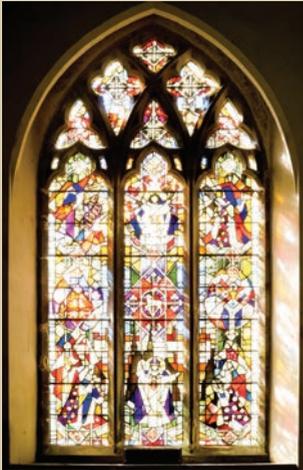




PENSHURST CHURCH

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST



Becket Window: Lawrence Lee
stained glass window 1970
(Page 9)

Introduction

This guide tells the story of almost 900 years, not only of the church's building as it emerged over several centuries, but also of the people commemorated or buried inside it who have played a part in Penshurst's history.

- 2 History & Early Years
- 3 The Church's Surrounds
- 4 The Churchyard
- 5 The Church's Exterior
- 8 The Church's Interior
- 10 The Tower
- 12 The Nave
- 14 South Aisel
- 15 Sidney Chapel
- 19 Sir Philip Sidney
- 20 Sidney Descendents
- 24 Sidney Chapel Memorials
- 29 The North Aisle
- 32 The Church Organ

History of St John the Baptist Church, Penshurst



Above: Penshurst Church
Below: The Textus Roffensis

Sections of the building can be traced to almost each century between the 12th and 19th.

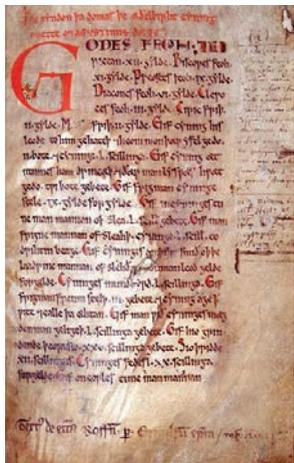
Famous architects, artists and the Civil War have left their mark. Those buried, or commemorated inside, include Earls, Viscounts, a Viceroy of India, a Private Secretary to two Kings, Knights ancient and modern, leaders of the British Army - and two winners of the Victoria Cross.

The War Memorials and their roll of names tell of savage inroads made into the village's youth by three wars within 50 years – the Boer War, World War 1 and World War 2. Outside, the Tower hovers protectively over the village, floodlit at night.

In the graveyard below, tombstones contain the murdered and victims of disease. Much of a nation's history and all of a village's life can be found in and around its church. Penshurst is a rich example.

David Lough
Penshurst, January 2012

Early Years



There has certainly been a church in Penshurst on the present site since 1115 when it is mentioned in a document by the name of Textus Roffensis.

There may have been a church on the site since Saxon times, well before the Norman Conquest in 1066. The recent discovery of Saxon artefacts on adjoining land reinforces some evidence that the foundations date from 860AD.

Penshurst's first priest, Wilhelmus, was installed 55 years later in 1170. Famously, the installation ceremony was carried out by Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.

It was his last public act: he was assassinated two days later in his cathedral by four knights, supposedly following King Henry II's plaintive cry,

"Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?"

Becket was canonised three years later and the murder has since been enshrined in literature, stretching from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral and Anouilh's play, Becket.

The Church's Surrounds



The Guild House: a rare example



Leicester Square

The church stands in the south west corner of Penshurst Place's park: there are entrances directly from the park and from Penshurst Place's formal garden. The most commonly used approach is from the village, through the buildings of the small Leicester Square, named after the Sidneys of Penshurst who were Earls of Leicester from 1618 to 1743.

On the left-hand side of this square, looking towards the church, is the Old Guild House, sometimes called The Church House, one of only two still left standing in England. Every parish used to have one to house spits, crocks and other utensils for preparing food and drink. This example is believed to date from 1475.

After the Reformation, parish clergy had to provide shelter for travellers and their parishioners who came for services on feast days. Church inns were set up to provide food and drink in respectable surroundings, controlled by the church. Church ales were brewed and the profits went towards the upkeep of the church and to provide the poor with feasts on special occasions.

At the time, the church was a village's central community building, as explained by historian Sir Roy Strong:

“For centuries, [the church] was the one really strong building arising amidst the hovels of the peasantry and the only one large enough for any kind of community gathering, whether for business or for play. In it took place meetings, debates, elections, legal proceedings, teaching as well as festivities.”

The church, or the church house, also housed fire-fighting equipment, stored the village's ducking stool and acted as the armoury for storing weapons.

The room above the Leicester Square archway was once Penshurst's village armoury and later served as the parish school room. Under the archway used to be a room where shelter was provided to visitors. Church inns were finally abolished by the Puritans in the middle of the 17th century, at which point it is thought that this section of Penshurst's church house became a public house called 'The King's Head'. The building has a diagonal 'dragon' beam at each corner, supporting the overhang or 'jetty' and is structurally sound, however alarming it may look.

Other buildings in Leicester Square, closer to the road, date from as recently as 1850, although they look much older. They are the work of the talented Victorian architect, George Devey (1820-1886), who worked at Penshurst place and was much patronised by the Rothschild family. In Penshurst, he also designed the mock Tudor buildings at South Park Farm.

The Churchyard



The graveyard

The bulging church yard contains the burials of almost eight centuries. The memorial stones date from the late 17th century to the middle of the 19th century, when the church yard was closed in 1857 by order of the Privy Council. Since then, parish burials have taken place at Poundsbridge Chapel, on the edge of Penshurst parish, about two miles away.

Entering the church's graveyard from Leicester Square, the first headstone on the far right is above the **grave of Richard Sax**,

a farmer who was murdered in 1813 by a labourer after an argument on the nearby estate of Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the world scout movement.

Henry Langridge was a day labourer who worked at Fordcombe'. With his wife and nine year old son, he occupied a cottage at Penshurst which was owned by the 53 year old Richard Sax, for whom Langridge had formerly worked. Between 5 and 6 pm on 1st February 1813, Langridge left his work and, with his son, set off for home. On the way home, they stopped in a field some quarter of a mile from their home, and cut some sticks for firewood.

They wrapped the sticks in a bundle which they put on the footpath while they rested. Richard Sax came along the path and, it being dark, stumbled over the sticks. Sax saw Langridge and accused him of deliberately putting the sticks on the path to trip passers-by.

The ensuing argument rapidly turned into a fight. Langridge allegedly turned to his boy and told him to go home, saying:

“I will kill him tonight, or he will have me transported tomorrow.” The boy is said to have left the scene but, as he walked across the next field, distinctly heard the cry of “Murder”, repeated several times. There followed what was said to be one of the most brutal murders committed in Kent.

Old Sevenoaks Borough Murders, Book 1, Mark Mullins.

