



LORD CHIEF JUSTICE
OF ENGLAND AND WALES

**THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD THOMAS OF CWMGIEDD
LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND AND WALES**

SWEARING IN OF THE LORD CHANCELLOR

19 MAY 2015, COURT 4, ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE

1. Of the many duties this court performs, one of the most pleasant is to welcome those who take their oaths of office in this courtroom. The oaths taken reflect not only the differing responsibilities that are undertaken, but also the age of the office. Each of these offices evolves over time and it is, of course, the genius of our constitution that at the heart of all these oaths is the respect for and maintenance of the rule of law.
2. The Attorney General, an office that has existed since at least the 13th century, still promises to serve the Queen in all her courts, to truly counsel the Queen and “duly and truly minister the Queen’s matters and sue the Queen’s process after the course of the law and after my cunning” – a duty each Attorney General has their own way of performing. The High Sheriff, an office that has existed since before the

Norman conquest, promises to “truly and faithfully acquit at the Exchequer all of those of whom I shall receive any debts or sums of money belonging to the Crown” – one of the many duties that have to be performed in preserving the rights and property of the Crown although this office is held yearly for no pay.

3. The oath you have taken today, my Lord Chancellor, in assuming an office that has existed even longer, has replaced the six part oath that your predecessors took prior to the reform of your office. One of those parts required the Lord Chancellor to, “truly counsel the King and his counsel he shall layne and keep”. As Lord Campbell’s monumental history the Lives of the Lord Chancellors explains, “layne” is an old Norman word signifying “to conceal”. After his departure from office, having been both Lord Chief Justice and then Lord Chancellor, Lord Campbell undertook this work because, in his words, “I felt within me a revival of the aspiration after literary fame, which, in my most busy days, I was never able entirely to extinguish. Having amused myself with revising for the press ‘a Selection of my Speeches at the Bar and in the House of Commons’, I resolved to write ‘The Lives of the Lord Chancellors’.” – the latter by far more interesting today than a selection of speeches at the Bar or in the House of Commons.

4. There is a common theme, since the new Lord Chancellor is also a published author. Having been educated in England and Scotland, he read English at Lady Margaret Hall and served as President of the Oxford Union. After leaving university he took up a career in journalism, working for local and national newspapers, including The Times, and on radio and television; and was also Chairman of the think tank “Policy Exchange” and has written four books, his most recent being Celsius 7/7. He entered Parliament for Surrey Heath in May 2005, becoming a shadow Cabinet Minister. In 2010 after the General Election he was appointed Secretary of State for Education, and then Chief Whip in 2014.

5. It is a particular pleasure to welcome his family: his wife Sarah, a well known columnist, and his children Beatrice and William. We are delighted they can be here. Days such as this are particularly special for the family, who have provided support and encouragement whilst the midnight oil is being burned on so many occasions.

6. The Lord Chancellor brings a wealth of experience to this ancient office as this briefest of introductions makes clear. In his profession as a journalist, as well as more recently in Parliament, he has demonstrated a combination of forensic analysis, a love of communication and a thirst for ideas.

These qualities, coupled with his evident energy and enthusiasm, will serve him well in this new role which epitomises tradition, but also demands continual evolution as our justice system develops and modernises.

7. My Lord Chancellor we warmly welcome you into this ancient office. We wish you well as you take up your responsibilities and look forward to working with you in fulfilling our respective roles in the delivery of one of the key responsibilities of the State – the delivery of justice through a shared commitment to judicial independence, access to justice and the rule of law.

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