**The Tower in Tudor Times: A royal prison**

The first Tudor monarch, Henry VII (1485-1509) was responsible for building the last permanent royal residential buildings at the Tower. He extended his own lodgings around the Lanthorn Tower adding a new private chamber, a library, a long gallery, and also laid out a garden. These buildings were to form the nucleus of a much larger scheme begun by his son Henry VIII (1509-47) who put up a large range of timber-framed lodgings at the time of the coronation of his second wife, Anne Boleyn. The building of these lodgings, used only once, marked the end of the history of royal residence at the Tower.

The reigns of the Tudor kings and queens were comparatively stable in terms of civil disorder. However, from the 1530s onwards the unrest caused by the Reformation (when Henry VIII broke with the Church in Rome) gave the Tower an expanded role as the home for a large number of religious and political prisoners.

The first important Tudor prisoners were Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher of Rochester, both of whom were executed in 1535 for refusing to acknowledge Henry VIII as head of the English Church. They were soon followed by a still more famous prisoner and victim, the King’s second wife Anne Boleyn, executed along with her brother and four others a little under a year later. July 1540 saw the execution of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex and former Chief Minister of the King - in which capacity he had modernised the Tower’s defences and, ironically enough, sent many others to their deaths on the same spot. Two years later, Catherine Howard, the second of Henry VIII’s six wives to be beheaded, met her death outside the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula which Henry had rebuilt a few years before.

The reign of Edward VI (1547-53) saw no end to the political executions which had begun in his father’s reign; the young King’s protector the Duke of Somerset and his confederates met their death at the Tower in 1552, falsely accused of treason. During Edward’s reign the English Church became more Protestant, but the King’s early death in 1553 left the country with a Catholic heir, Mary I (1553-8). During her brief reign many important Protestants and political rivals were either imprisoned or executed at the Tower. The most famous victim was Lady Jane Grey, and the most famous prisoner the Queen’s sister Princess Elizabeth (the future Elizabeth I). Religious controversy did not end with Mary’s death in 1558; Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) spent much of her reign warding off the threat from Catholic Europe, and important recusants (people who refused to attend Church of England services) and others who might have opposed her rule were locked up in the Tower. Never had it been so full of prisoners, or such illustrious ones: bishops, archbishops, knights, barons, earls and dukes all spent months and some of them years languishing in the towers of the Tower of London.

Little was done to the Tower’s defences in these years. The Royal Mint was modified and extended, new storehouses were built for royal military supplies. In the reign of James I (1603-25) the Lieutenant’s house - built in the 1540s and today called the Queen’s House - was extended and modified; the king’s lions were rehoused in better dens made for them in the west gate barbican.