

Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery

Eric Ives

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Lincoln College, Oxford

To my many friends who have grappled with
The Reign of Edward VI

LADY
JANE GREY
A Tudor Mystery

ERIC IVES

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**
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PREFACE

JANE Grey, the rightful queen of England, was deposed on 19 July 1553 and beheaded on 12 February 1554. This may not be what the text books say, but it is the conclusion offered by this study. The book is not a conventional biography. Jane Grey did not live to see seventeen and the successive crises which destroyed her lasted, each of them, for only a fortnight. It is, rather, ‘a mystery’, a detective story, in English parlance, ‘a whodunnit’. It asks how it was that in 1553 England came suddenly and desperately close to civil war and why those involved behaved as they did. It surveys the facts, discusses the options, suggests where the evidence leads, and weaves the discussion around as much as can be known of the remarkable girl who in right was the fourth of the Tudor monarchs and the first of the Dudley line. As with the solutions offered to every ‘mystery’, it is for the jury of readers to be persuaded or otherwise.

The notion of ‘a mystery’ determines the structure of the book. It looks first at the available evidence and then assesses each of the protagonists in turn. Next the complexities of the key decisions are unravelled. The narrative of Jane’s thirteen-day reign follows and finally the focus switches back to the sixteen-year-old and the last six months which elevated her to martyrdom.

In the course of what has been a tortuous investigation I owe a debt of gratitude to many archivists and librarians, notably Philippa Bassett (University of Birmingham), Andrea Clarke (British Library), Bridget Clifford (Royal Armouries), Tanya Cooper (National Portrait Gallery), Michael Frost (Inner Temple Library), Wayne Hammond (Williams College, Mass.), Sonje Marie Isaacs (the Lady Jane Internet Museum), Alexandra Kess-Hall (University of Zurich), Sheila O’Connell (British Museum), Michael Page (Surrey History Centre), Jayne Ringrose (University of Cambridge), Susan Tomkins (Beaulieu), Naomi van Loo (New College,

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TITLES AND OFFICES

IN the years covered by this study, titles and office-holders changed. What follows lists the principal identifications; see also the index.

<i>Admiral</i>		<i>see</i> : Dudley, John [I]; Seymour, Thomas; Fiennes, Edward
<i>Brandon, Charles</i>	1514–45	duke of Suffolk
	1539–45	lord great master and president of the council
<i>Brandon, Frances</i>	1533	marchioness of Dorset
	1551–9	duchess of Suffolk
	1555–9	Lady Stokes
<i>Canterbury, Archbishop of</i>	1533–55	<i>see</i> : Cranmer, Thomas
<i>Chancellor</i>	1544–7	Thomas Wriothesley
	1547–52	Richard Rich
	1552–3	Thomas Goodrich
<i>Clinton, Lord</i>		<i>see</i> : Fiennes, Edward
<i>Cranmer, Thomas</i>	1533–55	archbishop of Canterbury
<i>Darcy, Thomas</i>	1550–1	vice-chamberlain of the household
	1551	Lord Darcy of Chiche
	1551–3	lord chamberlain of the household
<i>Dorset, marchioness of</i>		<i>see</i> : Brandon, Frances
<i>Dorset, marquis of</i>		<i>see</i> : Grey, Henry
<i>Dudley, John [I]</i>	1542	Viscount Lisle
	1543–7, 1549–50	admiral
	1547	earl of Warwick
	1547–50	lord great chamberlain
	1550–3	lord great master and president of the council
	1551	duke of Northumberland