The church yard's earlier tombstones are shorter and thicker, while the later are taller and thinner, with lichen growth. In the 1830's and 1840's, slate was popular and available for use in fashioning gravestones, as a result of nearby railway construction. The slate stone inscriptions are still crisp and legible.

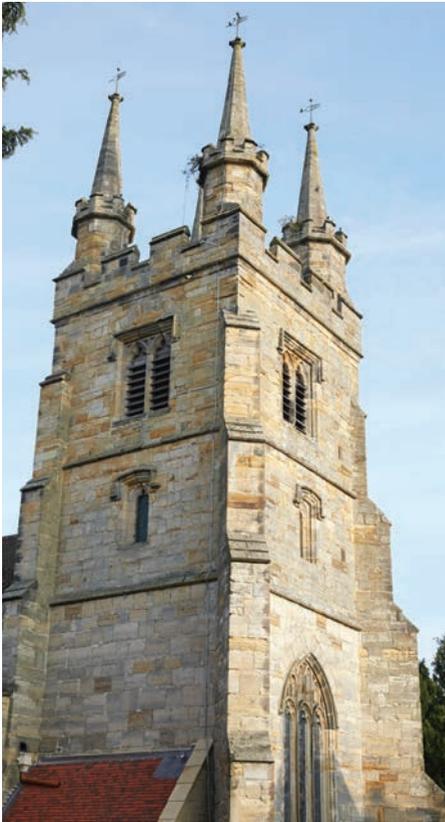


The dole table

The apparent table tomb by the church's south-west porch is not a tomb, but a rare dole table from which bread was distributed to the poor. Bread was handed out on 21st December, St Thomas's Day.

The Church's Exterior

'St John the Baptist's is a rare example of a church which has been extended over many generations with several large building campaigns, but maintains an overall integrity because of use of common materials and design ideas.'



The tower

The church's **south wall** dates from the aisle's extension (which doubled its width) in 1631, but it is remarkably similar in quality and materials to the Tower. Window tracery in this wall was replaced in the middle of the 19th century by Sir George Gilbert Scott, while he was working on the north aisle extension and chancery.

The south west porch is mainly built of 14th century stone and was probably moved to its present place when the south aisle was widened.

This verdict given by a contemporary ecclesiastical architect is due in large part to the unity of the church's building materials: largely local Wealden sandstone, as used at Penshurst Place, although there are blocks of the less interesting but softer and more workable Kentish Ragstone around the apex of the entrance porch archway and its window dressings.

The church's most striking external feature is its Tower, which is formed of three architectural stages.

The first, two storeys high, dates from the 15th century. The stone blocks used at low level, particularly in the buttresses, are large, indicating their antiquity when greater depths of bed were available to masons.

Subsequent stages, added in the 18th century, carry the clock stage and belfry. The design is unusual, with deep diagonal buttresses and battlements and, rising from the latter, four unusual octagonal columns with corner pinnacles.

The entrance to the **Sidney family burial vault**, set just to the right of centre in the church's southern wall, was built in 1820, at the same time as the third **Sidney family chapel**. The chapel occupies the south-eastern corner of the church, close to Penshurst Place. The date 1820 is set in the spandrels to the left and right of the vault doorway, which bears the initials and arms of Sir John Shelley Sidney, Bart., head of the family at that date.



Entrance to the Sidney family burial vault



Entrance detail

The church's originally narrower **north aisle** was not widened until 1854 and the stonework dating from that time is noticeably less interesting.



George Gilbert Scott

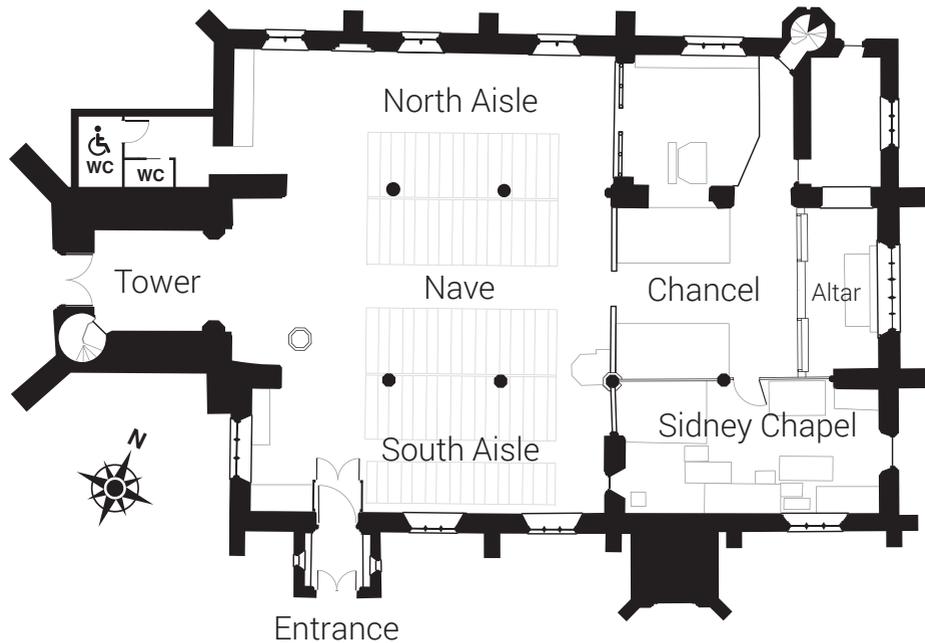
The extension's architect, however, was distinguished: Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811- 1878), better known for his design of the extravagantly Victorian gothic St Pancras hotel and station in London (now the Eurostar train terminus), of St John's College Chapel in Cambridge and of the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park, London. Closer to Penshurst, he was responsible for the whole of the late 19th century church built in Speldhurst, the village next door to Penshurst.

Both Gilbert Scott's son and grandson followed him as prominent architects. His grandson, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960), designed this church's War Memorial in 1920, early in his career.

He is best known for his later work in designing the new Anglican Liverpool Cathedral and the red public telephone kiosk, one of Britain's iconic designs. Finally, late in his career, he designed the famous Bankside power station, on the south bank of the Thames opposite St Paul's Cathedral. The power station has now been adapted to serve as the world-famous Tate Modern art gallery.

