

## THE ALFORDS OF LYME REGIS, OTTERY, ESCOTT, AND FARWAY

pp. 102–112

### FROM ROBERTS' "LIFE OF THE DUKE OF MONMOUTH"

"Mr. Gregory Alford, one of the Corporation of Lyme Regis, wrote to the King (Charles II), on 9 April 1681, to say that the day before, about ten miles west of Lyme, he was overtaken by Mr. Edmund Gibbons, a Cromwellite, who was in company with the Earl of Stamford. He said he came from Oxford after the Parliament was dissolved. The night before, an Ambassador came from the King of France to Charles, to assure the payment of £800,000 if the King would dissolve the Parliament. The writer, Gregory Alford, adds—'if the said Gibbons said so much to me, no doubt but he said much more to the dissenting party at Lyme!'"

### FROM MACAULAY'S "HISTORY OF ENGLAND"

"On the evening on which the Duke of Monmouth landed; Gregory Alford, Mayor of Lyme, a zealous Tory and a most bitter persecutor of Nonconformists, sent off to give the alarm in Somersetshire and Dorsetshire, and himself took horse."

"Late at night he stopped at Honiton, and thence despatched a few hurried lines to London."

"At five in the morning the King (James II) received the letter which the Mayor of Lyme had despatched from Honiton. The Privy Council was instantly called together."

"Alford's communication was laid before the Lords, and its substance communicated to the Commons. A Bill received the Royal assent the same day, attainting Monmouth of high treason, and a reward of £5,000 was promised for his apprehension."

"The Lords had no evidence before them except the letter of the Mayor of Lyme."

"Monmouth marched towards Taunton, where he arrived on the 18th of June, exactly a week after his landing." (*Vol.i, p. 579, etc.*)

### THE TANNER MSS., BODLEIAN LIBRARY

A less flattering account is quoted in Allan Fea's *King Monmouth*. "The Duke's frigate, and the two tenders (described by the Mayor of Lyme as a fly boat of 200 tons and a ketch of 100 tons), brought eighty-three hands including Monmouth. His Grace, having landed, unsheathed his sword, and led his men by a field path—"The Stile Path"—over the cliff into Lyme, thus avoiding the guns of the fort. The Mayor, Alford, was at his wits' end what to do, issuing an order for the drums to beat an alarm."

"I am confident", writes Thomas Tye, Lyme, July 8, 1685, "forty men might have preserved this towne; but our Mayor, Captain Alford, immediately ran away, neither had he provided any powder, or encouraged any men."

### FROM THE "HOUSE OR LORD'S JOURNAL"

Gregory Alford's letter to James II:

"Honiton, 11 June 1685, near twelve at night.

"May it please your sacred Majesty,

"This evening, between 7 and 8 of the clock, there came a great ship into the road of Lyme, not showing any colours, the off side of the ship not seen by us from the shore. She filled five great boats full of men, which they speeded behind the Cobb and so landed. They went over the cliffs and presently were in the Town; at least 300 men, with the Duke of Monmouth at their head; so they became masters of the town.

"I presently, knowing that I should be the first seized, took my horse and came with all speed to this town, and gave notice to all the country as I came, and sent my servants that notice should be given to Somerset and Dorsetshire, and I hope to be in Exeter in two hours to give an account of it to the Duke of Albemarle.

"In the morning there landed at Chideok, in our bay, two men, which I understanding sent by all ways to take them. Whether they be taken or not I know not.

"So I humbly beseech your Majesty to pardon this distracted relation, not doubting they have plundered me.

"I am your Majesty's most humble servant,  
"GREGORY ALFORD, Mayor."

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The Alfords of Dorset and of Devonshire

It seems probable that the Alfords of DEVONSHIRE and of DORSET are of the same stock as those of Somerset, though the compiler, so far, has been unable to trace the connection. But it may be noted that the *Harleian MSS.* (1538, fol. 4), give the "Arms of Alford of Okehampton, Devon: Argent, two hounds sable", and the same Arms are found in connection with the family at Escott in Talaton, having stood above the chief doorway of the old Manor House.

