# Traitor’s Gate Audio Tour

# The Tower of London

## Overview

Find out why people call this river entrance 'Traitors' Gate'.

## Stop 1 Traitor’s Gate

### Narrator:

When you entered the Tower, you walked in through a gate from the city. But for most of the Tower’s history, a lot of the traffic would have been by boat. So, an important building like the Tower needed water gates. The one in front of you was built in the 13th century as part of the Outer Curtain Wall, and it would have opened directly onto the Thames. The tower above the gate – called St Thomas’s Tower – was a royal residence. Jane Spooner is Curator of Historic Buildings here at the Tower:

### Jane Spooner:

From the river, visitors or people sailing past would have seen coloured painted sculptures on the battlements and also they would have seen that there was stained glass and gilded window bars glinting in the sunlight. The basin underneath St Thomas’s Tower is large enough for the king’s barge to be kept and you can just see, if you look at the walls, small arrow loops which is where archers would have actually defended this, what would have been quite a vulnerable entrance to the Tower of London.

### Narrator:

Through the small door on your right you can see an archer defending the basin under St Thomas’s Tower. The façade you can see today dates mainly from the 16th century.

### Jane Spooner:

Most of what you can see actually dates from - in design - the reign of Henry VIII. In the 1530s Henry VIII embarked on a major campaign of restoration and repair, making it attractive and pleasant, in readiness for the coronation procession of Anne Boleyn. Much of this timber framing actually survives from the 16th century.

### Narrator:

But it’s not just the timber framing that reminds us of the time of Henry VIII. Though officially called St Thomas’s Tower, this gate also has another - much more telling - name: Traitors’ Gate. Sally Dixon-Smith is Collections Curator at the Tower:

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

Obviously this is one of the key associations: Traitors being brought up to these stairs, brought into the Tower, particularly in the Tudor period, in the 16th century. The Tower was first of all a fortress and a palace, but because it was so well defended and secure, this is where very important prisoners were brought.

So Anne Boleyn was held here, which was very ironic for her, because this is the point at which her coronation procession had started three years earlier and then very little time later she’s brought back here as a traitor, and her trial actually takes place in the Great Hall where she’d celebrated her coronation.

### Narrator:

Over the centuries, the Tower has had many lives: there was even a zoo here for over six hundred years!

Choose another tour to discover more about this extraordinary fortress. You’re very near the start of the medieval palace tour, so you may want to take this one next.

## [End of Tour]