

Allen, John (1476-1534) (DNB00)

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←Allen, James Mountford

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Allen, John (1476-1534)

by James Gairdner



sister projects: Wikipedia article.

1904 Errata appended.

ALLEN, JOHN (1476–1534), archbishop of Dublin, studied first at Oxford and afterwards at Cambridge, where he took the degree, as Wood believes, of LL.B., and not M.A., as others supposed. He afterwards, according to the same authority, was made LL.D., either at Rome or at some Italian university, having been sent abroad by Archbishop Warham on matters connected with the church, and resided in Italy for a period of nine years. His absence from England could scarcely have been so long; for Warham became archbishop in 1504, and Allen received English benefices at pretty frequent intervals, even from an earlier date than that till 1515, while we know that he was at home in 1522, and that he could not have gone abroad afterwards for any length of time. The history of his early promotions is mainly derived from a catalogue of documents exhibited by him to Dr. Brett, commissary of the Bishop of Bangor, in 1525. He first obtained a 'title' or capacity to receive orders, 'dated at the manor of Denham, 10 Sept. 1496.' Next he had 'letters dimissory,' dated London, 6 Feb. 1498 (that is, 1498–9). He took subdeacon's orders on the 23rd of the same month, and deacon's on 16 March following. A dispensation for age was granted to him on 8 March 1499, and he became a priest on 25 Aug. in the same year. He was instituted to the vicarage of Chislet, in Canterbury diocese, on 6 July 1503, and shortly afterwards obtained from Rome what is called a *bullâ trialitatis*, probably a dispensation to hold three benefices at a time, dated 13 Feb. 1503–4. In 1505 he obtained another bull, dated 13 April, for uniting the vicarage of Chislet to the prebend of St. Margaret's in Lincoln Cathedral; but apparently this was never acted upon, for his name does not appear among the prebendaries of St. Margaret's. On 12 Jan. 1507–8 he was presented to the living of Sundridge in Kent, and three years later (6 March 1510–1) to that of Aldington in the same county. The latter he resigned within a twelvemonth, obtaining in its place the rural deanery of Risebergh, or Monks Risborough, in Buckinghamshire, a peculiar of Canterbury, to which he was instituted by letters dated at Lambeth 25 Jan. 1511–2. Meanwhile he had obtained another bull, dated 19 June (13th calends of July) 1508, for the union of Sundridge with the canonry of Westbury. On 1 March 1515–6 he was made rector of South Ockendon, Essex, which he resigned in 1526 (NEWCOURT, *Repertorium*, ii. 448). But in anticipation, as it would seem, of this last preferment, he had obtained a bull from Leo X, who was then at Florence, dated (apparently) on 7 Feb., for the union of South Ockendon to the prebend of Asgarby in Lincoln Cathedral. On 2 June 1518 he obtained another promotion, described in the catalogue as 'Literæ institutionis Archi'tus Calipolen.'

He now began to attract the notice of Cardinal Wolsey, whose commissary he was as early as 1522. On 2 Dec. 1523 he obtained (of Wolsey's gift) the rectory of Gaulby (not Dalby: see *Valor Ecc. Record Commission*,

iv. 152, 162) in Leicestershire, which properly belonged to the master and brethren of the hospital of Burton Lazars. The cardinal was then at the height of power; but one of the articles for which he was impeached six years later was that he had disposed of this benefice by virtue of his legatine authority in derogation of the rights of the true patrons (BREWER'S *Letters &c. of Henry VIII*, vol. iv. pt. 3, No. 6035). It is clear this was only one of those technical offences which the ingenuity of lawyers never failed to discover when it was sought in those days to crush a falling statesman. Much more serious complaint was made at the time of another of the cardinal's measures, in which Allen acted as one of his chief agents—the suppression of a number of minor monasteries in 1524 and 1525, with a view to the foundation of his two colleges at Ipswich and Oxford. This he was authorised to do by papal bull; but the conduct of his agents in the matter, especially of Allen, gave rise to considerable outcry, and complaints were made about it to the king. Wolsey, however, appears to have satisfied the king on this point, and Allen continued on the high road to favour. On 19 Nov. 1524, he was made, in addition to his other promotions, vicar of Alborne, and in August 1525 rector of Llaniestyn in Carnarvonshire. It was with a view to his institution to this latter benefice that the documents above referred to were exhibited by him to the Bishop of Bangor's commissary, Dr. Brett.

