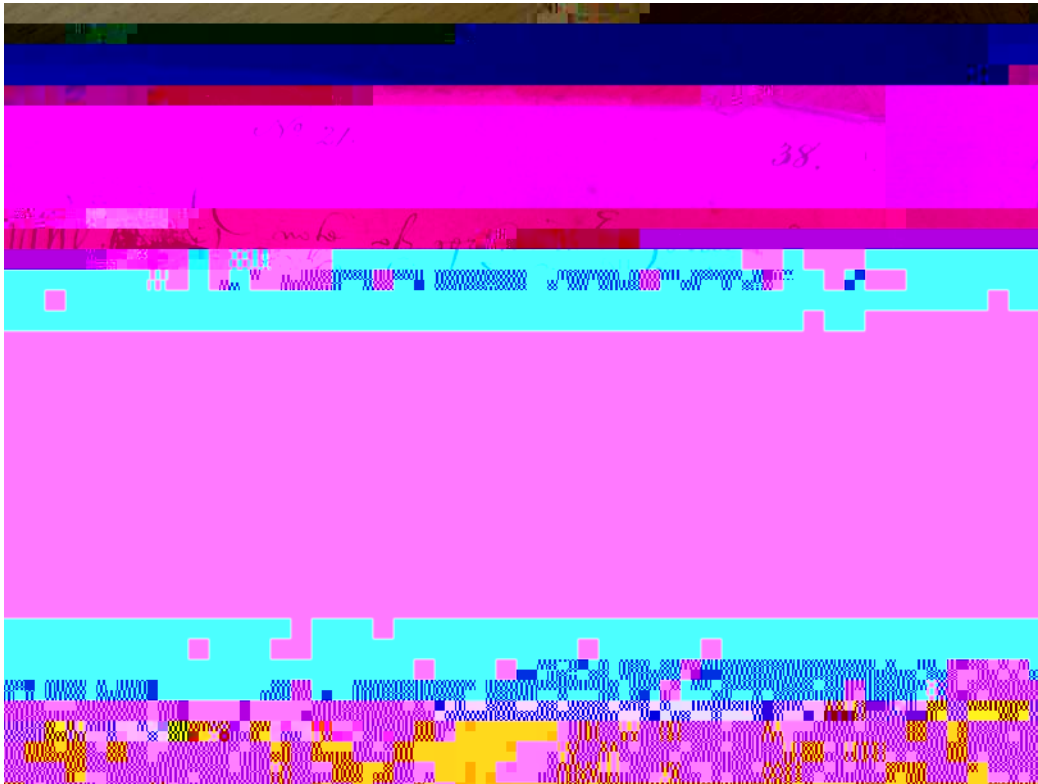


sisters, and in favour firstly of any male heirs of Lady Frances Brandon (there were none), and then any male heirs of Lady Jane. In June 1553, and close to death, Edward altered this in favour of Jane AND her male heirs, effectively making Jane his successor. The will was made official through letters patent on 21 June, signed by over 100 people including the members of the Privy Council.

Edward died on 6 July 1553. Jane was informed of her accession to the throne three days later and on the following day, 10 July 1553, she was officially proclaimed Queen of England. It is fascinating to note that the first of our two wardrobe warrants was signed by Jane, as Queen, on this very day.¹



Having eventually heard of her brother's death, Mary had moved to her estates in East Anglia to drum up support. Knowing he had to check Mary before she could reach the capital, Northumberland left London with his army on 14 July. It is on this day that the second of our warrants was signed by Jane.² With Northumberland out of the way, the situation in London changed dramatically. The Privy Council abandoned any support for Jane and, on 19 July, proclaimed Mary queen. Having reigned for just nine days, Jane and her husband Guildford were imprisoned, separately, in the Tower of London. Support for Northumberland crumbled and Mary entered London on 3 August.



Northumberland was executed on 22 August. Jane and Guildford Dudley were tried in London on 13 November; they were, of course, found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death, which for the time being was suspended. One of the charges of which Jane was found guilty was that she had signed several documents as 'Jane the Quene' – precisely the signature we see on our two wardrobe warrants. As can be seen, following Jane's fall from grace, someone saw fit to strike through the words 'the Quene'.

It seems very possible Mary may have spared Jane's life, but it was the involvement of her father and his brothers in the Wyatt rebellion of early 1554 (Sir Thomas Wyatt's response to Mary's plan to marry Philip II of Spain) that finally tipped the balance of favour against Jane. On 12 February 1554 Guildford Dudley was executed on Tower Hill, while Jane was beheaded in the more private surroundings of Tower Green.

How John Woodford came to collect these warrants together is unknown. That he should have presented them to his College is something for which we should be grateful, offering as it does a tiny glimpse into a brief but turbulent period in England's history, and into the short life of one of its most tragic figures.

As a footnote, it is interesting to see that MS328 also includes, at the end, two notes similarly relating to the procurement of cloth signed by none other than John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, the first dated 20 May 1553, the day before Jane and Guildford Dudley were married.

Jason Morgan (New College Library)