

The Alfords were a family of some note in Lyme Regis from about 1600 to 1750, between which dates the name constantly occurs in Town Records and Church Registers. They were descended in two lines, as is shown in the pedigree Table [VIII], from the Alfords of Winsham, co. Somerset, the junior line forming the connection with Lyme a generation earlier than the senior, both lines alike being associated later with Escott in Talaton.

We commenced with the elder line of the family, arising from John Alford of Winsham:

**1. Richard Alford** "of Lyme Regis" was born at Winsham, co. Somerset, in 1590, being the youngest son of "John Alford the elder" of that place. He came to Lyme as an apprentice, rising to be a merchant of note and wealth, and possessed of a "mansion and estate" called Haye, near to Uplyme, and just outside the town of Lyme Regis. He married Margaret, the daughter of Mr. Gregorie, a well-known townsman and Mayor of Lyme, by whom he had seven children, of whom only three out-lived him, these being:

- i. Gregorie Alford, of whom next (2).
- ii. Christian, married Timothy Hallett (afterwards Vicar of Lyme on the presentation of Gregorie her brother in 1663), and had five children.
- iii. Richard Alford, junior, of Escott in Talaton, the lease of which his father left him by Will, was born at Haye, and baptized at Uplyme in 1622. He matriculated at Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1640, and in 1650 married Ursula, daughter of William Drewe, Esq., of the Grange, Honiton, and granddaughter of Mr. John Symes, of Poundisford Park, Somerset. He had a "mansion" in Ottery St. Mary, but from 1655 to 1667 lived at Escott, during which period the baptism of six children, and the burial of three of them, are recorded in the Talaton Registers. The surviving children were:
  1. Francis Alford, who was born at Escott in 1659, and died at Chard in 1705, being described as "Gent. of Lime".
  2. George Alford, born 1665 at Escott; and
  3. Richard Alford, born 1667 at Escott, of whom no further record is found.

There are numerous references to Richard Alford in the Registers and the Town Records, where his name first appears in 1621. He did his duty both in a civil and in a military capacity, being admitted to the Town Council in 1625, becoming a magistrate, and occupying the Mayoral Chair in 1627, 1628, 1629, 1630, 1631, and again in 1636, and once more in 1653. He was also Captain of Militia, and as such must have seen some service. The *House of Commons Journal* records his giving evidence before the Committee for Safety of Lyme (see below). In the siege of Lyme by Prince Maurice, 1644, Richard Alford's house at Haye became one of the outposts, from which, however, the Parliamentary garrison was soon driven back into Lyme, and the house occupied by Prince Maurice as the Royalist head quarters. The Royalists were eventually repulsed, and Richard Alford was taken prisoner as "a determined Royalist" by the Parliamentary Governor, and sent "as a malignant and desperate one" by ship to Portsmouth; but on the voyage the vessel was taken by a King's ship, and Richard Alford was released. One of his own ships, the *George*, was destroyed during these troublous times, and the Governor granted him, instead, a Dutch prize-ship, the *St. Sebastian*. His house and estate at Haye was sequestered, but eventually restored to him. He took a lease in 1664 of Escott in Talaton, an estate a few miles from Lyme Regis, but in the co. of Devon, where Margaret, his first wife, died. "After the troubles" he returned to Lyme, and was again Mayor (as already noted) in 1653, at the close of which year he, as Deputy Mayor, took the first marriage recorded in the existing Lyme Registers. He died in 1658, aged 68, and was buried in the vestibule, now the baptistery, of Lyme Regis Church. His will is given below.

The impropriation of the rectorial tithes of Lyme belonged to Richard Alford; this he left by Will to the Mayor and Corporation of the town. To his widow, Mary Alford, and ultimately to his son, Richard Alford, junior, he left his "Mansion and Estate of Haye". "Parc Close" formed part of the estate on which now stands "Park House", or "Little Park". Hay Farm lies near Hay House, which has been rebuilt. "Mary Alford, widow, of Haye", is mentioned in the Town Records between 1660 and 1670. She died at Haye in 1672. His son, Gregory Alford, was his father's executor and residuary legatee.

