



First of the Tudors

Joanna Hickson

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‘A great tale... the golden thread that led to the crown of England’ Conn Iggulden

Jasper Tudor, son of Queen Catherine and her second husband, Owen Tudor, has grown up far from the intrigue of the royal court. But after he and his brother Edmund are summoned to London, their half-brother, King Henry VI, takes a keen interest in their future.

Bestowing Earldoms on them both, Henry also gives them the wardship of the young heiress Margaret Beaufort. Although she is still a child, Jasper becomes devoted to her and is devastated when Henry arranges her betrothal to Edmund.

He seeks solace in his estates and in the arms of Jane Hywel, a young Welsh woman who offers him something more meaningful than a dynastic marriage. But passion turns to jeopardy for them both as the Wars of the Roses wreak havoc on the realm. Loyal brother to a fragile king and his domineering queen, Marguerite of Anjou, Jasper must draw on all his guile and courage to preserve their throne – and the Tudor destiny...

First of the Tudors Details

Date : Published December 1st 2016 by Harper

ISBN :

Author : Joanna Hickson

Format : Kindle Edition 528 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, English History, Tudor Period

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From Reader Review First of the Tudors for online ebook

Helen Hollick says

This book has received a Discovering Diamonds Review:

Helen Hollick

founder #DDRevs

"...captures a sense of place, time, intrigue, romance and the lust for power – and the trouble all these things bring – in a very talented written and enjoyable novel."

Tracey says

This was an interesting read , I enjoyed that it was from Jasper Tudor's point of view .

Liz Fenwick says

I loved and it was bliss to escape into history so vividly portrayed with characters who held my heart

Kelly Obernuefemann says

I enjoyed her previous books much more. I think the problem with the narrative is the time jumps. There are several key moments, like the death of Edmund, that are just mentioned after the fact and not given a scene in the story. And why doesn't her editor use commas!?

Kate says

Absolutely fantastic! I adored every page - this book made my weekend.

Pamela Scott says

<https://thebookloversboudoir.wordpress...>

I was given a review copy by the publisher via NetGalley and voluntarily reviewed it.

I like to dabble in historical fiction every now and again. Thanks to Hilary Mantel I have a fondness for the

Tudors. First of the Tudors sounded right up my street. I really enjoyed this book. It's flawless. The characters are well developed and really come to life. I loved the plot. I know very little about the early days of the Tudors so felt I learned a lot from this book. There is a fairly disturbing event in the book when a thirteen-year-old girl is married and falls pregnant. I understand this was fairly normal during the time period but it still made my flesh crawl. I thought this was a great historical fiction novel and look forward to the sequel. I'd recommend it.

Helen Drake says

I enjoy a good historical fiction, especially if it is about a time I am only somewhat familiar with. I have read extensively about the Tudors, primarily Henry VIII and his wives and his children, especially Queen Elizabeth I. I knew there was a War of the Roses but I did not as much about the people involved. I certainly was not familiar with Jasper Tudor and the role he played as King Henry VI's half brother and a loyal member of the House of Lancaster.

This story was told from the point of view of Jasper Tudor and his fictional mistress Jane (Sian) Hywel, a Welsh cousin. Each told their own story of this precarious time and the life they shared together. I especially enjoyed reading about Henry (Harry) Tudor, Jasper Tudor's nephew who later became Henry VII. In this story he is taken from his mother at a very young age to be the ward of Jasper Tudor by order of King Henry VI. Mistress Jane in essence becomes his foster mother and raises him from his early years to his teens in this story.

There are so many interesting historical figures in this story. The style of story telling made this very complicated time in history a lot easier to understand! I certainly look forward to reading the next book in this series! I will also go back and read the previous novels written by Joanna Hickson.

Angela Smith says

If you enjoy reading about the Tudors then what better place to start than more or less at the beginning. It tells the story of Jasper Tudor, brother to Edmund Tudor and Uncle to Henry (the future Henry VII)

It was a very uncertain time in the monarchy when the crown was being passed back and forth like pass the parcel. Jasper Tudor mostly has guardianship of his nephew Henry except for the times he is exiled. He has a mistress with whom he has two daughters. This is his story as much as it is his mistress's story. (Jane)

You have to remember when reading this how marriages were conducted in a very different way and the fact that Jasper's brother Edmund married a thirteen year old girl and impregnated her before he died smacks of child abuse in this day and age, but was fairly normal back then, however, it is still disturbing to read.