On 18 June, 1526, he was admitted to the prebend of Southwell in Nottinghamshire, belonging to Wolsey's see of York, which he resigned two years later on being made archbishop of Dublin. On 12 Jan. 1527, he was made prebendary of Reculverland in St. Paul's Cathedral. That he was also treasurer of that cathedral, as stated by some writers, appears to be a mistake; for, according to Le Neve, the office was held by Thomas Benet, LL.D., from 1521 to 1558. He continued to assist Wolsey in the discharge of his legatine functions, as in the examination of heretics and in the collusive suit shamefully instituted by the cardinal against the king in May 1527, by which it was sought at first to get the marriage with Katharine declared invalid without her knowledge. In July of the same year he accompanied his patron on his splendid mission to France, described by Cavendish. In August 1528 he was nominated to the archbishopric of Dublin, and resigned the livings of Sundridge and Risborough, with the three prebends of Southwell, Asgarby, and Reculverland. On 19 Sept. he was made chancellor of Ireland, and the money due to the king on the temporalities of his see was remitted (RYMER, *Fœdera* (1728), xiv. 266, 268). His consecration as archbishop took place on 13 March, 1529 (COTTON'S *Fasti*, ii. 18). A difficult task lay before him in Ireland, where he was expected to support Wolsey's authority as legate, which, it was maintained by the primate (the Archbishop of Armagh), did not extend to that country (BREWER, iv. 5624). A few months later (October 1529) Wolsey fell into disgrace, and was indicted for the exercise of his legatine powers in England; and when, in 1531, the English clergy were heavily fined for having submitted to his authority, Allen also had to compound for offences against the statutes of provisors and *præmunire* at no less a sum than 1466*l* 13*s*. 4*d*. He received on this (7 Feb. 1532) a general pardon, both as chancellor of Ireland and as Wolsey's commissary. But he was greatly impoverished, and begged Cromwell for a prebend of 100*l*. a year to enable him to maintain appearances. On 5 July the Archbishop of Armagh, with whom he had great controversies as to precedence, was made chancellor of Ireland in his room.

In 1534 broke out the formidable rebellion of Lord Thomas Fitzgerald. Archbishop Allen secretly left Dublin Castle, where he was in danger of being besieged, and took sail for England; but, the wind being unfavourable, he was driven back, and compelled to land at Clontarf on the north side of Dublin Bay. He took refuge, along with some dependants, in a house in the village of Artaine. On the news of his landing becoming known, Lord Thomas repaired to the spot, and caused him to be dragged out of bed into his presence. The archbishop knelt before him in his shirt and mantle, entreating for mercy. But the followers of Lord Thomas, mistaking, as some say, an order from their master, which was simply to take him away and put him in confinement, butchered him and most of his attendants without remorse. This foul deed was done on 27 (or perhaps 28) July 1534, and Campian, writing of the event a generation later, says 'the place is ever since hedged in, overgrown and unfrequented, in detestation of the fact.' The archbishop is said to have been at the time in his fifty-eighth year.

Allen was the author of two treatises: 'Epistola de pallii significatione activa et passiva,' written when he received his pall as archbishop, and 'De consuetudinibus ac statutis in tutoriis causis observandis.' He also compiled two Registers, both of which are still extant, the one called 'Liber Niger,' and the other 'Repertorium Viride,' full of valuable information regarding the affairs of his diocese and the state of the churches.

[Wood's Athenæ, ed. Bliss, i. 76; State Papers of Henry VIII, vol. ii.; Calendar of State Papers, Henry VIII, vols. iii. to vii.; Campian's History of Ireland.]

J. G.

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N.B.— *f.e.* stands for *from end* and *l.l.* for *last line*