"Vincent Calmady, Esquire, of Langdon Hall, Devon (near Plymouth), married Wylmote Alford. He died 1579. Their coat of arms included the Pears for Alford of Wilts and Berks."

The Head-mastership of the Bideford foundation Grammar School, which stood originally on the site of the present Free Library, adjoining the bridge, was held for many years by the Rev. Henry Alford, whose parentage the compiler has been unable to trace. He was born in 1795, graduated at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, 1822, and married Sarah Gourlay, of Great Yarmouth, who died in the same year as her husband, leaving no children. The *Collection of the Davidson Pamphlets* in the Athenæum Library, Plymouth, contains the following:

"Persuasions to a Holy Life," etc., by the Rev. Henry Alford, A.M., Bideford, 1832.

"Sermon preached at Westleigh Parish Church (near Bideford) on Sunday, November 25, 1832; being the day appointed for returning thanks to Almighty God for Deliverance from Asiatic Cholera."

He died in 1861, and was buried in Abbotsham Churchyard.

*Abbotsham, North Devon; an Altar-tomb in the Churchyard:*

"Sacred to the memory of the  
Rev. Henry Alford,  
late Master of the Bideford Grammar School,  
who departed this life Feb. 13th, 1861, aged 66;  
in the joyful hope of a glorious resurrection."

—————  
"Sacred to the memory of  
Sarah Alford,  
Relict of the Rev. Henry Alford,  
who departed this life Nov. 17, 1861, aged 63."

A family of Alford occupied a good position in the parish of Wear Gifford during the eighteenth century.

Mr. Lawrence Alford, of Wear Gifford—a particularly charming spot, lying on the river Torridge, between Torrington and Bideford—was a subscriber to Watkins' *History of Bideford*, published in 1792. A quaint entry is found in this volume:

"Towne of Biddiford. . . . The bridge is 677 feet long, and has 24 arches of different sizes. It was built as early as 1350. . . . The famous bridge of Bytheford is very long, and yet one William Alford of that place carried on his back for a wager four bushels salt-water measure all the length thereof."

The *Visitation of Devonshire*, 1620, gives the following:

"John Alford of Bowe (N. Devon) married Grace Slowbye."

"Joane Alford married John Whitton of Chagford."

"Susan Alford, daughter and heiress of John Alford of Okehampton, married Peter Ebbeworthy."

A List of "Disclaimed", published at Barnstaple in 1620, includes John Alford of Monkton Zeale.

In 1786, Miss Mary Alford of Sanford, near Crediton, Devon, married William Henry Walrond.

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We return here to the Lewis Alford Family, whose connection with Dorsetshire appears in Table VI [AAFA *ACTION* March 1991, p. 22].

The Alford entries in the Bridport registers ceased in 1729, after a continuous record of over one hundred and thirty years. Descendants of the Bridport stock spread into Devonshire, and we find entries in the registers at Wear Gifford (1763-1806), High Bickington (1771-1848), Ashreigney (1786-1869), Chawleigh (1816-1853), and neighbouring parishes.

The present head of the Devonshire family is Colonel Frederick Lewis Alford, of Bickham, Roborough, South Devon. His grandfather, Samuel Alford (b. 1793, d. 1853), had one son, the late Mr. Lewis Alford, F.R.G.S. (b. 1830), who married (1) Fanny, daughter of the late R. Boorn, by whom he had a son, Frederick, and (2) Florence, daughter of Colonel Stamford, Bombay Horse Artillery, by whom he had two sons, Henry and Charles.

Colonel Alford was educated at Harrow and Woolwich, served for several years in the Royal Artillery, and was appointed, in 1903, to the command of the Glamorgan Artillery Militia. He married, in 1893, Emmeline McNeale, of the family of Mount Pleasant, co. Louth, and related on her mother's side to Lord Carbery's family. He has one son, Lewis McNeill Alford (born 1898), and one daughter, Margaret.

