

PERROT family, of Haroldston, Pembrokeshire

Sir JOHN PERROT (1528 - 1592), statesman

Sir John Perrot was born, probably, at Haroldston, in November 1528 and, according to his own statement, was educated at St. David's cathedral school. Later, at the age of 18, he entered the household of the Lord Treasurer, William Paulet, marquis of Winchester. Contrary to the oft quoted myth regarding Perrot's birth and paternity, he was not an illegitimate son of Henry VIII. Perrot's mother, Mary Berkeley, did not serve as one of the royal ladies-in-waiting and his father, Thomas, was never knighted.

He possessed great stature and physical strength, but he had an arbitrary temper and a brawling nature. With the Tudors he enjoyed great popularity; Henry VIII is thought to have offered him preferment but died before he could grant it, whereas Edward VI valued him and dubbed him a Knight Bachelor in 1549. Although he was not yet twenty Perrot replaced the recently deceased Richard Devereux as Member of Parliament for Carmarthenshire in Edward VI's first parliament in 1547. Backed by his courtier step-father Sir Thomas Jones and Lord Treasurer Paulet Perrot's Court career prospered during the reign of the boy-king. In the summer of 1551 he accompanied the Marquis of Northampton to France to negotiate the marriage of the King and the French Princess Elizabeth. During a hunt Perrot is said to have saved Henry II from a wounded boar which threatened his life. A grateful King offered Perrot a place at the French Court with 'a good pension to serve'. Perrot declined the offer and returned to England, where his extravagances forced him to mortgage some of his family lands. According to his son and biographer, Sir James, in the spring of 1553 Perrot met with Edward VI who expressed sympathy with his predicament and persuaded the Council to grant him £100. It is clear that Perrot divided his time between the Court and country when in September 1551 he was pricked as sheriff for Pembrokeshire. In 1553 Perrot was appointed one of the royal commissioners responsible for surveying and listing the goods of churches and fraternities in Pembrokeshire.

Having enthusiastically embraced the Protestant faith it is likely that Perrot did not wholeheartedly welcome the accession of the devoutly-Catholic Mary in 1553. He continued his political apprenticeship when he was returned as member for Sandwich in Kent to two of Mary's Parliaments in 1553 and 1555. In 1555, he was appointed to the commission of the peace in Pembrokeshire serving as a justice of the peace before later taking charge of justice in the county when he was promoted *custos rotulorum* or chief magistrate. Mary did not, at first, take exception to Perrot's strong Protestantism, even granting him the lease of Carew Castle, but, when he aligned himself with the Protestant opposition in Parliament the regime took against him. Perrot was later denounced by his neighbour and bitter enemy, the pro-Catholic Thomas Catherne (died 1568) of Prendergast near Haverfordwest, for harbouring heretics at his Haroldston home, for which he was imprisoned for a short time in the Fleet, and he deemed it more politic to spend the rest of her reign abroad, serving in France under his friend, **William Herbert** (died 1570), earl of Pembroke. In France Perrot embraced the military life and distinguished himself at the siege of St. Quentin. He returned to this country only a few months before Mary's death but he was never far from controversy. In February 1558, he resumed his feud with Catherne whom he reported to the Queen's Council accusing him of corruption. A month or so later Perrot, accompanied by a posse of armed servants, broke into Catherne's house and took him into custody at Carew castle. Both men appeared before the Council in June where it was found that Perrot had 'misused himself' and he was committed yet again to the Fleet. On his release Perrot was bound over in a recognizance of £200 to keep the peace.

Under Elizabeth he enjoyed great favour and was one of four appointed to carry the canopy of state at her coronation in January 1559. In the first few years of Elizabeth's reign Perrot cemented his power in south-west Wales by accumulating a series of significant offices: in 1559, he was appointed steward of the manors of Carew, Coedraeth, Narberth and St. Clears; constable of Narberth and Tenby castles and gaoler of Haverfordwest. In 1560-1 he served as mayor of Haverfordwest, and as commissioner for concealed lands, and in 1562 he was appointed vice-admiral of the coast in South Wales. In the following year, he was returned to Parliament as member for Pembrokeshire. He now rapidly became the most powerful personality in the county, but his numerous lawsuits and intense love of litigation as a means of embarrassing his enemies made him very unpopular among his powerful neighbours. In 1570 Perrot was made commissioner for musters, steward of the lordship of Cilgerran and served a second term as mayor of Haverfordwest, after a period during which the mayor and corporation had been bitterly anti-Perrot.

