

The Scandalous Secret of a Lord Warden

Terry Sutton

English Heritage, responsible for the care of Walmer Castle, has carried out research about the role of the castle during the First World War when the war cabinet met there occasionally.

Officials at English Heritage believe it was at Walmer Castle where the decision was made to carry out the misguided 1915 Gallipoli operation that resulted in the loss of so many lives and eventually the fall of the government.

At the time the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports was the William Lygon, 7th Earl of Beauchamp whose official home in that office was Walmer Castle.

It is claimed that, following the death of the previous Lord Warden Earl Brassey, the post was offered to the Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith but declined because of upkeep cost.

Asquith, leader of the Liberal Party, handed over the opportunity to wealthy Beauchamp, a member of the Liberal Party. Asquith made a condition that if he needed Walmer Castle for official purposes he could use it.

Beauchamp's appointment as Lord Warden set in train a series of scandalous events, unknown to most Cinque Ports' people, although he remained Lord Warden for the next 21 years. Few had such a dark secret as the 7th Earl Beauchamp who was Lord Warden and Constable of Dover Castle in the years 1913-1934.

By the time, 21 years later, he handed over

the Wardenship to the Marquess of Reading those in the know were not sorry to see him go. Beauchamp's health was given as the reason for his departure.

The real reason was he was "outed" as a homosexual and in those days such acts were illegal and for which the punishment was severe. It is claimed Beauchamp, when visiting his official home, entertained a number of lovers at Walmer. The scandal only came to light as a result of the hatred by his brother-in-law, the Duke of Westminster, a Tory who in true political spirit wanted to get one over the Liberals who were in power.

Westminster seethed as Beauchamp clicked with the Liberal leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (who used to spend holidays in Dover) and when Sir Henry came to power he appointed Beauchamp to a number of high offices.

All this time the Duke of Westminster had been gathering evidence to back up the rumours which, in high places, were being whispered about Beauchamp.

In the very early thirties Westminster, hoping to ruin the Liberal Party, struck. He went to the king with his allegations. Said the horrified king: "I thought men like that shot themselves."

Westminster had already spoken to Beauchamp with an offer. If Beauchamp would separate from his wife Lady Lettice, (Westminster's daughter) without a divorce, and give up his offices, no further action would be taken.

Beauchamp refused to agree to the arrangement and shortly afterwards Lady Lettice obtained a divorce.

With the threat of criminal investigations hotting up Beauchamp resigned most of his offices to avoid a public scandal and fled abroad to Venice. Strangely he held on to his title of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

It is recorded that Beauchamp tried to return to his homeland for his wife's funeral but when the ferry was off Folkestone he was warned by a friend on the pier that he might be arrested. So he remained on the ship and quickly returned to Boulogne. Then, in 1936, he heard the news that his

favourite son Hughie had died in a motor accident. This time the Earl did not care if he was arrested and he stepped ashore at Folkestone, without any interference, in order to attend his son's funeral.

Little more is known of the Earl after that, although there were reports of a threatened suicide. He went abroad again and died of cancer in New York City in November 1938, aged 66.

**It is claimed the Lord Beauchamp, who had three sons and four daughters, was the model for Lord Marchmain in Evelyn Waugh's novel Brideshead Revisited.*

Dover County School RE Cadets

Phil Eyden

Under the instruction of the Kent Territorial Association, Dover County School raised its own Cadet Force which officially was recognised by the War Office on the 8th October 1915. The cadets were attached to the RE Territorials and were designated the No.1 Company (Cadets), Cinque Ports Fortress Royal Engineers. Over sixty boys signed up immediately and were issued with service pattern khaki uniform. The school Headmaster, Fred Whitehouse, accepted a commission as Captain and Officer Commanding, teachers Edward Owen-Jones became Captain, Josiah Slater and William Pearce became Lieutenants and the school's Physical Training Instructor, Mr. Frederick 'Paddy' Pascall, was appointed Sergeant Major. All the officers were given military training to assist them in their duties. Captain Mowll granted permission for them to use the Liverpool Street Drill Hall and their 80 rifles on the ranges. The Cadets performed their first parade on



Cadets