

Outline of the Tudor side of things...

It is 1524 and Nell is 15 and a maid in waiting to Catherine of Aragon, when she meets Anne Boleyn newly returned from the French court.

Poor Nell hasn't had a very happy time at court as she is seen as an outcast and perhaps a traitor as well. People in court have long memories and blame her father for the death of their loved ones in battle. Her father was forgiven his folly and now is a trusted employee of the court. Nell and Anne Boleyn become friends.

Nell's father is Lambert Simnel

Nell survives the storm that breaks with Anne's death and goes on to see Elizabeth crowned Queen. When Nell dies, the story skips back into the modern day, and Judith goes home to stay with her parents for a few weeks. During that time, she talks to her father about what happened in St Peter ad Vincula, and he admits that he is a direct descendant of Nell's eldest son Charles. Her father leaves the room and comes back with a box, in the box is Anne's B necklace which has been in their family for centuries. It now belongs to Judith.

The ringing of my alarm clock sounded loudly in the warm May morning, I reached out and swiped the clock off my bedside cabinet where it fell to the floor with a loud thud. I sighed and snuggled down, hoping to get just a few more minutes of peace, but the alarm clock rang out defiantly. I threw back the duvet angrily and got out of bed, stubbing my toe on the bedside cabinet as I did so. "Damn clock," I said, as I picked it up and flipped the switch, putting an end to its incessant noise. I slammed the clock back on to the bedside cabinet and opened the plum-coloured curtains. The sun streamed through the windows and gave the room a warm golden glow. I opened the window and breathed in deeply enjoying the crisp fresh air of a new day.

I sat on the edge of the bed yawning and rubbing my now painful toe. I looked around the room and felt very happy, it had taken me a while, but I now had my bedroom as I wanted it. The only thing missing was some carpet, but as yet I hadn't seen anything I liked.

Stacked up against the lilac-coloured walls was a shelving unit which I had yet to build alongside it was a box of my beloved much read books. In the corner were yet another two boxes full of books, moving was always stressful. I had been in my new apartment for almost a month, and I still hadn't finished unpacking.

I would never get tired of the view I had, over the river and the Tower of London from my windows. However, it did take me a while to get used to the hurly-burly of traffic and the noise of London life that streamed past my home every day. Only natural I suppose since my parents lived in a very remote ramshackle farmhouse deep in the Oxfordshire countryside. I often wondered why my parents didn't want to move to a more modern and smaller house, but they always said that they were far too old fashioned and set in their ways to want to up sticks and join the modern world.

It was true, Mum still cooked on the Aga in the kitchen and she always seemed to be doing something, be that from milking the goats, collecting eggs from the chicken coop, fetching coal or chopping wood. I lost count of the number of times Dad had to patch the roof when the thatch was torn from the roof by the birds for their nests in the nearby woods.

I suppose the only things that could be called modern in the house were an indoor toilet, a shower and gas and electricity.

When I was growing up we didn't own a television, but that really didn't bother me since I had always preferred to read anyway and our only entertainment was the radio.

Mum and Dad would listen to the Archers religiously and enjoyed the late-night debates that sometimes took place on Radio 4. Dad had somewhat begrudgingly had the telephone and internet installed, but understood that I needed it for my school and college work, and of course, it was the best way to keep in touch with each other now I had moved to London. However, neither of them as yet had mobile phones. I offered to buy them a mobile phone for Christmas, but Dad was dead against the idea. He believed mobile phones

were the reason why society was like it was. He said, "Since the birth of mobile phones the art of conversation has been lost Judith, it's all, swipe this, swipe that, pressing buttons, text messaging, online apps and social media sites now, humanity is slowly becoming obsolete in the so-called advanced technology and ever-increasing speed of the rat race. Anyway, a mobile phone in the hands of your mother is simply asking for trouble, she's scatterbrained enough at the best of times, the Lord alone knows what will happen if she ever had one. I haven't forgotten the Microwave incident yet," he said

To be honest, neither had I.

When I was at college, I often didn't get home until midnight some nights. So I had brought a microwave to warm up my dinner when I got home. Anyway one day mum had decided she should warm up some baked beans in the microwave, knowing it would be quicker than lighting the Aga. Twenty minutes later, dad and I heard an almighty bang and the fire alarm came bursting into life.

Opening the door to the kitchen, we saw it filled with thick black smoke and the acrid smell of burning plastic. Dad had quickly opened the back door and windows, and we waited till the smoke had cleared to see what had happened. The microwave had blown up, and there was broken glass, melted plastic, and what was left of the tin and baked beans everywhere. Mum came in from outside and asked, "What's happened? What's the matter?". Mum saw the mess and said, "I read the instructions, honestly I did. It said put the beans in the oven on full power for twenty minutes."

"Did you open the tin?" I said. I looked up and saw a few chunks of glass and tin had embedded in the ceiling.

Mum said "Well, I didn't think I had to. I have seen you put things in the microwave Judith so I thought it would be ok."

Dad opened the cupboard and took out another can of beans, read the instructions, shook his head and said, "Not 20 minutes my Dear, it says that the beans should be placed in a suitable microwavable dish and cooked, on full power for 2 minutes. I suppose I should be thankful that the windows didn't get broken."

Mum said, "Well it wasn't my fault, it was an accident" and went back out into the yard to chop some wood.

