# Imprisonment And Execution Audio Tour

# The Tower of London

## Overview

Uncover the true stories of imprisonment and execution at the Tower.

## Stop 1 The First Prisoner

### Narrator:

Our tour starts at the Scaffold Site – it’s the place marked with the glass sculpture shown on your screen.

The first person to be imprisoned at the Tower of London was Bishop Ranulf Flambard who was held here in 1100, only a few years after the White Tower had been built by William the Conqueror. He managed to escape. But not all were that lucky. Over the centuries, the Tower of London has been witness to imprisonment, torture and death. Join us as we explore the gruesome and often tragic stories that lie behind these walls.

## Stop 2 Tower Executions

### Male Voice:

Gentle visitor, pause awhile. Where you stand, death cut away the light of many days. Here jewelled names were broken down from the vivid thread of life. May they rest in peace while we walk the generations around their strife and courage under these restless skies.

### Narrator:

This sculpture symbolically marks the Tower as an execution site. On it, you can see the names of some of those who died here. But contrary to what you may think, very few people were actually executed inside the grounds of the Tower. As Sally Dixon-Smith explains, this was, in fact, a privilege.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

Only very few people were actually granted the privilege - and it was seen as a privilege - of being executed within the walls of the Tower. The vast majority of executions associated with this place happened outside on Tower Hill and were very public, with huge grandstands being erected. What happened with executions within the Tower, although they were far more private, still there was an invited audience of very important people who would come and witness the executions and again grandstands would be erected but it was a much smaller number of people.

### Narrator:

Among those who were executed here was Henry VIII’s wife Anne Boleyn. She was beheaded on the 19th May 1536.

### Anne Boleyn:

I am come hither to accuse no man nor to speak anything of that whereof I am accused and condemned to die - but I pray god save the king and send him long to reign over you … for a gentler nor a more merciful prince was there never and to me was a good and sovereign lord.

### Narrator:

Her body was taken to the chapel you can see just beyond the Scaffold Site, St Peter ad Vincula, St Peter in Chains, and buried. She was later joined by Henry VIII’s fifth wife, Catherine Howard, and also Lady Jane Grey, the ill-fated Queen, whose reign in 1553 lasted only nine days. Roger Hall is the chapel’s chaplain:

### Roger Hall:

The interesting thing about going into the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, that there are no obvious tombs. Unlike Westminster Abbey and other great state churches where there are large memorials to monarchs who died, these queens and the people who were buried in this chapel were buried very discreetly and quietly, simply on the pavement floor with just a slab across them.

I mean the chapel itself retains the bodies of approximately 1,500 people, many of whom were just people who lived and worked around the Tower, but in and among them were all the famous people who were executed and buried there and this of course included the three Queens who are remembered at the top end of the church in the sanctuary area. But also we have two saints, now two of the most famous English saints; Sir Thomas More and John Fisher, and they’ve become real pilgrimage places of course for the Roman Catholic community.

### Narrator:

But St Peter ad Vincula is more than just a famous burial site.

If you'd like to hear more about the history and life of the Chapel, select the option on your screen.

## Stop 2a St Peter’s Chapel

### Roger Hall:

There’s been a chapel on the site for approximately 900 years, but the present chapel’s only been there for 500 years. There was a great fire and as a result of that it just sort of fell into disrepair. And by the time Henry VIII came to the throne he said that a new chapel was to be built. And it’s quite a rare church in many ways because there were lots of other buildings built during Tudor times but there weren’t many churches actually built in Henry VIII’s period and so our church is quite unique in that sense.

When you look at it today it would be easy to see it as just part of the history of the Tower of London containing three queens and two saints - and just be seen as a mausoleum, but it isn’t, it’s always been a place of worship.

The sacraments have been administered there for 900 years, prayers have been said there for 900 years, and that still goes on today.

On Sunday we have two services, one at nine fifteen and one at eleven o’clock. These services are always open to the public as well. You can come to the main gate just before nine o’clock and just before quarter to eleven and say to the Yeoman Warder, whoever’s on duty that you’re coming to church and they will give you direct access into the chapel. We also are very well blessed in that we have ten professional singers who sing every Sunday morning at eleven o’clock and we’re quite famous, because we are a Tudor chapel, for singing Tudor music.

### Narrator:

If you want to visit the chapel on any other day, you can do so on a Yeoman Warder tour.

## Stop 3 The Beauchamp Tower

### Narrator:

As you’ve just heard, only very few people were executed at the Tower. But thousands were held prisoner here over the years. And we’re about to see where some of them were kept. Facing the chapel, turn left. Straight ahead, you’ll see a large stone building with steps leading down into it. This is the Beauchamp Tower and we’re going to go there next. In order to get to the first floor, you’ll have to climb steep steps.

