

# Factsheet

## **The Constable of the Tower of London**

- The Constable is the most senior appointment at the Tower of London. Our current Constable is General Sir Richard Dannatt GCB CBE MC (as of 1 August 2009), who will be installed as the 159<sup>th</sup> Constable of the Tower in a ceremony on 7 October 2009
- Formerly, in the absence of the Sovereign, the Constable would have been among the most powerful men in London. Today the Constable retains the right of direct access to the Sovereign. Since 1784 the Constable has always been a senior military officer
- William the Conqueror appointed the first Constable, Geoffrey de Mandeville, in the eleventh century. Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, also served as Constable for 26 years from 1826 - The Waterloo Barracks, where the Crown Jewels are now on display, was built while he was Constable and named after his famous victory over Napoleon. The Duke changed the appointment of Yeoman Warders (beefeaters) to being based on distinguished military service and he also made improvements to the Tower itself. By 1841, in the words of the Surgeon-Major, the moat was 'impregnated with putrid animal and excrementitious matter...and emitting a most obnoxious smell'. Several men from the garrison died and 80 were in hospital due to the poor water supply. Local cholera outbreaks were blamed on the moat. The duke drained it and created the dry ditch, or fosse, that visitors see today
- The Constable's term is five years. The installation of a new Constable takes place on Tower Green with much pomp and

ceremony and involves the Lord Chamberlain, as the monarch's representative, handing the Tower's golden keys to the Constable, as a symbol of his custodianship

- As well as being one of the most honourable positions in the Crown's service, the Constable of the Tower was once one of the most profitable. Perks of the job included any horses, oxen or pigs and sheep that fell off London Bridge
- For every foot of livestock that stumbles into the Tower's moat the Constable received a penny, and any cart that fell in became his property. Also all the herbage growing on Tower Hill belonged to the Constable
- The Constable was entitled to demand 6s 8d a year from the owners of all boats fishing for sprats between the Tower and the sea; 1s a year from all ships carrying herring to London and 2d from each pilgrim who came to London by sea to worship at the shrine of St James
- Every ship that came upstream to the city had to moor at Tower Wharf to unload a portion of its cargo for the Constable. These included oysters, mussels, cockles, rushes and wine. This tradition is still upheld at the colourful ceremony of the Constable's Dues which is held annually. When a ship of the Royal Navy visits the Port of London the Captain, with an escort from the ship's company, presents a barrel of wine (the "Dues") to the Constable on Tower Green