# Life at The Tower Audio Tour

# The Tower of London

## Overview

Find out what living at the Tower is really like and discover the ancient ceremonies still performed today.

## Stop 1 Behind the Scenes

### Narrator:

The Yeoman Warders, whom you’ve certainly already noticed in their unique and colourful uniforms, are world-famous, a symbol of the Tower and of London. But though their tours are highly entertaining, their duties go far beyond that. In fact the secret life of the Tower is one that holds many surprises. If you’d like to hear more, we suggest you find a comfortable place to sit - on a bench or in the café.

## Stop 2 The Tower Community

### John Keohane:

My name is John Keohane and I am the Chief Yeoman Warder here at the Tower of London.

### Narrator:

John Keohane is in charge of the 35 Yeoman Warders currently stationed at the Tower. They are one of the most popular attractions for visitors. But they’re not just here for show. They are, in fact, the ceremonial guardians of the Tower of London. And all of them have had distinguished military careers.

### John Keohane:

First of all you have to have served a minimum of 22 years’ military service and be in receipt of a military pension. You have to have also during your service career have been awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. Thirdly, you ideally should have achieved the minimum rank of Warrant Officer or Sergeant Major, although we do accept Colour Sergeants, Staff Sergeants, Flight Sergeants from the RAF. And lastly, you need to be a minimum of 40 years of age and ideally, no older than 55 years of age on appointment.

### Narrator:

Their duties then, go far beyond showing visitors around.

### John Keohane:

Duties of the Yeoman Warder basically resolve around the whole of the 24 hours a day. I have a Yeoman Warder known as the Watchman, who is the man who is responsible for the security throughout the night. He starts at four o’clock in the afternoon and works right through until eight o’clock the next morning, so that’s basically a 16 hour shift. Basically, out of the 35, I have to provide 21 Yeoman Warders per day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

### Narrator:

And they don’t just turn up at the Tower for their shift. For the job of Yeoman Warder also comes with a very special privilege:

### John Keohane:

We get accommodation, we all live here inside of the Tower of London. So when all of our visitors are walking round the inner wall and look over into the outer wall and see the washing etc., those are in fact the houses. The one that I live in for instance was made out of three stables and you can see the windows are still the shape that you would expect a stable door to be.

### Narrator:

And it’s not just the Yeoman Warders who live here. Their families live here, too. The Tower of London is a community. There are over 35 members of the Yeoman body, all of whom live at the Tower with their families, totalling around 140 people overall. There is a strong sense of community here – there is a chaplain and a doctor, as well as other military personnel and Historic Royal Palaces staff. It is rather family orientated too, as there are children and grandchildren living here. It must be quite exciting to grow up in one of the most unique homes in 21st century London.

### John Keohane:

And living here as part of the village we have our own club or pub as people often refer to it. And it’s a small family atmosphere because we have the children, we have the grandchildren, and what is so nice about the Tower is that after all the public have gone home it becomes ours.

It’s a village, it’s a privilege to be able to be a part of something that has been here for so long and just to stand there and to look across towards Tower Bridge and to look at the Tudor buildings and to know that it’s your village and you’re a part of it.

### Narrator:

And while you’re visiting, you’re part of it too - and most welcome to join the Yeoman Warders on one of their tours and hear them share their stories of this amazing place.

### John Keohane:

I would certainly recommend anybody, even if English is not your first language, we do try very hard to put it over in such a way that you will be entertained and you will be able to take away from it a lot of the facts about English history. So my recommendation is go along, give it a try.

## Stop 3 Ceremony of the Keys

### Narrator:

The Tower of London has, over its long history, been an impregnable fortress, a refuge for Kings, the home of the Crown Jewels, a place of imprisonment and torture, and the site where the country’s most important records have been kept. As such, it’s always had to be firmly secured. Even today, the Tower is a garrison. And every night, at seven minutes to ten, a very special ceremony takes place: the Ceremony of the Keys. You may want to find a comfortable place to sit while we tell you more about this unique tradition.

Here’s John Keohane, the Chief Yeoman Warder, to tell us more:

### John Keohane:

And so it is, at precisely 7 minutes to 10, you will see the Chief Yeoman Warder leaving the Byward Tower, the oldest manned guardroom in the world. He will be carrying in one hand a set of keys and in his other hand a lantern, still lit to this day by a single candle.

### Narrator:

He then walks towards the Bloody Tower archway where his military escort is waiting for him.

### John Keohane:

There are four soldiers, three of them armed with their modern up-to-date SA80 weapons and a fourth member of the escort whose duty it will be to carry the lantern each and every night. The Chief Yeoman Warder joins his escort and then, under the orders of the Sergeant, they step off.

### Narrator:

They walk towards the two gates that you originally came in through. These gates are then locked and secured. [GATES BEING LOCKED] They then march back towards the Bloody Tower archway.

### John Keohane:

In the shadows stands a sentry and it’s his job to challenge anyone who approaches to find out what business they have. The sentry will step from the shadows and call upon the escort to “Halt!”.

They will halt. He will then call out “Who comes there?”

And the reply will come from the Chief Yeoman Warder: “The keys!”.

But the sentry won’t be satisfied with that. He will want to know “Whose keys?”

And the reply will come “King Charles’ Keys”.

Well then, of course, hearing that it is The King’s keys that are approaching, he will give the command: “Pass, King Charles’ Keys. For all is well.”

The escort will then make its way through the archway and will halt at the bottom of the broad steps.

### Narrator:

The Officer of the Guards stands there presenting his ceremonial sword and, behind him, some of his soldiers.

### John Keohane:

When the escort halts at the bottom of the stairs, the officer will give the command for the guard and the escort to present arms. As that happens, the Chief Yeoman Warder will take two paces forward. Raising his Tudor bonnet high in the air, he will proclaim: “God preserve King Charles!”.

The reply will come from all those soldiers on parade: “Amen.”

At that stroke another soldier on the top of the stairs will take out a bugle and as the clock is striking ten o’clock, the bugle will play the last post. This is the last bugle call to be heard in the Tower of London at night.

[LAST POST]

### Narrator:

Your look behind the scenes ends here do go and take a yeoman warder tour or have a look at your map and see what other fascinating aspects of the tower are there to discover.

## [End of Tour]