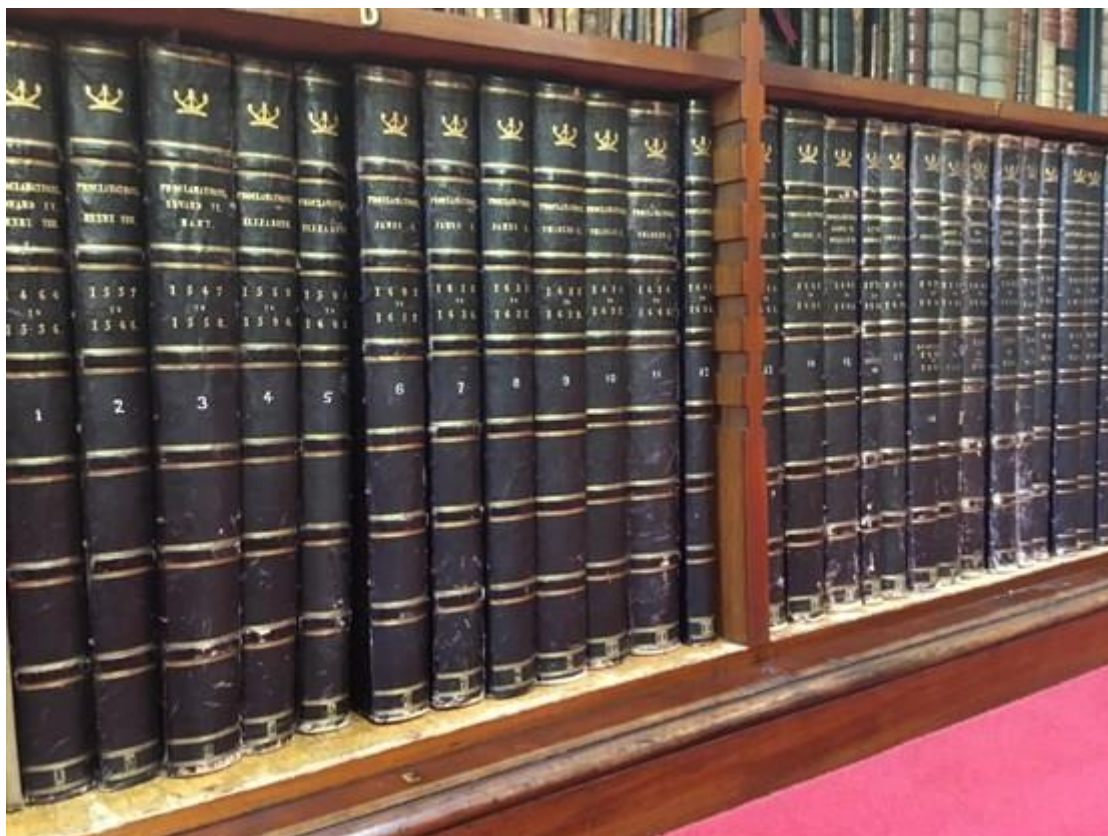


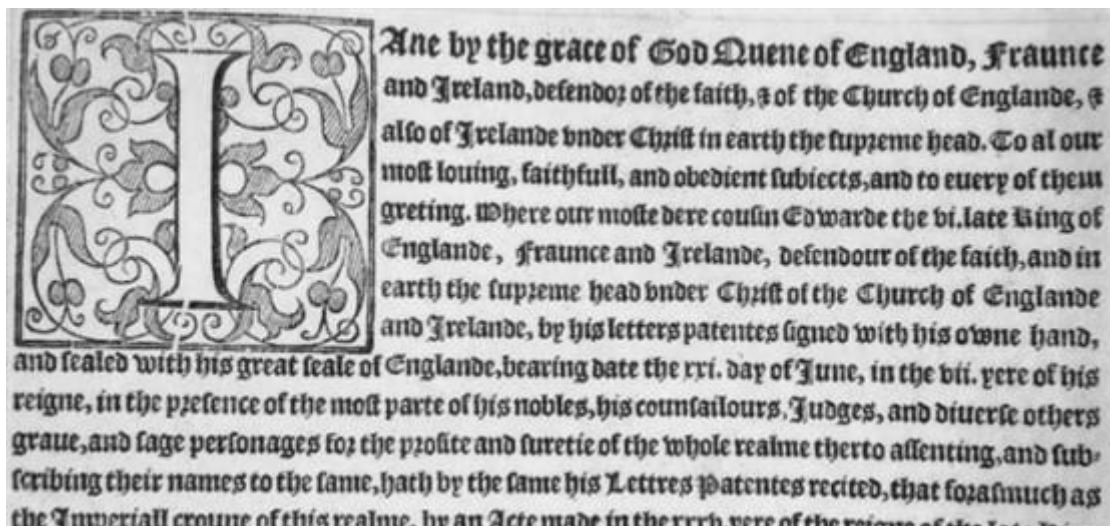
THE PROCLAMATION OF LADY JANE GREY (1537-1554)

