

Introduction

Welcome to Roundheads at the Tower. This audio guide will take you on a walk through one of the secret histories of the Tower of London.

***Feel free at any point to pause the guide and enjoy the other attractions the Tower has

to offer, it will be clear where
you should be, to begin the
next track when you are ready
to move on.***

In the early 1640s London was
in turmoil, King Charles I was
at great odds with his
Parliament over matters of both
religion and money. The King's

favourites, his favoured courtiers and personal friends, were viewed with great suspicion for the influence they had over the monarch. And the city itself was fractious, the London Mob turning out in response to the smallest slight.

With factions forming, the parliamentarian roundheads and

royalist cavaliers began facing
off in the halls of power as
well as on the streets of the
city.

Where did the Tower of London
sit in the story of these
troubled times? And how, when
the conflict came to a head in
1642 starting the First English

Civil War, did the Royal Palace
and Fortress of the Tower of
London, end up in
Parliamentarian hands?

**1. *Lord Strafford's confinement,
or the beginning of the Tower's
troubles***

***Our tour begins by Tower
Wharf, on the North side of the
River Thames by the Middle
Draw Bridge. Once there, start
the track *Lord Strafford's
confinement, or the beginning of
the Tower's troubles*, and,
keeping the Tower to your right,
move at your own pace towards

the entrance to the Tower on

Tower Hill***

In 1632 the great architect Inigo

Jones, Surveyor-General of the

King's Works, began directing a

much needed refurbishment of

the Tower. Many of his changes

were vanity projects, Jones

cleared and redesigned the docks

by the Tower, constructing a new Wharf, and began replacing the stonework of the White Tower with the expensive Portland stone we see today.

Working on the recommendations made by Sir Allen Apsley 10 years earlier, Jones did undertake some more practical

projects. He repaired the and replaced the walkways which ran around the outer wall of the Tower, replaced the lead and the cannon on the roof of the White tower and refurbished the interiors of several Towers in the inner ward, something particularly demanded by the King after he had had the

misfortune of nearly falling through one of their rotting upper floors in the middle of a ceremony. Jones also enlarged the gunpowder stores for the Office of the Ordnance though curiously despite years of complaints, he did not follow through on the proposal to move the Jewel Houses from their

then home, in temporary sheds
right next to those same
gunpowder stores.

By 1640 the tower was ready
for the final stage of its make-
over, the arming and manning its
new defences. As the king was
ordering the final troops to be
trained, cannon installed and

defences placed, Thomas

Wentworth the Earl of Stafford,

and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland

arrived in London. A

controversial figure in Parliament

and a staunch supporter of the

king Parliament saw Strafford's

arrival at this moment as

suspicious. He had suggested

before that Charles use the

Tower to bring them to heel.

And now with rumours flying of

his misconduct in the Scottish

Wars and a plan to bring across

Catholic, Irish troops to put

down the quarrelous parliament

they were to say the least,

discomforted, the timing of his

arrival.

On the 25th of November 1640

Charles I visited the Tower of

London. In the company of the

Parliamentarian James Hamilton,

Earl of Cambridge, he had come

to examine the completed works

and view his new troops training.

That same day, in the king's

absence, the Earl of Strafford

was impeached by Parliament.

Seized by parliamentary guards,
he was imprisoned in the very
castle he was accused of trying
to turn against them, the Tower
of London.

2. Captain Billingsley's Round, or the First Tower Coup

*** Head up through the iron gates onto Tower Hill. The Hill has been a traditional site of protest for the people of London for centuries. Pause here overlooking the Tower, and begin the track *Captain Billingley's Round*. There is seating immediately to your left, and further up tower hill to the

right, tickets for the Tower are
available at booths to your
left***

By May 1641, after a 7 month
long trial, the Earl of
Strafford's execution at the
hands of Parliament was
becoming more and more likely.
With concerns running high in

the court, several of Charles inner circle presented ideas to the king, to save his favourite's head. A plot developed to bring Charles' northern army down to London, and spirit the Earl away to the continent. News of the plot in the north quickly leaked, but the plot had a southern component.