Dad shrugged his shoulders and said, "Come on, Judith, let's get this mess cleared up, before Mum has yet another one of her 'accidents'" and started to clear up the mess.

After we had cleaned up, Dad said, "You are not to buy another microwave, Judith," and given what had happened, I agreed with him.

Dad continued, "A mobile phone in your mother's hands is just too dangerous to even think about Judith. Knowing her, she will probably end up burning the house down, it's about the only thing she hasn't done yet when she has one of her 'accidents'," and laughed.

Just before I moved to London, I had finally managed to persuade Dad to let me buy a washer dryer. Mum had always washed everything by hand, but she was getting too old for doing that now, so I knew the washer dryer would help make life a little easier for her. However after I had shown Dad how to use it, we had both forbidden Mum to go anywhere near it

Mum had also nagged poor Dad into buying a fridge freezer. As she rightly said, "If we get a fridge freezer, then there will be fewer trips into town during the winter months, and it will mean that you will have more time to do what needs doing here."

Dad pondered for a while, as he really wasn't a fan of any new-fangled gadgets, as he called them, before he too, admitted that it would indeed be useful in the winter. Although he insisted the "damn thing" as he called it would have to be put in the outhouse.

I loved living with my parents, and my childhood was an idyllic one, I loved the hot summer months just sitting in the tree-house in the orchard that my father built for me when

I was younger, either reading a book or doing some school or college assignment on my laptop. But now that I was older, I needed to spread my wings, and there was more to life than just being a country bumpkin.

So here I am living in an apartment in London overlooking the Thames and the Tower. It was strange. I had read so much about the Tower and yet I had never actually been there and seen all the things I had read about. The carvings on the walls of the poor prisoners condemned to a traitor's death. Medieval graffiti, my college tutor had called it, but to me, there was more to it than just carvings on the wall. These people had lived and breathed the same air I did, they walked the same streets as I did, although the streets they walked were very different, full of mud and worse.

They once looked down on the river from the windows of their cells and watched people going about their business, or watched the passenger ferry and Cargo wherries going back and forth across the river taking goods, noblemen and woman, squires and ordinary people, who could afford the fare, to where they needed to be. Did these poor prisoners see the royal barge and hear the controlled rhythm of the drum beating out the steady measured tread for the oarsman to follow?

Many guilty and innocent people entered that tower, and only came out in two pieces, although their heads would soon be parboiled, coated in tar and placed on a pike above the Tower for all to see. They were the lucky ones, for at least their bodies would be buried, dumped in a hole and covered with lime and then forgotten about. Or they had simply disappeared, leaving just a mystery that would never be solved.

My college tutor believed that some prisoners might have even been thrown to the lions dead or alive.

A king of England had died there: the hapless and useless Henry VI, whose ineffectiveness and ineptitude as king had sparked a war.

Only a small number of people had ever escaped the tower, and two of them had been priests. One of them a much hated and fat greedy friar called Ranulf Flambard.

The other man to escape was John Gerald, a devout Jesuit priest. Who despite months of horrific torture to try and make him betray his brethren, had kept silent and had found the courage and strength he needed to slide down a rope and be taken by his friends to the safety of France.

Two innocent queens had also met a grisly fate within the Tower at the hands of a maniacal and cruel king

I shuddered thinking just how brutal and unforgiving England was back in the days of yore and felt that every stone in the Tower had a history all of its own to tell.

Finally, I realised that I had been sat on the edge of the bed for nearly an hour and put on my dressing gown and have some breakfast before deciding whether to tackle any more boxes and finding places to put everything. The only annoyance was that I was yet to find my electric kettle, which despite careful packing and labelling, the box seemed to have completely vanished. I had, however, found the lead to the kettle packed in amongst my towels. No doubt Mum put it there since she really was a complete scatterbrain when it came to anything to do with organisation and would always have her own logical explanation to why she put it there.

Dad told me a month ago that he had caught Mum putting a tube of toothpaste in the fridge, claiming she had read it made the toothpaste work better. Since Mum and Dad wore dentures, I didn't see how she could prove that it was true or not.

No doubt the kettle would turn up at some point, but in the meantime, I had to boil a saucepan of water to make my coffee. I walked into the kitchen, which I had painted a sunny yellow colour, and got the saucepan out of the cupboard. I filled it with water and put it on the hob I took my favourite purple mug off the mug tree and put in two spoons of coffee and decided to have a quick shower whilst the saucepan was boiling. Feeling refreshed and a

little more awake now that I had, had a coffee I decided it was far too nice a day to be stuck indoors and instead, I would go out and explore the neighbourhood. I put on my blue jeans and t-shirt and the woollen shawl I had brought from the market a few weeks ago and put on my shoes. Grabbing my phone, keys and purse, I went out shutting the door with a satisfying click.

I stepped out onto the street that I now called home, and as I turned the corner, I was met with the bustling hive of activity so typical of a London street. I had come to know this road very well by now, since my workplace was at the end of it. I had been very lucky to find a place so close to my work and within walking distance too. I didn't fancy commuting on the underground every day.

Whenever I had to use the underground, I always felt like I was a sardine in a tin can and had many a bruise on my ribs when people had rudely elbowed their way through the other sardines to get on or off the tube.

Today, however, was my day off, and I felt that I needed to do something completely different from what I had done on my last day off.

