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LORD WARDEN OF THE CINQUE PORTS

Statement by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies

I was delighted to accept this appointment which I feel is as much a tribute to Australia as it is to me personally. The selection of an Australian for a position so steeped in British tradition and history is a real demonstration of the family bonds of the British Commonwealth. I am most conscious of the honour that has been done to me and it is a particular privilege to assume the appointment in the footsteps of Sir Winston Churchill.

I can assure the citizens of the Cinque Ports that I will at all times do my best to uphold the finest traditions of this post.

The appointment nowadays is purely honorary and no longer involves any judicial or administrative duties. However, I understand that the citizens of the Cinque Ports do like their Lord Warden to visit them from time to time and I will endeavour to resume the practice of the Lord Warden residing in the area for at least a week each year. I hope to be able to manage this while in Britain for the other matters that will no doubt take me there from time to time.

As for the official installation at Dover Castle, no plans have yet been made for this. However, I hope the installation might be able to take place when affairs next take me to Britain.

CANBERRA,
7th October, 1965

GENERAL BACKGROUND:

The following is an extract from "Heritage of Kent", Autumn 1943, describing the functions of the Lord Warden :-

"At the head of the Cinque Ports stands the Lord Warden. The holder, in former days, held a dual position, as a Minister of the Crown, through whom the Royal commands to the Barons of the Ports were conveyed, and also as the representative of the Confederation, pledged to maintain all the franchises, liberties, customs and usages of the Five Ports.

"The appointment includes the offices of Constable of Dover Castle, and Admiral of the Cinque Ports, and carries with it the right of residence at Walmer Castle, of flying a distinctive flag, and of precedence next to Royalty in any of the Cinque Ports or their Liberties. At sea, the Lord Warden is entitled to a salute of 19 guns and to hoist the standard of the Cinque Ports within the limits of his Admiralty.

"For the purpose of his formal installation in office, the Lord Warden still exercises his right of summoning the Ports to Dover Castle and of presiding at their ancient Court of Shepway. On such occasions he wears the full dress uniform of his office specially designed to indicate his high naval and military rank, and has borne before him, instead of a mace, the silver oar of his Admiralty jurisdiction."

The Cinque Ports are an association of maritime towns in the South-East of England, exercising a jurisdiction dating from about the time of the Norman conquests. Five principal ports constituting the body are Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich.

It is interesting to note that the office of the Lord Warden includes the right to "Wreck", i.e. flotsam, jetsam, lagan, etc., found within the limits of jurisdiction of the Cinque Ports. There are some excepted areas within the jurisdiction where the rights of certain Lords of Manors (about twenty in all) have been admitted by the Crown in respect of unclaimed wreck washed ashore.

The Office also includes the right to "Fishes Royal" within the same limits, but these are probably more of a liability than an asset in that they usually have to be buried, and the cost of the burial is a charge to be borne by the Lord Warden. On balance, the proceeds of the wreck, etc. more than cover the cost of burials, but the amounts, in normal times, are small, averaging about £12 a year.

*Fishes Royal are whales, porpoises, sturgeon, and the like, and were granted to the Lord Warden in 1707.