Sir John Suckling had petitioned the king for permission to raise troops in the service of the king of Portugal and had recruited 100 men to be put under the command of Captain Billingsley. But Sir John had other plans for his regiment.

On May 2nd 1641, Charles I ordered the Lieutenant of the Tower William Balfour to allow 100 reinforcements to enter the Tower under the command of Captain Billingsley, but refused to commit the order to paper.

Billingsley's troops were supposed to assemble that day

at the **White Horse Tavern** on
Bread Street, near modern day
St Paul's Cathedral, it was
hoped that under the cover of
the celebrations for the royal
wedding of **Princess Mary**, the
mass gathering of soldiers would
go unnoticed.

With barely half their number arrived by the time they were to depart, and those present already well in their cups, the sorry company marched on the Tower of London with the intention to overthrow its garrison and free the Earl of Strafford.

Rumour had spread however, of armed men marching on the Tower, eventually reaching the parliament by late that afternoon.

Billingley's company were stopped at the main gate to the castle by William Balfour, who questioned their right to enter,

delaying the invading force long enough for the people of London to step to the Tower's defence.

Hundreds of Londoners turned out to blockade the Tower, by land and by river, buying parliament vital time to send troops to put legitimate

reinforcements into the fortress,
and to take Billingsley and his
men into custody. The Earl of
Newport, Constable of the
Tower was quickly dispatched to
take up residence in the fortress
for its protection. The people of
London stood vigil over the
Tower for several days, until
they were assured of its safety.

As the focus of the plot,
parliament decided that the Earl
of Strafford posed too great a
danger to be allowed to live, he
was *homo homini lupus*, the man
that is a wolf to other men
according to the pamphleteers.

The Earl was executed, on
Tower Hill by Parliamentary

authority on 12th of May 1641,
just 10 days after the failed
plot.

3. Lieutenant Balfour's Castle, or the peoples' Tower

***When you are ready, begin
the track Lieutenant Balfour's

castle, and proceed into the
tower, passing under the middle
tower and into the inner ward
of the fortress and past the
Bell Tower.***

The people of London were
very discerning about the
security of the castle which
controlled their city, supported

their trade and dominated their river. It is fair to say then that as Lieutenant of the Tower William Balfour was more than popular, he was trusted.

As part of the May 1641 plot to take the Tower and free the Earl of Strafford, Balfour had received orders from the king to

permit entry to 100 troops raised by Sir John Suckling to reinforce the fortress, but with suspicion rife and rumours spreading through the city of armed men lurking by the Tower the people of London intervened and Balfour kept the gates locked against the intruders.

Following the failure of the Plot
Balfour was called to account
for himself in Parliament.

In his questioning by Parliament
Balfour answered plainly that
though dubious of the order,
true to the King's command he
had intended to allow entry to
Suckling's troops. The king was

after all the king, but following
the public protests he kept the
council of the crowd and
parliament and barred the door
to them.

His testimony must have
satisfied parliament, for he was
shortly returned to the Tower
as Lieutenant. And endured in

the post for a further 7 months without incident.

When in December 1641, Balfour would leave his post. Either at the King's request or due to pressing concerns over his lands in Ireland, he was obliged to have publish a pamphlet explaining his departure to quell

the outcry of the city. The Earl of Newport, constable of Tower and Balfour's superior was once again forced to move into the fortress to reassure London of its safety.

***4. Colonel Lunsford's Ascension,
or When the convict ran the
prison***

***On your right you will see
the steps up to the Medieval
Palace above Traitors gate,
follow the route through the
Palace and onto the Inner
Curtain wall. To your right you
can overlook the river down
which parliament's envoys would
have travelled to reach the

Tower. Pause here and start the track *Colonel Lunsford's Ascension, or When the convict ran the prison ****

Colonel Thomas Lunsford was personally appointed to the role of the Lieutenant of the Tower of London in December 1641, by Charles I, to immediate

outcry from the city and
parliament.

