

Coins and Medallions of Lady Jane Grey

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Introduction

Lady Jane Grey was born c.1536 and was the great granddaughter of Henry VII through his younger daughter Mary and was a first cousin once removed of Edward VI.⁽¹⁾ She was a protestant and very well educated, being fluent in Greek and Latin. In May 1553, she married Lord Guildford Dudley, a younger son of Edward's chief minister John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, on 25 May 1553, at Durham House in the Strand. This was an arranged marriage, and two other marriages took place at the same ceremony; Jane's sister Catherine was matched with the heir of the Earl of Pembroke, Lord Herbert, and another Katherine, Lord Guildford's sister, with Henry Hastings, the Earl of Huntingdon's heir.

In June 1553, Edward VI became terminally ill with tuberculosis, and wrote his will, nominating Jane and her male heirs as successors to the Crown. The will removed his half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, from the line of succession on account of their illegitimacy, and Mary was a Catholic.

Edward VI died on 6th July and Jane was proclaimed queen on 10 July 1553. Support for Mary grew very quickly, and the Privy Council changed sides, pronouncing Mary as queen on 19 July 1553. Her main supporter and father-in-law, the Duke of Northumberland, was accused of treason and executed on 22 August 1553. Jane was held prisoner in the Tower and was convicted of high treason in November 1553, and though Mary initially spared her life. when her father, Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Suffolk, was associated with Wyatt's rebellion, she was considered a threat. Both Jane and her husband were executed on 12 February 1554.

Lady Jane Grey in Film

As might be expected of such a tragedy, books, plays and films have been written teasing out the rapid rise and ultimate fall of Lady Jane who was a pawn in a power struggle between families with allegiances to the New Church of England and a resurgent Rome. The fictional works have all modified the relationship between Jane and Guildford into a growing romance, when in reality that was not the case. The first play where Jane had a leading role was written by Thomas Dekker and John Webster in 1607.⁽²⁾

There have been three film versions of Jane's life.⁽³⁾ In 1923 a silent film *Lady Jane Grey; Or, The Court of Intrigue* had Nina Vanna in the lead. Interestingly, though the cast is known, no copy of the film survives. In 1936 Nova Pilbeam took the lead in *Tudor Rose*. This film is also known with the titles *Lady Jane Grey* and *Nine Days a Queen*. The third and most relevant here is the 1986 Paramount film *Lady Jane* with Helena Bonham Carter in the lead. Many of the cast were already big names in 1986 as follows; Helena Bonham Carter – Lady Jane (LJ); Cary Elwes – Guilford Dudley (GD); Sara Kestelman - Frances Grey – Duchess of Suffolk (DS); Brian Poyser - Under Treasurer (UT) and Michael Hordern – Dr Freckenham (DF). Patrick Stewart played Jane's father Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Suffolk before taking to the stars.

The first fifty minutes introduces the main players and includes the wedding between Jane and Guildford who are still antagonistic. Then there is a scene where the couple have been accosted by beggars, one of whom has been branded, and some coins handed over. . . shortly afterwards the couple are back at their palace, bickering about the events and the money that was given away. . . .

0:53:23 GD Do you know what's happened to the value of money?
 LJ No
0:53:25 GD What's that? [Sliding a coin across the table, the camera lingers on the coin]
 LJ A Penny.
 GD It isn't! It's a shilling!
 LJ It can't be, shillings are made of silver.
 GD Should be, used to be, but not now. Which is why a shilling is not worth a shilling.
0:53:46 GD You really have no idea what's going on, have you?

After being crowned, Queen Jane has an emotional moment, and then begins. . .

1:25:27 LJ We want . . . I want . . . a real shilling.

Some time later there is a scene at the mint . . . very dark and dingy . . . a crucible of molten metal is shown and then a coin being struck. The pile has the reverse design and is about 100mm in diameter, set into the end of a large log and the trussell (with the portrait) is being struck with a hammer.

1:35:03 [showing a freshly struck coin resting in the middle of the die - a bit off centre.]



Fig. 1. A star is born! A freshly struck shilling of Lady Jane Grey. © Paramount.
(Brightness significantly enhanced, hence the grainy image).

1:35:04 [the coin is picked up and the reverse shown to camera.]

1:35:06 [showing a basket if freshly made shiny coins.]

The next scene begins with QJ and LD frolicking into a room where officials are waiting . . . decorum resumes.