Walk down the steps into the Beauchamp Tower. On the ground floor is an exhibition about some of the Tower’s most famous prisoners; you’ll have time to look at it later. For now, let’s go up the stairs - which you’ll find on the left as you enter - until you come to a small room.

## Stop 4 Tower Prisoners

### Narrator:

If you look around here, you’ll notice the many carvings and inscriptions in this room. A particularly prominent one is directly above the fireplace.

“Quanto plus afflictionis pro Christo in hoc saeculo, tanto plus gloriae cum Christo in futuro.”

The more suffering for Christ in this World, the more glory with Christ in the next.

It’s dated 22nd June 1587. Jane Spooner:

### Jane Spooner:

During Elizabeth I’s reign, one of the Beauchamp Tower’s longest serving prisoners was kept here. He was the Earl of Arundel and you can see his inscription carved over the top of the fireplace here. We have letters surviving begging to be allowed to have more freedom and complaining about his poor conditions.

### Earl Of Arundel:

The length of my imprisonment, together with the daily weakening of my body, will shortly put me in danger of my life. I humbly beseech your lordship to move her majesty for my liberty, and that it will please her to take compassion of that miserable and wretched life, wherein I have now two years and a quarter remained.

### Jane Spooner:

On a daily basis he expected to be led off to execution but he was never actually told in the whole ten years of his imprisonment that Elizabeth had never actually signed his death warrant.

### Narrator:

Without having been granted his wish to see his wife and young son, the Earl of Arundel died of dysentery after 10 years at the Tower.

Like many of those held at the Tower, the Earl of Arundel was imprisoned for religious reasons. Depending on the religious allegiance of the King – for example Henry VIII was succeeded first by his Protestant son Edward VI, then by his Catholic daughter Mary, and then by his Protestant daughter Elizabeth the First - you could be in danger because of your faith. Both Catholics and Protestants were persecuted at various points in time. And, of course, this also had a political dimension. Kings and Queens demanded absolute loyalty, and in the volatile political climate of the 16th and 17th centuries, rebellion never seemed far away.

To hear another tragic story linked to this room, about Lady Jane Grey, select the option on your screen or to continue play the next track.

## Stop 4a Dudley Graffiti

### Narrator:

Immediately to the right of the fireplace you can see a particularly elaborate carving.

### Jane Spooner:

If you look at this beautiful heraldic carving, this was done either by or for the members of the Dudley family, who were imprisoned here shortly after the unsuccessful coup of Lady Jane Grey.

### Narrator:

Lady Jane Grey, a young noblewoman, had been a pawn in the plans of her power-hungry father-in-law John Dudley, who wanted to achieve royal power. Jane was proclaimed Queen in July 1553, but her reign only lasted nine days. The Tower, to which she had come to prepare for her coronation, became her prison. At the same time, her husband, Guildford Dudley was taken prisoner. His four brothers were also imprisoned, here in the Beauchamp Tower, and this heraldic carving refers to them.

### Jane Spooner:

It’s what is known as a rebus, which means that there are certain visual puns carved into the wall which refer to the names of some of the members of the Dudley family. And you can see in the centre their heraldic symbol, the bear and the ragged staff. And then around it you can see carved various motifs which refer to the names of the prisoners. So for example in the bottom right-hand corner you can see acorns which refer to Robert Dudley, and that is because the Latin for oak tree is ‘robur’. And then above it you can see gillyflowers and that refers to Lady Jane Grey’s husband, Lord Guildford Dudley, and so on.

### Narrator:

From her prison, Lady Jane Grey witnessed her husband go to his death and saw his headless body being brought back on a cart. She herself was beheaded on the 12th February 1554. She was 16 years old.

## Stop 5 The King’s House

### Narrator:

We're going to leave the Beauchamp Tower now. Go back down the stairs, and out through the door on your right. Remember you can pause your player until you’re ready to continue.

If you walk back up the stairs, you can see, on your right, a large plot of grass. This is Tower Green, the site where Lady Jane Grey is said to have been beheaded. Beyond it, you can see a row of black and white half-timbered houses. In front of one of them, a guard stands on duty. This is The King’s House.

The King’s House is the only surviving original Tudor timber-framed house in the City of London - all the others were destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666. The house was built in the 1540s on the site of the original 14th century lodgings; both were intended for occupation by the Constable, later by the Lieutenant and more recently by the Resident Governor. Before the 14th century, it was thought that the Constable had a residence in the White Tower. All these job titles carried the same responsibility: that is to run the Tower of London.

The King’s House has a rich history because many of the more important prisoners of the Tower were kept under guard here. Guy Fawkes was interrogated here after the Gunpowder Plot was uncovered. Prisoners were not exclusively British but included foreigners too; Rudolf Hess, a German Nazi, was also briefly held here in 1941.

Uniquely, the Tower has always played a dual role of both prison and residence, as dramatically shown in the history of this very house.

If you'd like to hear more about one of the prisoners who was kept here, Guy Fawkes, select the option on your screen.

