

The Tower of London as a historic environment





Evidence of Roman settlement: Samian pottery and amphora fragments found during excavations at the Tower



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Tower of London



An artists' impression of the Roman City Wall, AD 400



Early Medieval

Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, 1097

‘Also many shires, whose work pertained to London were badly afflicted through the wall which they constructed around the Tower.’

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, 1100

‘And soon after that, by the advice of those who were around him, the king [Henry I] had Ranulf bishop of Durham seized and brought to the Tower in London and held there.’

William Fitzstephens’, Descriptio Nobilissimi Civitatis Londoniae (description of the noblest City of London), 1174/1183

‘It has on the east the Palatine Castle, very great and strong, of which the ground plan and the walls rise from a very deep foundation, fixed with a mortar tempered by the blood of animals. On the west are two towers very strongly fortified, with the high and great wall of the city having seven double gates, and towered to the north at intervals. London was walled and towered in like manner on the south, but the great fish-bearing Thames river which there glides, with ebb and flow from the sea, by course of time has washed against, loosened, and thrown down those walls. Also upwards to the west the royal palace is conspicuous above the same river, an incomparable building with ramparts and bulwarks, two miles from the city, joined to it by a populous suburb.’



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An artists' impression of the building of the White Tower, AD 1080s



The Medieval Tower



The White Tower and South Lawn

© Historic Royal Palaces



Pennies of Harold II and William I, 1066-68



Medieval

Jean Froissart, *Froissart's Chronicle*, pp.72-73, 1390s

'And on the Friday in the morning the people, being at Saint Katherine's near to the Tower, began to apparel themselves and to cry and shout, and said, without the king would come out and speak with them, they would assail the Tower and take it by force, and slay all them that were within.

Then the king doubted these words and so was counselled that he should issue out to speak with them: and then the king sent to them that they should all draw to a fair plain place called Mile-end...

Then the people began to depart, specially the commons of the villages, and went to the same place: but all went not thither...

more than four hundred entered into the Tower and brake up chamber after chamber, and at last found the archbishop of Canterbury, called Simon, a valiant man and a wise, and chief chancellor of England, and a little before he had said mass before the king. These gluttons took him and strake off his head, and also they beheaded the lord of Saint John's and a friar minor, master in medicine, pertaining to the duke of Lancaster, they slew him in despite of his master, and a sergeant at arms called John Leg; and these four heads were set on four long spears...

Also these gluttons entered into the princess' chamber and brake her bed, whereby she was so sore affrayed that she swooned.'



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An artists' impression of the Tower in AD 1300



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Image of John Ball encouraging the rebels during the Peasant's Revolt 1381

© British Library

Source: Detail of British Library manuscript Royal 18 E. I f.165v (Froissart's Chronicles) (date: 1385-1400)



Late Medieval

Great Chronicle of London, written early in Sixteenth Century by a contemporary Londoner

‘George, duke of Clarence, brother to the king, who for a certain time before had been held in the Tower as a prisoner, was, for considerations moving the king, put secretly to death within the Tower and, as the fame ran, drowned in a barrel of malmsey.’

English Chronicle, written c.1461

In 1460 Lancastrian loyalists took control of the Tower and a siege was launched by the Yorkists:

‘The Tower was besieged by land and by water that no vitals might come to them that were within... They that were within the Tower cast wild fire into the city, and shot in small guns and burned and hurt men and women and children in the streets. And they of London laid great bombards on the further side of the Thames against the Tower and crazed the walls thereof in divers places.’

The Milanese ambassador in France, writing on 17 June 1471

‘All [Henry’s] most powerful adherents [are dead] or are in the Tower of London, where he himself is a prisoner. King Edward has had him put to death secretly, and is said to have done the like by the Queen [Margaret of Anjou], the consort of King Henry.’

Dominic Mancini, an Italian visitor to England, writing in 1483

‘[The princes] were withdrawn into the inner apartments of the Tower proper, and day by day began to be seen more rarely behind the bars of the windows, until at length they ceased to appear altogether.’



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A depiction of the imprisonment of Charles, Duke of Orléans, in the Tower of London from a 15th-century manuscript. The White Tower is visible, St Thomas' Tower (also known as Traitor's Gate) is in front of it, and in the foreground is the River Thames.