1:37:05 DS This is the under treasurer of your privy purse.

1:37:07 UT I am from the Royal Mint, Your Grace. [Jane is handed a box which she opens.]

1:37:09 LJ It's Our shilling! [Showing a close-up of the obverse of the coin in Jane's hand.]



Fig. 2. Close-up of the newly minted shilling in Jane's hand. © Paramount.

The shilling makes a reappearance when Jane is on the scaffold. . .

2:08:13 DF [Jane thanks her priest and presses the coin into his hand.]

Following the execution, the scene moves to a room with Dr. Freckenham

2:11:19 DF [He looks at the coin in his hand.]

Though the coin isn't seen again, it is passed by Dr. Freckenham to Queen Mary and she glances towards it as the film comes to an end.



Fig. 3. Publicity image for the film, with a crowned Jane in profile similar to the image on the coin.
© Paramount.

It has been suggested that shillings were occasionally handed out as tokens of remembrance by Protestant martyrs.⁽⁴⁾ In the story portrayed in the film it is also a remembrance to Jane and Guildford's commitment to social justice, to efforts to restore the currency and to help the poor, all fictional.⁽³⁾

Though not appearing in the film credits the coin dies were made by Westair Reproductions Ltd. of Birmingham. The following sections will look at the various issues of coins and medals created in the name of Lady Jane, beginning with the props used in the film, followed by some Victorian medals and fantasy pieces produced by Edward Emery and finishing with some medallions produced in the past few decades.

Westair Coins for the 1986 film – Lady Jane

Obv. **IANEI:D:G:AGL:FRA:Z:hIB:REGINA**
around crowned bust left, between rose and
XII

Rev. **POSVI:DEVM:ADIVTORE:MEV**

Details Pb, 11.673g, 33.6mm, 125%.

Notes Hand struck and slight double striking on rev.
Original from the film? Surfaces now
corroded. This and two other known lead
specimens may be early trial strikings from
the dies. The blanks and struck pieces shown in the film look too bright for lead and are possibly
bright pewter. Other pieces may exist. GO.



In around 2010 the original obverse die and two specimens were sold by 'The Propstore' with the following description 'A unique set, the stamp and coins remain in a good production-used condition with only minor wear to the metal plating on the coins and the head of the coin stamp. The coins measure 3.5cm (1.5") in diameter, while the press measures 8.5cm x 4cm x 4cm (3.5" x 1.75" x 1.75")'.



Fig. 4. Obverse die and two specimens. © propstore.com

Looking closely at the picture, the coins appear to be much brighter than lead.

Obv. **IANEI:D:G:AGL:FRA:Z:hIB:REGINA**
around crowned bust left, between rose and
XII

Rev. **POSVI:DEVM:ADIVTORE:MEV**

Details Pewter, 6.317g 31.3mm, 125%.

Notes Modern cast with a burnished finish. All details
slightly rounded. These pieces first appeared
for sale in 2021. GO.



Mr Emery's Mint

Edward Emery was an extremely skillful engraver and die-sinker and produced many medals in the 1840s. He also turned his skill to making dies and then counterfeiting many rarities of the British series, along the way creating fantasy pieces and concoctions. He was successful and prolific and was finally unmasked in an article in the Times on 19 July 1842, where he was described as 'an impudent and unprincipled forger'. A review of his products has been published elsewhere, listing three medals of Lady Jane, without illustration.⁽⁵⁾ The pieces are illustrated below and a fourth is added to the list.

Obv. **IOAN DG ANG FR ET HIB REGINA**
MDLIII around bust $\frac{3}{4}$ left.
Rev. **IN.TERRIS.ANG.ET.HIB.ECCLE.**
CAPVT.SVPREM around a crowned rose
and initials. i.m. Sun.
Details Ag, 16.72g, 34.0mm, 125%
Notes Pagan 87. Baldwin's of St. James's Auction
48, 24 Sep 2020, lot 409. Fish tailed letters
give appearance of hammered but too
uniform and part of the die.



Obv. **IANE.D.G.ANG.FRA.Z.HIB.REGINA.**
MDLIII around bust $\frac{3}{4}$ left.
Rev. **IN.TERRIS.ANG.ET.HIB.ECCLE.**
CAPVT.SVPREM around a crowned rose
and initials. i.m. Lys.
Details Ag, 16.72g, 34.0mm, 125%.
Notes Pagan 88(i). Davissons Ltd. Auction 39, 1
Apr 2020, Lot 335.