Last week I had gone to see the beautifully restored Cutty Sark, a tea clipper from the colonial times and wandered around Greenwich, much different to what it had once been. Long gone was the sprawling palace where the infamous Henry VIII had been born. Greenwich became a hospital in King Charles II's reign and then became a naval college. Now, it was just a tourist attraction to a bygone age. Strangely as I wandered around the beautiful chapel I felt I had been here before, perhaps I had, as Mum once told me that when I was little, we had visited London, and gone sightseeing. But the rowdy drunken behaviour by the local hoodlums and the constant din of traffic had rather spoiled things for them, and they had both been glad to return home to their quiet little farmhouse in the Oxfordshire countryside.

A bus full of screaming schoolchildren pulled up sharply as a car cut in, in front of him giving out a great black cloud of diesel fumes. I heard the driver swear at the car driver, although it was possible that some of the swear words could have been aimed at the schoolchildren as well. When the black smoke had cleared, I saw a picture of the Tower of London and a Beefeater holding a baby bird in his hand and decided it was time I visited the Tower.

I then hailed a black cab. "Tower of London, please, driver," I said, and soon we sped off towards Tower Bridge, passing the frustrated bus driver on the way who was shouting at the children to stop climbing on the seats and chucking rubbish out the windows. His words clearly had no effect, however, as a pair of shoes were promptly tossed out of the window. As we reached Tower Bridge, we had to stop as I saw a large sailing boat bobbing up the Thames. I never ceased to wonder as I watched the bridge split in two and rise higher and higher to allow the sailing boat through; it truly was a remarkable feat of Victorian engineering.

I could see the bus driver in the taxi cab's rearview mirror and saw his face go purple with anger as one of the children had poured a can of something over his head. I smiled thinking that if it was possible, the poor driver would have steam coming from his ears right about now.

After what seemed an age, we were on our way again, and within a few minutes we were at the Tower. I paid the cab driver and also gave him a generous tip, some would say too generous perhaps.

The Tower looked a far larger than I expected, but then I had only really seen it from a distance or in pictures. I felt a note of apprehension or maybe even fear as I followed the sign that led to the ticket booth and toilets. The man inside smiled as I approached and said "Good morning, madam, how may I help you?"

I smiled in return and said, "I would like to go on the tour please".

The man nodded and said, "We have a special discount for visitors today, so that will be twenty pounds, please, madam."

I took out two ten-pound notes and handed them to the man. He smiled and said, "Thank you, now if you would just like to go and stand over there with the others, a Tower guard will be with you shortly. I hope you enjoy the tour, madam, and please feel free to visit our gift shop and cafe."

I felt that this tour would be an adventure unlike any other and walked over to where the man had indicated, and was met with a babble of voices, all excitingly chattering about what they might see and no doubt hear as well. I had read enough literature to know that these tours could be as emotional as they were educational.

Suddenly a beefeater, as the tower guards were called, approached us. One woman, an American, judging by her accent, started to click away with her camera, capturing every step the beefeater made towards us. When he was close enough, she shoved the camera into the hands of her friend insisting that she take a photo of her kissing the beefeater.

The beefeater coughed embarrassingly and gently, but firmly managed to disengage the woman from his side and most of all her lips from his cheek. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the woman's vivid shade of bright red lipstick from his cheeks and his chin. He must have done this a hundred times or more with excited visitors, so this was just a normal day for him.

"Welcome, ladies and gentleman, I am your guide for the day, and I am about to lead you into a world of murder, mayhem, love and death and of course not to mention, horror and hauntings. The Tower awaits you, follow me."

The American lady tried to grab the arm of the guide, her mind, no doubt swirling, to embellish yet another story to tell her friends about how she survived the tower, with the help of her Prince Charming. But the guide was too quick for her, and neatly dodged her advances, so she had to be satisfied with linking arms with her friend instead and whispering, "Isn't he just wunnerful, gee I just love these English men. So austere and yet so rugged, I wish I could take him back home with me."

We walked through the large studded wooden doors, and looking up saw the heavy metal portcullis, which our guide said was never used now. There were also a number of holes cut into the high arch, these we were told are called "murder holes" which in the days gone by, had been used to drop boiling tar, water, oil, hot sand and rocks on the heads of anyone who tried to breach the tower walls and gates. There were also a number of arrow slits cut into the walls and like the "murder holes" had been used to fire arrows and jab spears at the rebels who managed to survive the onslaught of having boiling tar etc. dumped on them by the tower guards.

Sometimes a small bomb called a petard was hung on the gates. As petards were already lit, someone was chosen to hang these bombs on the gate and would run towards the gate as fast as they could. Many of these would-be bombers were killed long before they reached the gate, however, picked off by archers on top of the high walls. Of the few that made it through, they very likely died in explosion hopefully along with a few of the enemy, but also injuring many more on both sides of this battle.

"In all of the years the Tower has been standing, its walls have been breached just once, during the reign of King Richard II in 1381: the Peasants' Revolt led by Wat Tyler. He and his men stormed through these gates killing, raping and pillaging as they rampaged through the tower. It is believed that the tower guards at that time were sympathetic to the peasant's plight and simply offered no resistance against them and left the gates open," our guide said.