Lunsford was notorious. In 1632
he was ordered before Charles'
personal court the Star Chamber
accused of assault, poaching and
beating the servants of a
neighbouring landowner, by 1633
he back accused of attempting

to murder the same neighbour.

Committed to Newgate for the

offence Lunsford contrived to

escape and fled to the

continent. Upon his return he

quickly took up with the

burgeoning cavalier movement in

the royal court. Needless to say

he did not inspire the confidence

of the city.

On the first day of his
lieutenancy it was incredulously
ordered in the Commons "That
the Gentlemen that serve for
the City, and Mr. Tomkins, Mr.
Martin, and Mr. Peard, shall
inquire in what Hands the Tower
of London now is: And have

Power to send for Parties,
Witnesses, Papers, Records.”

The response in the city was immediate, the people of London blockaded the Tower, besieged Whitehall and began a vociferous pamphlet campaign against Lunsford. Some claiming his appointment to be part of a

catholic plot to overthrow the city! Others argued he was interfering with trade, as merchants dare not bring their gold into the Tower. Even parliament published a number of declarations against Lunsford labeling him unfit for the role.

Within a day of his appointment the Earl of Newport, Constable of the Tower and Lunsford's direct superior was ordered to again take up residence in the fortress to safeguard its interests from its new Lieutenant. The city meanwhile had quickly stationed itself outside. Throughout London

precautions had been taken to safeguard the city against attack. Drawing chains across the streets hinder horsemen and boiling water to douse any incoming troops Londoners took up arms against possible invasion.

Lunsford's lieutenancy lasted 4 days, before Charles relented and removed him from the role.

5. Lord Byron's Responsibility,

or keeping the peace

*****Start the track *Lord Byron's***

Responsibility, or keeping the

***peace* as you head towards the**

Lanthorn Tower, and make your

way through the Tower to

continue on the inner curtain

wall.***

On the 26 of December 1641

Sir John Byron took up the

mantle of Lieutenant of the

Tower of London. In the

unenviable position of following

the despised Colonel Lunsford, a

known criminal into the role,

Byron entered the Tower with explicit instructions from the king "to give no just cause of offence".

From the day of his arrival the Tower was blockaded by the people of London, determined to protect themselves from the tumult at the castle. They took

great care that no supplies should reach the fortress, and most certainly that its troops and armaments should not be increased.

Claims continued in popular pamphlets that for want of a Lieutenant they could trust trade in the city was dwindling, and

money being kept out of the
Royal Mint, which was
headquartered in the Tower.

Byron they claimed was a
“stranger to the city”, having
not held office there before,
unlike the parliamentary nominee
for the role Sir John Conyers,
and the city had taken a strong
dislike to him.

Byron quickly received a visit from the City Sheriffs, the enforcers for London's Common Council. The Sheriffs insisted that the new warders ordered to take up duties in the castle several months before, be removed, despite the new Lieutenant's protests that they

had been recruited on the orders of both Parliament and king in aid of the Towers security.

When requested to leave a copy of the order for their removal with him, the Sheriffs refused, and quickly withdrew. Writing to his friend, Secretary of state Sir Edward Nicholas, byron lamented 'I desired them to

leave a copy of this order with me, but their wisdoms would by no means consent to it. By this, Sir, you may see that though I carry myself never so fairly, they are resolved to pick quarrels with me'.

Byrons frustration with the position comes into sharp focus

in his correspondence with
Nicholas where he rails against
the blockaders threatening if
they were to 'go about to
starve me, or offer any other
violence, though I cannot promise
to keep this place long in the
condition I am in, yet I will sell
both it and my life at as dear
a rate as I can.' But he

remained determined to respect his directive to give no just cause for offence. So much so that when summoned by parliament in January 1641 Byron remained in the Tower await permission from both the king and the city before attending, despite threats of being labelled a delinquent.