## Stop 5a Guy Fawkes

### Narrator:

One of the most famous prisoners kept here was Guy Fawkes, the leader of a group of Catholic rebels. By 1605, English Catholics had suffered 50 years of repression. Catholic worship was illegal in England and fines were imposed on all those who failed to attend Anglican services.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

Guy Fawkes was the leader of, I guess, what we would see today as a terrorist sect. They made an attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament at the opening of Parliament when the King was present, with the hope of wiping out the monarchy and also democracy really, the Houses of Parliament themselves. However, they were caught before this went ahead - this was in 1605 – and all the conspirators who were rounded up were brought to the Tower. Guy Fawkes himself was interrogated and it seems very likely that torture was used on him, because when you look at the documents, you can see his handwriting changing and becoming a lot more ragged as the interrogations progress. The conspirators were executed in the most horrible ways, around London, not all at the Tower but some at Westminster and elsewhere very publicly to show that the monarchy and the government did not tolerate this behaviour.

## Stop 6 The Bloody Tower

### Narrator:

Facing The King’s House, turn left now, and then right, along the side of the Green. This path leads directly to the Bloody Tower.

This is another site where famous prisoners were held, among them, in the early 17th century, Sir Walter Raleigh. Inside the Bloody Tower, a room has been reconstructed that shows how Sir Walter Raleigh would have lived here.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

Sir Walter Raleigh, the great explorer, was prisoner at the Tower three times, he almost holds the record for falling into royal displeasure, and this was where he was kept on one of his longest stays at the Tower, which was almost a decade.

Sir Walter Raleigh’s imprisonment is a good example of seeing how different prisoners were treated, although his movement was completely restricted to within the confines of the Tower, he had the liberty to walk out on the leads on the roof, his wife and children lived on site – in fact he had a child while he was prisoner here, who was baptised in the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula.

### Narrator:

To continue, play the next track.

## Stop 7 Princes in the Tower

### Narrator:

From here, you have a beautiful view of Tower Green. Originally, this is where the Constable of the Tower had his garden. Sir Walter Raleigh himself used it to grow plants he’d brought from his travels abroad, among them tobacco from America. And because of this garden, the Bloody Tower was originally called the “Garden Tower”. In the 16th century its name was changed to “The Bloody Tower”. But why?

Well, Sir Walter Raleigh was not the first prisoner held here. Earlier in history, in the 15th century, two other famous prisoners were kept in this tower. And the memory of their tragic fate was responsible for the renaming of the Garden Tower. Sally Dixon-Smith:

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

The Bloody Tower takes its name from its association with the murder of the two little Princes.

### Narrator:

They were the eldest sons of King Edward IV, and when their father died in 1483, they were brought to the Tower by their uncle who was intent on becoming King Richard III.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

And so these two small boys were last seen at the Tower and then mysteriously disappeared. Nobody really knows what happened to them, but it seems very likely that they were in the way and that they were killed.

### Narrator:

We can’t be sure. But in 1674 workmen found the skeletons of two small children in a niche in the wall of the White Tower. When you later climb the wooden staircase up to the White Tower, you may want to have a look for yourself!

If you'd like to go inside the Bloody Tower now, please join the queue if other visitors are waiting, and select the next track once you're inside. But please note that you’ll have to climb some very steep stairs. So you may prefer to listen to the Bloody Tower’s story outside and maybe take a seat on one of the benches here.

## Stop 8 Sir Walter Raleigh

### Narrator:

As you enter the Bloody Tower, you will see, on your right, a portcullis. This is the portcullis you passed under earlier as you walked through the Bloody Tower gate.

Enter the first room now. It’s been reconstructed to show how Sir Walter Raleigh would have been kept here. Remember that you can pause your player if there’s still a queue.

### Jane Spooner:

The room in front of you contains many features which Sir Walter would have been familiar with. So for example, the tiled floor was installed in the fourteenth century and also the fireplace with its little hearth would have been here to warm him.

### Narrator:

Raleigh also used his imprisonment to pursue his intellectual interests.

### Jane Spooner:

Walter Raleigh had his own library and he also did a lot of writing. He wrote, for example, ‘The History of the World – Volume 1’.

### Narrator:

Go out of this room now, and up the stairs where you can see an exhibition on the young princes in the Tower.

Take your time there, but when you leave the Bloody Tower, play the last track.

## Stop 9 The Last Executions

### Narrator:

Our tour of the Tower as prison and execution site ends here. But the story itself didn’t end until the 20th century.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

The 18th century saw the final executions out on Tower Hill, with Lord Lovat being executed in 1747 for his involvement in the Scottish rebellion, the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, and the final hangings on Tower Hill were in 1780. However, during the First and Second World War there were men who were accused of spying who were executed at the Tower.

### Narrator:

Choose another tour to discover more about this extraordinary fortress.

## [End of Tour]