

EXTRACTS FROM THE DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF  
THE TOWER OF LONDON.<sup>1</sup>

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To deal with the entire history of the Tower from its documentary side would require more space than the limitations of this Journal usually allow for papers, while the list of eminent and royal prisoners within its walls would far exceed the line of Banquo's kings. At present the greater portion of the history of the Tower, both architectural and archaeological, lies buried in the mass of unpublished documents at the Public Record Office, waiting to be unearthed by the hands of such diligent historical students as may have alike the inclination and the requisite leisure to undertake so formidable a task. Not until the great Roll of the Pipe, together with the Close, Liberate, and Patent Rolls shall have been calendared and published, shall we be able to substitute fact for fiction, and evidence for dogmatic assertion founded upon guess work. I do not therefore propose to encumber this Journal by the tedious recapitulation of what those interested in the subject may read in the pages of John Bayley's *History of the Tower*, from which every subsequent writer has borrowed, without having in most cases the grace to acknowledge the source from which their information was derived, but rather to deal with some few of the less well known, and unusual events connected with the Tower, such as the escapes of its prisoners, its ghosts, its Jewish associations, and last but not least its sieges. I may begin by saying that although more than once surrendered after a prolonged blockade, and on several occasions subjected to attack, the Tower has never been taken by assault as the result of a formal and prolonged siege. According to Richard of Devizes,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Institute at The Tower of London, 22nd May, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes*, § 49. Roger de Hoveden's *Annals*. Bohn's edn. ii, 230.

the chancellor William Longchamp was, in October 1191, blockaded in the Tower for some days by the citizens of London, and as it was insufficiently victualled for a siege it was surrendered to earl John, the king's brother. In 1267 the papal legate, cardinal Ottoboni, took refuge in the Tower which was first besieged by the rebel barons under the leadership of the earl of Gloucester, and later their attacks being unsuccessful, this siege was converted into a blockade. The legate was extricated by the arrival of the king and his forces, on the side then facing the open country without the city wall.<sup>1</sup> Something in the nature of siege works would appear to have been thrown up on this occasion, for the *Chronicle of London* states that "at this time the whole of the covered way which the earl had made between the city and the Tower was entirely broken up, and the timber of which it was constructed was carried away."<sup>2</sup> In 1381 the Tower was what I can only term "rushed" by a ruffianly mob of murderous rioters. The young king Richard II having quitted it in order to parley with the rebels at Mile End, by some mismanagement the outer gates were left open, the drawbridges were not raised, nor were the portcullises lowered: whether this was done in order to facilitate the re-entrance of the king and his escort, if forced to beat a rapid retreat, or to display an ostentatious confidence in the people is not known, but Wat Tyler and his gang, having preceded the king on his return, were quick to take advantage of it, and of the hesitation shown by the captain of the gate, and "rushed" the place without encountering the least opposition. Separating into small parties they searched the wards and towers until they discovered and seized upon the treasurer, Sir Robert Hales, the archbishop of Canterbury, Simon of Sudbury, John Legge, the farmer of the unpopular poll tax, three of his assistant collectors, and William Appleton, a Franciscan friar, who was physician to, and passed for a chief adviser of, the king's uncle, John of Gaunt. Carrying their unfortunate victims forth from the Tower, they hacked off their heads upon a log of wood on Tower Hill, and after carrying

<sup>1</sup> Matthew of Westminster's *Chronicle*, Bohn's edn. ii, 447, T. Wykes, *Chronicle*, London, Riley, 97.  
<sup>2</sup> *Chronicles of the Mayors and Sberifs of London*, Riley, 97.

those of Hales and Sudbury round the city upon spears, proceeded to spike them over the gateway of London bridge.