Richard Alford of Lyme Regis, co. Dorset, merchant, 1658. "To Mary my lovinge wife my mansion of Hay, with orchards, garden, stables, etc....meadows called Hay, Parc Close, Long Meadow, etc., all belonging to the said mansion .... also plate, linen, furniture .... and after her decease to my youngest sonne Richard .... Lands not otherwise disposed of to Gregory Alford my oldest sonne, and to his heires male. For default to Richard my youngest sonne, and on his decease to Richard Alford my grandchild .... Francis, second sonne of my sonne Richard .... My cosen Melchisedec Alford of Culmestock, Devon, clerk .... Lease of mansion and lands called Escott, in the parishe of Tallaton, and mansion in Ottery St. Mary, to my sonne Richard and Ursula his wife and their children .... My cosens John Alford the elder, and Joseph Alford the elder, both of Winsham in the county of Somerset .... My Mannor of Stoke Cannon in the county of Devon .... Lands in Winsham, Somerset, and Thorncombe, Devon, and Halstock, Dorset .... To Mayor and Corporation of Lyme .... My sister Joane Wembry .... My cosen Mary, wife of Francis Wells .... My five grandchildren the issue of Christian Hallett my daughter, deceased .... To the poor of Winsham .... My sonne Gregory Alford, sole Executor."  
*P.C.C. 194 Wootton.*

**2. Gregory Alford**, after the death of his father, Richard Alford, senior, became the most prominent man of that date in Lyme Regis. He was the eldest son of the above Richard Alford and Margaret Gregorie his wife, and was born at Haye in 1620, and baptized at Uplyme Church. He followed in his father's steps as a firm Royalist, and as an active soldier and citizen, his name being first mentioned in 1642. His early experiences must have made him well acquainted with military matters, the severe siege of Lyme by the Royalists under Prince Maurice occurring in 1644, when he was 24 years old. His home, Haye House, was used as head quarters of the Royalist army. Gregory Alford "fought against the Parliament", whose forces held possession of Lyme, and the Royalists being repulsed, his father was imprisoned and his own property sequestered. Gregory Alford's name appears in Tring's *Catalogue*, amongst those "malignants" who compounded for their estates. The mention of his "return" to Lyme implies that he had been obliged for the time to absent himself, and his narrative of *The Flight of the King* states that he went to Portugal.

He married Mary Burridge, daughter of a prominent merchant and magistrate of Lyme, by whom he had three children:

- i. Gregory Alford, of whom next (3).
- ii. Joan, born 1646, died unmarried in 1666.
- iii. William Alford, of Lyme Regis, was born in 1650. He married Grace James in 1682, by whom he had three children:
  1. William Alford, born 1683, who married Alice Cox, and having three children, William, John, and Betty, continued the Lyme Regis family through another generation.
  2. John Alford, born at Lyme in 1686.
  3. Sarah, born 1688, who in 1712 married Roger Owesley, and died at Lyme in 1743.

We are unable to trace the family further.

In 1661 Gregory Alford was admitted a member of the Town Council; soon afterwards he became Captain of Militia; and for many years took a prominent part in both civil and military matters. He was particularly severe upon the Dissenters, who were then regarded as disloyal both to Church and State. In 1663, owing chiefly to Gregory Alford's "interference", Mr. Short, the Vicar, who was that way affected, was "obliged to absent himself". On Mr. Short's deprivation, which followed in the same year, Gregory Alford, having succeeded to the patronage of the living, presented Emanuel Sharp; and on Mr. Sharp's speedy resignation, presented to the vicarage Timothy Hallett, who had married his sister, Christian Alford. During this year, 1663, Gregory Alford was Mayor of Lyme Regis, and from his accounts as Mayor we find that he invited his cousin Melchisedec Alford, vicar of Ottery St. Mary, to preach at Lyme, apparently upon some public occasion. These accounts are of interest as including not only the fees for preaching sermons, and the salary of the Town Clerk, but also the salary of a gunner, the purchase of a barrell of powder, the repair of the cobb, and 16 gallons of Canary wine. A "memorandum of armament under Captain Gregory Alford", of about the same date, speaks of twelve-pounders, four-pounders, and culverins. The persecution of "Dissenters" continued, and Alford reported to Sir L. Jenkins, Secretary of State, his capture of thirty men

and eighty women in the head conventicle at Lyme—"having broken the doors which were strongly barricaded". "To-morrow", he writes, "I shall be upon the Quakers and Anabaptists."

In 1666 the Council Minutes Book records the committal by Gregory Alford of thirteen persons "for keeping of a Conventicle". In 1667, July 20, Gregorie Alford wrote a letter to the Duke of Richmond concerning some doings at Lyme on June 15, which were regarded as questionable, if not disloyal, and reporting on the preparations for defence in case the Dutch Fleet should attack the town (see below). The Duke of Richmond was at that time Lord-Lieutenant of the county, and had been admitted to the freedom of Lyme Regis in 1665. A list of the Town Council in 1670 includes the name of Gregory Alford.

