



the  
togs  
of  
war



Above: More than 100 legal agreements had to be signed before work could start on the new museum. Opposite: Up to 3000 exhibits will be hung from the walls of the tower. Henry VIII's war mask is the museum's emblem.

The Tower of London houses about 30 000 items of arms and armour, but lack of space means that many objects remain hidden. This will change when the £42.5m Royal Armouries Museum opens next spring in Leeds. Graham Ridout looks at one of the few privately financed initiatives to get off the ground.

NOT MANY CONTRACTS INCLUDE bill items for supplying 10 birds of prey, six hunting dogs and six horses. But, then again, there aren't many contracts like the new £42.5m Royal Armouries Museum being built in the centre of Leeds.

When the museum opens next spring, the animals will enliven hunting and jousting demonstrations held on open ground next to the 27 400 m<sup>2</sup> building.

Animals are not the only things out of the ordinary about this project. It is one of very few private finance initiatives that have got off the ground (see page 46). It is also a collective of four separate contracts — each one considerably different.

The prime contract is a £22m develop and construct package let to Alfred McAlpine Building for constructing the museum to little more than shell and core stage. Six months before the end of McAlpine's 27-month contract, areas of the museum will be handed over for a £7m fit-out which will be tackled as a management contract led by project manager Heery International. Dovetailing with these two contracts is

the phased handover of the gallery space so that experts from the Royal Armouries can mount the exhibits.

The fourth contract involves packing the exhibits presently housed in the Tower of London and then moving them to a secure warehouse in east London. From there, they will be called-off as required and transported to Leeds.

According to project manager Heery International's senior project manager Mike Clayton: "The entire operation is a huge logistics exercise, making sure everyone is ready when they should be. If they are not, we could get into a complete shambles."

**Putting the planning to the test**

Just how effective the planning has been will be put to the test in just over three months' time. That's when McAlpine is due to hand over the first area for the fitting-out works. First impressions suggest that hitting this deadline will be a tall order. However, the picture is somewhat misleading as the basic level of finishes is far lower

than for many other building types.

For instance, there are no raised floors or suspended ceilings except in the office and administration areas. Floor finishes are a mix of beech sprung floors in the galleries and terrazzo, granite or limestone in other areas. Walls and columns will be plastered and painted. For the main part, the ceilings will be fair-faced concrete. But rather than opting for a flat finish, architect Derek Walker Associates chose to make a feature of the coffered underside of the floor slabs. The sculpted profile will remain unadulterated by any lighting tracks as these have been designed to hide behind rebates in the ribs of the precast concrete coffered slabs.

It was decided to use precast rather than insitu concrete, says McAlpine's senior project manager Martin Whiteley, "because it would have been quite hard to achieve the required finish under site conditions".

Concrete frame contractor SCC of Sheffield undertook the task of casting the 1800 mm square coffered precast ▶