Byron even joined the city and parliament in their war of words, publishing his own letter to parliament in a pamphlet 'in defence of himself and to satisfy the world' as to his conduct as lieutenant.

6. *Captain Skippon's Request, or the politest coup*

***Pause here between the
Lanthorn and Salt Towers, and
start the track *Captain Skippon's
Request, or the politest coup.*

Down to your right you can see
the Postern or back Gate of the
Tower.***

On the 12th of January 1642

Sir John Byron, Lieutenant of

the Tower of the London,

answered a summons to attend

Parliament, amid growing

concerns for the security of the

castle from that quarter, and

increasingly regular suggestions

that the Trained Bands, London's

militia come police force, be

assigned to join the populace in encircling the Tower.

Upon news of Byron's departure from the fortress, the parliamentarian Captain, Philip Skippon, marched out with a contingent of 500 men from the parliamentary guard, with the intention of surprising the

fortress, and taking it for the
parliamentary cause.

Coming by evening to the back
of the Tower, they waited while
Skippon sent one man into the
castle to address the Captain of
the Hamleteers, the Tower
Hamlets Trained Band, and by

acknowledged right the Tower's
guards.

Skippon's message requested that
the Hamleteers march out of the
Tower to meet him and join
under his command. But the
Sergeant of the Hamleteers
would have none of it,
answering their regiment had

come there upon the command of Lieutenant Byron, and they would not depart without his order.

Skippon replied that Byron would not come again to the Tower as Lieutenant, but that if the Sergeant "scrupled to come out of the Tower, he desired him to

draw his men up to the iron gate, and upon the shooting of a musket to be ready to assist him.”

Before the Sergeant could consider the offer, Skippon was proved wrong. At 10 o'clock that night Byron was released by parliament and returned to

his charge, secure, if unhappy,
in his position. Foiling the
supposed plan to usurp the
Tower and install a new
Lieutenant.

Skippon and his troops quietly
withdrew. Though they faced no
censure, indeed Parliament would
shortly issue its own ordinance
endorsing their attempt.

7. Lord Byron's relief, or the

King flees the Castle

*****Make your way through the**

Salt Tower and start the track

Lord Byron's relief, or the King

flees the Castle, when you

arrive back on the Inner Curtain

wall.***

Having survived Skippon's attempted coup, Byron redoubled his efforts petitioning the king to be removed from the post of Lieutenant of the Tower. With pressure coming from parliament to the same end, and extreme rumblings of discontent in the city Charles I had little choice but to grant Byron's request.

Byron gratefully withdrew from
the post in February 1642.

Ceding to pressure from
parliament the king finally
appointed their favoured nominee
Sir John Conyers to the
Lieutenancy on February 11th
1642, it was his third nomination

for the post. This was one of Charles final acts in London.

The king, had already withdrawn to Hampton Court for safety in January, with the Tower now well and truly out of his control he fled north to begin raising support in the counties. On the 22nd of August 1642 in Nottingham he raised his

Standard a gesture which
officially marked the start of
the Civil War which had been
brewing since 1639.

From Conyers the Lieutenancy
passed, without the kings
intervention to Alderman
Pennington, of the city of
London's Common Council,

cementing the Tower as not only the heart of the city, but within the parliamentary gift, and as such well beyond the kings reach.

8. Sir Kenelm Digby, Spy, or the Building of the Lines of Communication

***Pass through the Broad Arrow
Tower and begin the track *Sir
Kenelm Digby, Spy, or the
Building of the Lines of
Communication* as you pass along
the refortified wall between the
Broad Arrow and Constable
Towers.***

In 1642 works began on a massive defensive emplacement which would encircle London - the lines of communication.