The Church's Interior

Use the map below to follow the descriptions of locations used in the guide

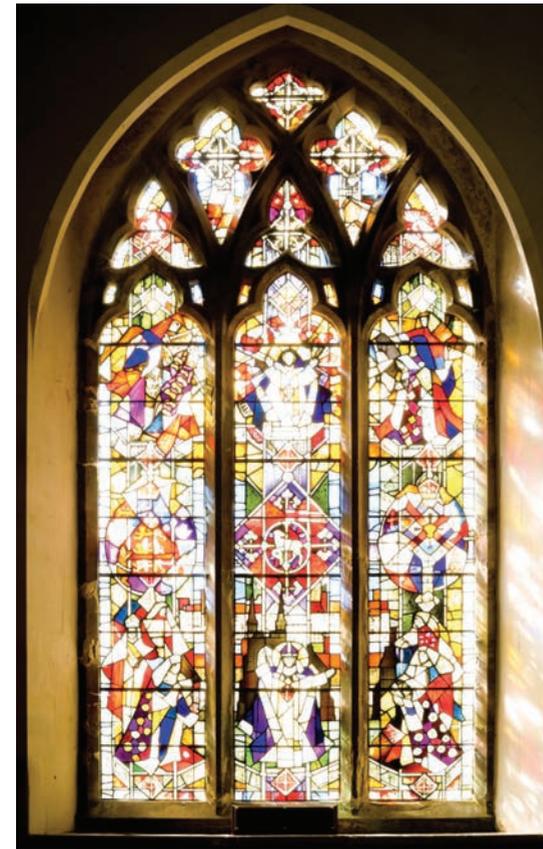


South west entrance porch

The oak door in the porch is described as 'creased' and dates from the 15th century. The porch was moved to its present location when the South Aisle was widened in 1631. The **Becket window**, by the doorway in the south-west corner of the church, was given by parishioners and friends to mark the 800th anniversary of Archbishop Becket's Institution of the village's first priest, Wilhelmus, in 1170 (a listing of all succeeding village priests is framed just to the right of the window).

The window's glazier was Lawrence Lee, a Master of the Glaziers Company, who designed and made other famous stained-glass windows at Coventry Cathedral and in the Chapel of The Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

Lee came to live in Penshurst in 1962 and set up his studio in a converted stable on Smart's Hill where he designed and made this window. At the foot of the central light, Becket stands in front of buildings designed to suggest Leicester Square and Penshurst Place behind. Above the Agnus Dei (lamb) symbol of St John the Baptist, he faces martyrdom on the steps of his own cathedral.



The Becket window



Window detail

The **Baptismal Font** is set in its traditional place inside the church's entrance, to symbolise baptism's purpose in welcoming a new member to the church. The font dates from the 15th century and has been repainted in what are said to have been its original colours.

Its shields represent the Instruments of Passion (north face), the arms of the Archbishop of Canterbury (east), the monogram of the Virgin Mary (south) and of Canterbury Cathedral (west).

Just behind the font can be seen a photograph of the church's Nave and Chancel as they appeared in 1897, before the wooden Chancel Screen was inserted.



Baptismal font

The Tower

The armorial glass in the central section of the tower's west window is dated 1627. The arms are those of the first Baron de L'Isle and Dudley, who died in 1626. The window was lying in Penshurst Place at the end of World War II and was moved to its present site when a falling 'doodlebug' bomb blew out the glass in many of the church's windows.

Set into the inside walls of the Tower, on both north and south sides, are the stone remnants from the coffin lids of two chest tombs. On the southern side, the stone carries the portrait of a lady now known as the **'Smiling Lady of Penshurst'**.



The 'Smiling Lady of Penshurst'

The stone was found in the church in 1854 during the extension works to the North aisle and was later moved to its current position. Superimposed on the Smiling Lady is a **Foliated Cross** which serves as a symbol of the church, is its processional cross. Within the last fifty years, the stone has been rather optimistically said to originate from the 13th century and the Albigensian rebellion amongst France's Cathars.

The **Albigensian Crusade** or **Cathar Crusade** (1209–1229) was a 20-year military campaign initiated by the Roman Catholic Church to eliminate the Cathar heresy. The Church had always dealt vigorously with strands of Christianity that it considered heretical, but before the 12th century such groups were organised in small numbers, around wayward preachers or small localised sects.



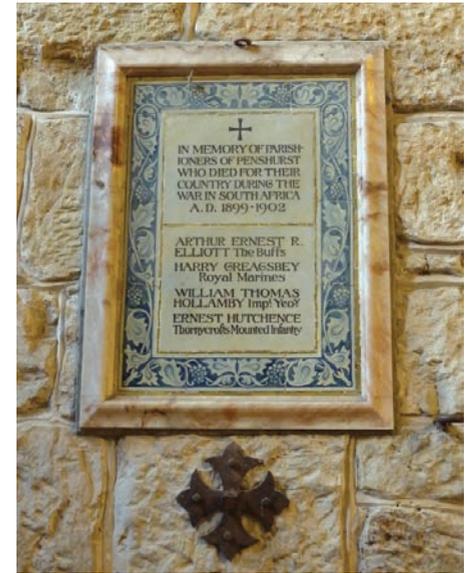
Foliated Cross

The Albigensians, because of the movement's presence in and around the city of Albi in southwestern France, represented an alarmingly popular mass movement that the Church had not seen for almost 900 years. In the 12th century much of what is now southern France was converting to Catharism and a Church Council held near Albi in 1176 declared the doctrine heretical.

The Tower's northern wall carries a Memorial tablet to four villagers killed in the Boer War. (By the organ console in the choir area is another tablet commemorating a fifth villager who died of pneumonia 'supervening wounds received in the Boer War').

The Tower's upper level carries a peal of 8 bells, listed with their weights in the picture frame on the Tower wall. Penshurst's no. 5 and 6 bells were originally cast in 1450 to coincide with the building of the tower. The Tenor bell, cast in 1619, weighs 19cwt (966 kg) and is one of the heaviest bells in Kent. It was cast by Josephus Hatch who lived at Ulcombe in Kent and also cast bells hanging in Canterbury Cathedral.

The door in the Tower's south west corner gives onto a spiral staircase. It is safe to climb to the first floor, where the **church clock mechanism**, dating from the 18th century, can be found. This strikes the hour and chimes each quarter hour over the village.



Boer War Memorial to Penshurst villagers



Bell pulls



View from tower

Unfortunately it is not safe for visitors to climb beyond the first floor unaccompanied, but the roof provides spectacular views of Penshurst Place and the village lying in the valley formed by the confluence of the rivers Eden and Medway.

The Tower's Western door is a double leaf door set in a two centre arch opening. It was installed in the 17th century.

The Nave



Arches: western end 1170 - 1250

The Nave is three bays long and incorporates some of the oldest fabric surviving in the building.

Above the western end's arch, at the Nave's junction with the Tower, can be seen a thickening in its construction, believed to be Romanesque and to date from the 12th century. This is the ancient line of the roof before it was raised to form a Clerestory in 1475. Much of the arcading below the Clerestory dates from the 13th century.

The central Nave is flanked by two gabled aisles. The arches at the western end of the northern side are in the simple Early English style which lasted from 1170 - 1250. These pillars are thought to date from about 1200. Those at the eastern end of the north side, between the Chancel and Vestry, and on the south side are in the more elaborate decorated style and date from between 1290 and 1350.