© British Library

Source: Charles, Duke of Orléans (British Library, MS Royal, 16 folio 73) (1391-1465)





The Princes in the Tower, animation by Historic Royal Palaces, 2013

A modern interpretation of the Princes' story:
<https://youtu.be/vO9vGUWtPKI>



Tudor

Extract from, *'The Complete Collection of State Trials', Volume 1, Fifth edition,* by Mr Francis Hargrave, Inner-Temple, Published 5th October 1775.

Thomas More's response to the Act of Supremacy, 1534, having refused to swear the oath and been condemned to death:

'I am able [to] produce against one bishop which you can produce...a hundred holy and catholick bishops for [your] opinion; and against one realm, the consent of Christendom for a thousand years.'

Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 10, 3rd May 1536

Exchange between Anne Boleyn and Sir William Kingston, Constable of the Tower, when Anne arrived as prisoner in May 1536:

'On my lord of Norfolk and the King's Council departing from the Tower, I went before the Queen into her lodging. She said unto me, "Mr Kingston, shall I go into a dungeon?" I said, "No, Madam. You shall go into the lodging you lay in at your coronation." "It is too good for me, she said; Jesu have mercy on me;" and kneeled down, weeping a [good] pace, and in the same sorrow fell into a great laughing, as she has done many times since.'

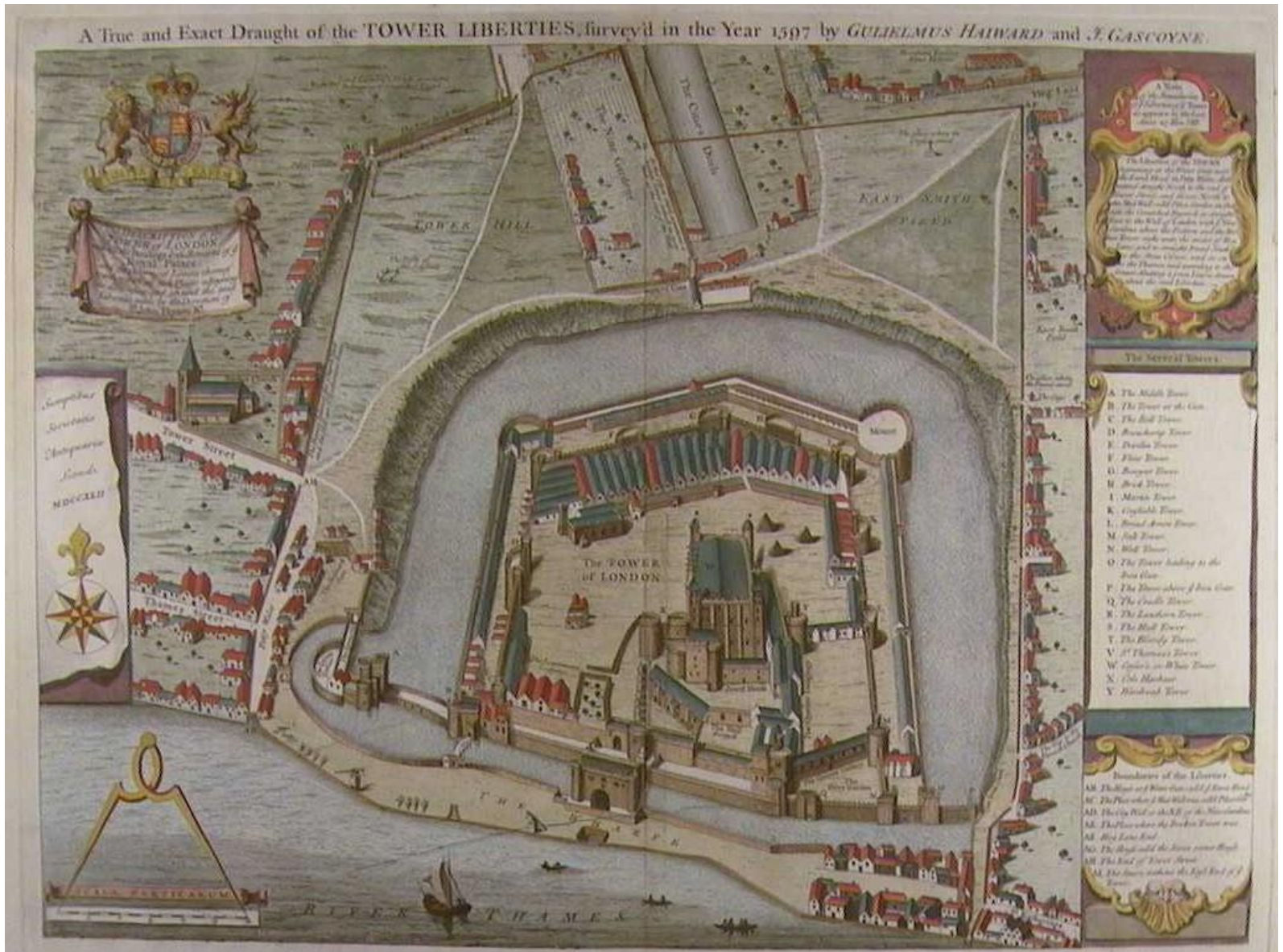
Lansdowne Manuscript 118/32 (transcribed) 1552-1557