Sheriff's cleared the area around London's city boundaries, striking and burning great swathes of temporary buildings, sheds and even homes constructed illegally outside of the city. Their

purpose was to prevent anyone from surprising the city from the cover of the ramshackle maze of lean-tos and sheds, or of course spies sneaking in, and to provide a clean shot for the cannon should any arm try to march on London.

Parliament ordered that a great ring of earthwork bastions and gates, connected by deep ditches and earth walls, be constructed surrounding the city. This was a major undertaking, but the people of London proved equal to it. Organised by their parishes and guilds Londoners turned out, whole families in tow in the

height of the summer to dig
and pile earth in front of the
city to protect their homes.

Lithgow related how good
matrons would bring out food
and drink for their families,
picnicking at the top of the
earthworks during their breaks,
and how gaggles of women
would form to dig and gossip

together as they built the cities
defences.

Kenelm Digby, an infamous
royalist spy was caught
overlooking the Lines on one of
his frequent trips between
London and Oxford. Meanwhile
John Webb, a surveyor reported
the particulars of the Lines,

their length and construction
back to the king. Like many
modern scholars, Webb probably
had his doubts about the
efficacy of the lines. The works
between the bastions were too
long to be defended efficiently,
they claim, and would require
too much manpower to patrol,

let alone to hold against

invaders.

But with the heavily armed

tower at the heart of this new

emplacement, and the Trained

Bands of London defending it,

the trouble of over long

walkways was a minor one. The

tower's guns could reach, at a

minimum, well across Southwark
and north up beyond
Whitechapel.

The king would have to think
twice before approaching the
city.

***9. Lord Lyttleton's Larceny, or
the theft of the Great Seal***

***As you exit the Constable
Tower make your way down the
steps off the Inner Curtain Wall
and begin the track *Lord
Lyttleton's Larceny, or the theft
of the Great Seal*. Keeping the
Jewel House to your right and
the White Tower to your left,
make your way toward Tower
Green.***

With the king gone to York,
where he was attempt`ing to set
up his own government, the real
business of running the country
was still continuing in London -
thanks to parliament's possession
of the Great Seal.

The Great Seal conferred the authority for Parliament to make proclamations and sue out writs - in the king's absence the smooth running of the country quite literally rested on parliament's possession of a mere 2 lb of metal. Without the seal, amongst other things parliament could not bring

judgement in criminal cases, or even elect new members to replace those who followed the king to the North.

The Seal was entrusted to the Lord Keeper, Lord Thomas Lyttleton. Who in quick order abandoned Parliament, making his way by stealth out of London

with the **Great Seal** in his possession. Lyttleton ran straight for the king's new court giving over the seal to his majesty's rightful possession.

This dramatic turn of events could have spelled the end for Parliament and curtailed the civil war in a matter of months. It

was here however that ownership of the Tower truly came into its own for parliament. For, the Tower was one of only two officially recognised royal mints in the country and by far the largest. Royal mints had two primary functions - producing coin, and producing medals, but those were not the limits of its

scope, if called upon, among those other things, it could produce a new the Great Seal.

After two days of discussion Parliament gave the order and a new Seal was cast.

The Tower mint was one of the only places in the world that

could produce a legitimate seal.

And it was only with a

legitimate seal that parliament

could resume the business of

government, rather than fading

away awaiting the kings

forgiveness.

**10. *Mrs Sherbourne's Eviction, or
fortifying the Tower***

***As you arrive at Tower
Green you will see benches to
your right and left and behind
you by the steps at the corner
of the White Tower, take a
seat with a view of the Queen's
House and begin the track *Mrs.*
Sherbourne's Eviction, or
fortifying the Tower. Please do
be aware if you prefer to stand

that the Guardsmen stationed in front of the Jewel House frequently march through this walkway.***

With the King's withdrawal from the city in February 1642, and war looking imminent Parliament went to work securing the Tower from royalist influence

and preparing for the conflict to come.

Their first order of business was to request that the supplies of arms and powder, which had sat in the armouries at Hull since the Bishop's Wars were returned to restock the Tower (and to remove them from the

king's grasp - he tried in April

1642 to take Hull). And to

bring in the Trained bands about

the city, to begin training.

