

# A Tudor Library

## by Philippa Gregory

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Father of the more famous son, Henry VII is obviously the starting place for any Tudor library, a good basic book is in the "Access to History" series, [Henry VII](#) by Roger Turvey and Caroline Rogers. Hodder and Stoughton 1991. Other essential reading on the Tudor monarchs would be J.J. Scarisbrick's magisterial [Henry VIII](#), Yale University Press 1968 which covers pretty well everything. The stories of Edward, and Mary Tudor; as well as Elizabeth, and Jane Grey, are recounted with her usual lively thoroughness by my favourite Tudor historian, Alison Weir in [The Children of England](#), Random House, 1996. Of the hundreds of accounts of Elizabeth, I most often use Jasper Ridley's [Elizabeth 1st](#) Penguin 1987, for its steady march through the long life of this most iconic Queen, and Weir, again, [Elizabeth the Queen](#), Random House, 1998. The countryside beyond the Tudor court is wonderfully evoked by John Guy, [Tudor England](#), OUP 1988, who also covers all the major facts of Henry VIII's reign.

That's the bread and butter stuff out of the way, now to the features that make us love the Tudors: the glamour, the violence, the extraordinary times of change and turbulence. For social history: Alan Haynes, [Sex in Elizabethan England](#), and in his even more riveting, [Invisible Power](#), the Elizabethan Secret Services. Liza Picard's [Elizabeth's London](#), and Alison Plowden, [Tudor Queens and Commoners](#). Anne Somerset's [Elizabeth 1st](#), US 1991, has interesting material about the day to day life of the Queen, and David Starkey, Alison Weir, and Antonia Fraser and have all written books on the wives of Henry VIII, in which all the authors have their own individual, vivid take on the characters of the wives and the King - though, if you are like me, you will be deeply tempted to just thump David Starkey for stating sexist prejudice as immutable truth. One particularly strong book on Anne Boleyn is Reetha Warnicke's, [The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn](#), from which I drew my contentious suggestion that George Boleyn and his friends were accused of having sex with Anne his sister, in order to eliminate the homosexual elite who had gathered around the failing Queen.

When I came to write [The Queen's Fool](#), my novel about the court of Mary Tudor I had a heroine who was both a secret jew and a seer. This led me into the most fascinating research into the lives of Tudor jews and into the alchemists, magicians and con-men who pioneered Tudor science and black arts. The most important book on the jews of England was an out of print text by Cecil Roth, [A History of the Marranos](#), The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1932. Strong texts on Tudor alchemists included Benjamin Woolley, [The Queen's Conjuror](#) New York 2001, and the key text by Frances Yates, [The Occult Philosophy in the age of Elizabeth](#), Routledge 1979. My heroine, Hannah, is 'begged' as a fool to the royal court and so I wandered off down the byways of the history of Tudor fools to my own great interest and pleasure. Enid Welsford, [The Fool](#), London 1935, was a fascinating history of fools both insane and comical from the earliest mediaeval cases to the Tudor courts, as was Sandra Billington [A Social History](#)

[of the Fool](#), Harvester 1984, who alerted me to the translation of 'fools' into comedians which took place from the Tudor courts, through the Shakespearean stage, to the 1600s.

I am working now on my next novel [The Virgin's Lover](#), which is set in the unsteady first three years of Elizabeth's reign and has led me into thoughts about the counterfeit currency, which took me to Thomas Gresham, the rivalry of Mary Stuart, which led me on to the Stuarts, and the delicate health of Robert Dudley's wife, which led me to Tudor medicine and scandalous accusation. Reading a Tudor library is easy, it's stopping that is impossible.