

*When the Queen Mother died two posts were left unfilled. We lost our Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and the Constable of Dover Castle. While we wait to learn of the next appointment, we speculate on who might be chosen to take the place of the Queen Mother. Many think that Prince Andrew would be a suitable candidate. He has a naval background and he is a royal prince. In history there is a tradition of a younger son or royal prince holding the post.*

*In some cases the holder was heir to the throne and relinquished the post when he became king, as Terry Sutton points out when he provides an insight into some of the past Lord Wardens. Many early holders of the dual office met untimely ends but many illustrious names are included among more recent wardens.*

## Lord Wardens of the Cinque Ports

*by Terry Sutton*

**T**here have been, over the centuries, many famous names who have held the posts of Lord Warden and Constable of Dover Castle. Many were of royal blood. Some lost their heads - literally - because of the job. At least one was murdered.

In the days when a man who commanded a castle was more important than one who commanded an army, the post of Constable of Dover Castle was a more high-ranking one than that of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. In addition Dover Castle was the 'key to the kingdom'.

The first Constable was Godwin, Earl of Kent, who was described as Lord Protector of Dover. It was his second son, Harold (1020-1066) who was killed fighting William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings. Harold's mother was Gytha, sister of Canute's Danish brother-in-law. Harold was in charge of the castle after his father's death and legend has it that he did not die at Hastings but, badly wounded, crept back to Dover, where he spent the rest

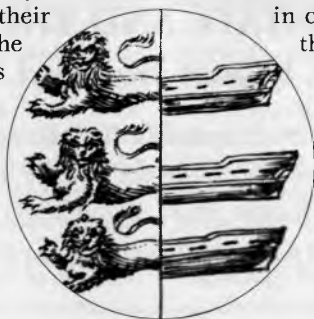
of his days hiding in a cave near Dover Castle.

While Harold was away at Hastings and elsewhere, Bertram Ashburnham was in charge of the castle and when the Normans arrived, via Folkestone, he refused to surrender the castle to the invaders. It is said that William was so angry his troops burned the town of Dover, captured the castle and had Ashburnham beheaded.

The first person to be appointed, it appears in May 1236, as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and Constable

of the Dover Castle was Bertram de Crioll, thus the first man to hold both posts. When he died he was buried in St. Radigund's Abbey.

Sir Roger de Leybourne was Lord Warden twice in the thirteenth century, during the stormy days of the wars between the king and the barons. He gave up the post to Prince Edward (later Edward 1) and went off to die in the Holy Land. He was buried in Palestine but his heart was sent home to go into a shrine in Leybourne



The arms of the Cinque Ports.



Dover Castle.

Church in Kent.

Another unlucky Lord Warden and Constable of Dover Castle was Henry de Montfort, son of Simon of the same name. He gave up the job when he went off to fight on the side of the barons in the Midlands. He was slain in the Battle of Evesham.

Prince Edward was Lord Warden and Constable in 1265 at the time when the Cinque Ports were still in rebellion. He was so conciliatory that he was able to persuade the portsmen to forget their differences with the king. Then like many others, he went to do battle in the Holy Land.

Sir Stephen de Pencester was appointed to the dual office in 1267 and held it for more than thirty years, proving to be a great historian of the castle. His name is remembered in Dover's Pencester Gardens.

No one was very happy when Bartholomew, Baron de Baldemere, was appointed the 57th Constable of the castle in 1320. He was known as the 'bold, bad baron' and the local girls kept out of his way. But he went too far when Queen Isabella of France requested shelter at Leeds Castle while on her way to Thomas a Becket's shrine at Canterbury.

Bartholomew made a few unsolicited advances to her and she complained to the King, Edward II, who had the baron's head chopped off!

His successor, Sir Hugh de Despenser (Junior) fared no better. He was executed as a traitor at Hereford in November 1326. He was followed by Edmund de Woodstock who was also executed. That made three Lord Wardens in a row to end their days on the scaffold.

A fourteenth century Warden and Constable was Sir Simon de Burley and



Walmer Castle.

16 when Richard II was in town he handed the castle keys to Simon. He became the victim of intrigue and was charged with plotting to sell Dover Castle to the French. He was locked up in Dover Castle and executed for treason in London in May 1388. By this time nobles were beginning to see that holding the posts of Lord Warden and Constable of Dover Castle could lead to trouble.

Edmund, Duke of York, grandson of Edward III, was on safer ground when he was appointed at the end of the fourteenth century. He also acted as Regent during the absence of Richard II abroad. Henry, Prince of Wales, held the dual office in 1409 and gave up the posts four years later when he became Henry V. His younger brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, was another Lord Warden in 1415 and held office for 42 years. He was later persecuted and placed in prison, where, it is suspected, he was murdered. Lord Saye and Sele, who followed, had his head chopped off at Cheapside in London in 1450 because he took up the unpopular cause of the Duke of Suffolk.

One of the most illustrious Lord Wardens was Prince Henry, Duke of York, who was appointed Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports by his father in 1493. Henry never forgot his association with Dover when he became Henry VIII and he often visited the town, arriving in great state at the castle. The most famous occasion was when he assembled his fleet in Dover before sailing to the Field of Cloth of Gold.

George Villiers, Duke of Buckinghamshire, was another Constable of Dover Castle who died violently. He was stabbed to death by a young officer, John Felton, at Portsmouth in 1628.

Another royal title holder was Prince James, Duke of York, appointed two months after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, but forced to resign in 1669 because he avowed himself a Catholic under the Test Act.

These are some of the tales that can be told about previous Lord Wardens. However, since the seventeenth century the Lord Wardens have had more peaceful histories. Among the famous names are included William Pitt the Younger, the Duke of Wellington ( who died in Walmer Castle, the official residence, in 1852), Viscount Palmerston, George, Prince of Wales, Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Robert Menzies and, most recently, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

The list of Cinque Ports most generally quoted is that embodied in the 1668 charter of King Charles II. It is as follows:

<i>Head Ports</i>	<i>Corporate Members</i>	<i>Non-corporate Members</i>
HASTINGS	Seaford Pevensey	Hydney Northeye Bulverhythe Petit Iham Bekesbourne Grange
NEW ROMNEY	Lydd	Broomhill Oswardstone Old Romney Dengemarsh
HYTHE	—	West Hythe
DOVER	Folkestone Faversham	Kingsdown Ringwould St Peter's St John's Margate Goresend Woodchurch
SANDWICH	Fordwich	Walmer Deal Stonar Ramsgate Sarre Brightlingsea
WINCHELSEA	—	
RYE	Tenterden	—