<i>Dudley, John [II]</i>	1553–4	earl of Warwick
<i>Durham, bishop of</i>	1530–52, 1554–9	Cuthbert Tunstal
<i>Ely, bishop of</i>	1534–54	<i>see</i> : Goodrich, Thomas
<i>Fiennes, Edward</i>	1515–85	Lord Clinton
	1550–4	admiral
<i>French Ambassadors</i>	1551–3	René de Laval de Boisdauphin
	1553–6	Antoine de Noailles
<i>Goodrich, Thomas</i>	1534–54	bishop of Ely
	1552–3	chancellor
<i>Grey, Henry</i>	1533	marquis of Dorset
	1551–4	duke of Suffolk
<i>Hastings, Francis</i>	1529	Lord Hastings
	1544–60	earl of Huntingdon
<i>Hastings, Henry</i>	1544	Lord Hastings
	1560–95	earl of Huntingdon
<i>Herbert, William [I]</i>	1551	Lord Herbert
	1551–70	earl of Pembroke
<i>Herbert, William [II]</i>	1551	Lord Herbert
	1570–1601	earl of Pembroke
<i>Hertford, earl of</i>		<i>see</i> : Seymour
<i>Huntingdon, earl of</i>		<i>see</i> : Hastings
<i>Imperial Ambassadors</i>	1529–45	Eustace Chapuys
	1544–1550	François Van der Delft
	1550–3	Jehan Scheyfve
	1553–5	Simon Renard
<i>Lisle, Viscount</i>		<i>see</i> : Dudley, John [I]
<i>Lord chamberlain</i>	1551–3	Thomas lord Darcy of Chiche
<i>Lord great chamberlain</i>		<i>see</i> : Parr; Dudley, John [I]
<i>Lord great master and president of the council</i>		<i>see</i> : Brandon, Charles; Paulet; Dudley, John [I]
<i>Lord privy seal</i>		<i>see</i> : Russell, John
<i>Lord protector</i>		<i>see</i> : Seymour, Edward [I]
<i>Lord treasurer</i>		<i>see</i> : Paulet
<i>Northampton, marquis of</i>		<i>see</i> : Parr
<i>Parr, William</i>	1543–53	earl of Essex
	1547–53	marquis of Northampton
	1559–71	marquis of Northampton
	1550–3	lord great chamberlain

<i>Paulet, William</i>	1539	Lord St John
	1546–50	lord great master and president of the council
	1550	earl of Wiltshire
	1550–72	lord treasurer
	1551–72	marquis of Winchester
<i>Protector</i>		<i>see:</i> Seymour, Edward [I]
<i>Radcliffe, Henry</i>	1542–57	earl of Sussex
<i>Radcliffe, Thomas</i>	1542	Lord Fitzwalter
	1557–93	earl of Sussex
<i>Russell, John</i>	1539	Lord Russell
	1542–55	lord privy seal
	1550–5	earl of Bedford
<i>Russell, Francis</i>	1550–5	Lord Russell
	1555–85	earl of Bedford
<i>Salisbury, countess of</i>	1514–39	Margaret Pole
<i>Secretaries of state</i>	1543–7	William Paget
	1544–57	William Petre
	1550–3	William Cecil
	1553	John Cheke
<i>Seymour, Edward [I]</i>	1536	Viscount Beauchamp
	1537	earl of Hertford
	1547–9	lord protector
	1547–52	duke of Somerset
<i>Seymour, Edward [II]</i>	1547–52	earl of Hertford
<i>Seymour, Thomas</i>	1547–9	Lord Seymour
	1547–9	admiral
<i>Southampton, earl of</i>		<i>see:</i> Wriothesley, Thomas
<i>Suffolk, duke of</i>		<i>see:</i> Brandon, Charles; Grey, Henry
<i>Sussex, earl of</i>		<i>see:</i> Radcliffe
<i>Vice-chamberlain of the household</i>		<i>see:</i> Darcy
	1551–3	John Gates
<i>Winchester, bishop of</i>	1531–51, 1553–5	Stephen Gardiner
<i>Winchester, marquis of</i>		<i>see:</i> Paulet
<i>Wriothesley, Thomas</i>	1544–7	chancellor
	1544	Lord Wriothesley
	1547–50	earl of Southampton

