

VIVIAN, HENRY HUSSEY (1821 - 1894), first baron Swansea, industrialist and patentee of metallurgical processes

**Name:** Henry Hussey Vivian  
**Date of birth:** 1821  
**Date of death:** 1894  
**Parent:** Sarah Vivian (née Jones)  
**Parent:** John Henry Vivian  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** industrialist and patentee of metallurgical processes  
**Area of activity:** Business and Industry; Science and Mathematics  
**Author:** William Llewelyn Davies

Born 6 July 1821 at Singleton Park, Swansea (now the nucleus of the Swansea University College buildings), eldest son of JOHN HENRY VIVIAN, a merchant engaged in copper smelting, Member of Parliament for Swansea, 1822-55, by his wife, Sarah, daughter of Arthur Jones, The Priory, Reigate.

From Eton, H. H. Vivian went for a time (1838-40) to study metallurgy in Germany and France before entering Trinity College, Cambridge (1840). In 1842 he began to manage the Liverpool branch of the firm of Vivian and Sons, afterwards becoming a partner. From 1845 to 1855 he managed the Hafod Smelting Works at Swansea for his father, taking, in 1855, after the death of his father, full control of the works. Hitherto the main work at Hafod had been the smelting of copper. Equipped with the metallurgical knowledge which he had acquired in Europe, Vivian began to obtain numerous by-products from that mineral. He took out several patents (see details in *D.N.B.*) in connection with the manufacture of spelter, gold, silver, nickel, and cobalt. In 1864 he began to obtain sulphuric acid from copper smoke; in 1871 he erected works at White Rock, near Swansea, to treat poor silver-lead ores. It is no exaggeration to say that under his influence Swansea became 'the metallurgical centre of the world.'

Vivian became the first chairman of the Glamorgan county council (1889). After the South Wales coal strike in 1889 he introduced the celebrated 'sliding scale' in regard to wages (see also under [William Abraham \(Mabon\)](#) and [William Thomas Lewis](#)). He helped to extend the harbour facilities of Swansea and was one of the chief promoters of the Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway. He was Liberal Member of Parliament for Truro, Cornwall, from 1852-7, Glamorgan 1857-85, and Swansea 1885-93. He was created a baronet, 13 May 1882, and on 9 June 1893, became the first baron Swansea. He was the author of *Notes of a Tour in America*, 1878. He died at Singleton Park, 28 November 1894, and was buried in Sketty churchyard.

## Author

Sir William Llewelyn Davies, (1887 - 1952)

## Sources

*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and the sources cited therein

W. H. Jones, *History of the Port of Swansea* (Carmarthen 1922)

## Further Reading

Ralph A. Griffiths, *Singleton Abbey and the Vivians of Swansea* (Llandysul 1988)

Wikipedia Article: [Henry Vivian, 1st Baron Swansea](#)

## Additional Links

Swansea University Archives: [Yorkshire Imperial Metals Records, 1740-1956: Vivian Papers. GB 217 LAC/126/A-K](#)

Wikidata: [Q12072266](#)

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