Arches: eastern end 1290 - 1350

The Nave's roof construction comprises rafters with collar braces, crown posts and collar purlins supported on tie beams and wall posts. The corbels below the wall posts are heraldic devices. Above these can be seen the stubs where Cromwell's Commonwealth troops sawed off the more decorative elements of the roof design during the Civil War.



Corbels defaced by Cromwell's troops

Just above ground level at the north west end of the Nave, where it emerges from the Tower, is the **War Memorial**, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and erected in 1920, in honour of the villagers of Penshurst who fell in the Great War. The names are listed in chronological order of death. After the end of World War II, the names of villagers who fell in that war were added in a small additional panel at the bottom of the Memorial.

All the names on the Memorial are read out in full each year during the Remembrance Sunday service. The list for World War I, in particular, is hauntingly long – 50 names from a single small parish, 35 of these men below the age of 30. In several cases, there are multiple names from a single family. World War II's list is strikingly shorter.

The Pulpit

At the Nave's eastern end, in front of the wooden Chancel screen, stands a fine Victorian pulpit made of marble and mosaic.

Chancel and Sanctuary

The Chancel, where the choir sit, and Sanctuary, behind the altar rail, are one architectural space, incorporating 14th and later 19th century work. The later work, by Sir George Gilbert Scott, consists of a lofty space containing three bays, set below a quasi barrel vault. Under the East window, behind the altar, is a wooden reredos in memory of Major Francis J Ball.

The Sanctuary is dominated by memorials to previous Rectors of the parish. Although he is not among those remembered by a tablet, the most notable of these was Revd. Henry Hammond, who became Rector in 1633 at the age of 28. At the time of the Civil War, he took the Royalist side and was chased out of Penshurst. Escaping via Winchester to Oxford, he went on to become Chaplain to King Charles I.



Sir Giles Gilbert Scott War Memorial



Pulpit



Henry Hammond, courtesy of the British Museum, London

His biographer, G.G. Perry wrote of him:

“When the Church was suffering persecution in the time of Cromwell, it was to Dr. Hammond, more than to any other single man, that she owed the continuance of her existence.”

From the 13th century, Rectors lived next door to the church in a Rectory which also changed down the centuries. The building was gifted by the Sidney family to the local Parochial Church Council, who became concerned at the costs of maintenance and gifted it some 50 years ago to the Diocese. After the Church

Commissioners' losses in the property market of the 1990s, the Diocese controversially decided to sell the original Rectory and build a smaller, modern replacement in the garden of its predecessor. Unfortunately the sale proceeds were added to general Diocesan funds and Penshurst itself did not benefit.

South Aisle



The Luke Tapestry

more than 50 years. Dedicated to St Luke as the first Christian physician, it denotes the partnership between medical science and Christianity.

The central panel contains a Greek quotation from the New Testament, translated as, ***“Greeting to you from Luke, the Beloved Physician”.***

The inner border contains electro-cardiograph tracings, one normal and one heralding a heart attack; a syringe and ampoules; a stethoscope; a doctor's 'black bag'; forceps and hammer; and two chemical formulae, one representing the nucleus of penicillin. Two

St Luke Chapel

At the eastern end of the aisle is St Luke's Chapel, the name it has carried since its rededication by the Bishop of Rochester in 1981. It houses the **Luke Tapestry**, which hangs above the altar.

The Luke Tapestry was designed and worked by a former village doctor, Dr A. Wood in memory of his father, Dr C. Wood, also Penshurst's doctor, for

chains represent the imprisonment St Luke shared with St Paul; two scrolls represent St Luke's two books.

Within the larger border are flowers used medicinally: foxglove, poppy, deadly night-shade, yellow gentian; willow gentian; autumn crocus. The ship is a Roman merchant vessel of the first century, denoting the journeys shared by St Luke and St Paul.

The memorial between the windows on the south wall is to **Sir William Coventry**, who died in 1686 at the age of 60. He was a Commissioner of the powerful Naval Board whom Samuel Pepys served as Secretary while keeping his famous diary. Coventry largely escapes the waspish side of Pepys' pen and secures many favourable mentions in the diary.

Sidney Chapel (South East)

This is the Sidney family's private chapel and they remain responsible for its upkeep. The family have lived in Penshurst Place for over 450 years.

Penshurst Place

The first recorded owner of the manor house, in the 13th century, was **Sir Stephen de Peneshurste** or Penchester, although technically the property was recorded in the name of his uncle, Sir John Belemeyens, canon of St Paul's, London. This information appears in Edward Halstead's History and Topographical Survey of the county of Kent, published in 1797.



Tomb of Sir Stephen de Penchester



Sir Stephen, described as a “very learned man”, was appointed Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports by Henry III and continued these posts under his successor’s reign when he was knighted and granted the manor of Peneshurst. According to Halstead, in 1299,

“he died without issue male and was buried in the south chancel of this church under an altar tomb, on which lay his figure in armour, reclining on a cushion.”

Today, the top half of his figure, still in armour and with his right hand grasping his sword, is all that remains; and it reclines anonymously, with little dignity, on the Chapel floor.

His younger daughter, Alice, who had inherited the property on her mother’s death during Edward II’s reign, sold the property to Sir John de Pulteney, who was Lord Mayor of London no less than four times and noted ***“for his piety, wisdom, large possessions and magnificent housekeeping”***. Pulteney initiated a major reshaping of the building in 1341, at the time when such properties ceased to be castles and became houses that could be defended in an emergency.

Sir John also died without male issue and the house passed through the female line to the Levaine family. When Nicholas de Louvain died in 1375, he left a tankard with a silver top in his Will to the parson of Penshurst and founded a College of Chantry consisting of a master priest and six others to pray for him. The manor house passed, again through the female line, to the Devereux family before being sold to John, Duke of Bedford, third son of Henry IV.

The Duke acted as regent for his infant nephew, Henry VI, and ***“the victories he acquired so humbled the French that he crowned his uncle Henry VI in Paris”***, where Bedford himself later died. He had been twice married but died without an heir. Penshurst, together with his other properties, passed to his younger brother, the fourth son of Henry IV, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. The Duke acted as Protector of England until Henry came of age, when he was appointed Lord High Steward.

On his death, again without issue, the property passed to Henry VI and thus to the Crown. The King granted it to the Duke of Buckingham’s family, in whose hands it remained for several generations until reaching the original Duke’s great grandson, Edward, in the reign of Henry VIII.

The young Duke entertained his King with great pomp at Penshurst in 1519 but, just two years later, was arrested for treason against the King and beheaded at the Tower of London. As was the custom in the event of treason, his properties, including Penshurst, passed back to the Crown.

