on the statue of Elizabeth used for her funeral procession in April 1603.

The portrait of Sir Henry Sidney. Servant to four Tudor Monarchs 1529 - 1586

Sir Henry's father, Sir William Sidney, served Henry VIII as a soldier and was rewarded in 1512 with a knighthood. He became an 'Esquire of the Body' to King Henry, being one of a small group of elite courtiers close to the King and Prince Edward.

Henry Sidney was born in 1529 and due to his father's connection with the Court, he became a royal 'henchman' in 1539. Henchmen were privileged young men brought to court to be groomed as royal servants and trusted companions to the young Prince Edward, heir to the throne.

Prince Edward became King in 1547. In 1552 he bestowed the gift of Penshurst Place and its estate to his Chamberlain, Sir William Sidney.

Henry Sidney became a 'Gentleman of the Privy Chamber', was knighted in 1550 and made Chief Gentleman in 1551. Sir Henry described these years of service to King Edward in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham in 1583:

" As the sweet prince grew in years and discretion, so grew I in favour and liking of him, in such sort as by that time I was twenty-two years old he made me one of the four principal Gentlemen of the Bedchamber.

While I was present with him he would always be cheerful and pleasant with me and in my absence gave me such words of praise as far exceeded my desert. Last by not only to my own still felt grief but also to the universal woe of England, he died
in my arms"

In 1551 Sir Henry married Lady Mary Dudley, daughter of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. Sir Henry and his family were closely allied with the committed

group of Protestants that surrounded Edward VI. When Edward died, Sir Henry supported Northumberland's attempt to put the Protestant Lady Jane Grey on the throne, instead of the Roman Catholic Princess Mary (eldest daughter of Henry VIII).

The attempt failed. Mary became Queen and Northumberland was executed. However, Sir Henry avoided the Tower and continued his service at Court serving the new queen.

Sir Henry was amongst the courtiers who were sent to escort King Philip II of Spain to England for his marriage to Queen Mary. This was not a popular marriage and must have been a difficult time for the Sidneys. However, Sir Henry, being politically astute, asked King Philip to be Godfather to his son, Philip Sidney, born in 1554 – the eldest son of the Sidney's continues to be named Philip to this day.

King Philip wished to be King of England, sharing power with Mary and fervently supported her policy of returning England to the Catholic Church.

Sir Henry also became one of the most faithful servants of Queen Elizabeth I, assuming responsibilities in Ireland for over 20 years, first as vice-treasurer of the Irish Council and later as Lord Deputy. In 1559 he was also appointed Lord President of Wales, a post which led him to take up residence at Ludlow Castle. He was made Knight of the Garter in 1564, yet generally received little thanks for his services, and equally little reward. By 1583 he was £5,000 in debt, complaining that he had not

"so much land as would graze a mutton".

Sir Henry died in Ludlow in May 1586, only a few months before the death of his eldest son, Sir Philip. The estate therefore passed to Philip's brother Sir Robert Sidney, who was to be the principal instrument in restoring the family fortunes.

***The Portrait of Sir Philip Sidney
1554 - 1586***

***'Even at this distance Sidney is dazzling.
He is that rare thing, the aristocrat in
whom the aristocratic ideal is embodied'***

Born 30th November 1554 at Penshurst, Sir Philip Sidney became during his short lifetime a much loved and admired figure. He was named after his godfather, King Philip of Spain, although his family were staunch supporters of the Protestant faith.

He went to school at Shrewsbury, then to Christ Church, Oxford, after which he travelled abroad for 3 years and studied languages. In 1583 Sir Philip married Frances, daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth, and they had one daughter, Elizabeth. He took a great interest in the New World and made plans to join Sir Francis Drake on a secret expedition. But being a great favourite of Queen Elizabeth she forbade him to go. Instead she appointed him Governor of Flushing in the Protestant Low Countries, where his uncle, Robert Dudley, was Captain General of the forces.

Sir Philip was wounded in the thigh in a skirmish outside Zutphen. His chivalry on this occasion has become legend. Thirsty from loss of blood, he called for water, but as he was about to drink he saw a dying soldier and handed the bottle to him with the words

'Thy necessity is yet greater than mine'.