The Tower was again besieged in 1460, and for the first time was seriously attacked with fire artillery. This was placed in battery at Saint Katherine's and on the south bank of the river; and the fortress was so strictly beset "that no man could issue out or in, to the manifest displeasure of Lord Scales and his company" who were cooped up there by the Yorkists under Salisbury and Wenlock. Like its predecessors the bombardment seems to have been converted into a blockade, and upon the news coming of the capture of king Henry at the battle of Northampton on 10th July, the Lancastrian lords agreed to surrender, giving as their *ostensible* reason for so doing the "lack of vitayl." The surrender took place on 18th July, the entire siege having lasted just sixteen days. Lord Scales, who was very unpopular, attempting to escape by water after dusk, was recognised by the Thames watermen, set upon, and killed, to the great annoyance of the earl of Warwick.<sup>1</sup> When the great wet ditch of the Tower was drained, raised, and converted into the present dry parade ground in 1843, numerous stone shot were found varying in diameter from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 10 inches in that part of the ditch running parallel with the Thames: of these two of the largest were found in the river bed, above low water mark, just opposite to Traitor's gate.<sup>2</sup> There is no room to doubt that these shot are of this period, and the spot at which they were found shows that they must have been fired from the battery on the Southwark bank: their calibre ranges from 12 to 84 lbs. A still larger stone ball, 17 inches in diameter, was discovered a little to the north and east of the White Tower, and while it is possible that this was thrown in by a great bombard, it may belong to the earlier period of stone-casting engines, by one of which it may have been hurled in during Gloucester's attack in 1267, or, as at Pevensey and elsewhere, it may have formed part of a store of such projectiles which, when the advent of gunpowder had rendered them obso-

<sup>1</sup> Davies, *English Chronicle*, 75: Camden Society, no. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Archaeologia*, xxx, 323-326.

lete, were simply buried as the easiest way of getting rid of them.<sup>1</sup>

No further attack appears to have been made upon the Tower, but during a great riot in the city, in the year 1518, Master Edward Hall tells us in his chronicle that "Syr Richard Cholmondeley, knight, and lieutenaunt of the Towre (whose tomb is now in the north aisle of St. Peter's chapel), being no greate frende to the citie, in a frantyke fury losed certayn peces of ordinaunce, and shot into the citie, which dyd little harme howbeit his good wyl apered."

Down to the date of their final expulsion from England in 1290 there are several notices of Jews in the history of the Tower. In 1219 Isaac of Norwich was sent to the Tower for having in his possession a forged "starr" or chirograph releasing him from a debt to the Crown, and in 1220 one Mosseus, a Jew, was committed to the Tower at the suit of the prior of Dunstable for forging the signatures to a similar deed, probably with the same purpose.<sup>2</sup> In 1255, on the 2nd November, 92 Jews were brought up to Westminster from Lincoln, and imprisoned in the Tower for the ritual murder of a Christian child (afterwards canonised as little St. Hugh of Lincoln). Of these, 18 who when the king was at Lincoln had refused to put themselves upon the verdict of a jury composed of Christians without Jews, and had been then indicted for the same before the king, were on the same day drawn, and after the hour of dinner, and towards the close of the day, hanged,<sup>3</sup> the other 74 were taken back to the Tower where their numbers were rapidly thinned by the jail fever arising from the insanitary condition of their place of imprisonment. The survivors, 35 in number, obtained their release by bribing the Minorite Friars to intercede for them with the king.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During the excavations in the mediaeval castle at Pevensey in 1908 and 1910, numerous similar stone balls varying in diameter from 12 to 18 inches were discovered, while the depth at which they were buried and the manner in which they were ranged along one of the curtain walls was such as to preclude any idea of their having been thrown in by any stone-casting engine. During the Scotch wars of Edward I

there is known to have been a manufactory of these balls there, and a store of them was kept to be drawn upon as needed.

<sup>2</sup> *The Lives of the Kings*, Edward Hall, edn. of 1904, i, 160.

<sup>3</sup> *Mise. Roll*, 14 John, edn. H. Cole 312.

<sup>4</sup> *Chronicles of the Mayor and Sheriffs of London*, edn. H. T. Riley, 25.

