The Coat of Arms

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Cover illustration: The Philipot Pedigree Roll, see pp. 16-40

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THE SIDNEYS OF PENSHURST

COLIN LAFFERTY-SMITH

Abstract

The distinctive arms and crests used by the Sidney family since the sixteenth century are considered, as well as the reasons why they may have been adopted. Examples of their usage over the last five centuries are presented.

Introduction

The Sidneys of Penhurst Place, sometime Earls of Leicester and of Romney, and later Barons and Viscounts De L'Isle and Dudley, rose to national prominence in the fifteenth century. Marriages to heiresses of the Brandon Dukes of Suffolk and the Dudley Dukes of Northumberland increased their position, titles, and heraldry. The male line died out in the 1700s but the Sidney name and titles were revived shortly thereafter through the female line. The family returned to the national and international stage in the form of the 1st Viscount De L'Isle V.C., K.G. (1909-1991). He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his defence of Anzio in 1944, and served as Governor General of Australia from 1961 to 1965.

The Porcupine

Perhaps the first, and certainly one of the more eye-catching, displays of heraldry to greet a visitor to the gardens of Penshurst Place is a giant porcupine (**Figure 1**). The porcupine has been used as both a crest and a heraldic supporter by the Sidney family since the mid-1500s. The founder of the Sidney family fortunes was arguably Sir William Sidney (1482 – 1553).[1] He served Henry VIII with distinction, both as a naval commander, and at the Battle of Flodden against the Scots in 1513; he was then appointed as governor to the household of the infant Prince Edward.

The early court prominence of Sir William owed much to his family connections with the influential Brandons through his mother, Anne Brandon, who would later become a heraldic heiress and add many quarters to the Sidney arms. Sir William accompanied his kinsman Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk (c. 1484-1545) to France when Princess Mary, King Henry VIII's sister, travelled to marry Louis XII of France. Unfortunately Louis died shortly after the marriage and, controversially, Princess Mary then married Brandon in secret.[2]

[1] Like many families, the same first names have been used by many generations. References in this article to Sir William Sidney are to this individual unless otherwise stated.

[2] This was Brandon's third of a series of rather grand marriages. His first was to Margaret Neville, widow of Sir John Mortimer and daughter of John Neville, 1st Marquess of Montagu. His second was to Anne Browne the daughter of Sir Anthony Browne (and step-daughter of Margaret Neville's sister). Between his wedding Anne and Princess Mary, he contracted to marry Elizabeth Grey, 5th Baroness Lisle (1505–1519), and was thus created 1st Viscount Lisle of the third creation in 1513, but the contract was annulled and he surrendered the title. Two months after Princess Mary's death in 1533, Brandon married Katherine Willoughby, 12th Baroness Willoughby de Eresby, the daughter and heiress of William Willoughby, 11th Baron Willoughby de Eresby.

Figure 1: Porcupine sculpture at Penshurst Place. All images are by the author unless otherwise stated.

The Sidney family believe it was following this eventful trip that Sir William adopted the porcupine – one of King Louis XII's personal emblems – as the family crest.[3] Louis XII (ruled 1498–1515) had inherited the porcupine symbol from his grandfather Louis I, Duke of Orleans (1372 – 1407) who instituted The Order of the Porcupine in 1393 to commemorate the baptism of his eldest son, and Louis XII's father, Charles. Louis of Orleans chose the porcupine "*to intimate something of revenge against John Duke of Burgundy, his mortal Enemy, no less than self-defence, against all his designs and assaults, of which this Animal is a proper Emblem*."[4]

The porcupine was known to the Romans as an import from north Africa, which since that time has become established in Italy and other parts of Europe. Pliny described it as a type of hedgehog, but with longer quills.[5] Topsell, writing in 1658 (based largely on a translation of a sixteenth-century book on natural history by Conrad Gesner) stated that porcupines were being bred in Africa and India to be sold in Europe as a curiosity.[6] Their quills, he noted, are extremely sharp, and when the animal is attacked these are sometimes cast off with such violence that they become impaled on trees, or in the flesh of men or dogs who hunt them. He noted that "*the pilgrims that come yearly from Saint James of Compostella in Spain do bring back generally one of their quills in their caps, but for what cause I know not*" It has been argued that "the bellicose role of the porcupine within royal propaganda became increasingly less adequate to the image of a 'père du peuple' that Louis XII adopted in 1506".[7] So it appears that the porcupine emblem was adopted by the Sidneys around the same time as it was falling out of favour in France.

