

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

[Correction: The opening subhead in the the last installment of *Alford Family Notes* said “Farbay” instead of “Farway”—the “w” in old English script in the chapter title looked like a “b.” Perhaps this is a good time to note that these installments come to you courtesy of Member #128 Willie Alford, who types them, and your editor, Pam Thompson, who proofreads them against the original to be sure the text is faithful to the original in content, spelling, and punctuation.]

6. Melchisedeck Alford, born at Lydlinch, near Blandford, Dorset, in 1623, was the only son of William Alford, junior, merchant, and Mayor of Lyme Regis. He matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1641, aged 18, but was expelled during the Great Rebellion, on account of his active support of the Royalist party. Having thus thrown his lot altogether in with the Royalists, in 1646, at the age of 23, he acted as Treasurer to the Royalist Garrison at Exeter, when that place was besieged by the Rebels. Here Samuel and Richard Alford, probably his relatives, were merchants. He carried messages to the King at Oxford, and assisted in seizing the youthful Duke of Gloucester—Henry, third son of Charles I. In 1648, William Alford of Lyme Regis died, Melchisedeck Alford his son, now aged 25, taking out letters of administration. Melchisedeck had by this time returned to Oxford, and in the same year took his B. A. degree. Two years later, at aged 27, he married "Elizebath, only daughter and heiress of Richard Channon, the owner of Escott in Tallaton", the marriage taking place at Lydlinch, near Blandford, Dorset.

Their eldest child, Richard, was born at Escott, in 1653, but died a year later; and in this year, Melchisedeck Alford seems to have taken Holy Orders.

In 1654, the birth of a daughter, Margaret, at Escott, is recorded in the Talaton Register, and Melchisedeck Alford is entered as "Clerk". He now left Escott—Richard Alford's (junior) family occupying the Mansion—and was for a time Curate in Charge of Dunsford* (* **The Dunsford Parish Registers of this date are imperfect and give no information.**), near Exeter. A year or two later he moved to Culmestock** (****The Culmestock Registers "are in a most dilapidated condition. From 1650 to 1661 there is no name of any Viscar or Curate"**).), Devonshire; for in 1658 he is mentioned in the will of Mr. Richard Alford, of Escott, as "Clerk, of Culmestock". Here, apparently, his third child, Elizabeth, was born in 1659.

In 1661, at the Restoration, Melchisedeck Alford was presented to the vicarage of Ottery St. Mary, and instituted on March 20th. Though of small value, it was a living of considerable importance, with a magnificent Church built on plan of Exeter Cathedral.

In 1663, as "Vicar of Ottery", he preached Corporation sermons at Lyme Regis, his cousin, Gregory Alford, being Mayor.

In 1680, Melchisedeck Alford joined with his wife, who was the heiress of the Channons, and with his two daughters and heiresses, Margaret and Elizabeth Alford, in the sale of Escott, Gregory Alford, of Lyme, being a Trustee in the Conveyance.

In 1684, Margaret Alford was witness to the death of Mr. Cottle, of Talaton.

Melchisedeck Alford, "Clerk, of Ottery St. Mary", died at the age of 66, and was buried at Ottery on August 10, 1689. His will follows :

Melchisedeck Alford, of Ottery St. Mary, Devon, Clerk, 1689. "To my daughter Margaret Alford, £400. . . . To my daughter, Elizabeth Alford, £200. . . . To the poor of the parish of Ottery St. Mary, £5. . . . I recommend to my wife the enlargement of the portions given by me to my said daughters, as shall seem convenient for her to doe. . . . the Residue of my Estate to Elizabeth my wife, whom I appoint Sole Executrix." Will dated August 7, proved September 28, 1689, by Elizabeth Alford, Relict.

P.C.C. 118 Ent.

The Ottery St. Mary Register Book No. 4 contains thirty-eight signatures:

An original letter, also bearing his signature, is extant.

The Bishop's Transcripts in the Exeter Diocesan Register, for Ottery St. Mary, 1865, are also thus signed.

References of more or less interest concerning Melchisedeck Alford are found in Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy*, Part II, p. 109; Polwhele's *Devonshire*, Vol. II, p. 271; and the *Ottery St. Mary Guide Book*.

"Melchisedeck Alford was a true loyalist, a man of very bright and excellent parts, and author of those well-known lines :

'Louvra Domus; Dominus Ludovicus; Regia Rege

Digna suo: Cælo est hæc minor, ille Deo',

which he made extempore in a company who were criticizing the inscription set up over the gate of the Louvre, beginning 'Non nobis gentem'."