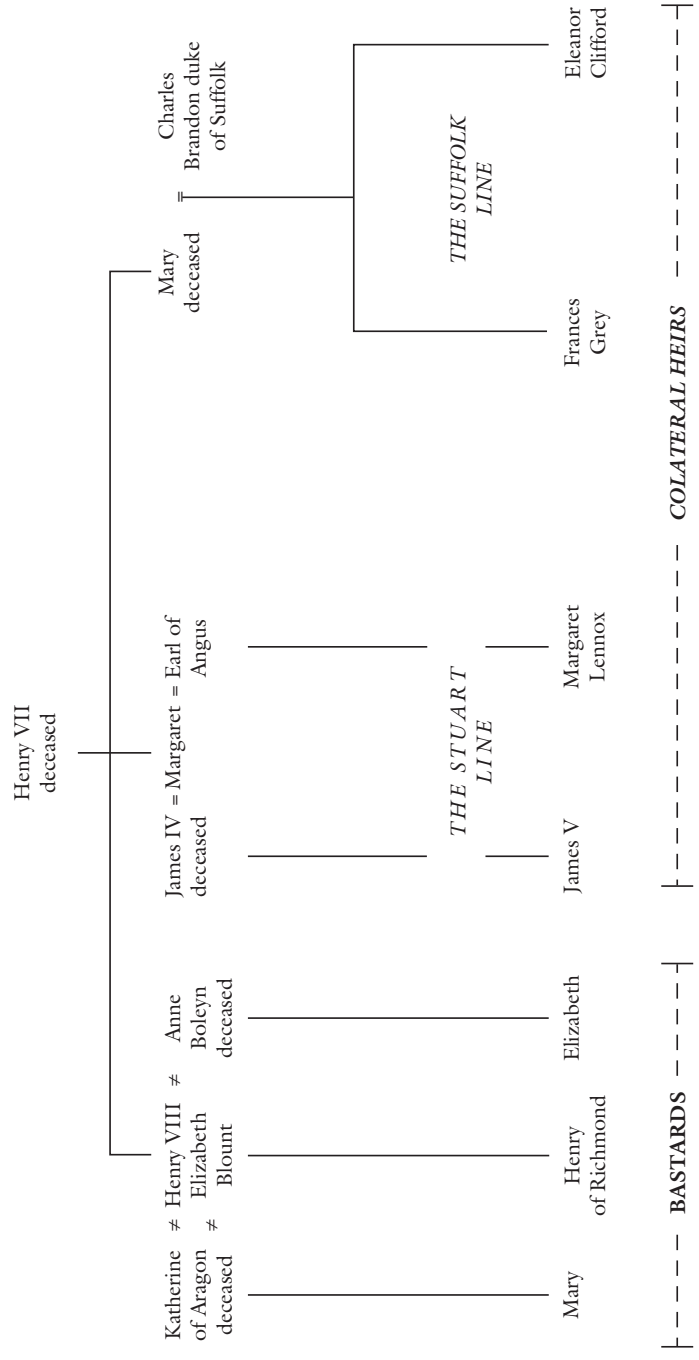


Figure 1 The Tudor family