But when exactly did the Sidneys start using the porcupine? Sadly, no crests appear on the tomb of Sir William Sidney in the Sidney Chapel at St John the Baptist Church, Penshurst (Penshurst Church). The porcupine crest does appear on the monuments of two of Sir William's children. These are: Sir Henry Sidney K.G. (1529 –1586) who served Queen Elizabeth as Lord President of Wales and Lord Deputy in Ireland, in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Little Walsingham, Norfolk (**Figure 2a**); and Frances Sidney (1531 – 1589, Countess of Sussex and the founder of Sidney Sussex College Cambridge), in the Chapel of St Paul at Westminster Abbey (**Figure 2b**). As such, the porcupine crest was clearly in use by the 1580s. It was, however, also used earlier. The earliest reference to the use of the porcupine crest by the Sidneys that I have found is a reference to the funeral of Sir William in the *London Provisioner's Chronicle* by Henry Machyn.[8] Machyn has been assumed to have been a merchant who rented or sold trappings for English funeral processions in the mid-sixteenth century. His entry for 24 February 1553 reads:

> "The twenty-fourth day of February was buried Sir William Sidney, knight, in the county of Kent at his place, called Penshurst, with two heralds of arms, with his standard and his banner of arms and his coat of arms and four banderoles of armours, and his target and mantle and helmet and *the crest a blue porcupine* and

[3] Margaret P Hannay, Michael G Brennan and Mary Ellen Lamb (edd.),*The Ashgate Research Companion to The Sidneys, 1500–1700 Volume 1: Lives* (Abingdon, 2015).

[4] Elias Ashmole, *The institution, laws & ceremonies of the most noble Order of the Garter* (London, 1672).

[5] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 8.53.

[6] Edward Topsell, The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents, 2 vols (London, 1658), vol. 1, p. 457

[7] Nicole Hochner, 'Louis XII and the Porcupine: Transformations of a Royal Emblem', *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2001), pp. 17–36.

[8] Richard W. Bailey, Marilyn Miller, and Colette Moore (edd.), Henry Machyn, A London Provisioner's Chronicle, 1550–1563, online at: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/machyn/.

Figure 2, left, 2a: a quill-less porcupine from the tomb of Sir Henry Sidney K.G. (1529 –1586) at Little Walsingham, Norfolk, Wikimedia Commons; right, 2b: porcupine from the monument to Frances Sidney (1531 – 1589), Countess of Sussex at Westminster Abbey, photograph by the author.

seven dozen and a half escutcheons."

This was not to be the last heraldic funeral in the Sidney family: Sir Philip Sidney's funeral procession in 1587 - one of the most elaborate ever staged - was captured in Lant's Roll, named after draftsman and herald Thomas Lant. It was engraved in 1587 and consists of 31 oblong plates; putting the plates in sequence would create a 10 metre long roll. A fully digitalised version is available at the Bodleian website (**Figure 3**) and Kuin has written a summary of the heraldry.[9] Some 500 years later, the porcupine continues to be used both by the Sidneys – the café at Penshurst is called the Porcupine Pantry – and as the mascot of Sidney Sussex College.

The Pheon and the Broad Arrow

The base of the porcupine statue in figure 1 alludes to the shield of the Sidneys, *Or a pheon azure*. Following analysis of various deeds and seals at Penshurst, Kingsford[10] asserted that the first datable use of the pheon by a Sidney is on the seal of a deed of 1451. His conjecture is that since the heads of the family for over fifty years were called William, it is possible that the long use of a seal with a capital W may have been the origin of the almost W-shaped pheon.

At various points in time, a similar image – commonly referred to as a 'broad arrow'

[9] Roger Kuin, 'Hieroglyphics of nobility: the banners in Sir Philip Sidney's funeral procession', the Sidney Journal, vol. 33.2 (2015).

[10] C. L. Kingsford 'On some ancient Deeds and Seals belonging to Lord De L'Isle and Dudley', *Archaeologia*, vol. 65 (1914) , pp. 251 - 268.

Figure 3: the 1587 funeral of Sir Philip Sidney as drawn by Thomas Lant, Christ Church, University of Oxford, Aldrich 1.1.