His wife went to nurse him but the wound turned gangrenous and within a month he



Sir Philip Sidney
Image © Viscount De L'Isle
Penshurst Place & Gardens

died aged 32 on 17th October 1586.

Seven hundred mourners attended his funeral at St Paul's Cathedral on 16th February 1587 and seldom has a young man of thirty-two been more widely and sincerely mourned. The helmet carried in front of his coffin bearing the Sidney porcupine badge can be seen in the Nether Gallery. He was accorded the honour of a state funeral – the first commoner to receive such a tribute, which was not to be repeated until the death of Nelson and later Sir Winston Churchill (who had Sidney



From Sir Philip Sidney's funeral scroll

Sir Philip Sidney was regarded as the embodiment of everything the perfect gentleman and courtier should be. Despite being dogged by ill health, he achieved a reputation which persists to this day. He remains the personification of virtue, chivalry and nobility, as well as a gifted poet, although none of his writings were published in his lifetime. His most celebrated literary works are his '*Defence of Poesie*' a sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella* and the prose romance *Arcadia*, written for his sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke. Her portrait also hangs in the Long Gallery.

***The portrait of Robert Dudley,
Earl of Leicester
Sir Henry Sidney's brother-in-law, uncle
to Sir Philip and Sir Robert Sidney,
favourite of Queen Elizabeth***



Dudley's wealth, power, as well as his unpopularity, all grew from his lifelong friendship with Queen Elizabeth. They were born in the same year, knew each other as children and both suffered the loss of a parent by execution. They were later imprisoned and feared trial and execution for treason. He was implicated with his father, the Duke of Northumberland, in the attempt to make Lady Jane Grey Queen instead of Mary Tudor. Both his father and his brother, Guildford Dudley, were executed but Robert and his brother, Ambrose, were later reprieved.

Dudley was dynamic, stylish, well educated and ambitious and when Elizabeth became Queen in 1558, Dudley pursued this friendship. She kept him close at court by making him her Master of the Horse, gave him money, titles and some power. She was probably in love with him which caused much resentment at court, especially when she made him Earl of Leicester in 1564. When challenging her authority, she would publicly remind him she was mistress of her own household and that England was ruled by 'one mistress and no master'.

Dudley led the English army to the Low Countries in 1585 to support the Dutch rebels against the Spanish Empire. It was an expensive and unrewarding campaign. In April 1588 he returned to England where he was made Captain General of the Queen's Armies and Companies. He died later that year, worn out by his tireless efforts organising an army to match the invasion forces of the Armada.

When Elizabeth died in 1603 a brief note from Dudley, written to the Queen shortly before his death, was found in her personal cabinet. Elizabeth had written on it 'his last letter' and had carefully kept it.

Robert Dudley's sword of State can be seen in the Nether Gallery

Edward VI King 1547 -1553

Edward was King between the ages of nine and sixteen. He had a brief and difficult reign, dominated by popular uprisings and power struggles at Court. His father, Henry VIII, had appointed a council of powerful men to protect and guide the young King until he could govern.

The council represented the new, Protestant forces in English society, led mainly by two strong personalities, Somerset and Northumberland. Their power and influence accelerated the religious and social changes set in motion by Henry VIII's break with Rome and the founding of a Church of England.

Edward, despite his age, was a committed Protestant and took his responsibilities as head of the new Church of England seriously. Along with his half sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, he received a very good education. He could read Latin, Greek and French, studied Mathematics and could play the Lute. Edward also participated in the normal pastimes of a noble and child of Tudor England. He rode, hunted, tilted in the ring, played tennis and practised archery. He was also a quiet and serious child. He balanced the normal pastimes with an awareness of the need to care for his soul.



King Edward VI

Edward was the focus of England's desire for a smooth succession on the death of his father, thus avoiding conflicts and distress. The young King's illness with Tuberculosis and death opened the way for Princess Mary and a Catholic reaction and upheaval.