Dr Rebecca Tomlin, Governance Officer, and Louise Horton, a PhD student researching 16th century women's book production, explore the history of the Society's 1553 proclamation of England's Queen Jane and its relationship to other items in the Society's collections.



The Society's large collection of proclamations and broadsides held at Burlington House.

A large bound volume [*Proclamations*, Vol III (Edward VI and Mary)] in the Society's Library at Burlington House contains a rare relic of the brief reign of England's 'nine-day queen'. Following the death of Edward VI, this immaculately printed three-page broadsheet proclaimed Lady Jane Grey as England's Queen. Printed by Richard Grafton, it is one of an extensive collection of proclamations that the Society has held since 1756. Sometimes considered a historical curio of a reign that never was, the story of Jane's proclamation offers us insights into the political and religious forces that sought to make her the first woman to be both England's monarch and defender of its faith.



The opening section of the proclamation of Jane as Queen of England

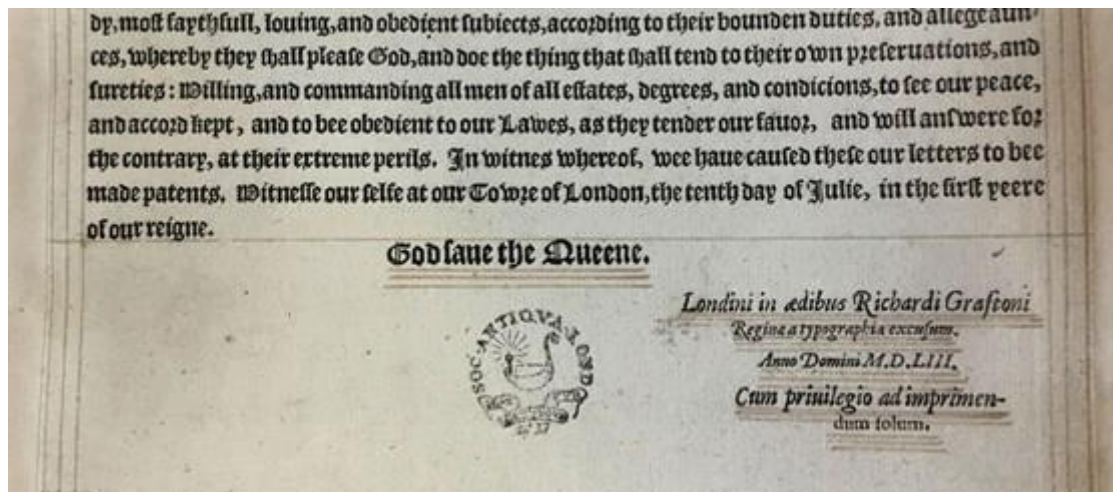
Unusually for a 16th Century document, we have multiple accounts of how and when Jane's proclamation was read. The Tudor diarist Henry Machyn recorded that:

‘The ix day of July ...by xi of the clock began the proclamation the same afternoon of Queen Jane with 2 heralds and a trumpet blowing, that my Lady Mary was unlawfully begotten and so Cheap to Fleet Street, proclaiming Queen Jane.’

Another near-contemporary account is given in the anonymous *Chronicles of the Grey friars*:

And the next day in the morning was set forth in print that the lady Mary with the lady Elizabeth ware both proved illegitimate and born unlawfully and clearly discharged from the crown and from all manner of possessions of the king their father Henry the viii.’