The American woman seemed to gasp in horror as the guide continued, "It is said that the young king's mother and her maid were found hiding in in one of the many closets, or toilets as they are called today, and that the unfortunate maid was brutally raped. The king's mother, Countess Joan, known as the fair maid of Kent was spared that dreadful fate, as one of the mob recognised her from his time in the Black Prince's army. The young king's much-lamented father died in 1376, when Richard was just 9. Countess Joan and her trau-

matised, now completely senseless maid were taken to safety by the man who returned just in time to see what they had stormed the tower for.” The tour guide paused for dramatic effect, and I heard the American woman say “How awful, that poor woman.”

The guide continued, “On finding the Archbishop of Canterbury Simon Sudbury they dragged him out of the Tower and onto a makeshift scaffold. They condemned him to death. It took eight savage blows to sever poor Simon’s head from his shoulders. The scaffold was slippery with Simon’s blood, when the jeering crowd watched as two more hapless victims were dragged out to face death. The chosen executioner, drunk from overindulging himself on the fine wine from looting the wine cellar, had trouble staying on his feet and hacked out wildly.

Eventually, someone who was at least a little more sober pushed him from the scaffold and finished off the two priests with just one blow each. He then took Sudbury’s head and that of the two hapless priests and put them on pikes. Thrusting them first into boiling water and then into boiling tar the crowd roared with glee as they saw that the heads of three of the most hated people in England, their bishop’s mitres nailed to their heads and placed above the tower gate.

However, the mob wasn’t done yet; they still wanted the head of the king’s uncle, John of Gaunt. But he had fled London when he heard that Wat Tyler and his rebels were coming for him. All the while this was happening, the fourteen-year-old King Richard II and the king’s cousin, Henry Bollingbroke, the son of the much-hated John of Gaunt were in hiding. All the while, King Richard was wondering what he could do to stop the rampaging mob.”

Again the American woman spoke, “Gee, can you believe that, just fourteen and already a king. My Frankie is fourteen, and he’s a useless lump.”

The tour guide ignored her, and continued, “The young king bravely faced the rebels, and they threw down their weapons and headed home, all that is but Wat Tyler and some of his men, who tried to capture the young king and take him hostage. But one of King Richard’s bodyguards cut Wat Tyler down and left him to die in the mud. However, King Richard was still in grave danger, but once again he bravely faced the rebels and promised them that their complaints against his nobles and the unfair taxes imposed on them would be listened to by him alone if they would just return home in peace. The mob lowered their weapons and offered thanks to their merciful king and began the slow exodus to their homes, the death of their leader and hero etched on their memories.

But the young king betrayed the people and as miserable as their lives were before their hero Wat Tyler led an army into London, it now became a living hell. Many years would pass before Henry Bollingbroke, deposed King Richard and seized the throne and became Henry IV. Poor Richard was left to starve to death in Pontefract castle.”

The tour continued, the guide said “This is traitor’s gate, this is where many criminals who had been deemed traitors, were brought into the tower. In olden times the Thames tide would come up to these steps,” pointing to them. “Many criminals who entered by these gates did not leave the Tower alive. To name just a few, who came into the tower here, William Wallace, who is revered by many as the first man who fought but failed to free Scotland from English rule. He was hanged, drawn and quartered as a traitor in 1305 at Smithfield not far from here.

Queen Anne Boleyn, Queen Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey also entered the tower through this gate.”

We followed the guide to the bloody tower. The guide explained “This tower was originally called the Garden tower the upper half opened out onto the constable’s garden, whilst the lower half contained luxurious lodgings. The top half of the tower was rebuilt in the reign of King Edward III.

I personally believe it got the name “The Bloody Tower” from the mortar used which contains crushed up Roman tiles from the Roman remains that were found on this site when the builders were digging out the foundations.

But of course, over the years it has more than earned the name “Bloody” Many people were imprisoned here and met their ends in bloody or brutal ends. Thomas Cramner was imprisoned here when Queen Mary I ascended the throne in 1553. He recanted of his protestant faith, and this should have spared him, but Queen Mary had never forgiven him for declaring her parent’s marriage invalid and was determined he would burn. He was burnt at the stake in March in 1556. It’s said that when the flames were lit, he thrust the hand that had signed his recantation into the flames first and said, “Let this hand that signed what I did not believe in my heart, burn first, for it does not deserve God’s mercy”.

Sir Walter Raleigh, one of Queen Elizabeth’s pirates who help defeat the Spanish Armada, was held here in the reign of James 1st and was executed in old palace yard, Westminster in 1618.

Thomas Overbury a poet and diplomat was poisoned by Frances Howard and Robert Carr in 1613. They were held prisoner here and would have been executed, but King James granted them mercy. Robert Carr was once a favourite of King James and the King still had some affection for his “young Steeny” despite his terrible crime.

Judge Jeffreys, the so called “bloody judge” was imprisoned here in one of the dungeons.

Jeffreys had sent nearly seven hundred men to the gallows, and those who escaped the rope were transported for life to Australia after the Monmouth rebellion was put down. When James II was deposed, Jeffreys was without his royal protector, up until then no one ever dared to revenge the death of their loved ones and Jeffreys knew he was in grave danger.

Jeffreys had every intention of following his king into exile, but he could resist the urge of just one last drink of good old English ale. However, he was recognised by some people in the pub in Wapping and set upon. Jefferys begged the town mayor for protection, but the town mayor had no more liking for Jefferys than the people did and would have happily let the people tear him apart. However, he had a duty to protect all those who asked for his help and summoned the guard who promptly brought him here.