– has been used as a logo to mark government property. Fox-Davies stated that this use "originated in the fact that one of the Sydney family, when Master of the Ordnance, to prevent disputes as to the stores for which he was responsible, marked everything with his private badge of the broad arrow, and this private badge has since remained in constant use."[11]

It is true that Henry Sidney, 1st Earl of Romney (1641-1704), son of Robert Sydney, 2nd Earl of Leicester and Lady Dorothy Percy, *was* Master-General of the Ordnance from 1693 to 1702, after playing a leading role in ensuring the succession of the Dutch House of Orange to the English throne in 1689. Sadly, however, the story about the broad arrow deriving from the Sidney arms / badge does not appear to be true. The use of the broad arrow to signify royal or government connections appears to go back beyond Lord Romney. Examples include: 1, a reference from 1386 to barrels marked with an "Arrowhede" to indicate that they were for the King's household; 2, correspondence from Sir Thomas Gresham in 1553/4 referring to royal ammunition marked with the "brod arrow"; and 3, an ordinance of Charles I establishing a crown mark in 1627.[12]

Given the confusion about its origins, perhaps Fox-Davies was right when he suggested that "the officers of His Majesty … should represent to the Government that the pheon is not a Crown mark, and that some recognised Royal badge should be used in its place, or else they should place its status upon a definite footing."

[11] Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *The Art of Heraldry* (1904).

[12] O. F. G. Hogg, 'The Broad Arrow: Origin and Use of the Ordnance Mark of Serviceability', *Army Ordnance*, vol. 14, no. 81 (1933), pp. 161–63.

Figure 4: the bear and ragged staff crest with the ragged staff motif incorporated into a building, both at Kenilworth Castle.

The bear and ragged staff crest

As well as the distinctive porcupine, the Sidneys have used the bear and ragged staff normally associated with the Beauchamp Earls of Warwick as a crest (**Figure 4**). The Sidneys adopted this crest because the Dudleys had done so before them. Prior to being raised to the Dukedom of Northumberland in 1551, John Dudley (then Viscount Lisle) had been made Earl of Warwick in 1547. The titles of the viscountcy and earldom reflect the Dudleys' illustrious maternal ancestors. John Dudley was descended from Richard Beauchamp, 13th Earl of Warwick via Richard's eldest daughter Margaret Beauchamp. Margaret was co-heiress to the Barony of Lisle which had been created by writ for her great-great-grandfather Gerard de Lisle (d.1360) in 1357.[13]

The Lisle title pased through Margaret's eldest son John Talbot, who became 1st Viscount and 1st Baron Lisle (1423–1453). The Viscount's daughter and heiress – Elizabeth had a daughter, also Elizabeth (6th Baroness Lisle in her own right) who married John Dudley's father Edmund.

[13] GEC, vol. 8, pp. 50-51.

Figure 5, left, 5a: crest of Robert Sidney, 1st Earl of Leicester, K.G. at Penshurst Church; right, 5b: silverware of Philip Sidney, 2nd Baron De L'Isle and Dudley.

On 12 March 1542, King Henry VIII ennobled John Dudley, as Viscount Lisle 'in right of his mother.' It is said that upon being appointed Earl of Warwick, John Dudley started using the ragged bear and staff as an emblem. I have not yet been able to find evidence of this, and he has no monumental tomb as a consequence of his trial and execution in 1553. There is, however, plenty of evidence of its use by John's sons, including John 2nd Earl of Warwick, Ambrose 3rd Earl of Warwick and Robert 1st Earl of Leicester. This family has spectacular tombs in the Beauchamp Chapel at St Mary's church Warwick (**Figure 6**). The Sidneys were particularly proud of their Dudley lineage. In his *Defence of the Earl of Leicester* Sir Philip Sidney said:

> "I am a Dudley in blood, that duke's daughter's son, and do acknowledge, though in all truth, I may justly affirm, that I am, by my father's side, of ancient, and always well-esteemed and well-matched gentry, yet I do acknowledge, I say, that my chiefest honour is to be a Dudley, and truly am glad to have cause to set forth the nobility of that blood whereof I am descended…"[14]

[14] Philip Sidney, 'A Discourse in Defence of the Earl of Leicester, 1584', *The Miscellaneous Works of Sir Philip Sidney, Knight,* ed. by William Gray (Boston, 1860), pp. 305-323.