Captain Henry Stamford Lewis Alford, F.R.G.S., of Dalcross Castle, Inverness-shire, the second son, was educated at Harrow and Sandhurst. He held a commission in the Royal Scots Fusiliers, and saw service with the Nile Expeditionary Force, 1896 (Queen's medal and Khedive's medal and clasp), and in South Africa 1900-01 (medal with five clasps). He wrote, in collaboration with W.D. Sword, *The Egyptian Soudan* (Macmillan, 1898), which is referred to as an authoritative work in the *Statesman's Year Book*. He is now a Captain in the 3rd Battalion Cameron Highlanders, and a Member of the Royal Company of Archers, H.M.'s Bodyguard for Scotland.

Charles Egerton Alford, the third son of this family, was also at Harrow, and afterwards at Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

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#### WILLS IN THE ARCHDEACON'S COURT OF BARNSTAPLE

1771 Administration. Lewis Alford, High Bickington. Granted to his sons Lewis and George; James Alford of Roborough being also mentioned.

1779 Admon. John Alford, of High Bickington, granted to Mary his widow.

- 1808 Will of Mary Alford, widow (of the above), of High Bickington, "yeoman". Sons George and William; daughter Joan Richards. Residue to son John Alford, sole executor.
- 1810 Will of Henry Alford of Roborough.
- 1814 Will of William Alford of High Bickington, yeoman; leasehold estate to his brother George, Executor. "Brother Lewis, and his son William . . . Deceased brother John, and his children, John, George, William, and Joan wife of Basil Richards."
- 1826 Will of George Alford of High Bickington, in the co. of Devon, yeoman. "My wife. . . my sons James, William, George, Henry. . . ; my daughter Frances Hunt, my daughter Margaret Perryman, . . . My daughters Mary and Joan. . . My son Lewis Alford, sole executor."
- 1846 Admon. Lewis Alford of High Bickington. Under £1,000. Granted to Mary his widow.
- 1848 Will of George Alford of High Bickington. "To my eldest son George Alford of Atherington, for ever the house and courtelage attached. Son William. . . daughter Mary Alford and Elizabeth Downe, executrices."

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The following matriculations at Oxford may be noted here:

"Alford, John, of Devon. Plebs. Exeter Coll., matric. 1596, age 22. B.A. 1601. Degree cancelled. Rector of Ashton, Devon (near Newton Abbot), 1615." He died in 1646.

"Alford, Theophilus, son of John Alford of Ashton, Devon, sacerdos. Trin. Coll., Oxf., matric. 1634, age 17. M.A. 1638. Cambridge 1640. Vicar of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, London, 1661, and of South Weald, Essex, 1662."

"Alford, John, son of Theophilus Alford, of Brentwood, Essex, clericus. Trinity Coll., Oxf., matric. 1675, age 16."

"Alford, John of Devon. Pleb. Merton Coll., matric. 1608, age 18. B.A. St. Alban's Hall, 1612."

"Alford, George, son of John Alford of Heavitree, Devon. Pleb. Exeter Coll., matric. 1631, age 20. B.A. 1632."

"Alford, Melchizedec. son of William Alford of Lyme Regis, Dorset, gent., Christ Church, matric. 1641, age 18. B.A. 1648, expelled (as a Royalist). Vicar of Ottery St. Mary, Devon, 1661.

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#### REGISTERS OF SOUTH PERROTT, DORSET

1626"Apr. 27 Gulielmus Alford de Lime Regis, uxorem duxit Susannah Heckes."