I read *The Sunne in Splendour* by Sharon K. Penman back in 2016 which is the other side of the coin. First of the Tudors mentions many of the events of that period but from a Lancastrian POV. There is obviously some artistic license with the relationship between Jasper and Jane, but he did reportedly have a mistress and at least three daughters (illegitimately) during his life.

The book has an author's note and a Glossary with words more unusual to today's reader as well as Welsh names and words and a variety of maps of the Tudor family tree and other areas.

Maartje Volder says

Well, let me start with what I did not like about this book. IT ENDED 20 YEARS TOO SOON!

I wanted it to end at the end of Jasper Tudors life, I expected it would be so until i realised that I was 400 pages in and a whole lot of history was to take place before his nephew would take the throne.

I loved the historically accurate tale, given a hint of romance by Jane her presence. The way the story is told (a common girl and a lord) by two people makes you give a very good view of the world at that time. Loved it from start to finish. (view spoiler)

Loretta says

An interesting look at a side of history less well-known to me - the beginning of the House of Tudor. Joanna Hickson has clearly researched her subject very well and it makes a change to read a story woven around one of the lesser-known characters of the time.

Nikki says

Thoroughly enjoyable account of a familiar period of history from a slightly different perspective.

I also noted with interest how much I prefer a historical novel with family trees and maps etc - the copy I have just read is a proof copy without a family tree, and I did flounder a few times initially (thank goodness for Wikipedia!). It is clear in the proof, however, that the properly published version will have several family trees and maps.

Bookread2day says

Every now and then I like a change from my normal crime fiction and I will read a book from the historical genre. Joanna Hickson has a brilliant new novel flowing with characters who have passion and betrayal within the Tudor family. I enjoyed reading First of the Tudors so much that I will be reading about Harri Tudors story in Joanna's next novel The Crimson Crown, which will pick up from where First of the Tudors finishes. I do hope that readers will join me we will discover more about the characters Jasper, Jane, Sian, Davvy and Margaret Beaufort as well as many new historical characters. First of the Tudors is perfect for fans of Philippa Gregory, Anne O'Brien and C.W. Gortner.

Morgan Dhu says

Joanna Hickson, author of The Agincourt Bride and The Tudor Bride - novels dealing with the life of Catherine Valois, ancestress of the Tudors - continues to follow the early days of the Tudor dynasty with First of the Tudors, a novel featuring Catherine's second son, Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke.

In *First of the Tudors*, we see the early years of the Wars of the Roses through the eyes of a semi-outsider. Half-brother to Henry VI, son of a former queen of England and commoner and a Welshman, ennobled by his royal brother's wish but holding lands in rebellious Wales, Jasper is a Lancastrian by blood, and during the early years of the wars, fiercely loyal to his brother Henry.

Though it was Catherine's oldest son Edmund, Earl of Richmond, who would marry Margaret Beaufort and father the first Tudor monarch, it was Jasper's lifelong devotion to Margaret that ensured the survival of the young Henry VII and his ultimate rise to the throne. After Edmund's death - an early victim of the political and military maneuvering that preceded the civil war between Lancaster and York - Jasper took charge of Margaret, a pregnant widow only 13 years old. As Margaret was under the age of majority, Jasper was awarded guardianship of the infant Henry, and served as the young boy's protector and advisor for most of his life, despite a long separation during his nephew's youth, when his guardianship was granted elsewhere during the first portion of Edward IV's reign. Though Margaret maintained contact with Henry, and sought to advance his claim once he became, in essence, the last Lancastrian heir, her fate as a wealthy heiress under royal wardship meant that she was a valuable marriage prize, and was never in a position to raise her son herself.

Jasper's initial period of guardianship lasted for five years, from Henry's birth to the beginning of Edward IV's reign in 1461, when he was forced to flee the country, and the young Henry Tudor's guardianship granted to one of Edward's supporters.

Jasper spent the early years of the York reign either in exile, separated from both Margaret and the young Henry, or fighting against the Yorkists whenever he managed to secure financial backing from his royal French cousins. The novel follows his story up to the brief restoration of Henry VI to the throne in 1470.

Interspersed with his story is the fictional story of Sian - Jane in English - a Welsh woman who is Henry's governess for most of his early life, and also Jasper's lover and mother of two illegitimate daughters. (There is some indication - but little actual proof - that Jasper fathered one or more illegitimate children; their mother is usually identified as Myfanwy ferch Dafydd. Myfanwy who appear in the novel, but as the lover of Jasper's father Owen and mother of his youngest child Daffyd - who was real enough, but the name of his actual mother is unknown.)