In the week before Palm Sunday, 1263, the Jewry in London was attacked by the mob and destroyed, all the property of the Jews was carried off, and as many of them as were taken being stripped and despoiled, over 500 of them were systematically murdered in batches by night. Those who survived the sack were saved by the mayor, and the justiciars, having been sent to the Tower before the slaughter began, the chest of chirographs or "stars" being also sent there for safe custody.<sup>1</sup> In 1278 orders were issued for the general arrest of all the Jews on a charge of clipping, and debasing the coin, 293 Jews and 3 Christians were sent to the Tower and were duly tried, drawn, and hanged. There is a tradition, whether ill or well founded I do not presume to decide, that these Jews were imprisoned in the dark and noisome vault which forms the subcrypt of St. John's Chapel in the White Tower or Great Keep: it is so far probable in that it is difficult to point out any other prison in which so large a number could have been securely detained pending trial. Some 307 other Jews being sent up from different counties to the Tower, shared in their turn the same fate.<sup>2</sup>

From early times it seems to have become a fixed custom for the king to spend the first few days of his reign at the Tower, prior to his coronation at Westminster, the last monarch who complied with this practice being Charles II, and it was usual on these occasions to create several knights of the order of the Bath. In a contemporary account of the arrival of Anne Boleyn at the Tower from Greenwich, on 30th May 1533 prior to her coronation, the following amusing passage occurs: The king and queen then went to supper, "and after super ther was sumptuous void. In a long chamber within the Tower

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Paris's *Chronicle*. edn. Bohn, iii, 163-168.

The Jews were regarded as peculiarly the property of the crown, so much so that in 1255 we find Henry III mortgaging all the Jews in England to his brother Richard earl of Cornwall as security for a loan.

The "stars" were deeds of acquittance peculiar to monetary transactions between Jews and Christians; Riley, *Chronicles*, ut supra, 66.

<sup>2</sup> There is a considerable discrepancy in

the numbers actually executed as cited by different writers. Stowe gives it as 267, *Survey of London*, 283. Matthew of Westminster. Bohn's edn. ii, 473, says 280 in London, and many more from other cities of England, and the Close Roll of 10 Edward I confirms this. The French Chronicle of London, edn. Riley, 239, gives the number as 296 including the three Christians, and Holinshed, quoting Nicholas Trivet, says 297, of whom but three were Englishmen.

were ordayned eighteen baynes in which were eighteen noblemen all that night who on the following day being Saturday May 31st did receive the order of knighthood it being Whitsun eve," what the writer intended to convey being, not that the noblemen remained soaking in the baths aforesaid the entire night, but that after due ceremonial purification they kept watch upon their arms throughout the remainder of the night.<sup>1</sup>

Although Henry I had a collection of wild beasts at Woodstock it is in the reign of Henry III that the first mention of the Tower menagerie occurs, when, in 1235, the emperor Frederick sent the king three leopards in allusion to the royal arms of England.<sup>2</sup> These seem to have been accommodated in cages adjoining the great barbican, which received in consequence the name of "The Lion's Tower." In 1252 a huge white bear from Norway was sent to the Tower as an addition to its collection of animals, and the sheriffs of London were directed to pay fourpence a day for his maintenance, which at the present day value would be equivalent to about six shillings and eightpence. They were further ordered to have made, and to pay for, a muzzle and a strong iron chain to hold the beast when out of the water, with a long and stout rope in order to hold him when fishing, and bathing in "the water of Thames" as the record expresses it, the cost being allowed to them at the exchequer when rendering the account of the *firma*, or rent paid by the city of London.<sup>3</sup> In 1255 Louis, king of France, presented king Henry with an elephant, the first ever seen in England or even in the countries on this side of the Alps; according to Matthew Paris,<sup>4</sup> "wherefore the people flocked together in order to see this novel sight." Being landed at the port of Sandwich in Kent it was conveyed by road to the Tower, and the sheriffs of London were directed "to cause to be made without delay at our Tower

<sup>1</sup> A void is the last course of highly spiced sweetmeats, or other cakes, and usually formed the parting dish at the close of a banquet. Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of Henry VIII, vi, no. 563, 250, and Edward Hall, *The Triumpbant Reign of Kyng Henry VIII*, edn. C. Whibley, 1904, ii, 232.