[For lunch Lady Somerset ate] mutton stewed with potage, boiled beef and mutton, roast veal, roast capon and two rabbits.

For dinner - mutton with potage, along with sliced beef, roast mutton, two rabbits and a dozen larks, all washed down with either beer or wine at 77s a week



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Plan of the Tower in 1597, showing the Tudor palace (now destroyed)



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Prisoner graffiti at the Tower of London. This shows a range of family, religious and esoteric carvings left by prisoners during the Tudor era.



Stuart

Charles I's pledge to Strafford, 1640:

'I cannot satisfy myself in honour or conscience without assuring you now, in the midst of your troubles, that, upon the word of a king, you shall not suffer in life, honour or fortune.'

Strafford's words en route to his execution on Tower Hill, 12 May 1641:

'I dare look death in the face, and I hope the people too. I care not how I die, whether by the hand of the executioner or by the madness and fury of the people: if that may give them better content, it is all one to me.'

Willem Schellinks' Travel Journal (an artist), 1661

'Inside the tower is also the royal mint to be seen, which we afterwards saw working, a large number of people are employed there. They sit in 8 or 10 special places, and in separate square rooms above each other like shops in a street.'

Francis Sandford, writing in 1677

'On Friday 17th July 1674 some men were digging down the stairs which led from the king's lodgings to the chapel in the Tower. Suddenly they found the bones of two youngsters in a wooden chest about 10 feet underground. On looking at them they seemed to be about 13 and 11 years old. Presuming that these were the bones of the princes, King Charles II ordered that the bones should be put in a marble urn and placed in the chapel of King Henry VII in Westminster Abbey.'



18th and 19th Century

César de Saussure (Swiss, writing in French), **Letter III, 16 December 1725**

A Foreign view of England in the reigns of George I and George II: The letters of Monsieur Cesar de Saussure to his family; translated and edited by Madame Van Muyden (1902), pp. 90

‘We had not the curiosity to examine these [the records in the Records Office] but preferred going to see money coined, the Tower being the only place in the kingdom where this is done.’