"Being never rewarded for his services after the Restoration, Melchisedeck Alford died in 1689 possessed of no greater preferment than the poor vicarage of Autery in Devon. His wife survived him many years, and her memory is preserved in the remarkable Will of Mr. Axe."

In the porch of the church of Ottery St. Mary there is a tablet recording some bequests of Mr. Axe, by his Will dated June 20, 1691, derived from property at Blandford, Dorset. This shows again that Mrs. Alford was known in the neighbourhood of Blandford—at Lydlinch. One bequest is "to some man or woman of exemplary life and skill who shall help the poor of Ottery gratis in case of sickness, or accident, the Vicar's wife before any other if she shall be very fit, or as fit as Mrs. Alford, the late Vicar's wife."

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Escott House was rebuilt "by Sir Walter Yonge soon after his purchase of the Estate in 1680. This second house was one of the most distinguished mansions of the neighbourhood, and was built by Inigo Jones. King George III, with three of the Princesses, visited Sir George Yonge (the Secretary of War) there in 1789. This splendid mansion passed into the possession of Sir John Kennaway in 1794, and was destroyed by fire in 1808."

"Estcote, a very beautiful and well-wooded estate, was possessed by the family of Chalons. The last heiress of Chalons married Melchisedeck Alford, whose only descendants joined with Alford in selling Escott to Sir Walter Yonge, Bart., 1680." (Polwhele's *Devonshire*.)

Extract from Sir G. Yonge's papers.—"Mar. 10 1680. 33 Car. II. Bargain and Sale from Melchisedeith [*sic*] Alford and Elizabeth his wife (sole daughter of Richard Channon deceased), Margaret Alford and Elizabeth Alford daughters and heiresses of the said Melchisedeith Alford by the said Elizabeth Alford his wife, to Sir Walter Yonge, of Colyton, Bart., in fee of Escott, £3,450. Conveyance from Gregory Alford to Richard Duke, Esquire, in trust for Sir George Yonge."

About four miles from Ottery St. Mary, and about seven from Escott, lies Farway, where Gregory Alford's family lived, and where his eldest son, Gregory Alford, died in 1693. Here too, in 1738 Frances Alford, widow of Thomas Alford, Vicar of Curry Rivel, Somersetshire, died and was buried. This fact has caused some confusion as to the relationship of Somerset and Dorset branches of the family. An explanation of the circumstances is found in the marriage of Laetitia, eldest daughter of Thomas and Frances Alford, of Curry Rivel and Weston Zoyland, to Mr. Gould, Rector of Farway. After the death of Thomas Alford, Frances his widow, moved to Farway, that she might be near her daughter, Mrs. Gould. (See High Ham Register.)

Between 1657 and 1661 a Joseph Alford is frequently mentioned in the Cobb Accounts (the Cobb being an ancient stone pier protecting the tidal harbour) as trading with Lyme Regis. He was presumably one of Winsham Alfords.

From 1657 to 1693, in which latter year he died at Lyme, the name of one John Alford constantly occurs the same way. He is called a "foreigner", i.e., not a townsman of Lyme, and was apparently one of the Bridport family.

EXTRACTS FROM THE LYME REGIS TOWN RECORDS  
[Made by the Compiler in 1890]