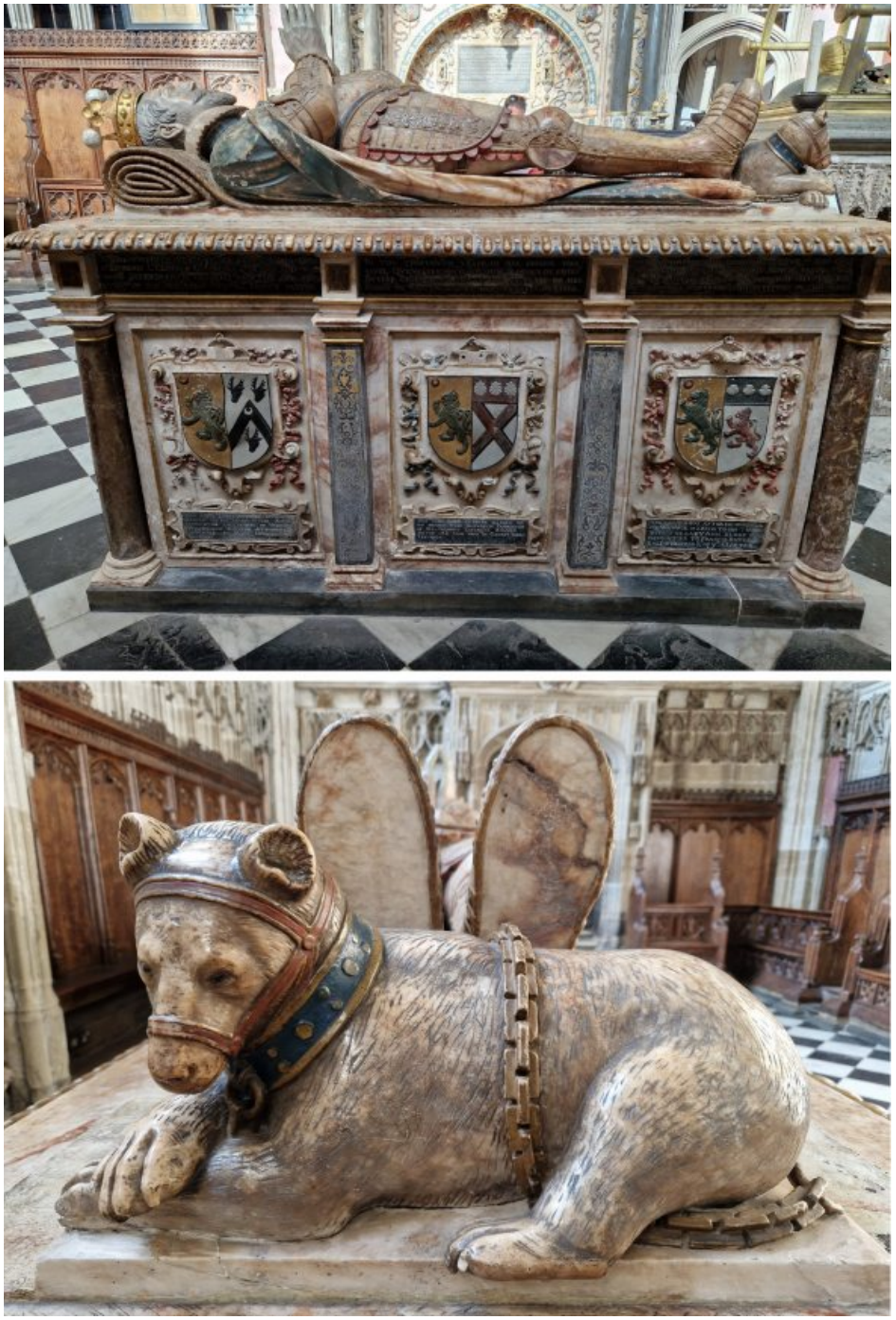

Figure 6: tomb of Ambrose Dudley, K.G. in the Beauchamp Chapel of St Mary's Church Warwick.

Figure 7: the monument to Ambrosia Sidney in St Lawrence's church Ludlow.