William Hutton, *A Journey from Birmingham to London*, 1749

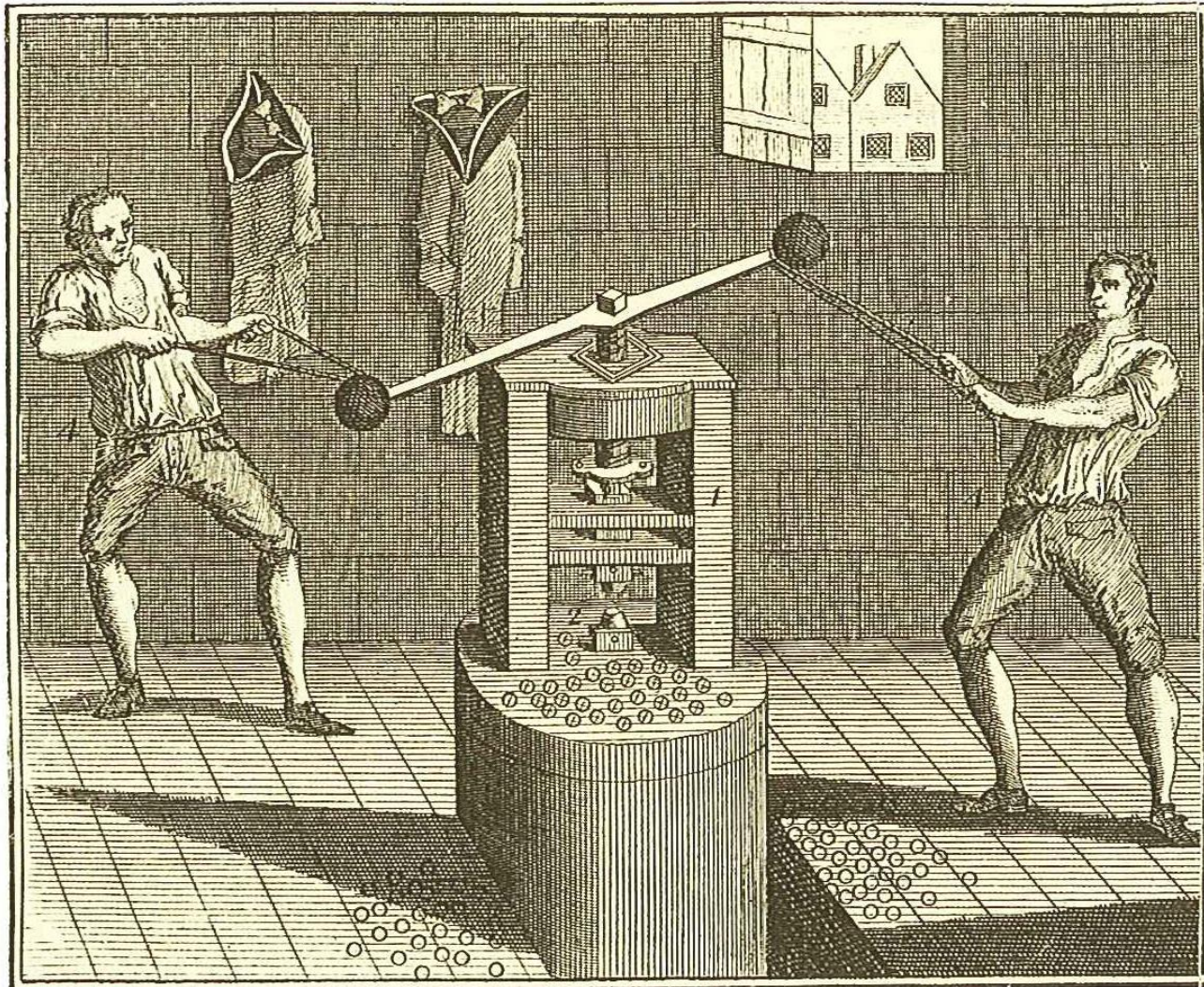
‘...my Derbyshire dialect quickly brought the warders out of their lodges; who on seeing the dust about my shoes, wisely concluded that money could not abound in my pocket, and, with the voice of authority, ordered me back.’

The Times, 29 October 1835

‘The Tower of London Menagery, this ancient exhibition, no longer exists... although the exhibition no longer exists, he [Mr Cops the keeper] retains his house, with a salary of 11s a day...’

A few weeks since the above remnants [the bear, the monkeys and birds] were disposed of to an American gentleman, and exported to that country. Last week the materials which formed the dens &c., were sold, broken up, and conveyed away.’





Men making coins using a machine, 1750.

The Royal Mint was based at the Tower between c1279 and 1812. It made had some well-known Wardens, including Sir Isaac Newton. He oversaw the production of £5,000,000 in silver coin.



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Drawing of the Grand Storehouse which burned down in 1841. Archive reference TOL158. © Historic Royal Palaces



Built in 1688, and destroyed by fire in 1841 with the loss of a number of historic artefacts, the Grand Storehouse was designed to store artillery and small arms, but it soon became a tourist attraction. The Duke Wellington was Constable during this time, and replaced it with the Waterloo Barracks which are still present today.





Visitors at the Tower looking at the animals, 1808.

The Menagerie operated at the Tower from its foundation in the early 1200s until the collection was moved to Regent's Park in 1826 and closed completely in 1835. The Royal Menagerie became home to more than 60 species of animal. This saw a long tradition of kings and queens keeping exotic animals as symbols of power and for the entertainment and curiosity of the court.

Animals were also exchanged throughout Europe as regal gifts, but sadly, they were often mistreated. By the beginning of the 19th century the Menagerie was in decline, until it was revitalised by the energetic showman Alfred Cops, Head Keeper.



