

## **Middle Ages – rise of the city and statute book**

The following Information report describes the rise of London and of the statute book between the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the 14<sup>th</sup> century, because at this time was the biggest economic growth. The report is based upon information from the internet addresses, as for instance Wikipedia (Tower of London, Magna Carta), [www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon](http://www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon) and [www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/). I have structured the report into the following paragraphs: “Who lived there?”, “What did London look like?”, “How was London organized?”, “The Tower of London in connection with the Magna Carta”. The purpose of this report is to see how the development of English society, of London and politics was and which important buildings were already built in the Middle Ages. Another purpose of this report is to see how important the Magna Carta is for England today.

### **Who lived in London in the Middle Ages?**

The medieval streets were full of different people, like traders, beggars, thieves, herders, farm-workers and livestock. Moreover, French merchants moved to London after the Norman Conquest. The French merchants wanted the towns to be managed by themselves independently from the king. Most people were Christians and members of the Roman Catholic faith. There was just a small group of Jews, who were expelled in 1290.

This table illustrates the growth of London’s population.

Year	Inhabitants
700	5000
900	5000
1066	10.000
1100	15.000
1180	40.000
1300	90.000
1350	50.000
1500	125.000

In the light of these numbers it becomes clear that the Black Death in 1349 killed many people, because the number of inhabitants decreased between the year 1300 to 1350.

### **What did London look like?**

London was the biggest city in medieval (12<sup>th</sup> century-14<sup>th</sup> century) England. The biggest part of London lay inside the stone wall which was built by the Romans. The big gates were closed and guarded at night. Outside around the wall was a moat and farmland. As the population increased, small suburbs developed behind the gates. Edward the Confessor built a royal place in Westminster. At that time Westminster Hall and in 1365 the Jewel tower were built. The Royal Westminster palace became the centre of government, finance and law. Westminster Abbey was built 100 years

before the Royal Westminster palace. Around 1185 the first stone bridge was built across the Thames. Suburbs developed and houses and shops were built. Along the “shopping streets” were traders and some small streets were named according to the trade, which was carried out there, like Fish Street, or Bread Street. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the first stone houses were built. In this century many churches and monasteries were developed. One of the most well-known churches is St. Paul’s Cathedral. The biggest hospital was St. Mary’s Hospital with 90 beds.

### **How was London organized?**

Barges transported wood, grain and stone. Ships imported overseas goods like wine, silk, wool and cloth over the Thames.

The waste of the toilets slid into cesspits which was taken away at night and was used as manure outside the city. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the built of pipe systems started and brought fresh water into the town.

Most children had some form of education, from their parents, in school, or as trainees. The schools were all integrated in the church, but not many children could read or write.

The people of medieval London did not have much medical knowledge; therefore a lot of diseases were life-threatening. About 1349 the Black Death reached London and just the rich sick people got help from the doctor. The beggars or other poor people got just help from monks.

### **Tower of London and the Magna Carta in a historical context**

The Tower of London or “the Majesty’s Royal Palace and Fortress” is a historic castle in central London. The Tower of London played an important role in the English history and therefore I will describe the development of the English statute book on this example. The tower had a lot of responsibilities and tasks like an armory, a treasury, a menagerie, the home of the Royal Mint, a public records office, the home of the Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom and as a powerbase in peacetime and a refuge in times of crises. The castle is made up of three wards.

#### William the Conqueror:

*Tower of London:* The innermost ward is the White Tower, which is the oldest part of the tower and was built by William the Conqueror in 1078. The Tower was a symbol of oppression inflicted by the new ruling elite. With the Tower the new ruling elite show their might.



The white Tower

### Richard Lionheart:

*Tower of London:* The inner ward (which contains the White Tower in the north, east and west) was built by Richard Lionheart.

### King John of England:

*Tower of London:* King Richard's successor was his brother John, who stayed often at the tower and was the first to kept lions and other exotic animals there.

*Magna Carta:* While King John ruled, London was dominated by riots. The reasons for the outbreak of the riots were higher taxes, unsuccessful wars and a conflict with the Pope. This made the feudal Barons angry and they forced the King to limit his power by law. Some Barons started to conspire against King John between 1209 and 1212. In 1215 the Barons presented him with the Magna Carta, which was influenced by the "Charter of Liberties" from Henry I, in 1100(in this charter he limited his power in specified areas).By signing the Magna Carta, King John proclaimed liberties, like the liberty of the church and accepted that his will was not arbitrary, but he went back on his word as soon as he could. His opponents, who were in control of the Tower and London were angry with King John and invited Prince Louis of France to come and take the throne. Louis planned an invasion in 1216. John died in the fight for his crown and his son Henry III was the next King.



King John of England and a copy of the Magna Carta(1215)

### Henry III:

*Tower of London:* The whole Kingdom had a crisis. Henry III included some new towers on the waterfront which he used as a refuge.

*Magna Carta:* Most people wanted Louis as their king and Henry had to do something against the rebels. Guala Bicchieri, who was a papal legate, was against the war between Louis and the Barons and issued a Charter of Liberty. Henry signed this Charter which should have claimed the rebels. This charter was shorter than the Magna Carta, but was basically the same. 1225 he included a new statement in the Charter. This version of the charter was the first which entered the English law. In 1237 the Carta Prava was developed. This contract lasted for a long time.

### Edward I:

*Tower of London:* Finally the outer ward and a Tower Warf were built by Edward I. He converted the tower in to the largest and strongest. He created another curtain wall and a new moat. He made the Tower useful for the military and residential, but he did not spend much time in the Tower. Since the time of Edward, the tower has been a prison.

*Magna Carta:* In 1297, he formed a new charter for a new tax and it was similar to the Carta Prava. Some clauses are still on the statute today:

#### Clause 1, the freedom of the English Church.

“FIRST, We have granted to God, and by this our present Charter have confirmed, for Us and our Heirs for ever, that the Church of England shall be free, and shall have all her whole Rights and Liberties inviolable. We have granted also, and given to all the Freemen of” our Realm, for Us and our Heirs for ever, these Liberties underwritten, to have and to hold to them and their Heirs, of Us and our Heirs for ever.” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna\\_Carta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta))

#### Clause 9, the "ancient liberties" of the City of London.

“City of London shall have all the old Liberties and Customs which it hath been used to have. Moreover We will and grant, that all other Cities, Boroughs, Towns, and the Barons of the Five Ports, as with all other Ports, shall have all their Liberties and free Customs.” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna\\_Carta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta))

#### Clause 29, a right to due process.

“NO Freeman shall be taken or imprisoned, or be diseased of his Freehold, or Liberties, or free Customs, or be outlawed, or exiled, or any other wise destroyed; nor will We not pass upon him, nor condemn him, but by lawful judgment of his Peers, or by the Law of the land. We will sell to no man; we will not deny or defer to any man either Justice or Right.” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna\\_Carta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta))

## **Conclusion**

Finally one can say, one important part is that not everything changed in the last 800 years. Some constructions which were built in the Middle Ages still exists today as, for instance, the Tower of London, the Jewel tower, the St. Paul's Cathedral or the St. Mary's hospital. Moreover, some of the constructions are as important as in the past.

As mentioned earlier in this text, the the most significant aspect appears to be the Magna Carta, because England has not a constitution like Germany and therefore the most important points are still remaining on the statute book of England and Wales. The Magna Carta is responsible for all principles of the English law. Today, nothing would be the same in England without the Magna Carta and the development of the Clauses, which gave more freedom and rights to London's citizens. Magna Carta is basic for London's society and government.

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