

Derek Wilson examines a set of relationships which illustrate just how dangerous life was in the court of the Tudor lion. He tells the interlocking stories of six men - all, curiously, called Thomas - whose ambitions and principles brought them face to face with violent death. Thomas Wolsey was an accused traitor on his way to the block when a kinder death intervened. Thomas More and Thomas Cromwell, whose convictions and policies could scarcely have been more different, both perished beneath the headmans axe. Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, would have met the same end had the kings own death not brought him an eleventh-hour reprieve. Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, though outliving the monarch, perished as a result of that war of ambitions and ideologies which rumbled on after 1547. Wriothesley succumbed to poison of either body or mind in the aftermath of a failed coup. Cranmer went to the stake as a heretic at the insistence of Mary Tudor, who was very much the daughter of the father she hated. In the Lions Court is an illuminating examination of the careers of the six Thomases, whose lives are described in parallel - their family and social origins, their pathways to the royal Council chamber, their occupancy of the siege perilous, and the tragedies which, one by one, overwhelmed them. By showing how events shaped and were shaped by relationships and personal destinies, Derek Wilson offers a fresh approach to the political narrative of a tumultuous reign.

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