Obv. **IANE.D.G.ANG.FRA.Z.HIB.REGINA.**
MDLIII around bust $\frac{3}{4}$ left.
Rev. **IN.TERRIS.ANG.ET.HIB.ECCLE.**
CAPVT.SVPREM around a crowned rose
and initials. i.m. Lys.
Details Cu, 16.065g, 34.5mm, 125%.
Notes Pagan 88(ii). GO.



Obv. **IOANNA REGINA DI GRATIA ANGL Z FR**
Around crowned bust to right. i.m. Lys
Rev. **SI-DEVS·NOBISCVM·QVIS CONT·NOS·**
around square-topped shield, **1553** above, portcullis
below.
Details Ag, 5.54g, 29.0mm, 125%.
Notes Spink c.1960, DNW 7 October 2004 lot 275
suggest it to be a fantasy Hammered Shilling or
Groat. Subsequently AMR Coins, December 2018,
Item HS-0450C. Not listed by Pagan.



Other Medallions

As might be expected the story of Lady Jane Grey has resulted in the production of several medals over the past few decades, usually as part of a set of monarchs, though a coronation never took place. A few such pieces are illustrated below.

- Obv. **LADY JANE GREY 1537-1554**
 Around a bust with tiara slightly left
 Rev. **THE QUEENS OF THE BRITISH ISLES** around a crown. Small H below.
 Details Ag, 45g, 45mm, hallmarked edge, 100%.
 Notes Medal issued as part of a set of nine to Commemorate Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee 1977. From the Heaton Mint, Birmingham.



- Obv. **JANE 1553**
 Around crowned bust slightly left
 Rev. Grey family arms with lion rampant left.
 Details Au plated Ag, 4.38g, 21.6mm, 100%.
 Notes Modern issue from the Our Royal Sovereigns 70 piece set by the Danbury Mint. 1990s?⁽⁶⁾



- Obv. **LADY JANE GREY 1553**
 Around veiled head slightly right.
 Rev. Royal arms in veil with shields, Tower of London, crowned tudor rose and book.
 Details Ag, 38.0g, 45.0mm, 100%.
 Notes Part of the Kings and Queens of England set issued by the Franklin Mint 1970-74.



- Obv. Coloured portrait of Lady Jane slightly left
 Rev. **THE GREAT BRITISH COLLECTION** around crossed sceptres and shields containing a Tudor rose, thistle, shamrock and flax plant.
 Details Steel, 10.0g, 29.0mm, 100%.
 Notes Part of the The Great British Kings and Queens, 24 Coin/Medal Collection. Issued by 'The Westminster Collection'. Still available. Image taken from the Streatham portrait from the 1590s, rediscovered in 2005, and now in the National Portrait Gallery.



- Obv. **LADY JANE GREY 1553** around bust slightly right.
 Rev. Royal shield with supporters.
 Details 22 ct Au, 3.12g, 13mm Hallmarked edge. 200%.
 Notes Part of a 43 miniature medal set showing the Kings and Queens of England issued by John Pinches (pre 1969).⁽⁷⁾



References and Acknowledgements

- (1) Wiki. Lady Jane Grey. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Jane_Grey and many branches from this page.
- (2) T. Dekker and J. Webster. *The Famous History of Thomas Wyatt*. Written 1602, published 1607.
- (3) C. Levin. Lady Jane Grey on Film. Chapter 5 pp76-87. In S. Doran and T.S. Freeman (Eds.). *Tudors and Stuarts in Film*. 2009.
- (4) J. Foxe. *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church* Also known as the *Book of Martyrs*. 1563. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/22400/22400-h/22400-h.htm> possibly a misreading of page 253. Lady Jane Grey's execution can be found on pp203-5.
- (5) H. E. Pagan. Mr. Emery's Mint. BNJ vol. 40 (1971), pp139-70.
- (6) <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/brit/jane/t.html>
- (7) <https://www.chards.co.uk/kings-and-queens-of-england-gold-medallion-set/3823>

Many thanks to Sarah Sorkin at propstore.com for providing the original picture for figure 4 and permission to use. Thanks also to Robyn at Chards for the pictures of the Pinches miniature gold medal – it really is very small!

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