The intimate details of Jasper's imagined family life, and Jane's efforts to keep the Tudor children - young Daffyd and her own two daughters - safe through the turmoil of the civil war and the York reign help to flesh out and humanise the events in the young Henry Tudor's life during the period of Jasper's exile. Jane is loyal, brave, loving, resourceful and devoted to a man she can never marry, and is as much the protagonist of this tale as Jasper is.

One assumes a sequel is in the works, which will cover the resumption of power by the Yorks, the long years of exile in Brittany and France for both Jasper and the young Henry, now the last living male Lancashire heir, though with a tentative claim to the throne at best, and the accession of Henry VII to the throne. I'm looking forward to its publication.

Helen says

Yes, I've been reading yet another Wars of the Roses novel! One of the things I'm enjoying about reading so many books set in the same time period is seeing the variety of ways in which different authors choose to approach the same subject as they search for a new angle and some fresh insights. In *First of the Tudors*,

Joanna Hickson takes us right back to the early days of the conflict and the beginnings, more or less, of the Tudor dynasty to tell the story of Jasper Tudor, uncle of the future Henry VII.

As the sons of Welshman Owen Tudor and Henry V's widow, Catherine of Valois, Jasper and Edmund Tudor are half-brothers to Henry VI, who is King of England as the novel opens in 1451. Being closely related to royalty but with no real claim to the throne for themselves, Edmund and Jasper are welcomed to court by Henry who rewards them with lands and titles, making Edmund Earl of Richmond and Jasper Earl of Pembroke. Edmund also wins the hand in marriage of Margaret Beaufort, which is seen as a great accomplishment as Margaret, despite being little more than a child, has royal blood and is one of England's richest heiresses.

When Edmund dies at Carmarthen Castle in 1456, possibly of bubonic plague, he leaves Margaret pregnant with his child. The baby, when it is born, is named Henry and is taken into Jasper's care (before later being placed in the custody of the Yorkist William Herbert). As the years go by and Henry grows into a man, Jasper is occupied with looking after his estates, trying to keep the peace in Wales and supporting his brother the king as unrest grows and the country heads towards civil war. Based closely on historical fact, we see all of this through Jasper's eyes, as he narrates his own story in his own words.

But there's also a fictional story, built around the idea that Jasper had a cousin, Sian (or Jane) Hywel, who became his mistress. There is no historical basis for this, but it is known that Jasper did have illegitimate children, so I have no problem with Joanna Hickson inventing the character of Jane, especially as she makes clear in her author's note which parts of the novel were factual and which weren't. However, I felt that too much time was devoted to Jane – she narrates around half of the book – and I would have preferred to concentrate more on Jasper and the other historical figures. This is just my personal opinion, though, and I'm sure other readers will like the domestic scenes and the love story more than I did.

I've always found Jasper Tudor intriguing, maybe partly because he tends to be overshadowed in historical fiction by other, more well-known characters. I had been looking forward to seeing him take centre stage for once, but I didn't really find his portrayal in this novel entirely convincing. I can't quite explain why, other than to say that his narrative voice was almost identical to Jane's and that I could never fully believe in him as a 15th century man. I did like the portrayal of Margaret Beaufort, however, which made her seem slightly more endearing than in other fictional portrayals I've read! I also enjoyed the focus on Wales, the descriptions of the Welsh castles and the Welsh people who played a part in this fascinating period of history – one secondary character whom I found particularly interesting was the poet Lewys Glyn Cothi.

First of the Tudors ends abruptly, leaving the feeling that there is much more of this story still to come, and the author's note confirmed what I had already expected: there will be a sequel and Henry Tudor will take more of a central role in that one. If you've never read Joanna Hickson before you may also be interested in *The Agincourt Bride* and *The Tudor Bride*, which tell the story of Catherine of Valois, or *Red Rose, White Rose*, the Wars of the Roses from Cicely Neville's perspective.

Connie says

I would much rather give this a 3.5 because although it was dry in some parts, I did enjoy it overall. It was a different perspective on Margaret Beaufort and Jasper Tudor ; one that I haven't yet considered. In previous books I've read, Margaret was enamored with Jasper, in this book it is the exact opposite. I also never considered how close Jasper could have possibly been to Henry VI and that in all actuality, he was probably one of the kings only true, unwavering supporters in a time where almost all nobles swayed back and forth from Lancaster to York.