in June 1536

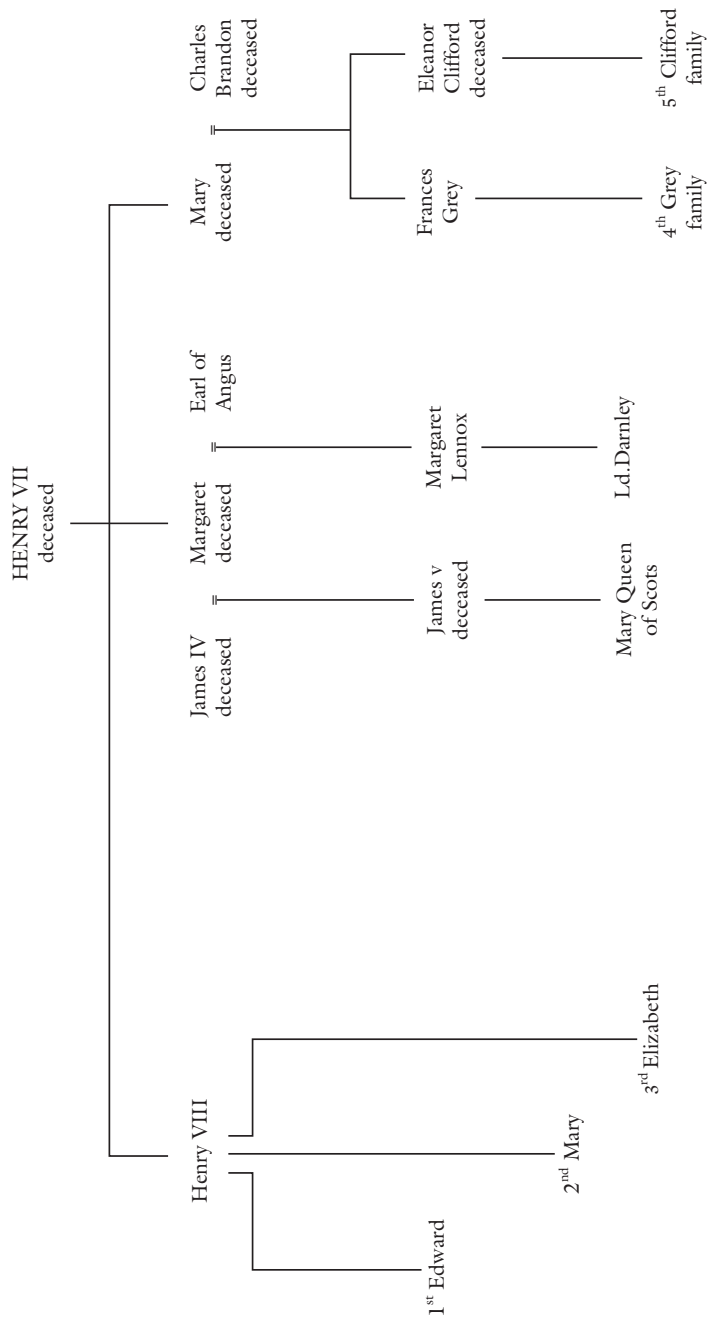