Mary Tudor

Sir Robert Sidney KG, Created in 1619 Earl of Leicester 1563 – 1626 (his portrait hangs in the Solar)

Robert, the beloved younger brother of Sir Philip Sidney, inherited Penshurst Place in 1586. He married a Welsh heiress, Barbara Gamage, and his own position was greatly enhanced by the death of his uncles, the Earl of Leicester in 1588, and, the Earl of Warwick in 1589, each of whom made him his heir-at-law.

With the accession of James I he quickly found royal favour and was made Baron Sidney of Penshurst in 1603, Viscount Lisle in 1605 and in 1619 the Earldom of Leicester, which had lapsed on the death of his uncle, and revived in his favour.

His main contribution to Penshurst, besides the restoration of the family fortunes, was the building of the Long Gallery and a sequence of staterooms.

The Nether Gallery

In the 16th century there was not the specialisation in roles amongst the Crown servants that we would expect today. The Sidneys fulfilled many roles; ambassadors one year and military governors of towns the next. Great landowners were expected to both serve at Court, on the battlefield, and hold a store of arms and armour ready to serve their monarch.

Many of the weapons on display reflect the change and modernisation in warfare during the 16th century. Heavy armour was still worn, especially by the cavalry, but there was an increasing emphasis on firearms like the muskets you see in the racks on the wall.

The musket was heavy with a metre long barrel requiring a musket rest to support the weight. The musketeer carried a wooden staff with a forked top for this purpose. Musketeers wore little protective armour due to the amount they carried. Gunpowder was carried in small tubes fastened in a bandolier, or shoulder belt. They fired a lead ball that could penetrate the armour that you see displayed.

Tudor armies before Elizabeth's reign were based on the longbow and the bill; simple weapons to manipulate and use. The cavalry was hired and equipped by the great landowners. The crown supplied the cannon and paid specialist mercenaries to make up the shortfall in men, equipment and training.

The pole arms in the racks are of two main types; halberds and partisans. Halberds have a spike on top and an axehead. The simpler spear-shaped ones are partisans.

These highly decorated examples would have been carried by officers to show their rank, where sergeants would have carried plainer versions. The Pikeman's main task was to receive and beat off the enemy cavalry. They were well protected with iron helmet and armour to guard the breast, back and thighs. They stood in close formation, presenting a solid wall of iron spikes and armour – not a very encouraging sight for the charging cavalry.

Most soldiers carried swords, although skill with a sword was the mark of a gentleman. Sir Robert Dudley's sword of state can be seen here and was carried in processions rather than in battle.



A Musketeer

The suits of armour on display were worn by special troops of cavalry or officers. This armour marked the wearer as someone of importance as well as giving protection. Armour was highly valued by Henry VIII who set up an armoury in the Tower of London where he employed skilled European craftsmen to make armour for his Court and armies.

The design of armour often imitated the fashion in clothes with fluting, codpieces and peascod bellies. However, the practical use of armour was declining, as its effectiveness against musket was minimal.

Armour was also worn at tournaments when gentlemen of the Tudor Court rode against each other in full armour and carrying lances.

