

HADRIAN DE CASTELLO a.k.a. Adriano Castellesi (da Corneto)

Hadrian was one of our more "colourful" bishops!

He was born around 1460 and raised in Italy. Little is known about his early life, and he first became prominent when sent to what is now Great Britain. The exact date of this event is obscure. One account states that he was sent by Pope Innocent III to Scotland, to reconcile James III to his subjects. This would have put the date some time before 1488. (James died in 1488 and Innocent in 1492.). This would have made Adriano quite young to be entrusted with such a delicate diplomatic task. Another account states that he was a confidant and favourite of Roderic Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI in 1492. How did he achieve that status if he was in Scotland ?

What is certain is that he was sent by a Pope to resolve some conflict in England or Scotland. This probably happened around 1500. At any rate King Henry VII obviously took a shine to him and had him appointed Bishop of Hereford in 1503, presumably to woo him back to England. Fat chance, because by this time Hadrian was back in Rome acting as Private Secretary to Alexander VI - a position of far greater status and power than being Bishop of Hereford.

He was made a Cardinal by Alexander VI in May 1503. In early August 1503 Hadrian entertained the Pope and his son Cesare Borgia at his Palace in Rome (Palazzo Tornolia) to dinner. Afterwards all three became ill, beginning with Hadrian. The Pope died of this illness on 18 August 1503. *(He was succeeded as Pope by Pius III, who was elected Pope on 22 September 1503, ordained priest 30 September, consecrated Bishop on 1 October, crowned Pope on 8 October, and died 18 October. So the final month of his life was quite eventful!)*. A theory that they were poisoned has been discredited.

In 1504 Hadrian was elected Bishop of Bath and Wells, but never once came to England, let alone Wells in the 14 years he was bishop.

In 1513, Hadrian was implicated in a plot (initiated by Cardinal Petrucci of Siena) to assassinate Pope Leo X (born Giovanni Medici). Petrucci was executed but Hadrian bought his way out of trouble by paying 25,000 ducats to Leo. He then fled to Venice and was subsequently stripped of his cardinalate.

Hadrian died around 1521-22, one account saying that he was murdered by a servant en route to the conclave that elected Pope Adrian VI. But if he had been deprived of his cardinalate, how did he qualify to attend the Conclave?