In 1570 Perrot was appointed the first president of Munster and he served from 1571 to 1573, following a desire by Elizabeth to establish in that county a presidency similar to that which already existed in Connacht. To him was entrusted the suppression of the rebellion of James Fitzmaurice, the nephew of the earl of Desmond, and in this he was successful, after a campaign of some severity. In 1573, however, he returned to Wales in poor health and determined, as he told **Burghley**, to live a countryman's life and stay out of debt. For the next ten years his 'countryman's life' became one of intense litigation and attempts to enlarge his lands. He again took part in Haverfordwest affairs, but his relations with the mayor and corporation now appear to have improved considerably, he himself becoming mayor for the third time in 1575. The previous year he had been appointed a member of the Council in the Marches of Wales and he became actively involved in the suppression of piracy along the south coasts. When, in 1575, the Privy Council set up a commission to suppress piracy in Pembrokeshire, he was made chief commissioner, but the following year, when a similar commission was appointed for Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, he declined to accept charge of it on the plea of ill-health. His anti-piracy activities are chiefly of interest because of the bitter feud which they created between him and Richard Vaughan, deputy-admiral in Wales and chief commissioner for piracy in Carmarthenshire, who deeply resented Perrot's interference in what he regarded as his sphere of influence.

In September 1579 Perrot was given command of a squadron of five ships with orders to cruise off the west coast of Ireland to clear the seas of pirates and intercept any Spanish shipping that might attempt a landing there. Apart from sighting one pirate ship, the '*Derifold*,' which Perrot chased and caught, the expedition was an uneventful one, though, on the return to the Thames, Perrot's ship ran aground on the Kentish Downs. When, finally, the squadron reached the Thames in safety, he found that his enemies had used this incident, and the uneventfulness of the expedition, to discredit him at Court. He was able, nevertheless, to clear himself completely. A little later, in 1580, Thomas Wyrriott, a former yeoman of the guard and the younger brother of George a justice of the peace, preferred a bill of slanderous charges against him, which he exhibited before the Privy Council. The latter deemed them to be slanderous libels and Wyrriott was imprisoned in the Marshalsea. He repeated his charges again later and altogether his feud with Perrot cost him at least ten years' imprisonment and a fine of 1,000 marks. Further disputes with other Pembrokeshire gentry involved Perrot in a number of Star Chamber suits but the bitterest quarrel came in 1581 with **Gruffudd Rice** of Newton, Carmarthenshire, in which the Privy Council itself was forced to intervene.

It must have been with great relief that many of Perrot's Welsh neighbours heard of his appointment as lord deputy of Ireland, a post which he held from 1584 till 1588. The queen had held his Munster service in high esteem. She had asked his advice, too, in 1581, about Irish problems and had been much impressed with a 'Discourse' he had written in answer, in which he outlined courses of action to be taken in that country. Again, he was a man of considerable financial means, well likely to be able to bear the expense of such an important office under the parsimonious queen. Perrot took his youngest son William (died 1587) and his nephew Thomas Jones (died 1604), whom he knighted, to serve with him in Ireland. Perrot's four years as lord-deputy were not happy ones; on hearing of his brother Henry's death in September 1586 he released his nephew, Thomas, from service, and a few months later was mourning the death of his son William. Perrot's attempt to have his eldest son, Sir Thomas, serve under him in Ireland in 1587 as master of the ordnance was blocked by the queen with the support of her chief minister, **William Cecil** (died 1598), Lord Burghley. The post was given to Sir George Carew (died 1629).

Although his Irish service was not without some notable successes his lord deputyship proved as stormy as his presidency of Munster, and included a spectacular brawl (before members of the Irish Council) with the aged marshal of the army, the cantankerous Syr Nicholas Bagnall (died 1590). Thwarted by the English officials of his council, a victim of his own unbridled tongue and temper, irritated beyond measure by the enmity of the Irish Lord Chancellor, Adam Loftus (died 1605), archbishop of Dublin, and others, Perrot begged to be recalled. He returned to England in 1588, bitter and disillusioned, suffering from gallstone and kidney trouble, but able, nevertheless, to boast to his successor, Sir William Fitzwilliam (died 1599), that he had left Ireland in a state of profound peace.

In February 1589, he was made a member of the Privy Council where he proved to be a capable and energetic councillor. After an absence of more than twenty-five years, Perrot was returned to Parliament as member for Haverfordwest. However, it was not long before rumours of treasonable activity were current about him. These had been instigated in the first instance by Philip Williams, his secretary in Ireland, and Adam Loftus had taken care they should reach the right quarter, namely Perrot's successor as lord deputy Sir William Fitzwilliam. They became the subject of investigation by the Privy Council and, in March 1591, Perrot was removed to the Tower. He was tried for treason in April 1592 and was sentenced to death. He died in the Tower in November 1592, before sentence could be carried out. There seems little reason to doubt that he was innocent of treasonable activity but guilty of indiscreet words concerning the queen's person, a fault of his hasty temper. He was more a victim to the animosity of his many enemies, among whom was Sir Christopher Hatton (died 1591), whose daughter, Elizabeth, he is alleged to have seduced, and who had been stung by Perrot's reported taunt that he had found his way to royal favour by means of the galliard. In spite of his attainder, his estates were soon granted, in March 1593, to his son, Sir Thomas Perrot, who was restored in blood.