Whilst in his dungeon the Tower Constable, Baron Lucas allowed people to pay and come and jeer, catcall and pelt the judge with rubbish and all manner of unpleasant things, until the new King William III could decide what to do with him.

Judge Jeffreys was known to be an alcoholic, so Baron Lucas was told to allow Jefferys to have as much brandy as he could afford and let him drink himself to death. This he did, as he died in 1689 of kidney disease.

Of course the most famous prisoners here were the two York princes, young King Edward V, who was twelve, and his nine-year-old brother, Richard, Duke of York, who were put in the Tower for safety by their Uncle Richard.

They were seen a few times over the next few weeks, but then they simply disappeared.

Their Uncle Richard, had the marriage of his brother Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville declared invalid, and their children bastards, by an act of Parliament called Titus Regus, and took the throne as Richard III in 1483. But his reign was short-lived, and it ended at Bosworth in 1485 when Henry Tudor claimed the throne and a new era and dynasty was born.

So what happened to the Princes? Well, it remained a mystery until the reign of Charles II.

In 1674, some bones were found in a box by workmen doing repairs on a staircase in the tower. The bones were believed to be the lost princes due to Sir Thomas More, who

wrote of the location where he believed the princes were buried. Four years after the bones were found, Charles II ordered the bones to be put in an urn and then placed in the wall of the Lady Chapel, built by Henry VII.”

The guide led us to our next site, “Through this passage is the Wakefield Tower, it was originally called the Blundeville Tower and was built along with the Bloody Tower during the reign of Henry III. This is where the deposed King Henry VI was imprisoned, and this chapel is where he met his death, on 21st of May 1471. As you can see there have been some white lillies and roses placed here. This is something which the provosts of Eton and King’s college do every year at this time in memory of their founder.” The guard picked up the wreath and pointed to a dark stain on the floor and said, “This stain is believed to be the hapless king’s blood, which can never be washed away due to the brutal manner of his death,” and placed the wreath back down.

We followed the guard to the Beauchamp Tower, where indeed there was the medieval graffiti my teacher had mentioned. The guide said, “These carvings are a sad reminder to where so many prisoners died from the appalling conditions. Those that survived were led from their prison only to find the scaffold awaiting them. There had been a few prisoners who had been pardoned for their crimes against the King or Queen, but it would take a very lucky man to survive the conditions that their pardon sometimes came with. They had to join the army, but death in battle rather than on the scaffold or in a rat-infested cell would at least be honourable.

“This room is where Princess Elizabeth was held prisoner on suspicion of treason and her complicity in the Thomas Wyatt rebellion of 1554, by her jealous half-sister Queen Mary. Elizabeth was held here from the 18th of March until 19th of May, when despite the bullying tactics of Queen Mary’s men, they could find nothing which would link Elizabeth to Thomas Wyatt, the leader of the rebellion. He too had fervently denied that he had never communicated with her either by word or letter.

Queen Mary was left with no other choice but to release Elizabeth but placed her under strict house arrest at Woodstock in the care of Sir Henry Beddingfield.”

The guide showed us the cell where Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, was imprisoned. “Margaret Pole, her son Henry Baron Montagu and grandson Henry Courtney were all arrested in November 1538 and put under attainder for treason. They were all the last few living members of the Plantagenet/York dynasty that could claim a right to the throne.

Both Courtney and Baron Montagu were executed just two months later on Tower Hill, which could be seen from the tower at that time and certainly if the wind was blowing in the right direction the cheers of the crowd that thronged around tower hill could be heard as well...

However, poor Lady Salisbury, who was sixty-five at the time of her arrest, was kept prisoner for two years and half years. She was given warm clothes and had servants as befitting her station, it is said that Queen Katherine Howard was supposed her sent her a gift of a fur-lined nightgown to help bear the bitter cold of the winter nights. Nothing could save the life of poor Margaret Pole, and at the age of sixty-seven, in May of 1541 she who had never wanted anything more than a peaceful life, made the short walk from her cell to the scaffold.

Defiant to the end when the executioner asked her to put her head on the block, she said, “Only traitors put their head on the block, and I am no traitor.” The executioner was forced to chase Margaret, who given her age was still rather spritely, around the scaffold and hacked her to death in what was one of England’s, bloodiest executions. And why did Henry VIII so vindictively, irrationally and cold bloodily treat the Pole family so utterly contemptuously? Their only crime was that they were related to Reginald Pole who spoke out vociferously against Henry VIII and his divorce from Catherine of Aragon and for mak-



ing himself head of the Church in England.” He said and then added, “Ladies and gentleman you may have noticed that a poem has been carved into the wall. It reads:

“For traitors on the block should die.  
I am no traitor, no, not I!  
My faithfulness stands fast and so.  
Towards the block I shall not go!  
Nor make one step, as you shall see.  
Christ in Thy Mercy, save Thou me!”

