

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

pp. 98-102

FROM ROBERTS'S "HISTORY OF LYME REGIS"

Some account of the most distinguished families of Lyme:

"Alford. Richard Alford, merchant, was Mayor in 1627; the fifth time in 1652. Gregory Alford fought against the Parliament, and compounded for his estates at £10. He returned to Lyme, where he was very severe in his treatment of dissenters, at that period all politicians as well as religionists. During his second and last Mayoralty, Monmouth landed. The family soon after left Lyme." (p. 294)

"Richard Alford. The impropriation belonged to him. He was a determined Royalist. His son Gregory fought against the Parliament, which caused his father to be imprisoned. On his voyage to Portsmouth the vessel was taken by a King's ship, and he was released." (Another edition, p. 179)

Prince Maurice "would not release Mr. Harvey, brother-in-law of the Governor, who was taken prisoner when conveying Mr. Alford, a merchant of the Town, supposed to be a malignant and a desperate one, prisoner to Portsmouth". (p.86)

"Mr. Short, the Vicar, was in 1662 sequestered for non-conformity, and immediately formed a Society of Independents. The sufferers during the Rebellion avenged themselves after the Restoration upon the dissenters. Mr. Gregory Alford was particularly distinguished; owing to his interference, Mr. Short was obliged to absent himself." (p.121)

"The Rev. Amos Short preached to a small congregation, for whom, at his first coming to Lyme, he had drawn up 'Articles for the right ordering their conversation'. Mr. Gregory Alford, one of the Magistrates, sent these to the King of Council in 1668." (p.220)

"Monmouth came ashore with some order. The Mayor, Mr. Gregory Alford, set off to Exeter, where the Duke of Albemarle had arrived with a strong force, and dispatched messengers to the King." (p. 128)

FROM HUTCHINS'S "HISTORY OF DORSET"

Lyme Regis. "The impropriation, consisting of the Tithes of grain, belonged to Mr. Richard Alford." "Hay, a hamlet. In 1645, Mr. Richard Alford, of Lyme, his farm at Hay, valued at £100, was sequestered." (Vol. ii, p. 260.)

Halstock. "The return of the Commission, 1650, was that the impropriation belonged to Richard Alford, of Lyme Regis, Gent., and was worth £148 per annum." (Vol. iv, p. 464.)

"Gregory Alford's letter was read in the House of Lords, and appears in their Journal of that date." (Vol. ii, p. 61.)

"Patrons and Vicars of the Church of Lyme: Gregory Alford—Emanuel Sharpe, on the deprivation of Short.
Instituted 19th February 1662.
Timothy Hallet (by cession). Instituted 10th February 1663."

FROM THE PEPYS MSS., MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Amongst these is "the original Manuscript of Captain Alford, Mayor of Lyme", giving, as "The Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England desired me, an account of what I knew of his Majesty's (Charles II) most miraculous escape, and the great danger he passed through, after he came from Worcester". (Sept. 1651.) *The Flight of the King*, by Alan Fea, 1897, republishes this Narrative, and says: "Captain Alford's story is from the Tanner MSS. in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), and appeared for the first time in print in Cary's *Memorials of the Great Civil War*, 1842. Though this account contains many errors—the author, a Merchant, and afterwards Mayor of Lyme Regis, being abroad at the time of the King's unsuccessful expedition to Charmouth—it is too interesting a document to be ignored."

The Narrative runs: "His Majesty came to that loyal Gentleman's house, Sir Francis Windham, of Trent, in the co. of Somerset . . . and sent him to consult with Colonel Giles Strangways as to his escape. They thought that about Lyme there would be some convenient place . . . for his Majesty's embarkation . . . if they could find a man that might be trusted. Then the Colonel advised that Captain Alford, whom his Majesty knew well, might be entrusted. So one Peters,

a servant of Sir Francis Windham, was sent to find Captain Alford—who was then in Portugal, forced to be abroad by reason of his loyalty." Failing to embark at Charmouth, "the King stopped in Bridport", the King pretending to be the groom to his friends. "The ostler at the Inn took notice of the pretended groom, and told him that he was formerly a soldier, and urged upon the King that he had seen him in Exeter, insomuch that the King was forced to tell him that he had lived in Exeter with one Mr. George Potter, and had been his groom. The ostler replied that he knew well Mr. Potter, and Captain Alford that married Mr. Potter's daughter. So they drank lovingly together."