- 1618 An Indenture bears the signature "William Alford".
- 1621 A Subsidy Roll includes "Mr. Richard Alford of Hay".
- 1625 Richard Alford was admitted to the Town Council.
- 1627 William Alford was admitted to the Town Council.
- 1627 Richard Alford's accounts as Mayor, including "Captain Alford's (i.e., Richard Alford) account of Almshouse Charity".
- 1628 "3rd Charles I, Richard Alford, maior."
- 1629 Constant mention of "Richard Alford, mayor".
- 1630 "Mr. Richard Alford, maior of Lyme."
- 1631 Frequent mention of "Richard Alford, mayor".
- 1632 "William Alford. mayor".
- 1633 Corporation Order. "Mr. Richard Alford having built a house on Cobb, without any leave or direction of the Mayor, is to take a lease upon three lives of his own nomination, and to pay a fine of £5, and four shillings yearly rent, or else the house is to be pulled down."
- 1636 The signature occurs "Richard Alford, maior".
- 1642 A Rate list includes Richard Alford, William Alford, and Gregorie Alford.
- 1647 Mention of Richard Alford and Mr. William Alford.
- 1647 Poor Rate. "Rebeka Alford pd. 1s. 6d."
- 1649 An Indenture of January 15 in the 24th year of King Charles I. "Richard Alford, Justice of the Peace."
- 1649 A list includes Richard Alford and George Alford.
- 1653 Two warrants issued by Richard Alford, Mayor.
- 1655 Rate List. "Richard Alford." "Geo. Alford for his house."
- 1657 Accounts. Mention of—"Sa. Alforde." "Joseph Alford; John Alford; Richard Alford."
- 1658 Mention of Richard Alford.
- 1659 "Gregorie Alford, as Executor under his father's will, had a suit with the corporation concerning a Mortgage."
- 1661 "Gregory Alford, Merchant, was admitted to the Council of this Town, and thereunto sworn, the 26th day of August."
- 1661 The Cobb Accounts mention Gregorie Alford, Joseph Alford, and John Alford.
- 1662 "Mr. George Alford; Mr. Gregorie Alford; Mrs. Mary Alford."
- 1662 "Mr. Alford presented the Living of Lyme to Emanuel Sharpe."
- 1663 Indentures. "George Alford, Churchwarden". "Gregory Alford, Esq., Mayor." "Mary Alford of Haye, Widdow."
- 1663 Mayor's Accounts. "Gregory Alford, Mayor." "Dec. 24. Paid to Mr. Melchisedec Alford for preaching two sermons £1." "Feb. 1, for a Hogshead of Clarett in Mr. Alford's Mayoralty, £6."
- 1665 "17th of Charles II. The Duke of Richmond was admitted to the freedom of the Town, Joseph Ellesdon being Mayor."
- 1666 Minute Book of Council. "Present—Gregory Alford, George Alford."
- 1666 "Appeared Captayne Gregory Alford before us, and committed the persons hereunder written for keeping of a Conventicle att ye house of one John Creed. "For the offence we fine you—Thomas Murford . . . 6s. 8d.; John Creed . . . 6d.; Wm. Poole . . . 6d. (and ten others); or be put in prison twentie dayes." *Minute Book, Feb. 11.*
- 1667 Accounts mention—Rebecca Alford. Mary Alford, widow George Alford. Gregory Alford.
- 1667 Accounts mentioning John Alford.
- 1670 List of Council—"George Alford, Gregory Alford."
- 1671 Rate list includes George Alford.
- 1676 Accounts. "John Alford" several Times.
- 1679 Accounts include John Alford's name.
- 1684 "Captain Alford's account to the Towne of Lyme. To John Alford, a foreigner, for Powder £5 16s."
- 1684 "Captain Alford and Solomon Andrew are to be furnished with £100 to wait on the King and get a new charter."
- 1686 "Warrant to the Mayer of the Borrough of Lyme Regis, Captain Gregory Alford, and other officers, concerning musters of Militia." 1667. Accounts mentioning John Alford.

- 1687 A Rent roll mentions George Alford.  
 1689 Rate List. "Mr. Gregory Alford. Mr. George Alford. Mr. William Alford."  
 1690 Corporation Order Book. "That Gregory Alford and Ann his wife should redeem the estate upon the parsonages of Halstock and Lyme Regis."  
 1692 Corporation Order Book. Mention of a suit in Chancery carried on against Gregory Alford and Ann his wife "to recover £800 with interest advanced upon the security of the Livings of Halstock and Lyme".  
 1694 Rates. "Mr. Gregory Alford £1."  
 1696 "George Alford and Judith his wife." "William Alford."

EXTRACTS FROM "STATE PAPERS, DOMESTIC", ETC.

- 1621 "Samuel Alford, merchant, of Exeter, petitioned the Council of James I concerning a law-suit between himself and Thomas Guille of Guernsey, which had lasted twenty years. Alford was freed from the cost of appeal.  
*State Papers, Domestic.*
- 1627 "Richard Alford of Lyme joins in petition to Buchingham."  
*State Papers, Domestic.*
- 1628 "Richard Alford, merchant, of Exeter, joins in a petition to the King."  
*State Papers, Domestic.*
- 1649 "Petition to the Commissioners for compounding with the Delinquents. Original Letter, signed, 'Gregory Alford'.  
*Royalist Composition Papers, 2nd Series, vol. 41, pp. 261-266.*
- 1652 Order "to deliver the Dutch prize-ship 'St. Sebastian' to Richard Alford, in lieu of his ship 'the George', which was dismantled and sunk."  
*State Papers, Domestic.*
- 1665 October 25. "Petition of Captain Gregory Alford for reimbursement of £4,867 disbursed by him in His Majesty's Service. Recommended strongly to the Lord Chancellor.  
*State Papers, Domestic.*

FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS JOURNALS.

- 1643 Vol. xiv. The Committee "to consider how Mr. Harvey might be reimbursed for the moneys he had laid out on the garrison of Lyme, and of bringing up Mr. Alford".  
 1644 "Mr. Richard Alford attended and gave evidence before the Committee for the safety of Lyme and Poole."