

# The Tower of





*The Tower is a London landmark and it is one of the most famous fortresses in the world. It spans over 900 years of British history.*

*The Tower was begun about 1078 by William the Conqueror and it was built on the site of British and Roman fortifications on the north bank of the River Thames.*



*In those days it looked very different.  
For example, its outer walls were made of  
wood.*





Only the central keep, known as the White Tower, dates from the original building. It is 90 feet high and its walls are 15 feet thick.



The Tower was enlarged and improved throughout the centuries. A palace was built next to the White Tower in the reign of Henry III (the 13th century) and from his time until the 17th century the Tower was a royal residence.





Today we see the Tower surrounded by two strong walls. The inner wall has 13 towers, of which the best known are the Bloody Tower and the Wakefield Tower. The outer wall, with six towers and two bastions, is surrounded by a moat. It was filled with water in former times, but now it is dry.









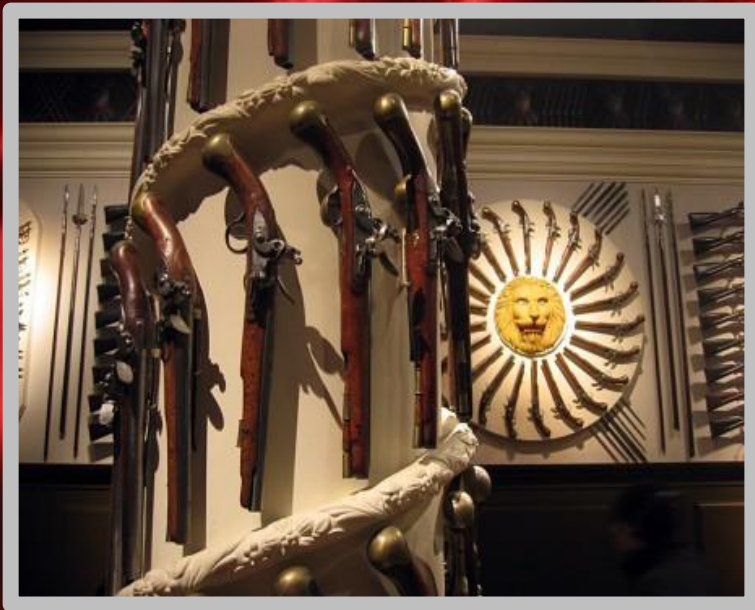


The main entrance was nicknamed Traitors Gate because numerous prisoners were brought through it to the Tower, which was used as a state prison. Most of them were accused of treason and called traitors. Some of them were murdered and others were executed, either on Tower Green or outside the castle, in public, on Tower Hill. Among them were Thomas More, Walter Raleigh, Anne Boleyn and Lady Jane Grey.





Today the Tower is a museum. Its fine armoury is world famous. It traces the history of western armour from medieval times to the Stuart period. It includes suits of armour worn by British monarchs, as well as a fascinating collection of artillery and weapons.







The Tower still guards the Crown Jewels and regalia. They were kept in the underground Jewel House and since 1994 they have been housed in a more spacious facility above ground.





Among them is the Imperial State Crown worn by Queen Elizabeth II at her coronation in 1953. The Sword of State is also used only at coronations.







**A Coldstream  
Guards sentry  
outside the  
Jewel House**





The Tower housed the Royal Mint, the Royal Observatory, the Public Records, and the Royal Menagerie - a collection of animals who were kept in the Lion Tower. All of these were moved to other places outside London.





There is a resident governor in the Tower. He lives in [the Queens House](#) facing Tower Green. The governor is in charge of the Yeomen Warders, or beefeaters, as they are popularly called.









## The Yeomen

Warders are a body of guards formed in **1485**. Their weapon is the partisan - a pike eight feet long with a broad blade. It was a common weapon in 1485, the year when Henry VII was proclaimed king and began the Tudor dynasty.



The Yeomen Warders wear a blue uniform, introduced in 1858. On special occasions they put on their famous dress uniform of scarlet and gold. Warders are recruited from retired non-commissioned officers.



They are in charge of the daily running of the Tower of London. They take visitors on a free tour of the Tower.



Besides the guiding of visitors the beefeaters have a number of ceremonial duties which include a daily parade and the ritual **Ceremony of the Keys**, when the Tower is locked for the night at 10 o'clock.









