

PIERCY, BENJAMIN (1827 - 1888), civil engineer

Name: Benjamin Piercy
Date of birth: 1827
Date of death: 1888
Spouse: Sarah Piercy (née Davies)
Parent: Robert Piercy
Gender: Male
Occupation: civil engineer
Area of activity: Engineering, Construction, Naval Architecture and Surveying
Author: Evan David Jones

Born near Trefeglwys, Montgomeryshire, 16 March 1827, the third son of Robert Piercy, later of Chirk, a commissioner, valuer, and surveyor for the inclosure of commons and for tithe commutation awards, with an extensive practice in the counties of Montgomery, Denbigh, and Flint. Benjamin was trained in his father's office, and became, in 1847, chief assistant to Charles Mickleburgh, surveyor and land-agent, of Montgomery. In 1851, [Henry Robertson](#), sought his assistance to prepare plans for the Shrewsbury and Chester Railway Bill, and later for a railway from Oswestry to Newtown. He commenced independent practice as engineer for the Red Valley Railway Bill for constructing a line from Shrewsbury to Minsterley. The Bill was rejected, but he succeeded in piloting, against strong opposition, a Bill for a railway from Shrewsbury to Welshpool, with a branch to Minsterley. This feat established his reputation as a witness in parliamentary committees, and thereafter he was engaged upon nearly every project for introducing railways into Wales. At this period he lived at Welshpool. The Welsh railways in the construction of which he was actively engaged included the Oswestry, Ellesmere, and Whitchurch, the Oswestry and Newtown, the Llanidloes and Newtown, the Newtown and Machynlleth, the Welsh coast railways, the Aberdovey, Barmouth, and Pwllheli, the Vale of Clwyd, the Caernarvonshire, the Denbigh, Ruthin, and Corwen, the Mid-Wales, the Hereford, Hay, and Brecon, and the Wrexham, Mold, and Connah's Quay. In these constructions he performed feats of engineering, notably bridges over the Severn, the Mawddach, and Traeth Bychan estuaries, the fine stations at Oswestry and Welshpool, and the Talerddig cutting. He prepared plans for a viaduct from Ynys-las to Aberdovey, but it was abandoned in favour of the deviation to Dovey Junction. In 1862 he began a long term of work in connection with the Royal Sardinian Railway Company, involving the resurveying and planning of the standard and narrow gauge lines on the island, and the construction of a harbour on the Golfo di Aranci. He acquired large estates in Sardinia, where his son still resides, and did much to improve agriculture on the island by drainage and afforestation projects and by the breeding of cattle, horses, and sheep. He became an intimate friend of Garibaldi, whose son, Ricciotti, became his pupil. His services to Sardinia were recognized by his creation as a Commendatore of the Crown of Italy. In Italy he was employed on a scheme for the canalization of the Tiber and on the plans of the Acqua Marcia, which supplied Rome with water. In France, he was engineer-in-chief of the Napoléon-Vendée Railway from Tours to Sables d'Olonne. He was also engineer to the Assam Railway in India, and projected its extension into Burma. In 1881 he purchased the Marchwiel Hall estate, and for the last years of his life devoted his attentions mainly to the resuscitation of railways in North Wales, consolidating their finances, and planning extensions to develop mineral resources. He was placed on the commission of the peace for Denbighshire, and was parliamentary candidate for Peterborough in 1883. He was a fine chess player, and he laid out one of the best cricket grounds in the country at Marchwiel. He died in London 24 March 1888, and was buried in the Kensal Green cemetery. By his wife Sarah, daughter of Thomas Davies of Montgomery, whom he married in 1855, he had three sons and six daughters.

Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

Sources

Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers, xcvi, 1889, 333-9

R. Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies (1894)*, 237-41

NLW MSS 9745-857

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Benjamin Piercy](#)

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