

# The Revived Bedchamber of Edward I

The Tower of London

8 November

Built by Edward I between 1275 and 1281, St Thomas's Tower provided royal accommodation for the king and access from the river through what is now known as Traitors' Gate. The tower was part of an extension to Henry III's royal palace and transformed the Tower of London into England's largest and most formidable castle.

A major restoration of St Thomas's Tower was carried out in the 1860s. This was followed in the early 1990s with an attempt to re-create the medieval palace interior. Building on the 1990s project, staff of the Historic Royal Palaces with the assistance of Stuart Interiors have recreated the Bedchamber of Edward I. Use has been made of Dr Jeremy Ashbee's recent PhD research into the use and construction of the royal palace in the 13th century. This has been supplemented by an analysis of wardrobe accounts for textiles and furnishings, along with other documentary and archaeological evidence. Our visit was guided by Aileen Pearce, the project leader for HRP, and Peter Russell of Stuart Interiors.

The hall leading to the bedchamber is unrestored and has traces of a large fireplace and the remains of a garderobe. A display provides information on how the interiors would have looked and there are samples of fabrics and tiles. A short film describes the medieval palace constructed by Henry III and Edward I.

The royal bedchamber is unexpectedly gaudy. Excepting one wall, the room has been repainted with a

masonry pattern based on the 13th century fragments surviving in the Byward Tower, but with an added floral design from a reference to the bedchamber of Edward's mother, Eleanor of Provence. Two fabrics were specially designed to furnish the room; one was based on a detail from Eleanor of Castile's bronze effigy in Westminster Abbey, while the carpet was inspired by the remains of a 15th century Spanish rug in the Washington Textile Museum.

The windows have crimson-painted shutters with gilded heraldic decoration. The fireplace, with its over-size hood and frieze, was modelled on a contemporary French example and also has heraldic decoration. The large canopied oak bed has insect-dyed red hangings supported on green painted columns. The base is of turned construction, having the appearance of a cot, painted white with gilded decoration, the whole being readily transportable. There is an entry in the household accounts for '11 shillings and a penny for timber boards and sawn panels for a bed for the lord king, and for transporting it through England.'

Other furnishings include a medieval chest with extensive decorative ironwork based on a 13th century French example, and an X-frame stool with carved golden lions' heads modelled on one illustrated in the *Windmill Psalter*. An oak table and form and hand-painted pottery complete the ensemble.

In the small turret adjoining the bedchamber is the oratory, with a tiled floor and stained glass windows replicated according to careful research. Throughout the exhibition there are added sound effects of voices, music and water lapping against the stonework, together with manufactured smells.