<sup>2</sup> These were really three lions, but until

late in fourteenth century it was customary among heralds when depicting a lion "passant guardant," to blazon him as a leopard, hence the lions in the shield of England are always spoken of as leopards,

<sup>3</sup> Liberate Roll, 37 Henry III, m. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Paris's *Chronicle*, edn. Bohn, iii, 115.

of London, a house for our elephant 40 feet in length, and 20 feet in breadth, of such strength as may be necessary," and so that if required it could be subsequently adapted for other purposes, and to provide for his food, and other wants of his keeper, the cost as above being credited to them at the exchequer, and debited to the *firma* of the city of London.<sup>1</sup> From another entry upon the Close Roll we learn that the beast survived until 1259, in which year the constable of the Tower is directed to "cause the bones of our elephant, lately buried within the ditch of the said Tower, to be delivered without delay to the sacristan of Westminster [abbey] to make thereof what the king has enjoined him to do," dated "9th August at Windsor, the 43rd year of our reign."<sup>2</sup> During the reigns of the first three Edwards there seem to have been numerous additions to the animals at the Tower. In 1313 the sheriffs are directed to pay out of the ferm and issues of the city of London a quarter of mutton daily for the maintenance of the king's lion, and 1½d. daily for his own wages to Peter Fabre of Montpellier, keeper of the king's lions in the Tower of London,<sup>3</sup> and in 1315 the same individual is to be paid 6d. a day for the maintenance of the king's leopard, and 1½d. a day for his own wages.<sup>4</sup> These amounts at the present day values of money would be equivalent to about ten shillings for keep, and two shillings and sixpence for his own daily wages. At first but only for a few weeks 2d. a day only was to be allowed for the leopard's maintenance, but this soon proved to be insufficient, and the amount is ordered to be increased to 6d. a day for the future.

In 1335 "the treasurer, barons, and chamberlains of the exchequer are directed to pay Berengar Couder, keeper of two lions, and two leopards of the king at the Tower of London, his arrears of pay which he ought to have received at the rate of 3s. 1d. per day, to wit 12d. a day for his own wages, and 2s. 1d. for the animals' maintenance, and to cause him to have an assignment therefor for that which they shall find to be due to him,

<sup>1</sup> Liberate Roll, 39 Henry III, m. 11, and Close Roll, 39 Henry III, m. 16. Like the other cages for the wild beasts the elephant-house was either in or adjoining the great barbican.

<sup>2</sup> Close Roll, 43 Henry III.

<sup>3</sup> Close Roll, 7 Edward II, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Close Roll, 8 Edward II, p. 163.

and to pay the same 3s. 1d. daily henceforth from the treasury," by the chancellor, at Northallerton, 18th June. In 1336 there is a similar order to the same to cause a like payment of arrears to be made at the same rate to Berengarius Daragoun, probably the same man, tested at Nottingham 3rd October, 1336.<sup>1</sup>

In 1365 a payment is made to Peter de Ekeston, and Robert Herbrak, coming from Gascony with a lion and a leopard, the gift of Edward Prince of Wales to his father; in money paid to them of the king's gift, and for their expenses, etc. £5.<sup>2</sup>

In 1370 this official had evidently been replaced by an Englishman at a much lower rate of pay, as sundry payments occur on the Issue Roll, as follows:

"To William de Garderobe, keeper of the king's lions and leopards in the Tower of London, receiving daily for his wages 6d. for his office, and for the food of 7 beasts, each 6d. a day, in money paid him in discharge of his said wages, and food for 50 days counting each day by two writs current of privy seal, £10, 27th April, 1370." In July of the same year one of the animals appears to have died as there is a further payment to him of £19 8s. 6d. for 108 days' wages at the above rate, and for food for *six* beasts only, by writ of privy seal dated 26th July. In October he receives for his own wages at 6d. a day and food of *four* beasts, £12 17s. 6d, and in addition to this for the food of two young lions, taking 8d. a day from 14th June to 10th October, £4 8s. od, and "to the same William de Garderoba in money delivered to him for the food of a lion lately sent by the prince of Wales from Gascony to England to our lord the king from 4th August to 10th October, at 6d. per day, £1 14s. od."<sup>3</sup> At this time the engineer of the king's war slings at the Tower was only receiving 6d. a day as his pay, while the chief blacksmith had 8d. a day, and another smith 6d. a day as pay, so that it will be seen that the keeper of the king's beasts was a well paid and important official, although his wages would appear to have been occasionally allowed to get into arrear.