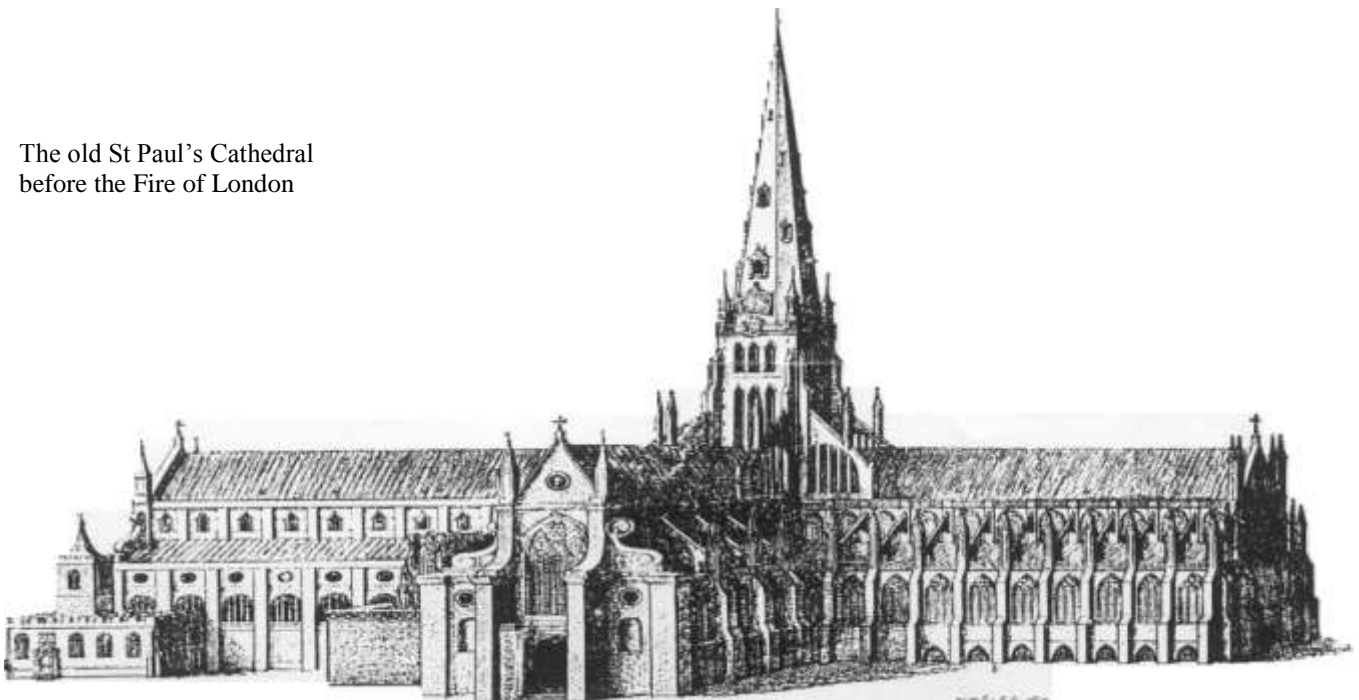
Perhaps the most significant item in the Nether Gallery is the funeral helm of Sir Philip Sidney. In 1587 he was accorded the honour of a state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral, the first commoner to receive such a tribute.

As if for royalty, mourning was worn by the people who lined the streets to watch Sir Philip's great funeral procession go by. The larger than life-sized helm, surmounted by a porcupine, the Sidney family crest, was carried in front of the catafalque. An engraving of the procession was made by Thomas Lant, showing those who marched in the procession, giving early pictorial evidence of important people in Tudor times. A copy of this can be seen in the Education Room.



Philip Sidney's Funeral Helm

The old St Paul's Cathedral
before the Fire of London





Left to right, top to bottom
Henry VIII, Henry VII, Elizabeth I, Edward VI

WORKSHEETS

Baron's Hall

How is the Baron's Hall different to your house. Think of as many things as you can.

Imagine you are one of the many servants who worked in the household during Tudor times. Write about 'a day in the life of' and draw your character into the Barons Hall picture supplied.

Make a Tudor menu for a special feast to be held in the Barons Hall. Draw a table laid up for the feast.

The Solar

From postcards of Queen Elizabeth Dancing La Volta and Barbara Gamage and her Children, choose three items of clothing, draw them and write a sentence about each.

The Queen Elizabeth Room

The Sidney family crest is above the fireplace. Design a crest for your family with animals and objects most suited to your name.

The Long Gallery

Choose one of the Tudor portraits in the Long Gallery and write a brief story about that person.

If you had a Long Gallery at home, what would you use it for and how would you furnish it.

The Nether Gallery/Armoury

Read the following statements about the armour you have seen in the Nether Gallery and decide if it is true or false. Give a reason for each of your answers (i.e. evidence from portraits or displays).

People wearing armour could not bend their arms

True •

False •

My evidence is

.....

.....

Swords were only worn on the gentleman's left hand side.

True •

False •

My evidence is

.....

.....

It takes a tall, strong person to be a Pikeman.