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Two very interesting books, *The Flight of the King*, and *King Monmouth*, by Allen Fea, 1902, unfortunately fail in accuracy with reference to the Alford family. The "Narrative of Captain Alford" in the former is ascribed in the latter to Richard Alford, who was dead when it was written, in 1684, by his son Gregory. The groom's statement that he knew Captain Alford and Mr. George Potter, whose daughter he had married, is also erroneous; the marriage being probably that of Richard Alford of Exeter.

The quotation of p. 297 of *King Monmouth* is from the entry in the Weston Zoyland Register Book, by Richard Alford, the direct forefather of the compiler. (See Table IX, and Notes.)

## BRITISH MUSEUM ADD. MSS., 21,947, F.105

(This letter was erroneously catalogued as "Giles Alford's letter", but is clearly signed "Gre. Alford").

Letter of Gregorie Alford to the Duke of Richmond, 1667:

*Lyme Regis, 20 July 1667.*

*May it please your Grace,*

*I humbly beg your pardon for not waiting on your Grace at Dorchester with the Mayor and the rest of my brethren, but considering the dangerousness of the tymes, thought it not convenient to be wanting, seeing there was a necessity of my Liftenant being with you, for that he was present here the 15th of June. We are all confident that your Grace hath given the King and Counsell a good account of that business.*

*Tuesday last we had notice from Plymouth that the Dutch appeared there, whereuppon we put ourselves in armes here, not knowing by change of winde what attempt they might make here; Wednesday morning we espyed 12 sayle of vessells standing to the West, three Leagues into sea, we judged them at last to be English, seeing a Ketch to be in their company, soe that we made a fyer, but finding that would not call them backe, we sent out a nymble boat with sayles and oares, and gave a good charge to one of our best guns, the report whereof made them to look about, and espyed our boat which made to them and gave them notice of the Dutch ffleet beeing in the West, on which the hawl-ketch with 8 guns ranne in here with 8 loaden vessells more, the rest were soe far in the offen that we doubt what may become of them.*

*We have made a chayne of ankers without the Cobb-mouth, soe firme that we hope no vessell can come in to hurt us. We have day and night 200 men in armes for that the Dutch ffleet are now in sight, 3 leagues off, due South from us; yesterday we told 48 of them. Sir John Stroude and Colonel Byshopp have appointed two companies to come to us upon notice from us. Our Mayor and Magistrates have been careful to provide in good store of ammunition, and, I must assure your Grace, are very careful in this tyme of danger. I wish the whole kingdom were soe well provided, and in soe good a posture to resist their enemyes as we are.*

*Your Grace's most humble and obedient servant,  
Gre. Alford.*

[The explanation of this letter, the first part of which caused me great perplexity, appears from the Record Office *State Papers Domestic*, Chas. II, 1667, p. 188, etc. "The Dutch War. London. June 15, the English Fleet burned and captured at Chatham by the Dutch." "The French Fleet appeared before the Isle of Wight." "Immense excitement, especially on the South Coast." "The Militia are preparing." Then see p. 272. July 6, 1667. Lyme. Letter of A. Thorold. "A Gentleman living near here has reported to Council that June 15 was kept as a day of rejoicing, much feasting and shooting of small guns." This in the face of the public danger and alarm recorded above, seemed to be a serious ground of complaint—it appeared treasonable. The Mayor and Corporation were called to account. "Sir John Strode and Colonel Bishop, Deputy Lieutenants, were sent to make enquiries. The Informer could not prove any point of his charge, which was mainly false." The satisfactory explanation was that the people of Lyme, in ignorance of the national disaster and danger, kept June 15 as a day of rejoicing—"being the day on which 22 or 23 years since Prince Maurice raised the siege of Lyme." The Mayor and Corporation then visited Dorchester to explain the matter to the Duke of Richmond, who was Lord Lieutenant of the County, Gregory Alford, though a Member of the Corporation, remaining at his post at Lyme as Captain of the Militia, and afterwards writing the above letter to his Grace. The conclusion of the enquiry was that "the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Richmond, came to Lyme and was handsomely received by the Mayor and his Brethren. He dined with the Mayor".—J.G.A.]