#### REGISTERS OF UPLYME, DEVONSHIRE.

The parish of Uplyme adjoins that of Lyme Regis, although the former parish is in Devonshire and the latter in Dorsetshire. The complete Registers date only from 1710. Some loose pages are of earlier date:

- 1620, Nov. 10. Gregory, son of Richard Alford, baptized.  
 1622, Dec. 3. Richard, son of Richard Alford, baptized.  
 1623, May 1. Edward, son of Richard Alford, baptized.  
 1625, Apr. 3. Robert, son of Richard Alford, baptized.  
 1626. William, son of Richard Alford, baptized.  
 1645, June 2. Gregory, son of Mr. Gregory Alford, baptized.  
 1646, May 8. Joan, daughter of Gregory Alford, baptized.  
 1650, May William, son of Gregory and Mary Alford, baptized.  
 1653, Jan. 30. Jane Alford and James Powell, married.

- 1672, Apr. 6. Gregory, infant son of Mr. Gregory Alford, buried.  
 1678, June 16. Robert Alford, buried.

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#### REGISTERS OF LYME REGIS, DORSET

*(In addition to the ordinary entries, which follow next.)*

- 1653 "John Lester of Poole, and Susan Baker of Stockland (near Honiton), weare published three severall times in the Market place, and weare married by Mr. Richard Alford, deputy under Mr. John Davye, Mayor, the 16th daye of December."

*(This is the first entry of a marriage in the existing Register.)*

- 1658, Jan. 25. Witnesses at a marriage:—(Signatures) "Robert Alford, George Alford."  
 1663, Feb. 28. Mr. Timothy Hallett was inducted as Vicar. (Signature) "Geo. Alford, Guard. eccl."

*(The Lyme Regis Registers are very incomplete. There is a Register of Baptisms only from 1538 to 1572, but this contains no Alford entry. The regular entries of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials commence in 1653, and the earliest Alford entry is:)*

- 1656, Jan. 8. George Alford, buried.  
 1658, "Mr. Richard Alford, senior, was buried the 29th January."  
 1666, Oct. 31. Joan Alford, buried  
 1672, Jan. 30. Mary Alford, vidua, buried.  
 1673, Oct. 21. Mary, wife of Gregory Alford, buried.  
 1682, May 18. William Alford and Grace James, married.  
 1683, Nov. 6. William, son of William Alford, baptized.  
 1686, June 21. John, son of William Alford, baptized.  
 1688, Feb. 20. Sarah, daughter of William Alford, baptized.  
 1693, Jan. 14. Grace Alford, Widow, buried.  
 1693, June 3. John Alford, buried.  
 1697, May 17. "Mr. Gregory Alford, buried".  
 1701, Feb. 21. Rebekah Alford, buried.  
 1706, Nov. 12. Judith Alford, widow, buried.  
 1712, Nov. 25. Roger Owsley and Sarah Alford, married.  
 1718, Apr. 27. Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Alford, baptized.  
 1719, Feb. 14. Thomas, son of Thomas Alford, baptized.  
 1722, Dec. 23. Thomas, son of Thomas Alford, buried.  
 1723, Apr. 11. Laura (?), daughter of Thomas Alford, baptized.  
 1725, June 11. Rebecka, daughter of Thomas Alford, buried.  
 1726, Oct. 23. Abraham, son of Thomas Aldford, baptized.  
 1729, Nov. 9. Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Aldford, baptized.  
 1730, June 13. Abraham, son of Thomas Alford, buried.  
 1731, Mar. 21. Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Alford, buried.  
 1733, Apr. 1. Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Alford, buried  
 1738, Jan. 25. William Alford and Alice Cox, of Lyme, married.  
 1739, July 6. William, son of William Alford, baptized.  
 1739, Dec. 25. Thomas Alford, buried.  
 1743, June 15. John, son of William Alford, baptized.  
 1743, Sept. 20. Sarah, wife of Mr. Roger Owsley, buried.  
 1745, Sept. 24. Betty, daughter of William Alford, baptized.  
 1782, Nov. 12. Sarah, wife of Thomas Alford, buried æt. 31.  
 1783, June 29. John, son of Jacob and Elizabeth Alford, buried, æt. 1.

#### REGISTERS OF LYDLINCH (NEAR BLANDFORD), DORSET.

1650, Dec. 18. Melchisedec Alford married Elizabeth Channon.