“It is believed that Margaret herself carved this poem. Margaret’s father also met a grisly death within these walls as well. Her father was George, Duke of Clarence, the brother of both Edward IV and Richard III. Clarence plotted along with the Richard Neville Earl of Warwick, better known as the kingmaker, to take the throne from King Edward, and although King Edward forgave him and the Earl of Warwick for this crime, George continued to plot against his brother, leaving Edward no other choice but to execute George for treason. Normally as you know a traitor is hung, drawn and quartered, but Edward wished to spare George such a barbaric and long drawn out death. Being a nobleman George could be simply beheaded, but again Edward didn’t want to do that, and finally asked George how he wanted to die. George asked to be drowned in a vat of Malmsey wine and this was carried out in 1478 when Margaret was just five, leaving her and her brother the simple minded Edward, Earl of Warwick orphans, Margaret’s mother Isabel the daughter of the Kingmaker had died in 1476,” he said, clearing his throat, and continued, “Work to fill in the moat that had once surrounded the tower since it had been built, was begun in 1843 and took two years to complete. During the war years, it served as allotments to grow vegetables, and as you can see, it is now a lawn with part of it becoming an outdoor ice rink and café. The Tower in recent years has also served as a hospital, prison and Army barracks in both World wars. The German spies Rudolf Hess and a man called Josef Jacobs who has the accolade for being the very last person to be executed in the tower. He was executed by firing squad in 1941. The infamous Kray twins were also kept prisoner in the Bell Tower in 1952.”

The guide again cleared his throat and said, “Ladies and gentleman if you like to follow me I shall take you to the very heart of the Tower Keep, which is also known as the White Tower. Built by William the Conqueror, although he asked a man called Gundulf who was the Bishop of Rochester to design and draw up the plans for it, and this is what Gundulf came up with. King William approved the plans and work started on it in 1078. What you have to understand, ladies and gentleman, is that the White tower when built was to serve as a home and fortress. From the new King William’s perspective, he was sending a message to everyone. A message which firmly said “The Normans are here to stay, and you better get used to it”. Many other castles started to be built around the country at this time too, with much the same message. However, King William never got to see the finished Tower as he died in 1087. It became a prison, dungeon and of course a torture chamber later on as many believed a fortress as difficult as this to get into would be just as difficult to get out of too. Perhaps that could due to thickness of the walls. They range from 15ft thick at it base to 11ft at the very top of the tower.”

The guide led the way down some worn stone steps and I noticed just how dark it was. Even with the benefit of electric lighting, there were still little corners where it seemed no light penetrated. I shivered from the cold, and perhaps from the fear that must have been running through the minds of those who found themselves in what they thought of, as a dark chasm of hell. A shaft of sunlight coming through the window did at least help us to see the stone steps, but what must have this been like down here when all that lit your way was a blazing torch?

Finally, we reached the dungeons which opened out into a large room which was filled with horrific devices of torture. The guide said “These are the rooms where so many poor

prisoners were often mutilated beyond all recognition, before they were finally given the grace of death, in whatever form that took. There are three levels for torture or “being put to the question” as it was sometimes called. Firstly a prisoner would be told of the horrific pain he would receive if he remained obdurate when questioned. If that failed to work, he would secondly he would be shown the instruments, which bear in mind were rarely washed so would likely be covered in blood and bits of flesh and sometimes faeces from others who remained silent so as you can imagine infections were rife within the prison. If he still refused to confess their guilt, the instruments would be used on him.

The torturer would use the gentler forms of torture, such as the thumbscrews, or having your hand held over a lit candle. Or the torturer would use something called the breaks; basically they were pliers, and were used to snap off teeth. Or the first two fingers tied together and have an arrow, which was sometimes heated, rammed between the fingers arrow causing the victim horrific pain and injuries. The torturer would then by slow degrees with more and more gruesome instruments at his disposal, as you can see, and finally progress up to the rack.

The rack was also affectionately known as the Duke of Exeter’s daughter, and any who had a “date” with her came away from the rack a little taller than they had been before being racked. Many people cracked long before the need to use the rack, but its very name struck fear into all those who fell into the clutches of the torturer.

During its lifetime, many men have been put to the question on the rack. People such a musician called Mark Smeaton, one of the accused lovers of Queen Anne Boleyn. And Francis Dereham, who was betrothed to the young and wilful Katherine Howard before her marriage to King Henry. It’s believed it was Dereham who told Thomas Cramner about Queen Katherine’s affair with Thomas Culpepper.

And of course perhaps the most famous of all those to have a date with the Duke of Exeter’s daughter was Guy Fawkes, whose interrogation may have been overseen by the very King that Fawkes tried to kill in the Gunpowder plot of 1605. James I showed Fawkes no mercy, and it is said that Fawkes’s arms and legs had been brutally wrenched from their sockets and needed help to mount the scaffold. You can see just how brutal the rack was by looking at this picture on the wall. You will see that it has two signatures on the documents shown. One is the clear firm signature of Guy or rather Guido Fawkes before he was put on the rack, the other, his barely legible signature from after he was racked.

However, there has been just one woman racked, in 1546 called Anne Askew. Like Smeaton and Fawkes, her arms and legs were ripped from their sockets. Bishop Gardiner knew that putting a woman on the rack was illegal, and one of the tower guards, Sir Anthony Kingston, spoke out most vehemently against this, and utterly refused to torture Anne like this. He actually went to King Henry VIII and begged his pardon for his failure in following Bishop Gardener’s orders. The King gave his pardon, but didn’t order Bishop Gardiner to stop what he was doing. As far as the King was concerned Anne had spoken out against the sacred six articles of faith and therefore deserved her punishment, Bishop Gardener had another reason for treating Anne the way he did. He was plotting against Queen Catherine Parr and believed that Anne, had information to further his case against the Queen for keeping heretical books and believed that the Queen was a heretic, a crime punishable by death. Heresy was something which Bishop Gardiner was determined to snuff out once and for all.