The bear and ragged staff emblem has been frequently used by the Sidneys including:

- as a crest, encircled by the Garter, in the stained-glass window memorialising Robert Sidney, 1st Earl of Leicester, K.G., in Penshurst Church (**Figure 5a**),

- as a supporter of the arms of Sir Henry Sidney on the elaborate monument in St Lawrence's church Ludlow (**Figure 7**) to Sir Henry's daughter (and Robert's sister) Ambrosia Sidney, who died aged 9. The monument includes two examples of the Sidney's eight quartered arms, as well as the arms of her uncle and godfather Ambrose Dudley, 3rd Earl of Warwick, from whom she derived her name.

- on silverware of Philip Sidney, 2nd Baron De L'Isle and Dudley on display in the kitchens of Penshurst Place (**Figure 5b**).

Figure 8, left, 8a: hatchment for Henry Streatfeild (d. 1762) in St Mary the Virgin Chiddingstone Kent. He married Anne Sidney, natural daughter of Jocelyne, 7th Earl of Leicester. Note the bordure engrailed in the Sydney arms; presumably representing her illegitimacy; right, 8b: The coat of arms of Sir John Shelley-Sidney, 1st Baronet by MostEpic on Wikimedia Commons.

The end of the original Sidneys

The principal male line of the Sidneys died out in 1743 upon the death of Jocelyn Sidney, 7th Earl of Leicester (1682-1743). The circumstances of Jocelyn life and death resulted in a variety of court cases, not only in the years immediately thereafter, but also 40 years later.[15] The main issue had been his disastrous marriage to Elizabeth Thomas, whom he wed when she was aged 18 (in 1717). The marriage was never consummated, perhaps because Jocelyn would not obtain her huge fortune until she reached the age of twenty-one, and so he might not have wanted to risk losing her in childbirth. As a consequence of his lack of ardour the relationship collapsed.

Without legitimate offspring, Jocelyn left most of his property to his illegitimate daughter Anne, who went onto marry Henry Streatfeild of neighbouring Chiddingstone Castle in 1752 (**Figure 8a**). Following his death in 1762 his two nieces, Elizabeth and Mary, the daughters of his elder brother Thomas (1681-1729), challenged the will with their husbands William Perry and Sir Brownlow Sherrard. After years of legal wrangling, a compromise was arrived at whereby Mary Sherrard received a lump sum and inherited various estates in Wales, while Penshurst went to Elizabeth Perry. The cases forty years later related to inheritance of both estates and titles. A John Sidney, calling himself the Earl of Leicester, claimed to be the son of Jocelyn and his wife Elizabeth. John's lawyers failed to persuade the members of the Grand Assize, who concluded that Elizabeth Perry

[15] Dr Robin Eagles, *Great Quarrels and Disputes' or A Bun in the Oven? The Penshurst Claimant and the earldom of Leicester*, online at historyofparliamentonline.org.

Figure 9, left 9a: arms of the 1st Baron De L'Isle and Dudley and his wife Lady Sophia FitzClarence at Penshurst Place; right, 9b: the arms of Lady Sophia's brother, George Augustus Frederick FitzClarence, 1st Earl of Munster (1794-1842), eldest illegitimate son of King William IV of the United Kingdom and his long-time mistress Dorothea Jordan, being the royal arms of King William IV (without the escutcheon of the Arch Treasurer of the Holy Roman Empire and without the Crown of Hanover) debruised by a baton sinister azure charged with three anchors or, by MostEpic, Wikimedia Commons.

was entitled to her estates.[16] Neither John Sidney nor his son were able to convince the House of Lords to recognise them as Earls of Leicester. After her victory against John, Elizabeth Perry tried, but failed, to be recognised as Baroness Sidney of Penshurst, a barony created for Robert Sidney (later 1st Earl of Leicester) on the accession of James I in 1603.

The modern Sidneys: the Perry and Shelleys

The Sidney name was revived by one of Elizabeth Perry's grandchildren. Elizabeth Perry's daughter, Elizabeth Jane Perry, married Sir Bysshe Shelley, 1st Baronet of Castle Goring, in 1769. Sir Bysshe Shelley's eldest son from his first marriage became the second baronet of Castle Goring whereas John, a son from his (second) marriage to Elizabeth Jane Perry, changed his name to John Shelley Sidney in 1793 by Royal Sign Manual.[17] Heraldically, this Sign Manual resulted in Sidney being quartered with Shelley, with Sidney in the most prominent first quarter (**Figure 8b**).

