

Lady Marian Alford, 1818 - 1888

1818 Marianne Margaret Alford was born in Rome, the elder daughter of the second Marquis of Northampton. Her childhood was spent in Italy, where she frequently returned on visits after moving to England in 1830.

1841 She married John Hume Cust, Viscount Alford, elder son of the first Earl Brownlow who was heir to Ashridge Estate.



1841 -painted by Sir Francis Grant in the year she was married.



A *carte-de-visite* portrait of Lady Marian Alford. Photographed by Camille Silvy of London in 1860

1851 Her husband died, leaving her with two young sons, the first of whom, John, succeeded to the Earldom aged 11.

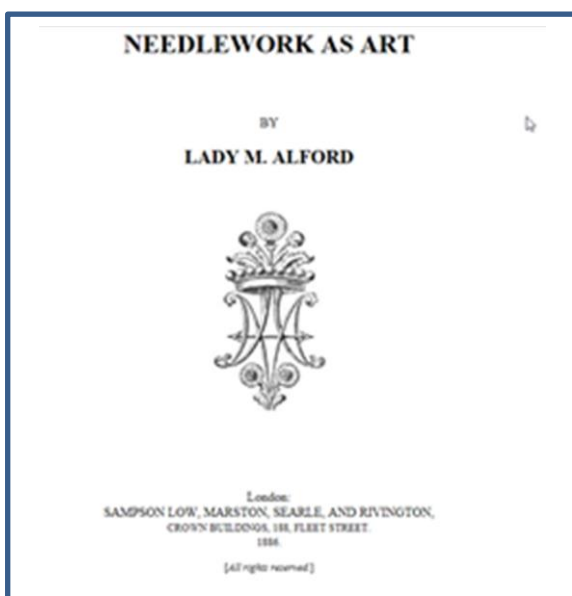


Lady Marian took over the administration of the estate and much of what can be seen today at Ashridge and in the village of Little Gaddesden can be attributed to her. She extended the gardens to create pleasure grounds and improved the principal rooms of the house, eg plaster decorations above the bookcases in the morning room, by Matthew Digby Wyatt.

1867 John died unmarried and her second son, Adelbert, succeeded to the title, becoming 3rd Earl Brownlow, aged 22. He married Lady Adelaide Talbot and, together with Lady Marian, they developed the estate and took a keen interest in tenants and employees, maintaining property, building new cottages, village halls, restoring churches, making roads and encouraging industry.

1872 Marian was an accredited English artist, patron of the arts and an author. She was especially interested in embroidery, its history and how women had used it as a form of employment. Together with her friend Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria, she was involved in the setting up of the *School of Art Needlework*, which later became the *Royal School of Needlework* in Kensington. As part of the Arts and Crafts movement's efforts to make arts and crafts more accessible to a wider audience, the school published the *Handbook of Embroidery* in 1880, which Lady Marian edited.

1886 *Needlework as Art* by Lady Marian, was published. (still available, free, from website Project Gutenberg.) Note the MA monogram, taken from the detail from the roundel above the bookcase in Ashridge and also seen on the embroidery presented to Edlesborough Church in 1868.



Monogram from roundel above bookcase

Frontispiece of Lady Marian's book.

1888 Lady Marian died at Ashridge and was buried at Belton House, Lincolnshire.

Edlesborough Connections

St Mary's Church

The Brownlows held the advowson of St Mary's ie they had the right to recommend or appoint a member of the Anglican clergy for a vacant position. Lady Marian was a generous Patron to the church.

1868 Lady Marian presented these embroideries to the church, embroiderers unknown.



The one on the left was to hang on the stand of the pulpit canopy, the one above was to hang over the lectern on the pulpit itself, see photo of them in use in about 1910. The embroidered label is on the back of the larger piece.

The label on the box made to hold the embroideries says "This box contains two pieces of embroidery designed and worked as hanging for the pulpit of the church of St Mary the Virgin, Eddlesborough. Given by Lady Marian Alford 1868"



1874 – Lady Marian, together with the Vicar, Rev AF Birch, paid for the large mural painting over the chancel arch.



Education

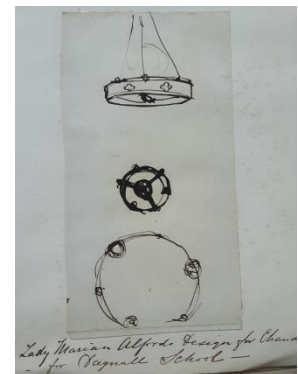
1849 Lady Marian opened the village school that she had endowed, with her was Viscount Alford, the future Earl Brownlow, who presented the school with £1 to mark the occasion. It had one room and a gallery with benches for the children to sit on. The first school master was appointed on a temporary basis with a salary of £40 per annum, paid by the Ashridge Estate.



She was also later involved in the design for its enlargement, as can be seen from this sketch, from her Scrap book.



Here is her sketch for some chandeliers at Dagnall school.



Sources

- 1 - Church Recorders – Alford embroidery pages 1 and 2
- 2 - *The Romance of Edlesborough* by Carrie Lovell
- 3 - Edlesborough Life, 1816 -1845
- 4 – From booklet 'Ashridge'
- 5 - From book *Ashridge, A living History*, by Kay Sanecki
- 6 - The Library of Nineteenth-Century Photography
- 7 - website www.madeira-web.com
- 8 - Lady Marian Alford's scrapbook, by kind permission of Ashridge College