Perrot married (1) Ann, daughter of Sir Thomas Cheyne, by whom he had a son, Sir Thomas Perrot (died 1594), who married Dorothy, daughter of **Walter Devereux** (died 1576), earl of Essex, and (2) Jane, daughter of Hugh Prust of Thorney in Devon and widow of Sir Lewis Pollard of Oakford, Devon, by whom he had a son William (died 1587) and two daughters, Lettice, who married (1) Rowland Laugharne of St. Bride's, (2) **Walter Vaughan** of Golden Grove and St. Bride's (the latter in right of his wife), and (3) Arthur Chichester, baron Chichester of Belfast and later lord-deputy of Ireland, and Ann, who married **John Philips** of Pictou. Besides these he had a number of illegitimate children of whom the most important were Sir James Perrot, by Sibil Jones of Radnorshire, Elizabeth, daughter of Elizabeth Hatton, a daughter who married David Morgan, gent., and a son John (b. tua 1565), who matriculated from Broadgates Hall, Oxford, in 1580.

In 1580 he donated lands and properties of the yearly value of £30, free of all charges, to the town of Haverfordwest, and these became known as 'The Perrot Trust.' Through the centuries many have been alienated, but the charitable trust still has a portfolio of 23 properties and capital investments which yield approximately £113,000 annually for the benefit of the town.

Sir THOMAS PERROT (1553 - 1594), politician, courtier and landowner

Sir Thomas was born, probably, at Haroldston, in either August or September 1553. He was the only child of Sir John Perrot and his first wife Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Cheyne, who died in childbirth or soon after. Perrot first appears in the records in September 1575 when he was appointed to the commission of the peace in Pembrokeshire. His appointment was facilitated by his father who was custos rotulorum or chief magistrate in the county. In the summer of 1579 he accompanied his father when the latter was appointed by the queen to command a flotilla of ships to patrol the seas off southern Ireland. When the fleet put in to Waterford Perrot was knighted by the Lord Justice of Ireland Sir William Drury (died 1579). On returning from Ireland Perrot secured a place at Court but he proved to be as headstrong as his father when he fell out with Walter Raleigh (died 1618). In February 1580 Perrot and Raleigh were committed to the Fleet prison for a week to prevent them from fighting a duel. The cause of their falling out is not known but it is worth noting that a month later Raleigh was committed to the Marshalsea prison for another 'fray'. Perrot returned briefly to Pembrokeshire early in 1581 when he was appointed commissioner for musters in Haverfordwest. In the same year, he first entered Parliament as the member for Pembrokeshire in succession to John Wogan of Wiston who had died in May 1580.

Perrot cemented his place at Court when, in 1581, he was one of 20 'defendants' of the Castle of Beauty at a pageant staged in the Tilt Yard before the Queen and the French ambassadors. Perrot proved as skilled a jouster as his father had been in his younger days. However, any goodwill he had earned with the queen was forfeit when he was committed to the Fleet prison in the autumn of 1583. His 'crime' had been to secretly marry the queen's lady-in-waiting, the eighteen-year-old Dorothy Devereux (died 1619). Dorothy was the daughter of **Walter** (died 1576), earl of Essex, and sister of Robert (died 1601), the second earl and future favourite of Queen Elizabeth. The queen never forgave Dorothy and she was banished from the Court. It is likely that Perrot's Court career was damaged beyond repair and from 1584 he and his bride are to be found in regular attendance on the family's Pembrokeshire estates. His return to Pembrokeshire coincided with his father's appointment as lord deputy of Ireland. In his father's absence Perrot was likely charged with maintaining the family's interests in the county.

It is perhaps during this time that Perrot devoted his energies to developing Haroldston and its large formal gardens the remains of which can still be traced in the landscape around the present-day ruins of the mansion house. Before settling down to life in his native Pembrokeshire Perrot volunteered to serve as a captain under Leicester in the Netherlands campaign in 1586. He fought with distinction at the Battle of Zutphen and was among the mourners at the state funeral of his companion-in-arms Sir Phillip Sidney. Perrot returned to Pembrokeshire where he served as Mayor of Haverfordwest in 1586-7, and as deputy lord lieutenant of the county from 1586 to 1590. In 1586 Perrot resumed his parliamentary career when he was returned as the member for Cardiganshire in place of Griffith Lloyd of Llanllŷr whose death led to a by-election. Perrot's failure to secure the post of master of the ordnance in Ireland under his father in 1587 ensured his attention was devoted to the defence of Pembrokeshire in the event of an anticipated Spanish attack. In April 1588 Perrot and his fellow deputy lieutenant **George Owen** of Henllys, reported to the Privy Council on measures to be taken to defend Milford Haven against a Spanish landing. The defeat of the Spanish Armada did not lessen the pressure on local officials to secure the coasts of south Wales and it is evident from letters written by Perrot to the Privy Council and to the judges at the Admiralty that he may have combined with his deputy lieutenant the duties of deputy vice-admiral.