<sup>1</sup> Close Roll, 9 Edward III, p. 412, and Close Roll, 10 Edward III, p. 611.

<sup>2</sup> Issue Roll, 39 Edward III, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> Issue Roll, 44 Edward III, pp. 25, 33, 118, 216, 288, 298.



In later reigns we find the office of keeper of the lions and other wild beasts becoming the subject for grants by letters patent with an increased fee of 12d. a day, and an allowance of 6d. per head for the maintenance of each animal. King Henry VI granted the office first to Robert Mansfield, marshal of his hall, and later to Thomas Rookes the steward of his household. By Edward IV it was granted to Ralph Hastings, esquire, for his life. Richard III gave it to Sir Robert Brackenbury the constable of the Tower who, like his master, fell at Bosworth field. Henry VII directly after his accession conferred not only the constableness of the Tower, but the distinct and separate office of keeper of the lions upon John, earl of Oxford,<sup>1</sup> with the customary fees and perquisites, and from this time the office appears to have passed with that of the constable of the Tower. A Venetian visitor to the court of Henry VIII, in a letter to a friend, which he signs Peter Pasqualigo, has described how he visited the Tower of London "where besides the king's lions, leopards, and other animals, we were shown the king's bronze artillery mounted on 400 carriages, very fine, also a great store of bows, arrows, and pikes, sufficient for 40,000 infantry, and they told me there was the like in store at Calais, and at another place [Berwick-upon-Tweed] near Scotland,<sup>2</sup> 30th April, 1515."

The wild beasts continued to be kept in cages in the great barbican, and in later years the collection was increased by gifts of beasts and birds, presented either by foreign potentates, or explorers returning from abroad. In 1754 there were among other animals two great apes called "the man tygers": probably these were orang-outangs. One of them is reported to have killed a boy by throwing a cannon-ball at him.<sup>3</sup> In 1821 by bad management, the inexperience of the keepers, and the cramped and insanitary accommodation, many of the beasts had died and the value of the collection was greatly diminished. Finally in 1831 the Duke of Wellington, during his tenure of the office of constable of the Tower,

<sup>1</sup> Patent Roll, 16 Henry VI, p. 2, m. 34, and Close Roll, 39 Henry VI, m. 2. Patent Roll, 4 Edward IV, p. 1. m. 19, *Brevia sub privato sigillo*, 1 Richard III, P.R.O. and Rymer, xiii, 276.

<sup>2</sup> Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, 7 Henry VIII, no. 395.

<sup>3</sup> Maitland, *History of London*, i, 172.

obtained the king's permission to remove the menagerie altogether, and to clear away the various unsightly and insanitary sheds and cages by which the entrance was encumbered, and new quarters having been erected for their reception, the animals were transferred in 1834 to the present Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park. Most unfortunately the necessity for the preservation of the barbican as an important feature of the mediæval fortress was then but imperfectly understood, no attempt was made to repair it, and it was entirely demolished.