With the arms from Hull safely

ensconced in the Tower by July

1642, parliament ordered that

several of its members be

“appointed to confer with the

Lieutenant of the Tower, and to consider of some Means for the Safety of that Place", by the 11th it was ordered that the Hamletteers, the Tower Hamlets Trained Band, take up a strict watch in the castle, and of the surrounding area.

In August the Lieutenant of the Tower was ordered to put the prisoners in the Tower into strict confinement. Prisoners would often have the freedom of the precinct and would frequently employ their own retinue of servants who could move freely in and out of the Tower about their duties. With

the official outbreak of war
prisoners were quickly confined
to their rooms to prevent their
association with one-another, and
their servants forbidden from
talking to anyone in the Tower
or leaving the castle, lest they
reveal information on its
defences.

The staff of the Tower

meanwhile, found their loyalties

divided, those who were for the

King applied for leave to attend

him at his new courts in York

then Oxford, or simply fled.

Positions were filled where they

could be, and troops and guns

began to flood into the castle.

Emplacements were armed and

guarded. The offices of
Armouries and the Ordnance
began working overtime to
prepare for war and to support
the cities defences.

Paranoia was high and
pamphleteers saw royalists
everywhere. One pamphlet
claimed that some enterprising

Cavaliers had stolen cannon
from the Tower Wharf and
were planning to ensconce it on
the steeple of the church of St
Mary Overie now Southwark
Cathedral in an attempt to take
command of the city.

In November one Mrs.

Sherbourne and her family, fell

afoul of the rising tensions,
when by order of the House of
Commons itself, they were
evicted from their home in the
Tower. Her two sons having left
to fight for the king, parliament
declared the whole family "all
Persons very ill-affected to the
Peace of the Kingdom" and
demanded they be removed and

their home reallocated to one of the many officers brought in to support the war effort.

11. *Carew Hervey Mildmay's*

key, or stand-off in the Jewel House

*****Make your way back across the courtyard with Jewel House to your left and turn down**

the slope to the far side of
the **White Tower**, by the
demolished **Wardrobe Tower** by
the entrance to the modern day
royal armouries. There are
benches to your right if you
wish to sit. Pause here and
start the track *Carew Hervey*
Mildmay's key, or stand-off in
*the Jewel House****

In the 1640s the Royal Jewel houses, both upper the home of the crown jewels and lower the home to the kings plate, had the dubious pleasure of being housed in a small addition to the White Tower, next to the powder stores. Though comment was made many times on the

wisdom of this decision it was not to be changed until well after the wars were over.

Despite their rather explosive location however the jewel houses were eminently secure even, occasionally from the king himself. As parliamentary control over the Tower had grown and

the king's departure began to look imminent, strict controls were placed upon his household's access to the Jewel Houses, so much so that Charles had to apply to parliament to be allowed to procure the best plate for use at a royal banquet. The fear was that once in possession of such valuable

items the king might pawn
them in order to fund his
conflict with parliament.

In many ways they were right,
one of Charles first acts upon
coming to war with his
parliament was to send his wife,
Henrietta Maria, and their
children to the continent for

safety. The queens task once away was to pawn those crown jewels they were able to smuggle out.

Parliament itself wasted no time in converting the kings plate into coin to support the war effort, a practice that continued for the duration of the conflict.

In 1649 following the execution of the king, it was ordered that an inventory be taken of the Jewel House for the purpose of their being sold off. The task fell to the Clerk of the Jewel House Carew Henry Mildmay.

Given the key by the Master of the Jewel House, Mildmay began

the inventory, before locking himself in the Jewel House, and refusing all entreaties to come out. The warders were summoned, and the door broken in. Mildmay was carried off to the Fleet prison for refusing to give up the key.

Regardless, the business of selling off the kings jewels and wardrobe was mostly completed by 1650.