Henry appears to have kept the property in his own hands for at least 13 years, buying surrounding land to enlarge its park, but he granted its use and the rent from its land to Sir Thomas Boleyn, owner of the nearby Hever Castle, as its Keeper. Boleyn’s son George is known still to have been receiving the rents as late as 1536.

Henry’s successor Edward VI granted Penshurst to the Earl of Warwick, but Warwick soon exchanged it with properties held by one Sir Ralph Fane, a knight whose grandfather had owned land near Tonbridge. Two years later, the new owner Sir Ralph was accused of treason together with the Duke of Somerset and, after being found guilty, was hanged on Tower Hill. Ownership of Penshurst passed back to the Crown again.

In 1552, Edward VI granted the property to Sir William Sidney (1482–1554), who had been a soldier and courtier to the King’s father, Henry VIII. Sir William’s son Henry (1529–1586) married Lady Mary Dudley, whose family became implicated in the Lady Jane Grey affair, although Henry escaped any involvement. During his lifetime he added apartments and the “King’s Tower” to Penshurst and created what is now one of England’s oldest private gardens. He met his end when he caught a cold while in Ludlow, a Welsh principality of which he was president. He died at the Bishop’s Palace in Worcester, from where he was, by Queen Elizabeth I’s order, carried with great solemnity back to Penshurst. His body was buried beneath the church but, according to Halstead, ***“his heart was carried back to Ludlow and buried there”***.

Sir Philip Sidney



Sir Philip Sidney

The famous **Sir Philip Sidney**, Henry’s eldest son, was born at Penshurst Place in 1554 and became one of the Elizabethan age’s most prominent figures. His mother, Lady Mary Dudley, was the daughter of John Dudley, 1st Duke of Northumberland, and the sister of Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester.

Philip was educated at Shrewsbury School and Christ Church, Oxford. He was much travelled and highly learned. In 1572, he travelled to France as part of the embassy to negotiate a marriage between Elizabeth I and the Duc D’Alençon. He spent the next several years in mainland Europe, moving through Germany, Italy, Poland, and Austria. On these travels, he met a number of prominent European intellectuals and politicians.

Returning to England in 1575, Sidney met Penelope Devereux, the future Penelope Blount; though much younger, she would inspire his famous sonnet sequence of the 1580s, *Astrophel and Stella*. Her father, the Earl of Essex, is said to have planned to marry his daughter to Sidney, but died in 1576. In England, Sidney occupied himself with politics and art. He quarrelled with Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, probably because of Sidney's opposition to the French marriage, championed by de Vere. Sidney challenged de Vere to a duel, which Elizabeth forbade. He wrote a lengthy letter to the Queen detailing the foolishness of the French marriage. Elizabeth bristled at his presumption, and Sidney prudently retired from court.

During his absence from court, he wrote the first draft of *The Arcadia and A Defense of Poetry* which were to prove the source of his lasting fame. He had returned to court by the middle of 1581 and was knighted in 1583, the same year in which he married Frances, teenage daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham.

Sidney was a keenly militant Protestant. In the 1570s, having persuaded John Casimir to consider proposals for a united Protestant effort against the Roman Catholic Church and Spain. He argued unsuccessfully for an assault on Spain itself in the early 1580s and, in 1585, his enthusiasm for the Protestant struggle was given a free rein when he was appointed governor of Flushing in the Netherlands. There, he consistently urged boldness on his superior, his uncle the Earl of Leicester, conducting a successful raid on Spanish forces near Axel in July, 1586.

Later that year, he joined Sir John Norris in the Battle of Zutphen. During the siege, he was shot in the thigh and died twenty-six days later. While lying wounded, he is said to have given his water-bottle to another wounded soldier, with the words, *"Thy necessity is yet greater than mine"*. This became possibly the most famous story about Sir Phillip.

His body was returned to London and interred in St Paul's Cathedral on 16 February 1587, but his tomb was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. During his own lifetime, but even more after his death, he had become for many English people the very epitome of a courtier: learned and politic, but at the same time generous, brave, and impulsive.

Sidney Descendents

Philip and his father had died in the same year and Philip's brother Robert Sidney inherited Penshurst. His time resulted in more additions to the state rooms, including the "Long Gallery". Robert was created a baron, by the title of Lord Sidney of Penshurst, and later Viscount Lisle in the reign of James I. He also inherited the Earldom of Leicester through the Northumberland family and died at Penshurst in 1626 to be buried in the church. His descendants continued to live at Penshurst for the next seven generations.

His son, another Robert, carried out several assignments as an ambassador for James I to Denmark, the states of Germany and court of France. He had married Dorothy, eldest daughter of Henry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland. They had six sons and eight daughters. The eldest daughter, Dorothy, to be known as Sacharissa, married Henry, Lord Spencer, who was created the Earl of Sunderland but was to die at a young age on the battlefield.

Of their sons who survived them, the eldest Philip succeeded to the title, but a younger son, **Algernon**, was a noted Republican and took time to return to England after King Charles II's Restoration. He might have been wiser to stay away, for he was accused of being an accomplice to the Rye House plot to murder the King at the Newmarket races.

Summarily tried by Judge Jefferies, he was found guilty on the flimsiest of evidence and hanged in 1683. It is said that his body arrived for burial in the Penshurst church crypt many weeks before his head, which had been on public display and therefore delayed.

His son Philip married the daughter of the Earl of Salisbury and lived until 1698. Their son and heir, Robert, was the fourth Earl of Leicester, who together with his wife Elizabeth (and nine of their fifteen children who died in infancy) are commemorated by a baroque memorial in the chapel. Robert lived until 1702 and was to be succeeded by three of his sons in turn before the male line died out in the middle of the eighteenth century – and with it the Earldom of Leicester.

Philip survived until 1705 as the fifth Earl, also commemorated in the Chapel. The next brother, John, led a distinguished life in royal service until he died unmarried in 1737; finally Joceline succeeded as the 7th Duke but he also died without lawful issue in 1743.

The fate of the late Earl's Penshurst estates was to result in two years of expensive litigation. The problem was that Joceline had produced one illegitimate daughter, Anne, borne out of wedlock; an elder brother, Thomas, had died in 1729 before he could succeed to the title. He had produced two legitimate daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. Which of them should succeed to the estates?



Algernon Sidney: beheaded



Robert Sidney: Viscount Lisle

Eventually a compromise was reached, to be confirmed by an Act of Parliament in 1745. Mary and Elizabeth were to share the Penshurst estates, paying a sum for their enjoyment to Anne, who herself was to inherit the estates in Glamorgan.

Mary's husband, Sir Brownlow Sherard, died in 1748 before they had children; Mary then received the King's special permission in 1752 to change her name back to Sidney. When she died in 1758, still without children, she left her half of the estate to the Yonge family who in 1770 eventually sold most of it back to Elizabeth Perry, thus re-uniting the bulk of the estate.