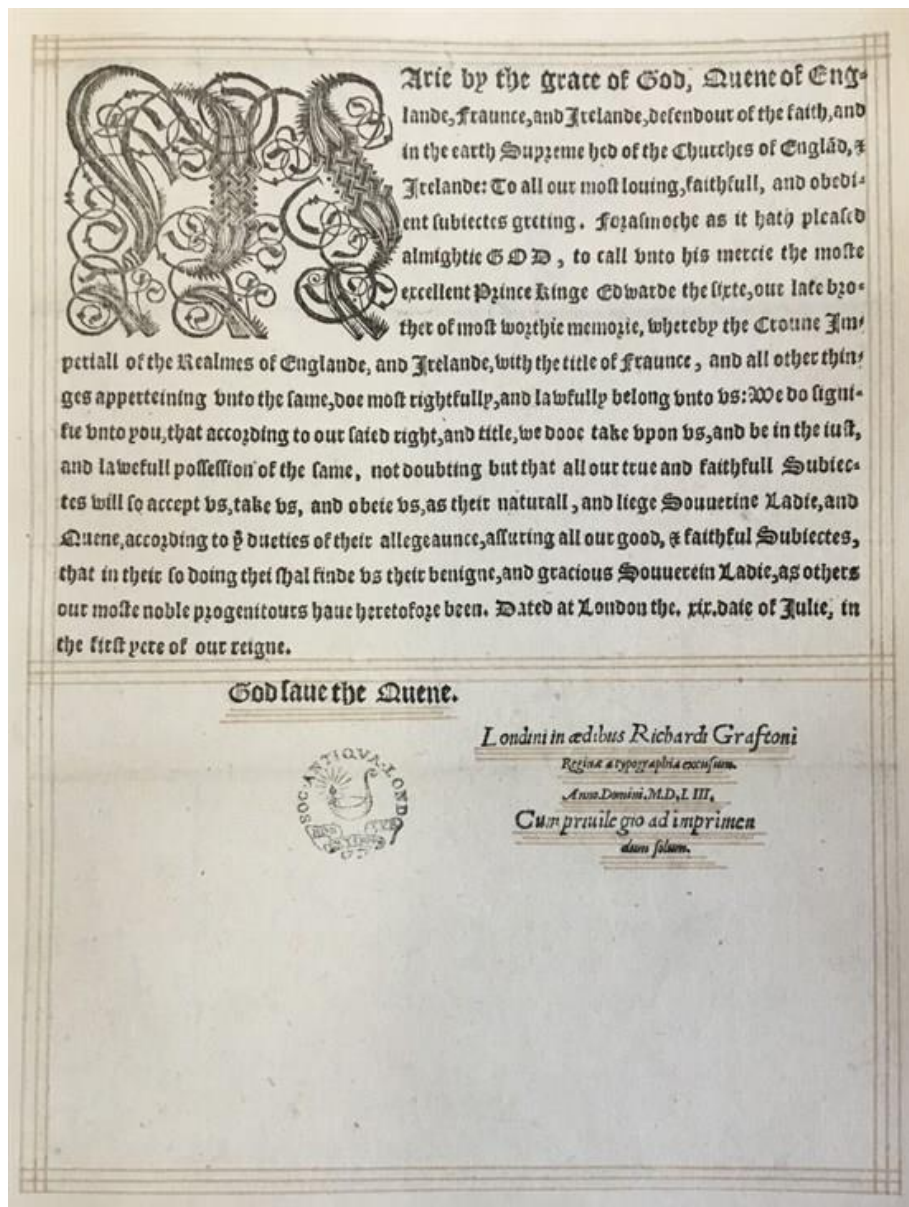
The mention that the proclamation was printed highlights how a relatively new technology allowed for the wide and swift distribution of this lengthy and complex document. As these accounts suggest, the proclamation has a lot of work to do; it first makes clear that the direct descendants of Henry VIII, and the late King 's closest relatives, his sisters Mary and Elizabeth, were illegitimate, and not to inherit the Crown. Since few people had heard of their cousin, the young and retiring Jane, she had to be introduced to her new subjects. Most importantly, the act of making the proclamation itself had the force of law to make these things so.



The closing section of the proclamation of Jane as Queen of England, showing Grafton's mark.

During the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, Jane's great-uncle and cousin, England had undergone a dramatic and revolutionary process we now know as 'the Reformation', in which Grafton, as the King's official Printer, had played a significant part in disseminating the texts enforcing reform. The attempt by the country's leaders to protect and consolidate the legacy of Edward VI's reforms through Jane, is evident in the text of the proclamation.