True •

False •

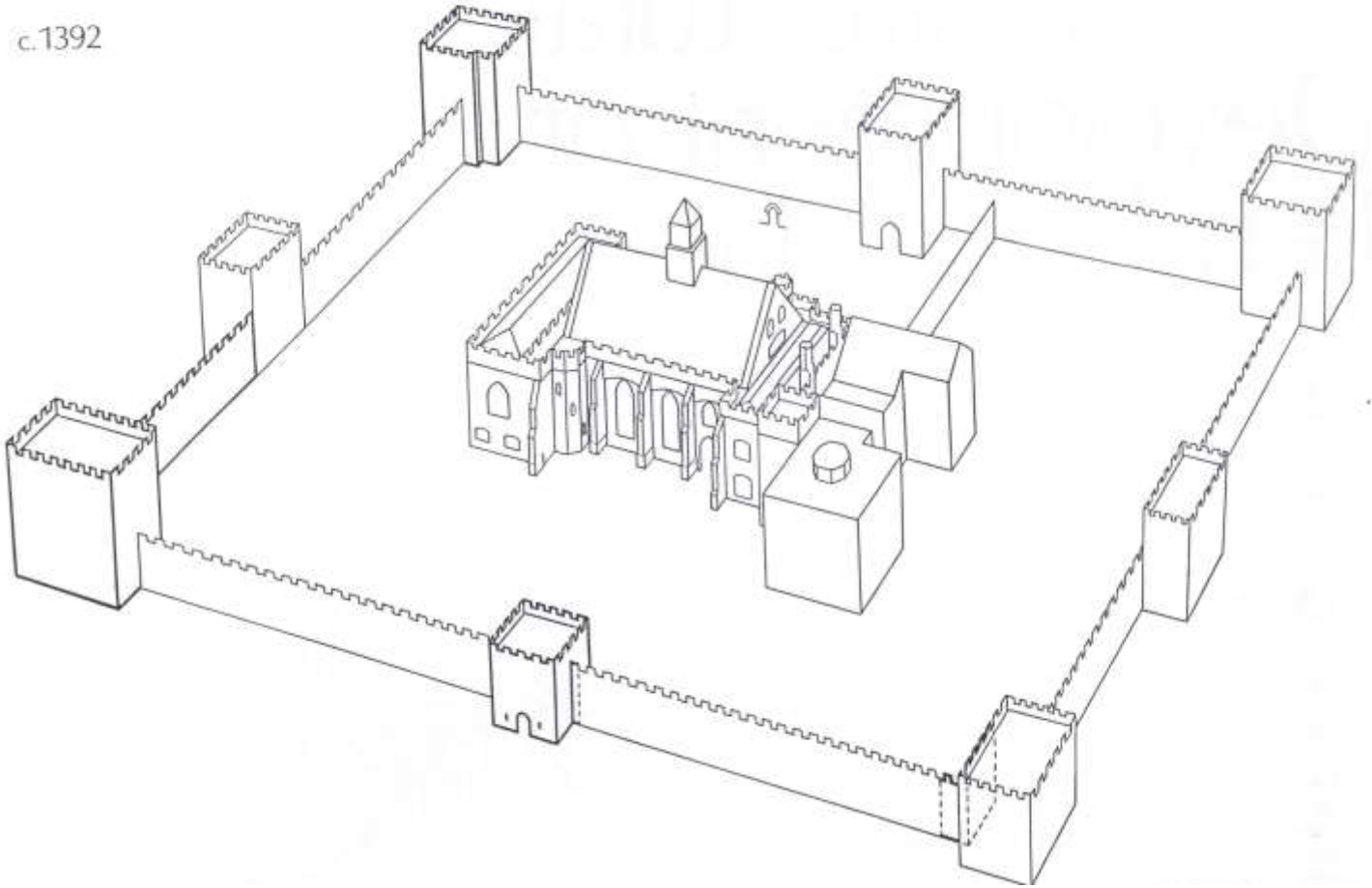
My evidence is

.....

.....

Compare the type of arms and armour worn by today's soldiers to that worn in Tudor England.

c. 1392





COLOUR IN THIS COAT OF ARMS
WHEN YOU GET HOME

Blue = 1

Gold = 2

Green = 3



Arms of Viscount De L'Isle

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