

# Factsheet

## Academic background to the new Medieval Palace

A team of curators at Historic Royal Palaces has extensively researched how the interior and exterior of the Medieval Palace at the Tower of London would have looked at the time of Henry III and Edward I (circa. 1216-1307). The new display (opening 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006) recreates the Medieval Palace interiors in their full glory, providing a full sensory and interactive experience for visitors to really immerse themselves in the extreme opulence and richness of the surroundings at this time.

- **Furnishings**

A specially commissioned oak **bed** will furnish Edward I's Bed Chamber in St. Thomas' Tower. The canopied bed has been decorated based on contemporary evidence of the bed of Edward I at Westminster, which was decorated with a green background sprinkled with gold stars. The bed has been hand-made with traditional methods, and it is known that oak was the timber of choice for bed manufacture at this time.

- **Wall Décor**

Over the **chimney hood** in Edward I's Bed Chamber hand-painted heraldic shields have been added, and the **walls** have been decorated with a floral and foliage painted pattern. Traditional paint colours, gold leafing and distemper have been used in the decoration. Brightly coloured **shutters** for the palace windows have also been hand-painted and gilded, decorated with the leopards of England, which are symbols of bravery, strength, ferocity and valour.

- **Floors**

**Tiles** for the Oratory floor have been hand-made in California. Their design is based on tiles which remain from the King's Pavement at Clarendon Palace, which are on display at the British Museum, and date from the period of Henry III. It is commonly known that the floor of such a room would be tiled, and it is supposed that the decoration of these tiles would be similar to that of tiles in Henry's other palaces.

- **Textiles**

A **rug** for the Bed Chamber has been handmade by a centuries-old firm in Lahore, Pakistan, using traditional Spanish knot techniques. Contemporary evidence shows that Queen Eleanor, wife of Edward I, introduced Spanish fabrics and furnishings to England, hence the design of the rug is based on remains of a mid 15<sup>th</sup> century Spanish carpet, on display at the Washington Textile Museum. This features a repeat design of octagons in rectangular frames, which are also known to be common in 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century design. The border has also been copied from a surviving 14<sup>th</sup> century Spanish carpet. Fabric to be used for **bed curtains** in the Bed Chamber has been woven in Valencia, Spain. Masculine symmetrical patterns, consisting of coats of arms, will represent Edward I, whilst the pattern on a second wall hanging is based on the pattern on the pillow underneath the head of Henry III on his tomb in Westminster. This is a diapered pattern, decorated with lions.

- **Smells**

In Edward I's Bed Chamber a lavender scent fills the air, whilst as the visitor steps towards the fireplace the smell of woodsmoke gets stronger, to evoke the experience of being in these rooms in Medieval times. In the Lanthorn Tower, the warm smell of spices flavours the air.

- **Sounds**

Latin prayer is heard in the Oratory, whilst in the Bed Chamber itself voices talk in old English and early French. The sound of water lapping against the walls outside, and boats moored below bumping against the walls, are also heard. This reminds visitors that the Medieval Palace would have been right on the river at that time.

- **Lighting**

The **lighting** of the Wakefield Tower has been redesigned to emphasise the architectural splendour of the room. The lighting in other rooms highlights the bright colours of the decoration and furnishings, and suggests how these rooms and colours would have looked as lit by candlelight at the time.