

2nd Talk

20th Century Life in the Constables Tower

A talk by Wendi Atherton reported by Terry Sutton

Life living in the Tower for nearly six years was related to us in the second talk at our public meeting on October 18th.

The tower in question was the Constable's Tower of Dover Castle and our speaker was Mrs Wendi Atherton, the wife of our President, Brigadier Maurice Atherton CBE. He was the 200th Deputy Constable of Dover Castle whose official residence was the Tower.

Wendi, who said it was an amazing experience, told of the benefits and the problems of residing there. One of the benefits was the view but problems involved lack of privacy such as finding Castle visitors such as American tourists accidentally wandering around the flat. Mrs Atherton revealed that she and her husband had to keep a record, and detailed financial accounts, of the official visitors they entertained and one

rule was that no one should be entertained more than once a year. That became difficult when the Queen Mother, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, was visiting! The rule was changed.

She told of the many other guests whom they entertained at Constable Tower including two Archbishops, ambassadors, Cinque Ports' mayors, Clarence House staff and military chiefs visiting the ranges at Hythe. Often this meant taking them on a tour of the castle so she had to swot up on the guidebook. One tradition at the tower is that the drawing room curtains are never drawn, she reported.

One of the problems when they moved in was that the furniture van carrying their possessions was unable to access the castle because of the low headroom of the castle entrances. On another occasion, when out in the kitchen garden, she found herself locked out

because the castle had closed to the public. She managed to squeeze under the huge locked doors. On another occasion they were snowed in at the castle for three days.

One experience, involving the Junior Leaders Royal Engineers, was when Wendi was lowered 278 feet down the ancient well that is located in the castle's keep.