In view of the serious charges laid against his father in 1590 Perrot was removed from the commission of lieutenantancy. The chief instigator in Perrot's removal from office was his father's bitter foe Lord Chancellor Hatton. As his father's situation worsened so did Perrot's and before the end of 1591 he was imprisoned without charges being preferred against him. He was later released and within a few weeks of his father's attainder and death in November 1592, Thomas Egerton (died 1617), the attorney-general, was reporting on Perrot's claims to the estate. As member for Pembrokeshire in the 1593 Parliament it must have been a source of some satisfaction if not relief to witness the act that restored him in blood though not by name. The act was rushed through both Houses in four days which suggests that he owed his restoration to the efforts of his brother-in-law, **Robert, earl of Essex**, and, more importantly, to the queen who was reportedly intending to pardon his father before his untimely death in the Tower. Perrot thus inherited Haroldston and much of the rest of the Perrot estates, but not Carew and Laugharne castles, which reverted to the Crown and the earl of Northumberland respectively.

Perrot was not yet forty before he fell ill and hastily made his will, dated 12 February 1594, in which he divided his estates (in default of male heirs following the death of his son Robert) between his wife, Dorothy, and daughter, Penelope: the will was proved three days later. Perrot was buried in St. Clement Danes Church in the Strand.

Sir JAMES PERROT (1571 - 1637), politician and humanist scholar

Sir James was the illegitimate son of Sir John Perrot of Haroldston, by Sibil Jones of Radnorshire. He was possibly born at Haroldston but since he is sometimes referred to as of Westmead, Carmarthenshire, he may have been born and brought up here which was in his father's possession. In 1586, at the age of 14, he matriculated from Jesus College, Oxford, and entered the Middle Temple in 1591. On the death of his father in 1592 he sought to obtain a share of the family estate and took his case to the Court of Exchequer. After more than a decade of often bitter litigation he was successful in obtaining much of his late father's estates, including the old family seat at Haroldston. He also devoted himself to literary composition and in 1596 he published his *Discovery of Discontented Minds ...*, which was followed in 1600 by *The First Part of the Considerations of Humane Conditions ... etc.* He also wrote a book on the life and death of **Sir Philip Sidney**, but this appears never to have got beyond the manuscript stage. In 1630 he published his last important work, entitled *Meditations and Prayers on the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments*.

He was knighted in 1603 and when Haverfordwest received its charter at the beginning of the reign of James I his name was the first on the roll of new aldermen. In 1608 he became a Gentleman Pensioner shortly after which he served for two years in Ireland as a captain of foot and as governor of the Newry. He was returned as member for Haverfordwest borough to the Parliaments of 1597-8, 1604, and 1614, and in that of 1614 took a vigorous part in the debate on impositions. He soon became prominent on the Parliamentarian side and after condemning the Spanish marriage in the Parliament of 1621, and demanding fresh guarantees against Popery, he lost his former royal favour and was honourably banished to Ireland as a member of Sir Dudley Digges's (died 1639) commission to enquire into certain grievances in that realm. He seems to have been more subdued in the parliament of 1624, when he was returned as member for Pembroke county, but in 1628, when returned as member for Haverfordwest, he strongly attacked Bishop William Laud (died 1645), a member of the privy council and one of the king's favourites. In 1624 he leased the royal mines in Pembrokeshire and acted as deputy vice-admiral for **William Herbert** (died 1630), earl of Pembroke. He was promoted vice-admiral of the county in 1626, and urged the necessity for dealing with the wreckers along the Welsh coasts. He also advocated the fortifying of Milford Haven. He was a member of the Virginia Company, to which he subscribed the sum of £37 10s. He died 4 Feb. 1637, and was buried in St. Mary's church, Haverfordwest.

He married Mary, daughter of Robert Ashfield, esquire, of Chesham, Buckinghamshire, but had no surviving issue.

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Roger Turvey

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Wikipedia Article: [Thomas Perrot](#)

Wikipedia Article: James Perrot

Wikipedia Article: Dorothy Percy, Countess of Northumberland

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