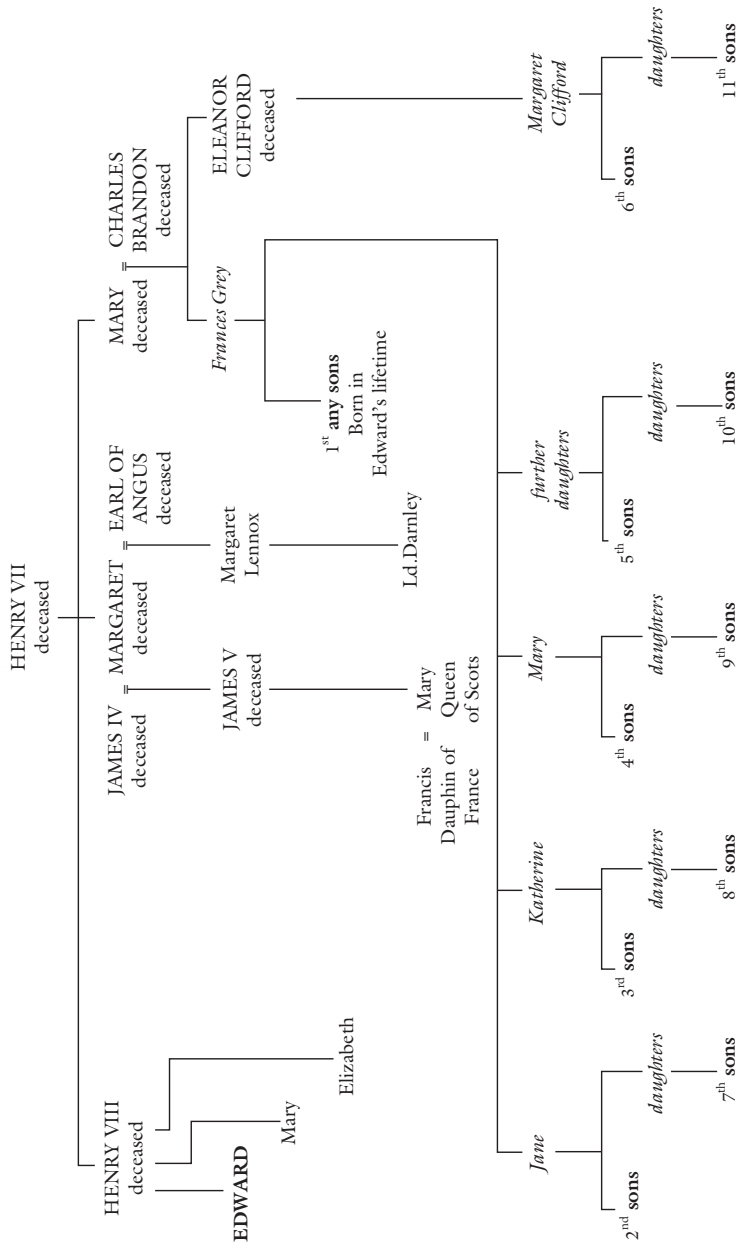
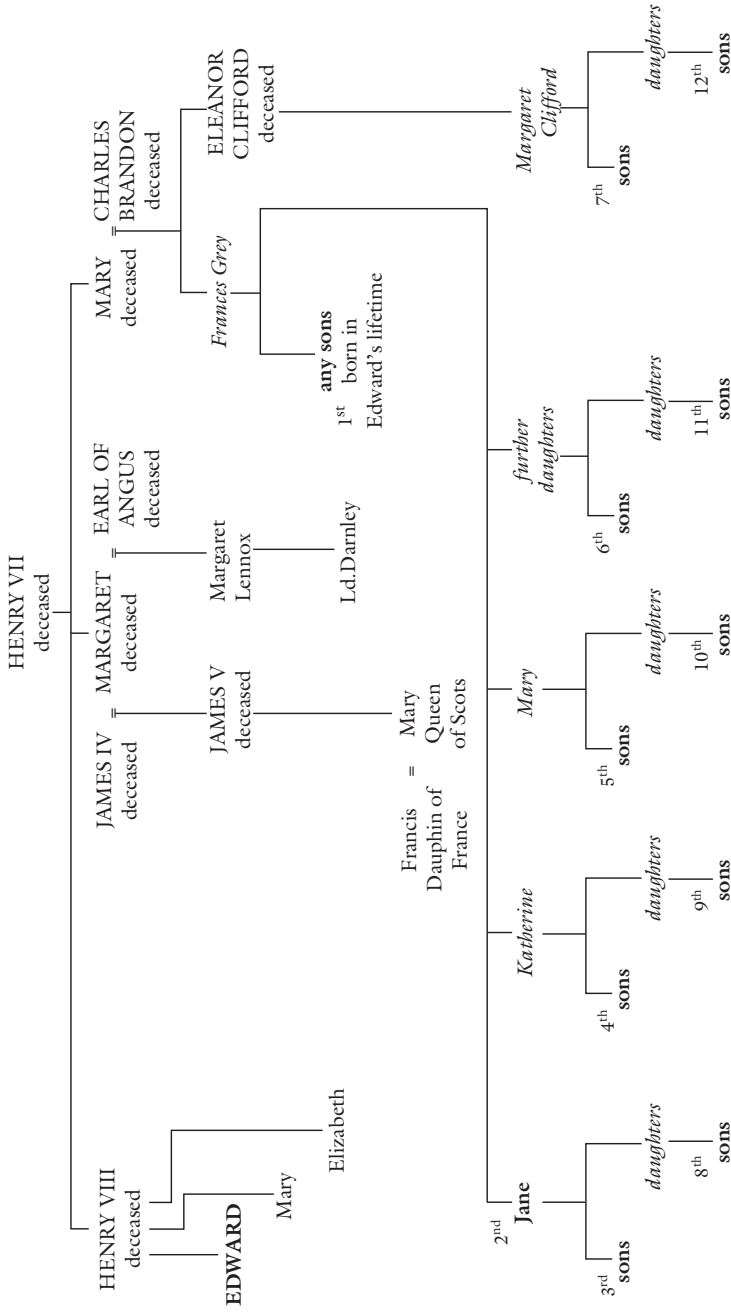


