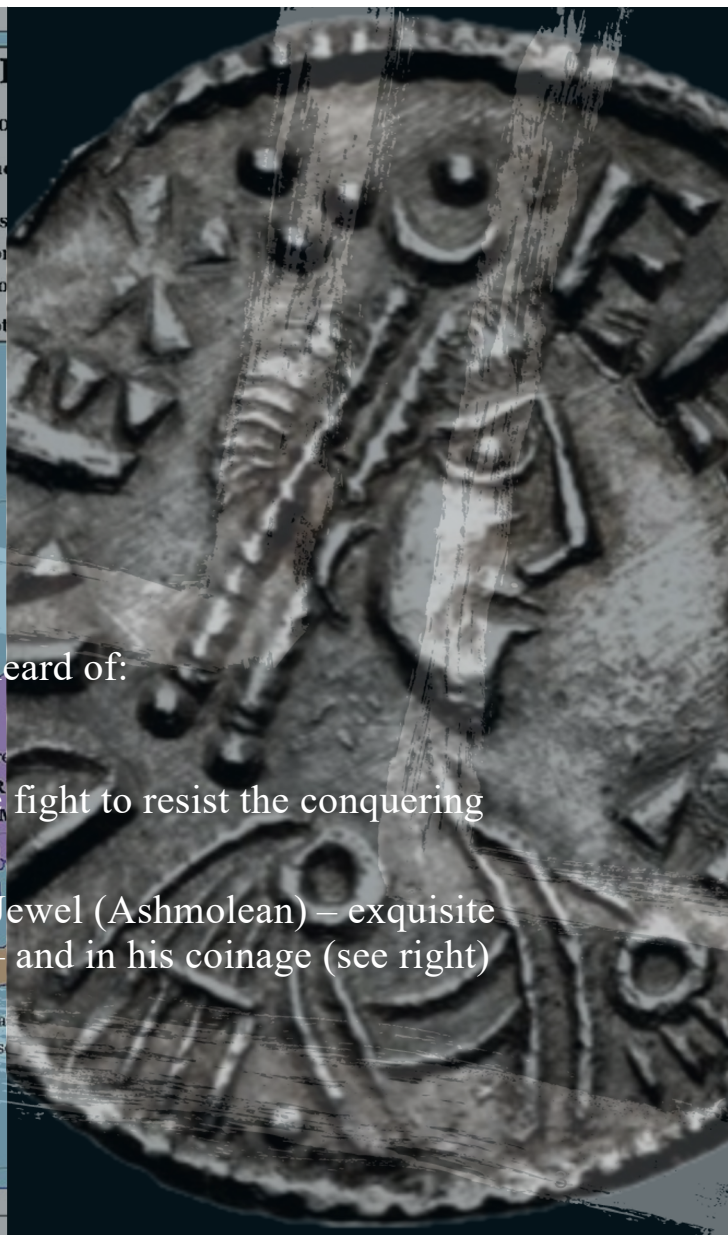
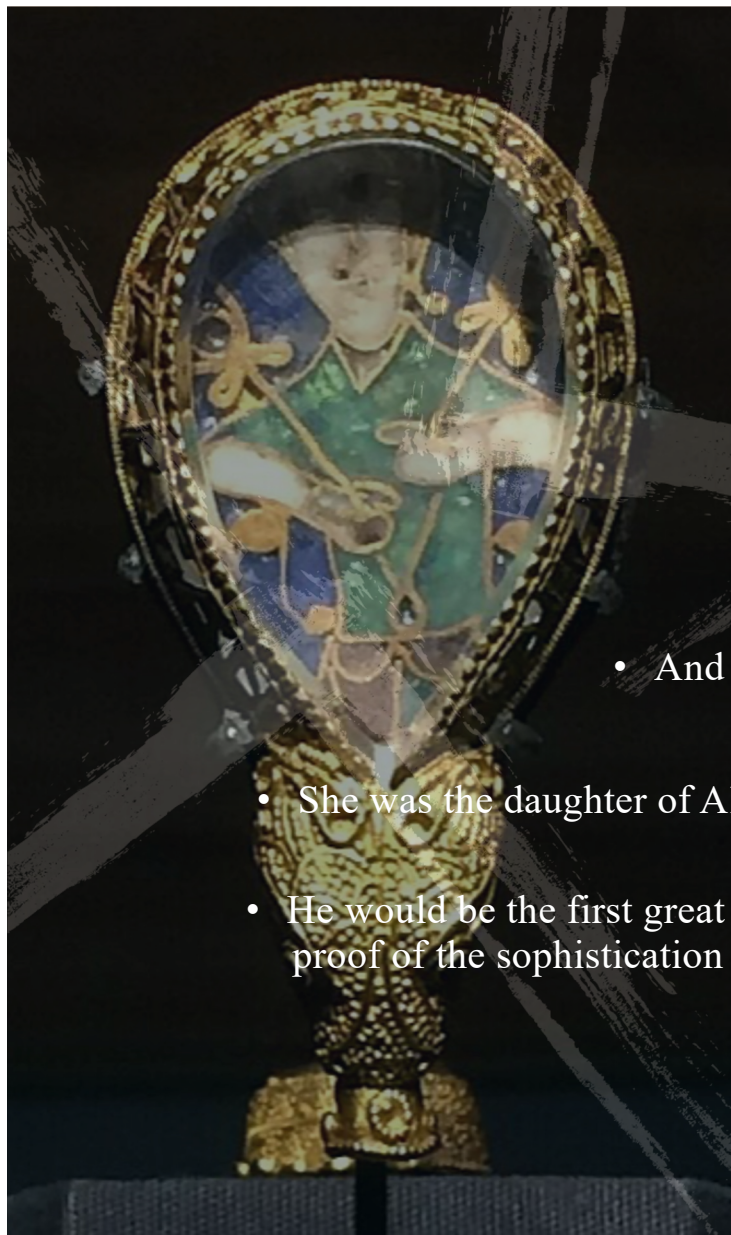