John was created 1st Baronet of Penshurst Place in1818, and in 1824 he unsuccessfully petitioned to terminate the abeyance of the barony of De L'isle. He married Lady Sophia FitzClarence, illegitimate daughter of King William IV and his mistress, the actress Dorothea Jordan, in 1825, and was finally raised to the peerage as Baron De L'Isle

[16] John Sidney, earl of Leicester, The Trial at Bar between John Sidney, Earl of Leicester… and Elizabeth Perry on Monday the 11th of February 1782 (London, 1782).

[17] Edmund Lodge, The peerage of the British Empire (London,1848), p. 248.

Figure 10, top, 10a: arms of Sir William Foulis 7th Baronet of Ingleby who married Mary Anne Turner of Panton House, From the Heraldry Society Image Library; bottom left, 10b: the Foulis crest on the ceiling and on silverware (10c, bottom right) at Penshurst Place.

Figure 11: memorials to three Sidney brothers and their wives in Penshurst church, Kent.

and Dudley in 1835. This marriage, and his noble status, is celebrated heraldically at Penshurst Place in a carving above the door to what is now a toy museum (**Figure 9a**). It shows the arms of the 1st baron: Quarterly 1, a grand quarter of Dudley and Shelley; 2, Sidney; 3, Dudley; 4, Grey, the whole encircled with the order of Hanover, and accolé with a version of the royal arms for his wife (**Figure 9b**).

Before inheriting, the second baron, also a Philip (1828-1898), married Mary Foulis (1826-1891), the only child of Sir William Foulis, 8th Baronet of Ingleby Manor (**Figure 10a**). Upon his marriage to Mary, Philip assumed the additional name (and arms) of Foulis after that of Sidney by Royal Licence, but relinquished it after her death in 1891.

Other than a hand-drawn example in the Heraldry Society Image Library, I have not been able to find any examples of shields bearing Sidney and Foulis quarterly. It might be expected that Foulis would have been placed in the first quarter given the ordering of the names in the Royal Licence, but the notice in the *London Gazette* is not explicit on this aspect. Philip's memorial in Penshurst church, erected by his second wife Emily Frances Ramsay, shows the Sidney pheon shield alone, and the memorial to Mary Foulis, Baroness De L'Isle and Dudley at St. Andrews Church, Ingleby Greenhow, North Yorkshire is not heraldic. There are, however, examples of the Foulis crest - *Out of a crescent argent a cross formée fitchée sable* – at Penshurst Place (**Figure 10b** and **c**).

After the death of the second baron, the barony passed between three of his four sons: Philip the 3rd baron (1853-1922), Algernon the 4th baron (1854-1945) and William the 5th baron (1859-1945).

These three brothers are represented heraldically in Penshurst church (**Figure 11**):

- Philip the 3rd baron's arms are impaling those of his wife Lady Elizabeth Maria (née Vereker), widow of William Harvey Astell and daughter of Standish Vereker, 4th Viscount Gort.
- Algernon, the 4th baron, who served in the Second Boer War, was unmarried and his arms appear alone.
- William the 5th baron's arms appear with those of his wife Winifred Bevan.

The 6th baron, William, was perhaps the most famous of the modern Sidneys. After attending Eton and Cambridge, he became a chartered accountant and Territorial Army officer. During the Second World War, he served with the Grenadier Guards and was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was elected to the House of Commons later that year. After succeeding his father as 6th Baron De L'Isle and Dudley in 1945 he served as Secretary of State for Air from 1951 to 1955, and was elevated to a viscountcy in 1956, before serving as the last British Governor General of Australia from 1961 to 1965. In 1965 he succeeded a distant cousin as 9th Baronet of Castle Goring, and in 1968 he was appointed a Knight Companion of the Order of the Garter. He died in 1991 as The Viscount De L'Isle, V.C., K.G., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., K.St.J., P.C. His memorial (**Figure 12**) shows the simple Sidney shield accolé, with that of his wife being Quarterly, 1 and 4, azure on a chevron or a chaplet vert (for Vereker) ; 2 and 3, gules a saltire vairy or and azure (for Prendergast). This reappearance of the Vereker arms in the Sidney chapel is because the 1st Viscount's wife, Jacqueline Vereker (1914 –1962), was the great-niece of Elizabeth (née Vereker) Astell, the wife of the 3rd baron.

Figure 12: memorial to the 1st Viscount De L'Isle and his wife in Penshurst church.