In 1673 he lost his wife, but afterwards married a second time, "Gregory Alford and Anne his wife" being mentioned in a Corporation Order of later date. A letter that he wrote to King Charles II, in 1681, shows that his loyalty had not abated, and, in 1684, he wrote a narrative—so far as he was aware of the circumstances—of the flight of King Charles II after the battle of Worcester, the original manuscript being in the Pepys Collection, Magdalene Collage, Cambridge. In 1685, being again Mayor, he took an active part on King James's side, concerning the landing of the Duke of Monmouth. The extracts on this matter from Macaulay's *History of England* (see below) are the chief cause of public interest in Gregory Alford's life. A warrant of 1686 mentions Gregory as still Captain of the Militia. In 1689 "Mr. Gregory Alford" is rated as a townsman, and again in 1694 and 1695. He died at Lyme in 1697, aged 77, and was buried in the Western porch or vestibule, now the baptistery, of Lyme Regis Church. Gregory Alford is described as "armiger" in *Dorset Administrations*. There was formerly a flat stone covering the grave bearing his name and arms—"Or, on a chevron azure between three roses three fleurs-de-lis argent". These arms, which have been since inaccurately painted amongst others on a screen close to the spot, were evidently the origin of the arms of the Somersetshire Alford family.

Gregory Alford died intestate, and the following grants are recorded:

"Gregory Alford of Lyme Regis, in the co. of Dorset, Merchant, 1701. Died interstate 1697. Letters of administration granted February 1701 to Annie Alford, his widow."  
*P.C.C. Act Books.*

"Gregory Alford, Armiger, of Lyme Regis, Adm. granted to Thomas Glyn, principal Creditor, Ann the relict renouncing, 26 February 1701."  
*Dorset Administration, P.C.C.fo. 24.*

**3. Gregory Alford**, the elder son of Gregory Alford and wife Mary his wife, was born at Lyme Regis in 1645. He left Lyme for Farway, in Devonshire, near Ottery St. Mary, and to Escott in Talaton, at both of which places his relatives had property. Here he died in 1693, four years before his father's death, leaving three children:

- i. Gregory Alford, who died as an infant in 1672.
- ii. Thomas Alford, who perhaps returned to Lyme and died there in 1739.
- iii. Marmaduke Alford, of whom no information has been discovered.

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We now return to the junior line of the Lyme Regis family:

**4. William Alford**, younger son of John Alford, senior, of Winsham, was born at Winsham in 1562. He was apparently the first of the Alford family who settled in Lyme, doubtless as a merchant, at the close of the sixteenth century. He seems to have taken no part in public matters, but left two sons, who both did good service in that respect:

- i. William Alford, of whom next (5).
- ii. George Alford, senior, of Lyme Regis. He is mentioned in the Town Records in 1649, also in 1655 and 1656. In this latter year he died at Lyme; his widow, Sarah Alford, being mentioned in 1657. They left two sons:

1. George Alford, junior, is mentioned in the Town Records in 1658, and he is spoken of as "Mr. George Alford", in 1662. He was Churchwarden of Lyme Regis in 1663, his signature attesting the induction of Timothy Hallett as Vicar, appointed by the latter's brother-in-law, Gregory Alford. George Alford was a member of the Corporation from 1666 to 1671. He was still living in 1696, when there is mention of "George Alford and Judith his wife". Her death as a widow, is recorded in 1706.
2. Robert Alford, who, together with his brother was witness to a marriage in 1658. He died in 1678, and was buried at Uplyme.

Losing his first wife, William Alford married a second time, in 1626, at South Perrott. This second wife, Susannah Heckes, survived her husband, who died intestate at Lyme Regis in 1641. Administration was granted as follows:

"William Alford, of Lime Regis, co. Dorset, 1641, November 6. Administration of the goods of William Alford was granted to Susannah the relict. Value of inventory £468."  
*Somerset House, Room 32, Dean of Sarum, lib. xiv, fo. 33.*

**5. William Alford**, junior, was the elder son of the above mentioned William Alford, senior. He is described as "of Lyme Regis, Dorset, Gentleman". He is the first of the family mentioned in the ancient records of the town, his signature appearing on an Indenture dated 1618. He was admitted as a member of the Town Council in 1627, and in 1632 filled the office of Mayor. His name also appears in the Town Records in 1636, 1642, and 1647. He had some connections with Lydlynch, near Blandford, probably having married a lady of that place, for his only surviving son, Melchisedeck Alford (of whom next), was born there. The Rector of Lydlynch at that time being Melchisedeck Waltham, it may be supposed that that notable member of the Alford family was named after him. William Alford died at Lyme, in 1648, and, having died intestate, administration was granted as follows:

"William Alford, of Lyme Regis, co. Dorset, 1648, November 18. Administration of the goods of William Alford was granted to Melchisedee Alford, the lawful son of the said deceased."  
*Somerset House, Room 32, Dean of Saurm, lib. xiv, fo. 106.*