Anne remained stoic, and Bishop Gardiner had to admit defeat, and perhaps had a little admiration for the courage Anne had shown on the rack when lesser mortals had broken and told all their secrets from just one turn of the crank. Her courage didn’t save her life, however, and on the day of her execution poor Anne was carried to her execution on a chair, and whilst she was being tied to the stake a small bag of gunpowder was put around her neck as an act of mercy. Three other accused heretics were burned along with her that day. One of whom was called John Lascelles, the very man who along with his sister Mary, denounced

Katherine Howard to Archbishop Cramner, about her immoral living before her marriage with King Henry. I suppose in a way Queen Katherine Howard's death was avenged, this is one of the times where the adage "Revenge is a dish best served cold" is apt."

The guide pointed to the wall and said, "This dank dark hole is called "Little Ease" which no man or woman could ever hope to be comfortable in. For as you can see, it is neither tall enough to stand up nor long enough to sit down in. So the poor prisoner would be forced to crouch, sometimes for days. This is what happened to a Tower guard in the 16th century called John Bawd. The other Tower guards took full advantage of the torture chamber's instruments and John suffered mercilessly at their hands, before being hung in chains over the tower walls and left to rot all because he had helped a prisoner called Alice Tankerville to escape. The fate of the Alice and her husband was one of an equally gruesome nature, for they were chained to the walls of the Tower at low tide and left to drown.

The original purpose of this chamber was that of a wine cellar, as you can probably feel that it is very cold down here, just the perfect temperature for keeping wine. Of course, as time and tide progressed, these chambers were put what was thought to be better usage, although I doubt those who suffered down here at the mercy of the guards, would agree.

So, ladies and gentleman, let us leave this chamber of horrors behind us, and go on to the hauntings in the tower."

We followed the guide back out into the sunshine which seemed to dazzle my eyes from the muted light in the Torture chamber, to be honest I was glad to get out of the suffocating atmosphere of the dungeon, not to mention get some peace from the never ending click of the American woman's camera. I had a feeling that nearly every picture she had taken would include that of our tour guide.

The guide continued, "It's believed that there are many ghosts and spectres that roam free around the Tower. Queen Anne Boleyn, has been frequently seen with her head tucked under her arm. She appears sometimes in that window," and pointed to a window where she spent her last night on earth. "Any who see her says that where her head should be, there is nothing. She is also said to wander around the scaffold where she met her sad fate at the hands of a French swordsman in 1536.

The spectre of Margaret Pole is also seen at the site of the scaffold still desperately trying to escape the executioners axe and screaming in terror.

Two little children clutching each other and shivering with fright are seen on the staircase of the bloody tower, anyone who approaches them, see the boys vanish into the walls and hear the sound of sobbing. It's believed these are the ghosts of the missing York Princes

Over a hundred years ago, a guard was literally frightened to death. He was on duty by the jewel house at the time, but he reported he had seen what he believed to be a large bear coming towards him, so afraid was he that he died just a few days later.

Another incident reported was from Edmund Swift the jewel house keeper. He and his wife saw a glowing tube-shaped object coming toward them. This object or apparition as was believed, floated over his wife's shoulder, and she exclaimed "Oh sweet Jesus, it has got me," before fainting.

Another Tower guard patrolling the Wakefield tower, one night during the World War Two, wrote down a story of a bright light suddenly appearing, out of which stepped the figure of a man dressed in what he felt was a monk's habit. The guard challenged the man, as the man slowly turned, the guard saw a grotesque bloody wound on his head.

As the man walked towards him, the guard thrust his bayonet at him only for it to go straight through, and the man and light faded slowly away, to the sound of religious chanting.

The guard dropped his gun and fled in terror and told his commanding officer who wasn't very sympathetic, what had happened. However, the commanding officer was duty-bound to investigate and made his way up the stairs. Finding the guards gun he picked it up

and was just about to head back down the stairs, when he felt a cold chill go down his spine and looking up, he saw and heard exactly what the guard had described.

Many believe this is the spirit of the hapless King Henry VI who died in the Tower chapel.

Screams of pain, torment and voices are often heard echoing around the tower of dark foggy nights, and most of us have seen mists and shadows, myself included, around the tower at some point. They have become so commonplace these days that the other beefeaters and I are no longer bothered by them.

I live in the Queen's House apartment where Lady Arbella Stuart's ghost is said to haunt. Lady Arbella, who was cousin to both Queen Elizabeth I and James I, was imprisoned for marrying without royal permission. Lady Arbella starved to death shortly afterwards. The previous tenant said he saw her sad spirit on many occasions walking slowly back and forth in front of his bedroom window. Perhaps she is still waiting for the man she loved to rescue her.

I personally haven't seen her yet, but perhaps one day I will. My apartment was her home, and in a way it still is, so she is welcome to stay."

We made our way toward a beautiful monument, which the guide told us was near the site of the scaffold. Onto it, had been etched all of the names of the people who had lost their heads here. I suddenly felt a great wave of profound sadness flow over me and tears sprung to my eyes, I wiped them away quickly, but the sadness I felt still remained. The tour guide led us away from the scaffold, and towards St Peter ad Vincula. It was so beautiful. The guide said, "The present church was built in Henry VIII's reign, but the original church that was built on this site could date back to a time before the Norman Conquest. However it widely believed that Henry I built the first church which was consecrated in August in 1110, on the feast day of St Peter. It would, at that time, have been outside the existing wall so the people of London would see the King going to church.