# **Hereabouts: Six significant figures in the history of our locale**

**Wixford Village Hall**

- Across the whole period of 1500 years since the arrival of the Anglo Saxons up to the present day there are so many people on whom I could have focused.
- And I have already spoken about some – including William Shakespeare.
- So I have chosen six others who had a considerable impact on Wixford and the towns and villages in a 20 mile radius from here:
- Our very own local Queen – Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians
- The Tudor patriarch of the Throckmortons: Sir George Throckmorton
- The leader of the Parliamentary cause: Robert Greville, Lord Brooke
- The greatest Birmingham and West Midlands politician: Joseph Chamberlain
- The quintessential English composer: Worcestershire's Edward Elgar
- Our most distinguished Wixford MP: Sir Anthony Eden



- And to start; a figure I doubt many of you have heard of:
- Aethelflaed (870–918)
- She was the daughter of Alfred the Great, King of Wessex, who led the fight to resist the conquering Danes.
- He would be the first great English king, commemorated in the Alfred Jewel (Ashmolean) – exquisite proof of the sophistication and creative skill of Anglo-Saxon England – and in his coinage (see right)





- Alfred wanted to secure all those English lands yet to fall to the Danes, and that meant Mercia, the great Anglo-Saxon kingship straddling the Midlands.
- So he married Aethelflaed to Aethelred of Mercia, a client king of Alfred's in 887
  - Their role was to halt the Danish tide and then drive it back.
- Alfred gave them responsibility for protecting lands as far away as London from the Vikings.
- At first together, before Aethelred died in 911, they did much to secure the West Midlands from the marauding Danes.



- Their strategy was to use limited, focused campaigns to make incremental progress to push back the Danes; then to consolidate by building fortified centres or burhs.
- One of the most significant was the *burh* with earth mound and walls at Worcester ‘for the protection of the people.’
- Just before he died Aethelred achieved a stunning success against the Vikings: who ‘*raided as far south as the West Country during which the fields of the Mercians were ravaged on all sides and deeply as far as the River Avon.*’ But the Mercians pursued, caught them and inflicted a devastating defeat killing their leaders at Tettenhall.
- But now Aethelflaed was on her own. Modern historians like Ian Walker have described this as ‘*one of the most unique events in medieval history.*’ Wessex never had a ruling queen but now Mercia had one, the only stand-alone Queen in 400 years of Anglo-Saxon history. Unlike Wessex queens she signed her own charters, a sign of royal power.
- Her brother Edward had succeeded Alfred. And William of Malmesbury wrote: ‘*she was a powerful ally of Edward, the dread of his enemies and a woman of an enlarged soul.*’