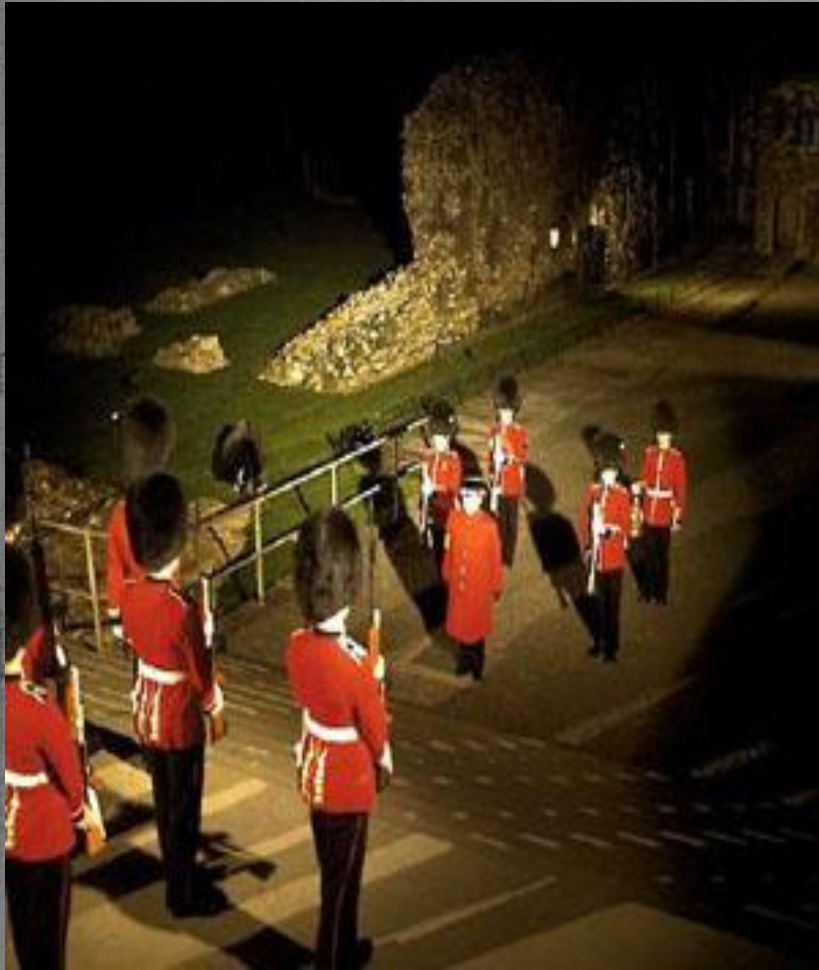


*The Ceremony of the Keys* is 700 years old. *The Tower is still owned by the Queen and its official name is Her Majesty's Tower of London. It guards the Crown Jewels, so it is closely guarded and securely locked at night.*





The ceremony is performed by the Chief Warder and an escort of foot guards. He locks each gate in turn with an exchange of challenges and replies with the gatekeepers after which the Queens Keys are deposited for the night.



**The ceremony begins just before ten o'clock at night and lasts for about 20 minutes from start to finish. Visitors can attend it. One should apply for a pass, in writing, to the Resident Governor.**





The Chief  
Warder's badge  
of office is a  
silver mace on  
which is a replica  
of the White  
Tower.

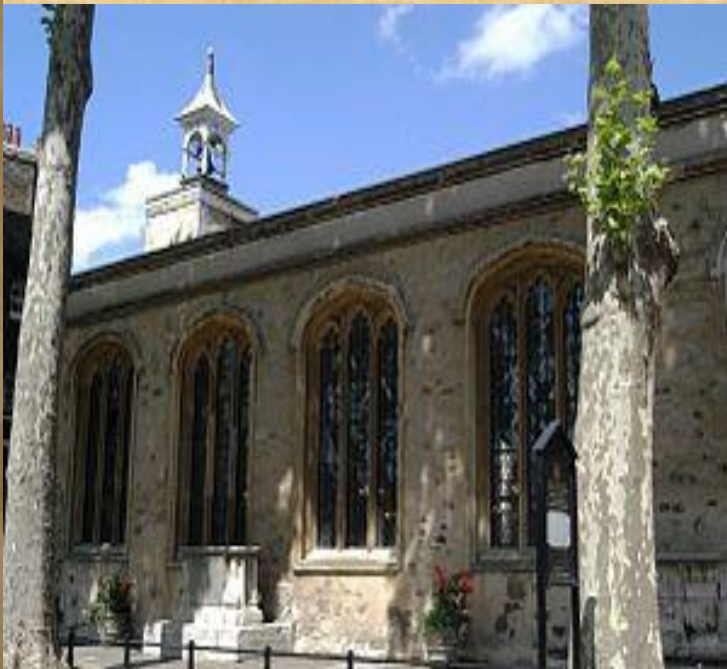
His  
second-in-comm  
and is the  
Yeoman Gaoler.

On State occasions he carries a ceremonial axe which is over 400 years old. It was introduced when the Gaoler escorted prisoners from the Tower to their trials at Westminster.





Among the less frequent ceremonies is *the Beating of the Bounds*. This takes place every three years on Ascension Day. After a service at St Peter's, the church of the Tower, the Governor, Chaplain, Yeomen Warders and choir process to each of the 31 boundary stones marking the limits of the Tower. The choirboys hit each stone with wands.





The ravens,  
with their  
clipped wings,  
are another  
famous sight.  
Legend has it  
that without  
them the Tower  
will fall and the  
Kingdom with it.  
The ravens are







# The main entrance to the Tower of London





# Tower Bridge connects the Tower of London with the City









*London 2013  
John Chapman*







*London 2018*  
*© [unreadable]*

