

# Factsheet

## Lady Jane Grey *'Nine Days Queen'*

Lady Jane Grey was born in October 1537 in Leicestershire, the daughter of the Marquis of Dorset. Her accession to the throne was masterminded by her power-hungry father-in-law, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland who intended to rule through her. Afraid that his own position would become precarious under Lady Jane's Catholic cousin Mary Tudor, he convinced the sick king, Edward VI, to alter the line of succession so that Lady Jane could continue Edward's Protestant reign. On 10 July 1553, four days after the death of Edward, Lady Jane was proclaimed Queen. Nine days later, Mary entered London with popular support and Lady Jane was arrested. Held at the Tower, she was beheaded on Tower Green on 12 February 1554 aged just 16. Lady Jane is buried beneath the altar of the Tower's Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula.

- Lady Jane was named after Jane Seymour, wife of her great-uncle, Henry VIII.
- Lady Jane first arrived at the Tower as Queen to prepare for her coronation. However, her regime fell before she had the chance to be crowned.
- Lady Jane was held prisoner, by tradition, in No 5 Tower Green, next to the Queen's House, (the present house is a later re-building). Her husband, Lord Guildford Dudley was imprisoned in the Beauchamp Tower.
- Whilst imprisoned, Lady Jane was permitted by the Lieutenant of the Tower to walk on Tower Green "at convenient times and at his discretion".
- The trial of Lady Jane Grey and her husband on 13 November 1553 took place by special commission at the Guildhall and was led by the Lord Mayor of London, Thomas White. Both were charged with high treason and sentenced to death.
- The sentence on Lady Jane was that "she should be burned alive on Tower Hill or beheaded as the Queen pleases".
- Queen Mary granted Lord Guildford Dudley a last wish to see Lady Jane on the morning of their executions. Lady Jane, however, is believed to have refused the meeting because she could not bring herself to see him.

- An anonymous diarist living at the Tower of London and who had dinner with Lady Jane shortly before she died, provides a written account of events leading up to her death and that of Lord Guildford. He records how, before being executed herself, Lady Jane had to endure the horror of watching her husband go to his death on Tower Hill and then see his body brought back in a cart, with his head wrapped up in a cloth.
- Records suggest Mary was anxious to spare Lady Jane's life. Four days before her execution, the Queen sent her chaplain, John Feckenham, to try and convert Lady Jane to the Catholic faith. However, even in the face of death, she was unrelenting and his attempts failed.
- Lady Jane's execution went smoothly and she was beheaded with a single blow of the axe. There was a last-minute panic, though, when the blindfolded Lady Jane was unable to find the block and shouted for help.
- Lady Jane's ghost has appeared at the Tower on a number of occasions, each on the anniversary of her execution. As recently as 1957, two Guardsmen witnessed a white shape "forming itself on the battlements" on 12 February, 403 years to the day after her death.

### **Inscriptions**

- Several inscriptions at the Tower are associated with Lady Jane Grey and her husband's family, the Dudley's. They include an inscription of Lady Jane's name in the Beauchamp Tower - lane (Jane) – which is believed to have been carved by Guildford Dudley during his imprisonment.
- One of the most elaborate and famous inscriptions in the Tower is that carved by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, the eldest son of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. He and his four brothers were imprisoned in the Beauchamp Tower between 1553-1554.
- The inscription depicts a bear and ragged staff, which had been the badge of the Earls of Warwick since at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and a lion with two tails which appeared in the Dudley family arms. This is surrounded by a border of roses, gillyflowers, oakleaves and honeysuckle. The verse beneath implies the border symbolises the names of John Dudley's four brothers: the roses are usually interpreted as standing for Ambrose, the gillyflowers for Guildford, the

oakleaves for Robert - from *robur*, Latin for oak - and the honeysuckle for Henry.

- Another simpler inscription showing an oak branch and the initials R D is attributed to Robert Dudley.
- All five brothers were condemned as traitors in 1553, but after Guildford's execution the other four were reprieved and pardoned in the following year. John Dudley died on 21 October 1554, ten days after his release from the Tower. Ambrose eventually acceded to the title of Earl of Warwick and became Master of the Ordnance to Queen Elizabeth. Robert became Queen Elizabeth's favourite and was created Earl of Leicester. Henry, the youngest, was killed on 10 August 1557 at the siege of St. Quentin, to which all three surviving brothers had gone in an attempt to regain the favour of Queen Mary and her husband Philip II of Spain.