#### REGISTERS OF TALATON (NEAR OTTERY ST. MARY), DEVONSHIRE.

1653, Jan. 17. Richard Alford, the sonne of Melchisedeck Allford, gent., was borne.  
1653, Mar. 23. Mrs. Margaret Allford, the wife of Richard Allford, gent., was buried.  
1654, Jan. 20. Richard Allford, the son of Melchisedec Allford, clerk, was buried.  
1654, Mar. 20. Margaret Allford, the daughter of Melchisedeck Alford, clerk, was borne.  
1656, July 23. Richard Alford, the sonne of Richard Allford, gent., was borne.  
1658, Aug. 13. Francis Allford, sonne of Richard Allford, gent., was borne.  
1659, Jan. 4. Francis, sonn of Richard Alford, gent., buried.  
1659, Nov. 21. Frances, sonn to Richard Alford, gent., was born.  
1663, Mar. 25. Mary Alford, the daughter of Richard Allford, gent., was borne.  
1665, Oct. 17. George, the sonn of Richard Alford, gent., was baptized.  
1665, Nov. 1. Richard, the son of Richard Alford, gent., was buried.  
1665, Nov. 6. Mary, the daughter of Richard Alford, gent., was buried.  
1666, May 12. An agreement entered on the fly-leaf of the Register. "Witness— Mr. Richard Alford."  
1667, Feb. 20. Richard, the sonn of Richard Alford, gent., was baptized.  
1684, Apr. 2. Witness to the death of Wm. Cottle, gent.:—Margaret Alford.

#### REGISTERS OF FARWAY, DEVONSHIRE

1669, June 6. James Alford, buried.  
1672, Apr. 1. Thomas, son of Mr. Gregory Alford, baptized.  
1675, May \_\_ Marmaduke, son of Gregory Alford, baptized.  
1693, June 27. Mr. Gregory Alford, buried.  
1706, June 3. Robert Alford and Mary Lee, married.  
1738, Sept 26. Frances Alford, widow, buried.

#### REGISTERS OF OTTERY ST. MARY, DEVONSHIRE

1689, Aug. 10. Melchisedeck Alford, vicar, buried.

#### REGISTERS OF WEAR GIFFORD, N. DEVONSHIRE

1763, Nov. 21. Lewes, son of Mr. Lewes Alford and Mary his wife, baptized.  
1764, June 23. Lewes, son of Mr. Lewes Alford and Mary his wife, buried.  
1765, Apr. 28. Lewis, son of Lewis and Mary Alford, baptized.  
1766, Sept 7. Laurence, son of Mr. Lewis Alford and Mary, baptized.  
1768, Mar. 20. Esther, daughter of Mr. Lewes Alford and Mary baptized.  
1771, Dec. 16. Mary, wife of Mr. Lewes Alford, buried.  
1774, Jan. 22. John Alford, buried.  
1774, Feb. 27. Lewis, son of Mr. Lewis Alford and Mary his wife,  
buried  
1775, Aug. 31. Thomas Law, gent., of Bishop's Tawton, and  
Elizabeth Alford, married.  
1781, July 4. Lewis Alford, gent. (aged 58), buried.  
1788, Dec. 22. Laurence, son of Laurence Alford and Mary, baptized privately.  
1789, Nov. 27. William Lewis, son of Laurence Alford and Mary, baptized peivately.  
1791, Apr. 7. John, son of Laurence Alford and Mary his wife, baptized.  
1792, Oct. 31. Charles James, son of Laurence Alford and Mary his wife, baptized.  
1794, June 29. Mary, daughter of Laurence Alford and Mary, baptized.  
1798, June 10. Arundel, son of Laurence Alford and Mary his wife, baptized.  
1800, Oct. 23. Edwin, son of Laurence Alford and Mary his wife, baptized.  
1803, June 2. Laurence Alford (aged 36), buried.  
1806, Oct. 3. Mary Anne Alford, from Bideford, buried.

The wills of several Alfords of Devonshire will be found in the Appendix.