The Perrys had been the wealthier of the two families and had taken Penshurst Place and its church in the original 1745 share-out of the estate. They had also received the king's permission in 1752 to resume the name of Sidney, but only for their children. William Perry spent a great deal of his money on repairing and improving the house and enriched it, according to Halstead, **"with a good collection of pictures, bought on his travels in Italy."**

It was left to his wife, Elizabeth, after his death in 1757, to use her inheritance to buy most of the balance of the estate from the Yorges in 1770. Twelve years later, she had to fight off a further claim to the estates in 1782 from one John Sidney, who claimed to be Joceline's son. She did so successfully but died the next year in 1783, passing on the estate in trust to her young grandson, John.

He neglected the building but in 1818 a new generation, in the form of another Sir John Shelley-Sidney, and his son Philip, who was created Baron De L'Isle and Dudley in 1835, began to restore it.

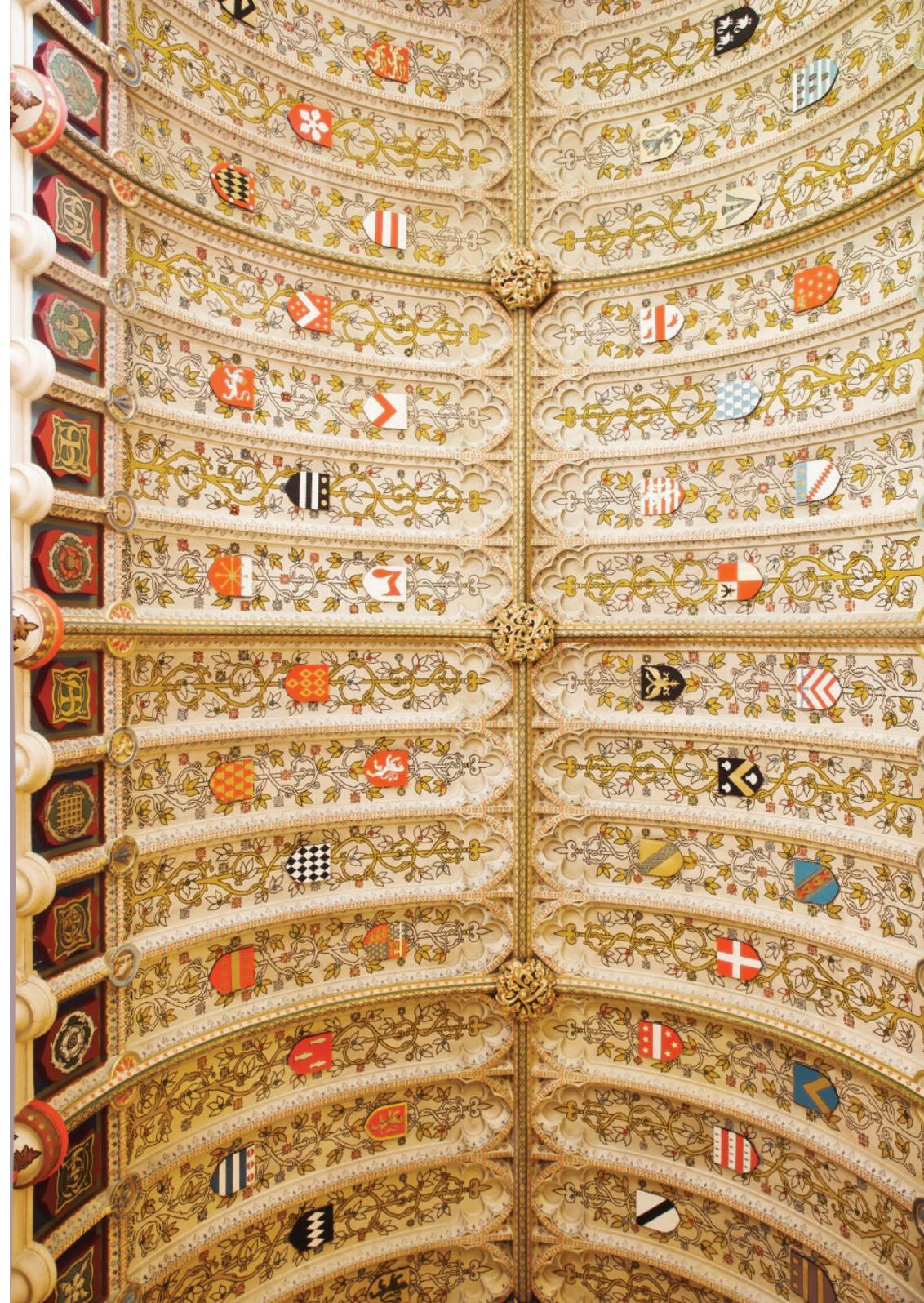


Sidney family gate

Their work includes the construction of the third Sidney chapel, between 1820 and 1822, to the design of architect, J.B. Rebecca, who carried out much of the restoration inside Penshurst Place, in Tudor Gothic style.

The Sidney family still use this chapel during church services, entering the churchyard through a gate in the wall directly from Penshurst Place's garden.

The house suffered in both of the twentieth century's World Wars. The present Lord De L'Isle's father was a famous soldier in the Second World War and then politician. It is to him and to his son, the 2nd Viscount who lives in Penshurst Place today, that much of the restoration is due.



Sidney Chapel Memorials

Sidney Chapel Ceiling (page 23)

The chapel's most notable internal feature is the tunnel-vaulted ceiling, restored in 1966. It is brilliantly painted with heraldic shields of the family, all hung on sinuous trees.



Thomas Bullayen, eldest brother of Anne Boleyn



Memorial to the Yden family

The chapel's memorials

The most important memorials found in the Sidney chapel include:

Lying against the south wall, the top half of a recumbent figure in chain mail, in Purbeck marble, of **Sir Stephen de Penchester** (who died in 1299). The legs have been broken off, but from the sword drawing posture of the figure it is reasonable to assume that they were originally crossed. (Photo-see cover).

A cross to **Thomas Bullayen**, the eldest brother of Anne Boleyn, who was probably born in 1502 and died as an infant in 1505 or 1506. His sister was to be the mistress and subsequently the second wife of King Henry VIII and mother of Queen Elizabeth I.

A beautiful floor brass, dated 1518, featuring a prosperous merchant, **Thomas Yden**, his wife **Agnes**, and, charmingly, their infant daughter **Joan**. Thomas Yden died in 1514. Both Thomas and Agnes are dressed in typical costumes of the day which had remained almost unaltered for a century but was to undergo change in the reign of Henry VIII. Note the fur edges and broad sleeves to Thomas's cloak.

Their daughter Joan, seen in miniature below her parents, was to marry Edward Shelley, a royal courtier who became Lord High Steward to Henry VIII, in which position he would have known Sir William Sidney.