Figure 2 The succession according to Henry VIII's will



Women who do not inherit but whose sons can Mary and Elizabeth are debarred by illegitimacy

Figure 3 Edward VI's 'deuise', VERSION ONE



Jane inherits
 Women who do not inherit but whose sons can
 Mary and Elizabeth are debarred by illegitimacy

Figure 4 Edward VI's 'deuise', VERSION TWO



The movement of forces, July 1553

PROLOGUE

ON the evening of Sunday 11 February 1554 Jane Grey sat writing in the gentleman-gaoler's house in the Tower of London. She was sixteen. Slightly built, 'prettily shaped and graceful' but short enough to require platform shoes, Jane had brown eyes, hair nearly red, and a fair complexion with freckles.¹ She was also frighteningly precocious; her scholarly reputation was talked of as far away as Zurich. But that evening she was not composing one of her elegant Latin missives to a foreign scholar. Jane was saying farewell. In twelve hours she would be dead, beheaded on the scaffold she had watched being built on the other side of Tower Green. Except for its horrifying finality, her death would be a piece with the whole of Jane's previous life. From birth she had been treated as an object to be passed around to the advantage of first one Svengali and then another. Now she was to be disposed of finally at the behest of her cousin, the ageing Queen Mary I, the daughter of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon.

Jane had by then been in the Tower for seven months, but not originally on Mary's instructions. On Monday 10 June 1553 Jane had been escorted to the royal apartments next to the White Tower with pomp and ceremony as, following the death of her cousin Edward VI the previous Thursday, leading magnates of the realm united to proclaim her queen. Taking over the fortress was a symbolic act of possession required of all incoming English monarchs. All that remained was Jane's coronation. But ten days later the Tower changed into a prison, ten days which had seen Mary displace her in a wholly unexpected political coup.

That, of course, is not the way in which the events of 1553 have been remembered. Over the centuries there has been almost a tacit agreement to play down Jane Grey's revolt as 'not quite English', a piece of naked

self-seeking in contrast to morally acceptable rebellions which are driven by principle, by genuine grievances or by loyalty to a 'king over the water'. The name by which Jane Grey is universally remembered says it all: 'the nine days queen' – not so much because she ruled for nine days (the more correct figure is thirteen), but because her reign was a proverbial 'nine days wonder'. Yet when Edward died, Jane's succession had looked secure. Nobody in the know gave Mary any chance at all; even the envoys of her cousin and supporter, the emperor Charles V, had concluded that 'her promotion to the crown will be so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible'.² Jane's backers held all the cards. They controlled the machinery of government; the whole of the political establishment was sworn to her, so too the royal guard; the Tower (the nation's armoury) was held in her name, the navy similarly. We have to turn tradition on its head and recognize that it was not Mary but Jane who was the reigning queen; her so-called 'rebellion' against Queen Mary was, in reality, the 'rebellion of Lady Mary' against Queen Jane. Mary's achievement was unique in the century and a half which separates the fifteenth-century wars of York and Lancaster from the seventeenth-century Civil War of king and parliament. It was the single occasion when the power of the English crown was successfully flouted. She alone of all the challengers succeeded in taking over government, capital and country, and in so doing ousted an incumbent ruler who had all the state's resources behind her. Had Mary failed as was expected, Jane Grey would have been the fourth monarch of the Tudor line and her rival, yet one more illegitimate contestant in the competition for the English throne which had been going on since 1399.

Of course, no sooner had Mary won than the country became unanimous that she was and always had been the legitimate heir to her brother. History is always written by the winners. In popular memory, the story of Lady Jane Grey and the rebellion of 1553 has become one of the great mythic dramas of English history. When the curtain rises, Edward VI is centre stage, two months short of his sixteenth birthday, coughing away his life, tortured in equal portions by disease and Tudor medicine. Who is to succeed him? Enter Edward's half-sister Mary, Henry VIII's elder daughter and the young king's 'rightful' heir. Also enter Mephistopheles, John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, Edward's chief minister, dragging with him the teenage Jane Grey whom he has forced to marry his son Guildford. Determined to oust Mary in favour of this daughter-in-law and his son her husband, the duke is willing to endanger everything the Tudor kings have achieved in rescuing England from the lawlessness and political collapse of the Wars of the Roses. Around the duke is a gaggle of noble

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