

# Installation of a Lord Warden

— Peter Sherred —

Following the death of Admiral the Lord Boyce KG, GCB, OBE, KStJ, DL in November 2022 His Majesty the King having agreed to the appointment of Admiral Sir George Zambellas GCB, DSC, DL, as Lord Warden and Admiral of the Cinque Ports and Constable of Dover Castle, the installation of Lord Boyce's successor (Sir George Zambellas) to these historic posts took place on 29 October 2024 in the grounds of the Duke of York's Royal Military School. This location came about principally because the Maison Dieu was not available due to the continuing extensive renovation works so it was decided by the Confederation that, in the interests of economy and logistics, all the elements of the installation should take place on one site. The school graciously offered to make its facilities available for this latest Installation of a Lord Warden. It must be remembered such an event is a logistical challenge as well as being an event with significant financial implications. Considering all current circumstances at the time it was deemed appropriate, sensible and viable, to contain all the elements of the ceremony in one place. The Duke of York's Royal Military School very helpfully cooperated with the Confederation and made available its resources to enable the Lord Warden's Installation to go ahead on one site. While this may have been disappointing to some Dovorian, realistically this was the only possible solution having regard to all current circumstances.

The day began with a Hallowing Service at 10.45am held in the school Chapel conducted by the School Chaplain, Stephen King. Such services in past ceremonies were held in the



*Admiral Sir George Zambellas*

church of St Mary-in-Castro, Dover Castle. The school Chapel was full of dignitaries and representatives of all the Confederation towns together with Confederation officers, military chiefs and other guests. The Bishop of Dover, the Right Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin, was present as was the former Bishop of Dover, the Right Reverend Trevor Willmott as the Chaplain to the Lord Warden. The

Judge Official and Commissary of the Court of Admiralty of the Cinque Ports, The Honourable Sir Nigel Teare, was present wearing his long red court robe and full bottomed wig. Members of the Court of Shepway also formed a significant element of the congregation. As the Surrogate Judge of the Court of Admiralty of the Cinque Ports, accompanied by my wife Mary, I was also privileged to be present.

During the service, the Confederation of the Cinque Ports' hymn "Honoured in our island's story" was sung to the tune Rhuddlan with words by the late Robert Willis, the former Dean of Canterbury Cathedral. The National Anthem was also sung. The sermon was given by the chaplain to the Lord Warden, Trevor Willmott, who had served as Lord Boyce's chaplain.

At the completion of the service, the second of three elements that comprise the Installation process, a formal session of the Grand Court of Shepway, was convened in the Nye Hall but immediately after the service and before processing to the Nye Hall a fly past, comprising several aircraft, in honour of the Lord Warden, took place. The fly past was observed by all who were present, standing just outside the school



*Dover Mayor and Recorder at Installation of Lord Warden*

chapel. This most impressive feature was made possible because of the benign weather conditions. After the fly past the Lord Warden inspected a guard of honour formed by the Royal Navy before joining the procession to the Nye Hall being preceded by the Admiralty Sergeant bearing the Silver Oar of Admiralty. The Court of Shepway, where Admiral Sir George Michael Zambellas formally took on to himself the duties of the Office of Lord Warden, was coordinated by the Registrar and Seneschal of the Confederation, Ian Russell MVO MA MSocSc, ably assisted by the Solicitor to the Confederation working with the Counsel to the ports. Ian Russell has been the Registrar and Seneschal of the Cinque Ports since 2005. He was formerly Director of Central Services and Solicitor to Hastings Borough Council. He previously served as Joint Solicitor to the Confederation from 1991 to 2020. The Registrar and Seneschal is appointed by the Lord Warden and Ian Russell was originally appointed by the Lord Boyce. The holder of this post carries the traditional title which refers to the fact that this official was Registrar of the Admiralty Court of the Cinque Ports, when it was in regular session. The word seneschal is an old Norman French title for a High Steward, responsible for administering the estate and affairs of a feudal lord.

Following the meeting of the Court of Shepway the band of the Royal Marines gave an impressive marching and musical display on the small Parade Square before lunch was

taken with the Lord Warden and members of the Court of Shepway in the school dining hall. Following lunch all who had attended the colourful and historic installation event left the school grounds. The event will no doubt feature in the Dover film which will be shown in the spring of 2025 by Honorary Freeman of the town of Dover, Mike McFarnell. While the present Lord Warden and his predecessor both held/hold the rank of Admiral in the Royal Navy, Lord Boyce was a former submariner while Sir George is an Aviator.

The Confederation of Cinque Ports is an historic group of south-east England coastal towns in Kent and Sussex. The name is Old French, meaning "five harbours", and alludes to the original five members of Dover, Hythe, New Romney, Sandwich and Hastings. Originally formed for military and trade purposes, the Confederation was at its peak in the Middle Ages when the Lord Warden was one of the most powerful people in the Kingdom. The Cinque Ports currently has a total of 14 members, comprising of five "Head Ports", two "Ancient Towns", and seven "limbs". All the ports are situated on the southern coast of England where the distance of the English Channel to the European continent is at its narrowest and which needed the most protection historically. While the Cinque Ports played a significant role in the defence of the realm during the 13th and 14th centuries the Confederation role in modern times is largely ceremonial, although it works with the member-towns in promoting local tourism and other activities to support their local communities. Dover is one of the "Head Ports" of the Confederation. *Few people were aware of this ancient ceremony taking place as there was little publicity. Those of us who knew were disappointed that the ceremony was held behind closed doors by invitation only at the Duke of York's Royal Military School with no opportunity for the general public to participate in the event.*

*Editor*