

Anna of Kleves



Anne of Cleves was born in Dusseldorf, Germany in 1515. Her actual birth date is not known but it could have been the 22nd September or 28th June. Not much is known about her early life until Henry VIII became interested in marrying a princess. The marriage between the two was organised and therefore Anna had to leave her homeland.

After travelling across Europe, Anna of Kleves arrived in England. In 1540, on New Year's Day, Henry VIII met her for the first time: after having disguised himself by wearing a cloak, the king reached Rochester and entered Lady Anna's chamber. However, Anna did not recognise him: it was only when the King changed into a purple gown that the lady greeted him appropriately.

Unfortunately, Henry was highly dissatisfied with her looks, and went to the extent of shouting "I like her not! I like her not!" According to the king, Holbein's work did not provide a true picture of Anna: he believed that the portrait beautified her rather than pointing out her true traits.

Furthermore, Henry VIII and his new wife had quite different tastes and characters: in fact, the new Queen of England was not interested in either music or books. The two could not even communicate properly: King Henry spoke English, whereas Anne only knew how to speak native German.

Anna of Cleves was Queen of England for only six months until her marriage with Henry VIII was annulled. Lady Anna accepted the annulment without hesitation: it is not certain whether she agreed so pleasantly and quickly to divorce from Henry VIII because she was afraid of what had happened to his previous wives. Following her divorce, Anna did not return to her homeland: she remained in England and never married again.