

The Early Cheshire Alford

[Text is in blue that refers to Tables.]

The foregoing Pedigree, with its Latin notes from the British Museum manuscripts, furnishes an authentic account of this early Aldford, and afterwards Alford, family. It is clear that some generations are omitted, but no doubt is possible as to the general accuracy of the descent.

The Alford of Aldford bore as their arms Gules, fretty ermine. A grant of arms is also recorded as made to Laurence Alford in the reign of Richard III.

The Cheshire collection contains many deeds of Richard de Aldford, who lived in the reign of King John. Among these documents occurs a fragment of his seal. This displays a man clad in armour with shield in his left hand and an uplifted sword in his right. He is seated upon a horse at full gallop. Round this remains part of the inscription "RIC D." The only remains of Aldford Castle are the earthworks, which are extensive and interesting. They occupy an angle formed by the junction of a tributary stream with the River Dee, about four miles above Chester. An iron bridge has of late years replaced an old ferry across the Dee, which ferry had replaced the old ford (Alde-ford), from which the family name originated. When visiting the place some years ago, a man of 75 stated to the writer that as a boy he remembered this ferry, and that when the water was low the ferry-boat had to avoid a stone course crossing the bottom of the river, doubtless the remains of the ancient ford. The Roman road from Chester leads through the Eaton estate straight to the ford. The site of the Keep of the Castle is now locally called "Bobb Hill." The village of Aldford lies just to the south of the Castle; and about three quarters of a mile still further south, near the road to Farndon and Hold, stands a new farmhouse, which replaced the old Aldford Hall, which was pulled down in 1883.

The Harleian Society's volume for Cheshire records the marriage of "Robert (Richard) Alford, Knight, with Mary, daughter of Richard Fitz-Eustace."

The pedigree of the family and descendant of Henry Alford, alias Fallows or Falwiz, who, about the year 1300, being a "younger son of the ancient family of the Alford, assumed the name of his wife and property," will be found in Earwakers's "Cheshire."

Holt Castle came into the possession of Thomas Alford, second son of Robert de Alford, probably by his marriage, about the year 1500. An old oil painting still exists at Holt of the Castle as it stood in those days. The little town of Hold is less than three miles from Aldford, but being on the opposite bank of the Dee is in Benbighshire. The position of the Castle of Hold is remarkable. It was perched upon a red rock, almost a pentagon in shape, surrounded by a moat tilled from the River Dee, which runs but a few yards distant and formed a natural defence upon the eastern side. The other sides of the Castle were protected by the sharp rise in the level of the ground in each direction, cut away artificially so as to form a perpendicular face of cliff. The picturesque ruin now belongs to Lord Kenyon.

Four generations of the Alford family held the Castle of Holt, the fourth, John Alford of Fawley Court, selling it shortly before his death in 1600.

The Holt Parish Registers only go back as far as 1662, and therefore contain no entries relating to the Alford family. It will be desirable to record here the following will:

Johanne Alford, widowe, late wyfe of Peter Alford, citizen of London, 1493. To be buried "in the parishe Church of St. George in Podyng Lane, otherwise called Rose Lane, where the bodie of my husband lyes." To the Church of St. George "a goblett of sylver gyltt." To Margaret my servant. Residue to my well-beloved Cosen Thomas Makworth.-- 29, Dogett, P.C.C.

Roger Alford of Chelmsford, Essex, 1517. "To Margaret my wyffe . . . to John my sonne my geldying that goeth in Stansted Park; my service of sylver and gylt;" etc. My cousin robert Alford of London, and Sir John Stafford, Executors.--5, Awoffe, P.C.C.

John Alford, citizen of London, 1535. "I bequith my soule unto Almightye God, and to his moste glorious Mother our Ladye, and my bodie to be buried in the parishe Church of St. Swithin in London, in the cloyster there." To my Cousin Johanne Alforde . . . residue unto Alice my wife. My right trustie friend robert Alforde and the said Alice, Executors. "To my Cousin Launcelott Alfrd a blak gowne."--20, Hogen, P.C.C.

The Chester wills begin only at 1545, previous to which year wills of that district were proved at Lichfield, out of which diocese that of Chester was formed. No Alford wills are to be found at either Registry.

A mural tablet at the east end of the north aisle in Farndon Church, which is upon the Cheshire bank of the Dee, immediately opposite Holt, records a marriage of Puleston with Alford, and bears the arms of Alford of Hold: Six pears with a chief.

We now deal with the founders of the three branches of the Cheshire Alfords.

John Alford, the eldest son of Thomas Alford of Holt and Jane Salisbury his wife, in due course became the possessor of Holt Castle. He married and continued the senior line of the family through his eldest son, John Alford (junior), afterwards also of Holt Castle. The Bucks and Berks and Yorkshire at first in his sons Peter and Launcelot, but ultimately also through his son John mentioned above. [See Table II and following notes.](#)

Robert Alford, the second son of Thomas of Holt and Jane his wife, was the founder of the Sussex and Hertfordshire branch. He married into the family of Brydges of Gloucestershire and of Somerset. Three of his sons entered into political life, causing the Alford name to be familiar in Parliamentary Reports and State Records. [See Table III and following notes.](#)

Thomas Alford, the fifth and youngest son of Thomas and Jane of Holt, was apparently the founder of the Hereford and Coventry family. He is mentioned in an ancient deed in 1505, as "of the county of Hereford." In 1529 he was a Gentleman Usher in the Court of King Henry VIII, and was afterwards appointed "Signer or Sealer in Chancery," which office he held until his death in 1535. [See Table IV and following notes.](#)