After Henry III came to the throne, things change,d and as you can see the chapel is now firmly within the Tower walls.

The Tower at that time was a community within a community, and many people who lived and worked within the tower used the chapel for their church services. The King and the Royal family would use the more private chapel of St John within the White Tower for spiritual comfort.

Buried in the chapel crypt, are the bones of some who ended their lives on the scaffold. After they had been executed, their heads would be parboiled, covered in tar and spiked above the tower gate as a warning to others on what would happen if they committed a crime against the monarchy.

There are a few who went to the graves with their heads: Queen Anne Boleyn and Queen Catherine Howard, and the tragic nine-day Queen Jane Grey, who was just sixteen, and her husband Lord Guildford Dudley, aged nineteen, had their lives cut short in 1554 on the orders of Queen Mary I.

And of course, Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII's spymaster general, conspirator and criminal mastermind, who lost his head in 1540, when he betrayed the King in securing a useless political alliance and humiliated him by forcing him to marry Anne of Cleves.

It's said that when Queen Anne Boleyn was executed, King Henry, being so steadfastly resolute to be rid of her, failed to provide a coffin for her. William Kingston, the keeper of the Tower, had to quickly find something suitable as a coffin for her. Only finding an old arrow chest, he placed her body into it and tucked her head under her arm. Her body was then carried into the chapel where it was laid alongside the coffin of her brother, and some say paramour, George Boleyn. Catherine Howard lies near the coffin of her cousin Queen Anne and strangely Jane Boleyn, the wife of George Boleyn, is buried next to Catherine. It's rumoured that Jane testified that Anne and George had committed incest, which Crom-

well put to good use. When Catherine Howard's immoral living came to light, and the guards came to arrest her and Catherine, Jane is said to have gone mad, perhaps hoping this would save her life, for at the time a mad person couldn't be executed. King Henry, in a murderous rage, changed the law, and poor Jane shared Catherine's fate, both were executed in February 1542.

The last burial in the crypt was that of Lyster Blount in 1633."

Someone in our party said, "Is the church still in use today?"

The tour guide nodded and said, "Indeed it is, madam. One of the other beefeaters was married here two years ago, and my daughter was baptised here just a few weeks ago."

Someone else said, "Why are there ravens here?"

Our guide smiled and said, "There is a legend, that if the ravens ever leave the Tower, the Tower and the kingdom will fall. So when Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, he made a decree that six ravens plus a spare were to be permanently housed here. To prevent them leaving the Tower, their wings are clipped. Each raven is given a name, and there is a befeater assigned as the Raven Master to look after them all. The raven master has many funny little stories about the Ravens, and indeed one of them often mimics him, very convincingly I hasten to add. Two of our Ravens recently became the proud parents to four chicks the last time this happened was in 1989."

"You mentioned Thomas Wyatt earlier, was he the same Thomas Wyatt who knew Anne Boleyn?" the lady in a blue dress said.

The guard said, "No, madam, the Thomas Wyatt I mentioned, was his son."

Another voice said, "Is it true that Catherine Howard said on the scaffold, "I die a Queen but would liefer die the wife of Culpepper?"

The guide smiled and said "No, madam, the speech she gave on the scaffold that day, was both humble and penitent. She asked the people who witnessed her execution to pray for her soul and asked God to send the King long life and good health. The "wife of Culpepper" I believe it was a Victorian invention to romanticise a life cut short by a cold ruthless king."

The same voice rang out again and said, "She was just a kid, he had no business being involved with her, let alone marrying her."

The guide said "By today's morality standards, such a relationship would be considered indecent and doubtless police and social services would be involved. However back in the 16th Century and before then it wasn't uncommon to see children much younger than Catherine Howard married to older men. Richard II married six-year-old Isabella of France, the little queen as she was called, and Margaret Beaufort was around 12 or 13 when she gave birth to Henry Tudor."

He paused for a moment before continuing, "Now then, ladies and gentleman, if you would care to follow me we shall make the last stop on our tour the Jewel house. This, is where you will see the very jewels that every monarch wears at their coronation. And here you shall hear the tale of the audacious plot by Colonel Thomas Blood, to steal the crown jewels in 1671."

For some reason, something told me not to follow the guide, and I made my way towards the door of the chapel. I reached out and turned the metal ring, and heard the latch click open. I pushed the door open as I took one last look around the grounds, and seeing only the coal-black ravens glaring down at me, I slipped into the chapel and shut the door behind me.

I wandered around the chapel, taking in the full beauty of the inside of the chapel. When I came to the altar, I saw that some red roses had been placed on one of the graves. As I looked at them, I wondered why and who would have put them there. I suddenly felt the same sadness that I had at the scaffold site, but this time the sadness was so utterly over-

whelming that I was completely consumed by it and lost all sense of control and reason. Tears began streaming down my cheeks and dripping onto the soft petals of the roses. They stayed on the surface of the petals for just a few moments, looking like blood-red tears, and then slowly faded to nothing. I fell to my knees weak with emotion, and continued to sob bitterly. I looked down on the grave, and through tear-blurred vision, I saw that amongst the roses, there was a puddle of tears.

My tears.

LORNA WANSTALL