At the eastern end of the southern wall, is a monument with a tomb-chest and a panelled back-

plate, known as an altartomb, commemorating **Sir William Sidney** (1482-1554) to whom King Edward VI gave Penshurst Place in 1552. It is of characteristic Late Perpendicular design and the back plate is framed by twisted shafts that carry a deep, panelled cresting.

A brass to **Margaret Sidney**, daughter of Sir Henry Sidney (1529-86) who died in 1558 in the reign of 'King Philip and Queen Mary'. Margaret's eldest brother was the famous Sir Philip Sidney.

A wall monument to **Robert Sidney, 4th Earl of Leicester** (d.1702) and the nine of his 15 children who died before reaching adulthood. On a pedestal, two children who reached the age of six are shown as dancing angels with large wings, holding out their hands to balance an urn. Infant heads in the clouds above are titled with the names of the Earl's children. The monument was commissioned and its words set by his wife, Lady Elizabeth Egerton, who outlived her husband by what she describes on the memorial as *"seven tedious years"*.

At the north-east end of the chapel (nearest to the altar), a marble tomb chest to **Philip Sidney, 5th Earl of Leicester** (d.1705) and various of his descendants. Its grey obelisk lies behind a magnificent coat of arms. The words on the top of the tomb chest describe his ancestry across several generations, including a mistake over the number of his daughters, later erased.

A sculptured figure of **Lady Sophia Fitzclarence**, a Sidney daughter who married a natural son of King William IV. The sculptor was W. Theed, later the only man allowed by Queen Victoria to take a death mask of her husband Albert. Dated 1837, as the Victorian age started, the figure is appropriately devout: on a pedestal, wearing Grecian draperies, holding a Bible, eyes aloft.



Memorial to, 4th Earl of Leicester



Lady Sophia Fitzclarence



Memorial to Lord Gort

More recent memorials may hold as much historical interest for future generations.

Inlaid in the floor is a leger in simple Cumberland slate, to Field Marshall **John Standish Surtees Prendergast Vereker, 6th Viscount Gort VC**, GCB, CBE, DSO & Two Bars, MVO, MC (1886 - 1946).

Lord Gort served in both World War I and II, rising to the rank of field marshal and receiving the Victoria Cross.

Commissioned in the Grenadier Guards during 1929, he commanded the Grenadiers who bore the coffin on the death of Edward VII in 1910. In 1911 he married Corinna Vereker, a second cousin. Their three children included Jacqueline who married into the Sidney family.

In 1914 Captain Gort fought on the Western Front. Mentioned in dispatches eight times, he won a Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order

and two bars. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions in September 1918 at the Battle of Canal du Nord, Flesquieres.

Promoted to colonel in 1925, he went to Shanghai in 1927, returning to give an account of the country to the King and the Prince of Wales. He was made a full general in 1937 and appointed, in which office he advocated the primacy of building a land army to defend France, ahead of Imperial defence.

At the outbreak of war in 1939, he commanded the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France. The German breakthrough in spring 1940 split the Allied forces so that communications between the BEF and the French broke down. Gort's position was difficult, serving under the French high command while also responsible to London. On 25 May he took the unilateral decision to abandon his orders for a southward attack and withdrew northwards to allow the BEF to be evacuated from Dunkirk.

Now without a command, Gort was sent by flying boat, with Duff Cooper, in June 1940 to Morocco to rally anti-Nazi French cabinet ministers, but was held on his flying boat. He became Inspector of Training and the Home Guard, but had little constructive to do. Appointed Governor of Gibraltar (1941-42), he extended the airfield against the advice of the British government, but was later thanked for his foresight when the airfield proved

vital to the British Mediterranean campaign. He was Governor of Malta (1942-44) during the island's siege, where his leadership was recognized by the Maltese with the award of the Sword of Honour. The island itself was awarded the George Cross. Gort received his field marshal's baton in June 1943 and ended the war as High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan.

In February 1946, shortly before his death, he was created a Viscount. Through his daughter Jaqueline's marriage, he was the father-in-law of Major William Sidney VC, and was present when his son-in-law received the VC from General Alexander on 3 March 1944 in Italy (the VC ribbon was cut from one of Gort's uniforms).

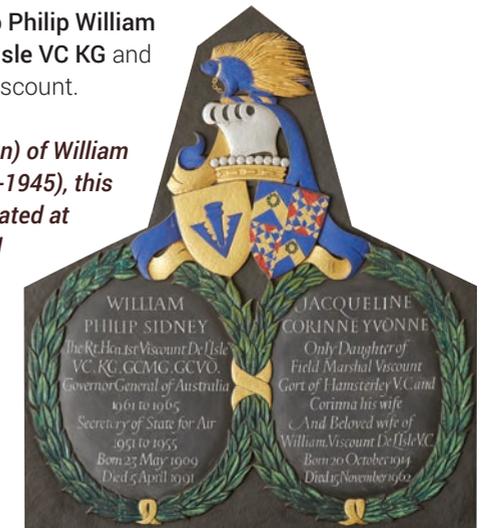
On the south wall is the simple memorial to **Philip William Sidney** (1909-1991), the **1st Viscount de L'Isle VC KG** and his wife Jaqueline, parents of the current Viscount.

The younger of two children (and the only son) of William Sidney, 5th Baron De L'Isle and Dudley (1859-1945), this 20th century Philip William Sidney was educated at Eton and Magdalene College, Cambridge and became a chartered accountant.

In 1929 he joined the Grenadier Guards and served during World War II in France and Italy, where he led a handful of men in the defence of the Anzio beachhead, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Sidney led a successful attack which drove German troops out of a gully; later, he led another counterattack and dashed forward, engaging the Germans with his gun at point-blank range, forcing a withdrawal. When the attack was renewed, Sidney was wounded, but he would not have his wounds dressed until the Germans had been beaten off. Although weak from loss of blood, he continued to encourage and inspire his men, according to the award's citation.

At a by-election in 1944 he was elected unopposed as MP for Chelsea. He succeeded his father as 6th Baron De L'Isle and Dudley in 1945. In 1951 he was appointed Secretary of State for Air under the government of Winston Churchill and held that office until 1955. During this time he visited Australia, travelling to Woomera to examine weapons research and meeting the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. In 1956, he was created Viscount De L'Isle. In 1961, Menzies recommended his appointment as Governor-General of Australia. He married Jacqueline in June 1940 and the couple had 5 children. After his wife's death, he married Margaret Shoubridge on 24 March 1966 in Paris. They had no children. He died in Penschurst in April 1991.



Memorial to Philip William Sidney

North Aisel

The north aisle was broadened in 1854-5, to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott. Its roof is scissor braced.

At its western end, to the left of the first window, is a memorial to **Field Marshal Henry, 1st Viscount Hardinge**, 1785-1856.



