

The King's Wardrobe

1272 - 1307

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The King's Wardrobe

Originally that part of the King's Household which looked after his jewels, documents, robes and money and also his Privy Seal, used for his private business (as opposed to the Great Seal of the Realm, used for State documents). It was a dressing-room and store-room and adjoined to the King's bed chamber.

King Henry III (father of Edward I) developed it from this and his officers of the Wardrobe became administrative staff of his Household and began to deal also with such other matters as paying for sieges, suppressing revolts and financing expeditions to protect the King's territories in England, Wales, Scotland and France. In due course, the practice arose of the King using his Privy (or Wardrobe) Seal to authorise the clerks in his Chancery to issue documents under the Great Seal.

By King Edward I's reign (1272 – 1307) The Keeper of the Wardrobe and his junior officers were responsible not only for the King's Household account but also for recruiting for his wars, financing them and administering everything concerned with them. The Keeper of the Wardrobe served him as his military and diplomatic secretary. The Wardrobe staff had to act as paymasters to his forces and Keeper **John de Drokenesford** always had to supplement the large advances for this made from the King's Exchequer with loans, which he himself had to negotiate. He and his men were able but over-worked and attempts to settle his accounts as Keeper were still being made at his death in 1329, twenty-one years after he had left the Wardrobe service.



Wherever King Edward I went, the Wardrobe travelled with him in three wagons, each pulled by three horses, plus two more wagons, each pulled by four horses. By 1303 (and probably earlier), it was guarded by a "**Vintenarius**" named Dickon and 24 crossbowmen whom he commanded.