20th Century

Carl Lody, Letters, 5 November 1914 (shortly before his execution as a spy)
London, Nov, 5th 1914
Tower of London

To the Commanding Officer of the 3rd Battalion Gren. Guards.
Wellington Barracks

Sir,

I feel it my duty as a German officer to express my sincere thanks and appreciation towards the staff officers and men who were in charge of my person during my confinement.

Their kind and considered treatment has called my highest esteem and admiration as regards good fellowship even towards the enemy and if I may be permitted, I would thank you for making this known to them.

I am, Sir, with profound respect:

Carl Hans Lody.

Senior Lieutenant, Imperial German Naval Res. II.

Sir Charles Peers of the Office of Works, 1923

When discussing how to memorialize the death of Henry VI, Sir Charles Peers of the Office of Works commented:

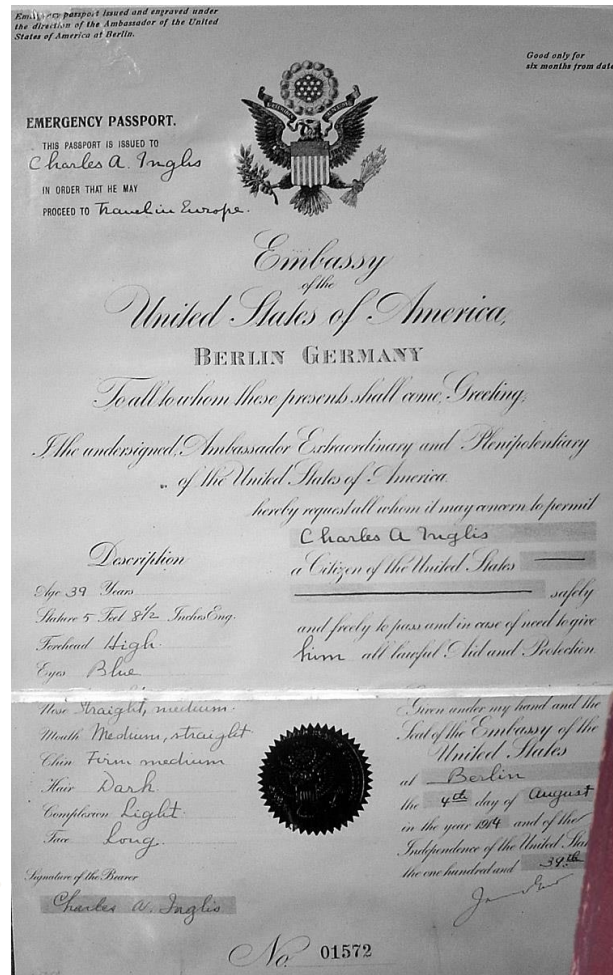
“A memorial tablet, if put up at all, should bear a qualified inscription – “by tradition” or something of that sort.”



Lody's belongings



A hollowed out book containing pills.



An American passport in the name of Charles Inglis





Yeoman Warders (Beefeaters) in the 1800s and 2011. It is thought their nickname is derived from their position in the Royal Bodyguard, which permitted them to eat as much beef as they wanted from the king's table.

Yeoman Warders are a detachment of the 'Yeomen of the Guard' and they have formed the Royal Bodyguard since at least 1509. Their origins stretch back as far as the reign of Edward IV (1461-83).

Today, Yeoman Warders must have served in the armed forces for at least 22 years, reaching the rank of warrant officer, and they must also have been awarded the long service and good conduct medal.



The Tower Today

The planting of the last Poppy in 2014 to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.



The Poppies installation 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red' at the Tower of London, 11 November 2014. © Historic Royal Palaces. Photograph by R Lea-Hair

Tourists queuing to see the Crown Jewels in 2016



Key Question Ideas

- How has the Tower of London changed over time?
- What has been the Tower of London's primary function?
- Do the Tower of London's uses over time prove it deserves its gory reputation?
- What can the buildings of the Tower of London reveal?
- Is the Tower of London a unique environment?



Ideas for activities and foci

- Preparing to act as guides for tourists to learn about the different functions of the Tower
- Creating an audio or video guide for the Tower
- Creating a new exhibition with ideas for key objects, locations and sources
- Writing a guide book or trail for primary or KS3 students
- Debates on Salvin's work: are newer buildings as important as older ones or should they be removed?
- Physical remains vs written sources – which are more valuable for historians and what are their issues?