Field Marshal Henry,
1st Viscount Hardinge

Born at Wrotham in Kent, Henry Hardinge attended Eton College and Sevenoaks School before entering the British Army in 1799 as an ensign in the Queen's Rangers. His first active service was at the Battle of Vimiera, where he was wounded; and at Corunna he was by Sir John Moore's side at his fatal wounding. He was appointed deputy-quartermaster-general in the Portuguese army and was present at nearly all the Peninsular War's battles, being wounded again at Vittoria. At Albuera he saved the day for the British at a critical moment by strongly urging General Cole's division to advance.

When war broke out again in 1815 after Napoleon's escape from Elba, Hardinge returned to active service to be appointed as Wellington's commissioner at the Prussian army headquarters. In this capacity he was present at the Battle of Ligny on June 16, 1815, where he lost his left hand by a shot and thus was not present at Waterloo two days later. For the loss of his hand he received a pension of £300; he had already been made a KCB. Wellington presented him with a sword of Napoleon's.

In 1820 Sir Henry became member of parliament for Durham; and in 1828 was appointed Secretary of State for War by Wellington. He also filled this post under Sir Robert Peel between 1841-1844. In 1830 and 1834-1835 he was chief secretary for Ireland.

In 1844 he succeeded Lord Ellenborough as governor-general of India. During his term of office the first Sikh War broke out. Waiving his right to supreme command, Hardinge offered to serve under Sir Hugh Gough; but disagreeing with Gough's plan of campaign at Ferozeshah, he temporarily reasserted his authority as governor-general. After the successful termination of the campaign at Sobraon, he was created Viscount Hardinge of Lahore and given a pension of £3,000 a year for three 'lives' or generations; the East India Company also voted him an annuity of £5000, which he declined to accept. Hardinge's term of office in India was marked by many social and educational reforms and by the instigation of many important railways, roads and canals.

He returned to England in 1848 and used his financial rewards from India to buy a Palladian mansion at South Park in Penshurst and expand it into a large Gothic house. He built a stables block with a wooden bell tower, modelled on that of his mentor, Wellington at Stratfield Saye.

In 1852 he succeeded the Duke of Wellington as commander-in-chief of the British army and was responsible at home for the management of the Crimean War, which he tried to conduct on Wellington's principles - a system unsuited to the changed style of warfare. In 1855 he was promoted to the rank of field marshal but resigned as commander-in-chief in July 1856, owing to failing health, and died later in the same year.

The stables block and walled garden of his Penshurst home survive almost as built today, but the family could not afford to remain in the main house when the pension for three generations ran out during the depression of the late 1920s. Large houses were then worth no more than the bricks of which they were built. The house was sold to a demolition merchant, who had not quite completed the work of demolition before the World War II broke out. The Hardinge family repurchased its remains after the war.

When India achieved Independence in 1948, the new Indian government removed all statues of former British governor-generals and Viceroy, including a large statue of the one-armed Henry Hardinge astride his horse in Calcutta. The family purchased the statue from the government and had it shipped home to Penshurst, where it surveyed the village from the top of the South Park's hill. It left on a lowloader in the 1990s, with the last member of the family to live in Penshurst, Julian Hardinge, and can now be found in Cambridgeshire.

There are other memorials to the Hardinge family in Penshurst church, including one beneath the organ pipes to **Major Patrick Hardinge VC**, who was killed at the Hohnzollern Redoubt in France in 1916.

During the middle of the 19th century, the Hardinge family had a private chapel built for their use in the next door village of Fordcombe. The chapel became a parish church and is now part of a combined benefice with Penshurst. It is in this church that 22 of the Hardinge family are buried.

Among them is the 1st Viscount Hardinge's younger grandson, **Charles Hardinge**, who followed his grandfather as the Crown's most senior representative in India in 1910. By then, the King was styled Emperor of India and his representative as the Viceroy. Hardinge held the post of Viceroy until 1916 and was appointed **Baron Hardinge of Penshurst** in his own right. He later became Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, the department's most senior official.

The prominent public positions held by this family continued for another generation, when Charles Hardinge's own son, Alexander, became Private Secretary to successive kings. **Alexander Henry Louis Hardinge, 2nd Baron Hardinge of Penshurst** GCB GCVO MC PC was Private Secretary to Edward VIII during the Abdication Crisis and to George VI during most of the Second World War.



Baron Hardinge of Penshurst

Born in 1894, Alexander Hardinge was commissioned into the Grenadier Guards and fought in World War I alongside his brother, winning the Military Cross. In 1920, he became Assistant Private Secretary to King George V and was promoted to Captain. On 8 February 1921, he married Helen Gascoyne-Cecil. They had three children.

Hardinge served George V until the King's death in 1936 and was promoted to Private Secretary at King Edward VIII's accession. He held the sensitive post throughout the Abdication Crisis and continued in the role for George VI until his retirement in 1943. His elder brother, Edward, had died from wounds received in action in 1914, so Hardinge succeeded his father as Baron Hardinge of Penshurst in 1944. He died in 1960.

Between the two windows are two brass tablets in memory of the **Reverend George Richard Boissier**, who died in 1858 having been rector of Penshurst, and Maria, his wife, of whom it is noted that she was the daughter of Allnutt, who has his own tablet at the eastern end of the North Aisle. This is to the right of the window, before the screen separating the Vestry from the aisle.

Besides sitting on the magistrates' bench, Richard Allnutt was a prosperous wine merchant. He built the original Palladian mansion at South Park in the second half of the 18th century when wine merchants were amongst the most prosperous members of the community.

Richard Allnutt refused his second daughter's suitor's proposal because he was not wealthy enough. The young man decided to make his fortune in India, with the East India Company, and she agreed to wait. He duly prospered and returned three years later to claim his bride. As he approached the foot of South Park's drive on horseback, a black funeral cortege coming down the hill toward him. Told that the coffin was that of Allnutt's younger daughter, he turned his horse round, rode off and was never seen in Penshurst again.

The Church Organ



The Church Organ

The church's fine organ was built by J W Walker & Sons in 1907. This organ maker, founded in 1828, can trace its roots back to the celebrated 16th century builder, Thomas Dallam. It has installed some 2000 organs, of which the oldest surviving instrument is a small chamber organ dating from 1832.

This instrument has two manuals and was extensively rebuilt in the years leading up to the Millennium, a project funded by village members who adopted different pipes for the Appeal.

Recent Work and the Future

An appeal was launched in 2010 to restore the building, overhaul its lighting and heating and add an extension housing a small kitchen and W.C.'s. The appeal raised almost all its ambitious target of £700,000 and the work was completed in 2014, in time for the nine hundredth anniversary of the first mention of the church on this site in the Textus Roffensis, (page 4).