

JOHN DE DROKENESFORD

His life in brief

AD 1265

Author: Gordon Hope

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Born in Droxford about AD 1265: His father was John de Molendinis, probably one of a family of loyal kings' servants since King John's days (and possibly earlier). The effigy in Droxford Church is probably of his mother (professionally dated between 1270 and 1305).

Educated probably at Oxford and probably trained in the law.

Employed first in the King's wardrobe service in 1285. Appointed Usher there 1288. Then, Cofferer 1290. Then, Controller there from 20 November 1290. Finally, promoted to be Keeper of the Wardrobe on 20 November 1295 holding this office until May 1308 (12½ years). Kept very busy finding men, equipment and money for the Scottish Wars of the King, Edward I (1276 to 7 July 1307).

Employed briefly in 1308 as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Presented to the benefice of Droxford on 28 September 1308. Later nominated and on 9 November 1309 consecrated as the next Bishop of Bath & Wells but not enthroned there until about November 1310. (He was succeeded in the benefice of Droxford by Philip de Drokenesford on 5 November 1310 and then by Michael de Drokenesford on 21 December 1315, both believed to be his younger brothers. A Michael de Drokenesford died as Rector of Droxford by 1361, but this may have been a son of the Michael above.)

In March 1310 Bishop John was involved with other clergy and with Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, and with other Lords and Barons in appointing a body of 'Lords Ordainers' to control Piers Gaveston, the favourite of King Edward II, for the good of the realm.

Thereafter Bishop John was very active and always on the move (including visits to his home at Droxford) in the matters of his diocese and of the turbulent political troubles of the Kingdom. He also tried to help various nephews and kinsmen but was sometimes criticised for making unsuitable appointments.

He died on 9 May 1329 at his episcopal manor house at Dogmersfield in Hampshire.

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