

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

N° 488

## A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : The Tower of London

Location : London

State Party : United Kingdom

Date : December 28, 1987

## B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria II and IV.

## C) JUSTIFICATION

On Christmas Day 1066 following his victory at Hastings, William the Conqueror was crowned king at Westminster Abbey. He immediately set about fortifying London, his new chief city. To command the city on its seaward and most vulnerable side he quickly had an earth-and-timber keep built on top of an artificial mound in the southeast angle of the ancient Roman walls. A ditch and a palisade protected the yard on the northwest side.

Ten years later, in full control of England, William replaced these traditional defenses with a grand edifice in stone, a sort of palace-fortress which was immediately named the Tower of London. Built during the 1080s and modified over the centuries (the cupolas of the corner towers are from the reign of Henry VIII, the windows were nearly all enlarged in 1715), the White Tower, as it is now called, became the centrepiece of the complex of fortifications, courtyards, and buildings which extends over 7.3 hectares. The whole ensemble came to be known as the Tower of London, the name which originally applied only to the keep of 1076.

At the heart of this defensive stronghold, which affords a comprehensive review of medieval and post-medieval construction techniques, the White Tower (so named because of its whitewashed walls) both exemplifies Norman architecture of the time and is unique for the ambitiousness of its design. It is undeniably the most significant element of the ensemble for World Heritage, even if other parts of the Tower of London are associated with tragic moments in the history of the English monarchy, for example the "Bloody Tower", where the sons of Edward IV were assassinated in 1483.

The White Tower, an impressive parallelepipedal block measuring 35.9m x 32.6m on the ground, rises to more than 27 meters above the mound. No expense was spared in constructing this monument which symbolized the power of the new ruler. The massive walls (4.6m thick at the base) were made of Kentish limestone, with ashlar of Caen stone, imported at great expense from the conquerors' Norman domain, laid at the corners and around the doors, windows and arrow-slits.

Inside, the three principal levels of the keep incorporates the requirements of both a defensive work and a royal residence. It includes a chapel situated over two storeys of lower chambers which jut out from the southeastern wall. At the corners of the building are four turrets: three are rectangular, while the fourth, located at the northeast angle, is circular and has a spiral staircase. This massive Norman castle dominates the whole of the fortified works of the Tower of London, which include the remains of the inner curtain wall from the time of Richard the Lionhearted and John Lackland, the outer curtain built by Edward I and the numerous later constructions.

Recalling that the Castle of Durham (whose chapel built in 1072 was part of the original Norman keep) along with the nearby Cathedral were included on the World Heritage List in 1986, ICOMOS fully recommends that the Tower of London be included on the basis of criteria II and IV.

- Criterion II. A monument symbolic of royal power since the time of William the Conqueror, the Tower of London served as an outstanding model throughout the kingdom from the end of the 11th century. Like it, many keeps were built in stone, e.g. Colchester, Rochester, Hedingham, Norwich or Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight.

- Criterion IV. The White Tower is the example par excellence of the royal Norman castle in the late 11th century. The ensemble of the Tower of London is a major reference for the history of medieval military architecture.

#### ICOMOS Observations

ICOMOS draws the Committee's attention to the inconsistent value of the surroundings of the Tower of London. Alongside certain remarkable and historically valuable elements, such as Tower Bridge, outsized buildings have increasingly been built in the Docks area. The most regrettable one is the Tower Hotel, which seriously modifies the urban landscape in the St. Katherine's dock area and diminishes the monumental value of the Tower of London. ICOMOS expresses the wish that the Committee recommend that the United Kingdom authorities make strenuous efforts to protect the surroundings of the Tower of London in order to prevent any further abuse of this nature.

ICOMOS, July 1988