The ditch was filled up, the present unsightly ticket office and engine house being erected on its site; indeed if it were not for the various models of the Tower at different periods, with the old plans and drawings that still remain, the present generation would find it difficult to obtain even a mental picture of this whilom important portion of the defences which formerly guarded the principal entrance to the Tower. As I have already said the payments of wages to the king's artificers in the mediæval period were frequently allowed to fall into arrear, sometimes with curious results, as the following extract will show. In 1340 we find the king sending an order to the sheriffs of London "to cause William de Baion, a smith, to be brought back to the Tower of London if he is found in the city or the liberties thereof, together with the implements of his work, to stay there for such work *at reasonable wages* therefor, as the king is informed that the said William, having lately been brought to the Tower there to work for such reasonable wages, has withdrawn himself without the king's licence and wish or that of the master of the king's works there, wilfully and without reasonable cause": Andover, by the chancellor, 18th September, 1340.<sup>1</sup>

When accounts had once been allowed to fall into arrear there seems to have been great difficulty and long delay in coming to a satisfactory settlement with the officials of the royal exchequer, and of this perhaps the most notable example is furnished by the case of Ralph de Sandwyco, or Sandwich, constable of the Tower from 1284 to 1306, about which latter date he appears either

<sup>1</sup> Close Roll, 14 Edward III, m. 43d, p. 626.

to have died or to have retired from his office, in which he was succeeded by John de Crumbwelle. On 11th July 1306 there is an order "to the treasurer and barons of the exchequer to account with R. de Sandwyco for moneys received from the issue of his bailiwick, and for all debts due by him to the exchequer, and for his yearly fee of £100 for all his time, which fee Anthony Bek, and Ranulph de Dacre, late constables of the Tower were wont to receive, as it appears to the king by inspection of the rolls of chancery, compensating for all debts, and allowing what should be allowed if Ralph has a surplus or excess of expenditure beyond his receipts, and assign him debts of some of the king's debtors at the exchequer, as Ralph has shown the king that he has during his tenure of office expended not only sums due from the issues of his bailiwick, the treasury, etc, but a great part of his own money at divers times in the maintenance repair and amendment of the walls houses engines<sup>1</sup> barges and bridges of the Tower, and in the construction of a new chapel within the Tower,<sup>2</sup> and in wages robes and stipends of one clerk of the Tower, and one keeper of the water of Thames,<sup>3</sup> and in wages robes and other necessaries of many Welsh men and Scots and divers others staying in the Tower [as prisoners], and of their keepers, and in other things and affairs of the king, by virtue of the king's writs, and for all his time he has not been satisfied [paid] for his £100 yearly fee for the custody, and he has besought the king that he may be satisfied in some way for what is due to him in the premises after due account made and taken of his receipts expenditures fee and debts due by him to the exchequer, and the king accedes to his supplication in consideration of his gratifying and praiseworthy services to him and to his father."<sup>4</sup> No immediate payment seems to have been made despite this order, for in 1327 after the lapse of the entire reign of Edward II, during which, owing to the internal troubles of the realm, the settlement seems to have been in abeyance, the following reference to the non-payment

<sup>1</sup> Stone-casting or projectile engines are here meant.

<sup>2</sup> The rebuilding of the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula is here meant.

<sup>3</sup> A kind of water bailiff.

<sup>4</sup> Close Roll, 34 Edward I, p. 402.

occurs. "The king (Edward III) to the treasurer and barons of the exchequer, whereas Juliana de Leybourne the heiress of Ralph de Sandwyco has shown the king that whereas Ralph at his death was bound to the king's progenitors in many accounts, and debts which are now exacted from her at the exchequer, and Ralph's executors when accounting at the late king's exchequer for the time when Ralph was constable of the Tower of London, had a surplus of £255 12s. 3d, which were (sic) not allowed afterwards to her or to anyone else, she prays that the king will order the aforesaid surplus to be allowed to her in the aforesaid debts, the king therefore orders the treasurer and barons to inform themselves concerning this surplus, and the debts due from Ralph at his death for the arrears of his accounts rendered and that are still to be rendered, and for other debts whatsoever, and to cause Juliana as his heiress to have allowance for the said surplus in the said debts, provided that if Juliana be bound to the king in any debt for Ralph beyond the said allowance it shall be levied for the king's use: by the king, 3rd June, 1327."<sup>1</sup> The lady seems to have died during the year, and it seems doubtful whether her estate received the benefit of Ralph's surplus, nor does the matter appear to be mentioned again in the roll.

[To be continued.]

<sup>1</sup> Close Roll, 1 Edward III, m. 24, p. 129.