Firstly, her accession is providential, 'by the Grace of God'; she is queen by God's will. This divine authority is underpinned immediately by the reference to Edward's letters patent; she has spiritual and temporal authority to reign. The proclamation then turns to Edward's half-sisters, who, as we have seen are declared 'not lawfully begotten'. Unlike Jane, who was married to Guildford Dudley, an English Protestant, both her rivals, Mary and Elizabeth, were unmarried. The proclamation declares them a threat to the 'profit and surety of the whole realm', who were in danger of marrying 'a Stranger borne out of this realm' who would bring a 'free' England back 'into the tyranny and servitude of the Bishop of Rome'. Here the proclamation announces its ideological origins, sharing as it does the language of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1553) which Grafton also printed, and which warns of the 'tyranny of the Bishop of Rome'. Only Jane is envisaged as the carrier of a future Tudor and protestant king, 'so from son to son' defending her subjects from this threat of 'utter subversion' of the reformed faith. In body and belief, only she offered surety and continuity to her realm, but it wasn't to be; famously, Jane's reign lasted only nine days before Edward's Catholic sister Mary enforced her own claim to the throne.



The proclamation of Queen Mary

A copy of Mary's proclamation follows Jane's in the Society's bound volume and the contrast between them is stark. At about a ninth of the length of Jane's, Mary's proclamation is far simpler - everyone knew that Mary was the daughter of Henry VIII and was named as heir in the act of Succession of 1543. It also appears to have received a warmer reception in London. Machyn writes:

there were at proclamation iiii trumpeters and ii herald(s) of arms [...] and this was done at the cross in Cheap, and from that place they went unto [St] Paul's and there was *Te Deum Laudamus*, with song, and the organs playing, and all the belles ringing through London, and bonfires, and tables in every street, and wine and beer and ale, and every street full of bonfires, and there was money cast a-way.

Grafton printed Mary's proclamation too, but it was too late for him to change allegiances. He was jailed briefly for a third time for his printing, and relieved of his position as printer to the Queen. The Society's magnificent portrait of Queen Mary was made by Hans Eworth shortly after her coronation in 1553, and like her proclamation, depicts a resolute woman through whom the continuity of the Tudor line is assured. Yet this portrait promises, as Jane's proclamation had, a future that never materialised, and her own death followed only four years after Jane's.

Jane Grey in the Society's Collections

It seems likely that the proclamations were originally collected by Humfrey Dyson (1582-1633), one of England's earliest book collectors. They probably came into the Library as part of a collection of early broadsides purchased at a cost of £9 in the posthumous sale of the library of one of the Society's earliest Presidents, Martin Folkes. The Folkes broadsides were supplemented by a gift from Thomas Hollis of his own collection, also in 1756. The two collections were reorganised and bound in chronological order as 'Ballads' and 'Proclamations' in 1852.

In 1748, the Society's official engraver, George Vertue, produced an engraved image of Jane for the Society's then-president, Algernon Seymour, 7th Duke of Somerset, who was descended from Jane's younger sister Catherine. Although the portrait on which it is based has since been identified as actually being of [Elizabeth I](#) (when she was still a princess), we can see in Vertue's engraving, with its weeping figure of tragedy, the eighteenth-century romanticisation of Jane's story as the 'nine-day queen'.



George Vertue's engraving *The Lady Jane Grey Proclaimed Queen* (1748)

© Trustees of the British Museum. The Society's bound version of this engraving is found in SAL/P&D/Historical Prints/Fol.21/ML4D

Although not directly linked to the Society, which was founded some 100 years later, a College of Antiquaries, linked to the College of Heralds, was active from 1586 to around 1607. Among the College's members were important Elizabethan antiquaries, including Sir Robert Cotton, John Stow (who quarrelled with Grafton) and William Lambarde, after whom the Society's Lambarde Travel Awards are named. The Camden Society, formed in the 19th century and named after another member of the College, William Camden, published transcriptions of many of the early sources featuring Jane, including *The diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant-taylor of London, from A. D. 1550 to A. D. 1563* (1848); *The Chronicle of Queen Jane* (1850), and *The Chronicle of the Grey friars of London* (1852), all edited by John Gough Nichols FSA. Another Fellow, Doyne C. Bell FSA, who oversaw the nineteenth-century renovations of the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower of London where Jane was buried after her execution in 1554, proposed that she had been buried in front of the altar, next to another reformist Tudor queen, Anne Boleyn.



The chapel of St Peter ad Vincula from *Notices of the Historic Persons Buried in the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula* by Doyne C. Bell FSA (1877).

Readers who wish to know more about Jane Grey may like to watch Helen Castor's [*England's Forgotten Queen: The Life and Death of Lady Jane Grey*, BBC Four \(2018\)](#), which was filmed in part at the Society's Burlington House apartments and which features the proclamations discussed in this article.