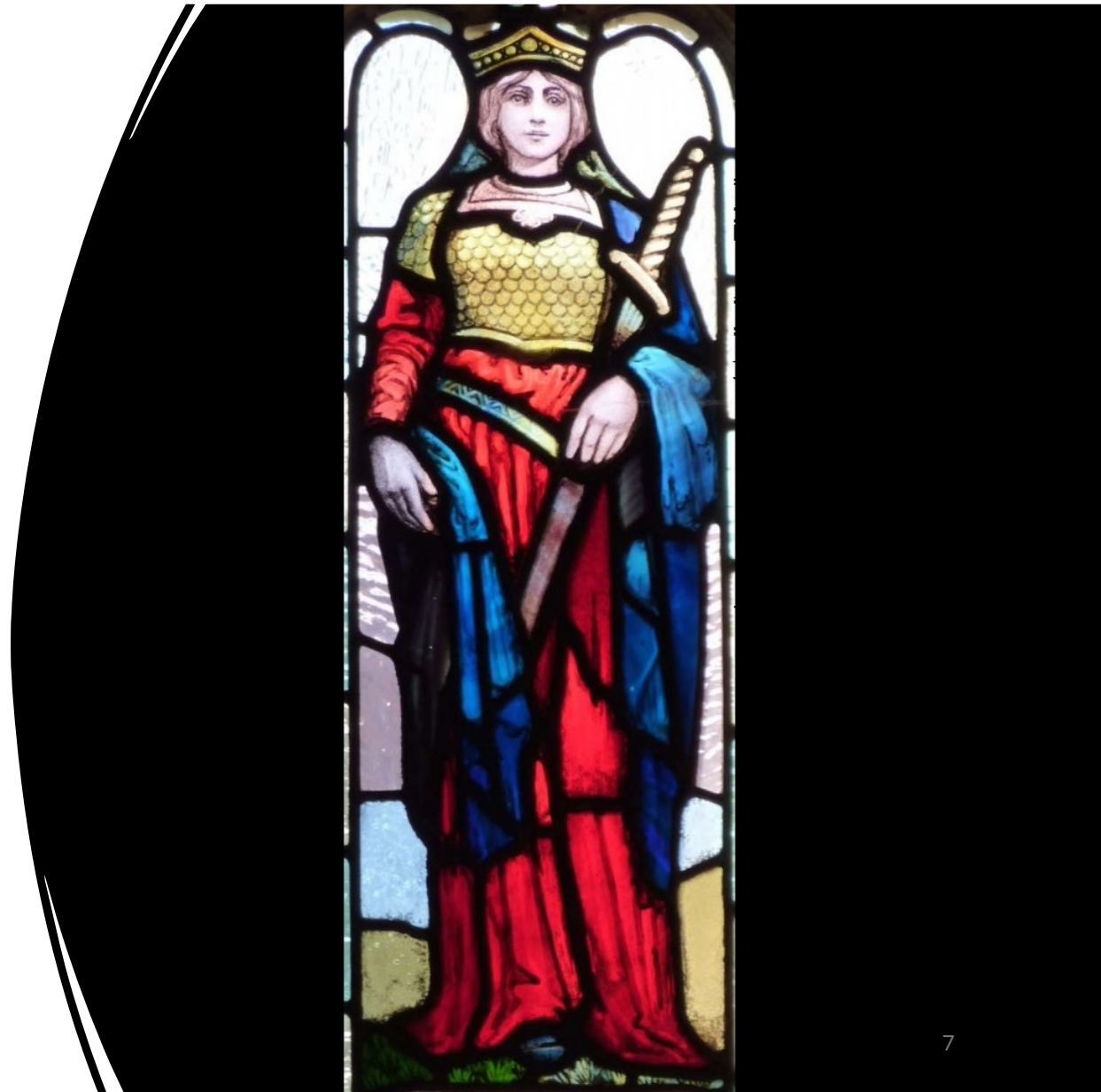
- Now based on Worcester she took the fight to the Danes: she built an arc of new defensive burhs east and north of here: Bridgnorth, Tamworth, Stafford, Warwick. And she restored Chester, retaken from the Danes, to its former prosperity.
- She faced a large Danish army sent from Viking Leicester to bring her to heel in 913, and she defeated it.
- *The Irish Chronicle* wrote: 'her fame spread in all directions, and she made peace with the people of Alba and the Britons.'
- In 917 her greatest triumph was the comprehensive defeat of the Danes at Derby. Sadly, she died just as she marched on York (the Viking nerve centre) where the citizens were making ready to pay her homage.
- Her achievements were exceptional; she preserved this area from the Danes and she freed her brother Edward to initiate the counter-attacks against the Danes which made his reputation.



Source: Wikipedia



- A sign of her importance is that she alone ensured Mercia's independence.
- On her death in 918 her brother assumed personal control over Mercia; it became one client element, in the larger entity of an Anglo-Saxon England governed from Winchester.
- In a male-dominated age she was evidently an extraordinary ruler, widely respected. She never felt the need to re-marry being confident in her own powers, a real chip off the old (Alfred) block.



- And so 500 years on to another ruler of Wixford and the surrounding area:
- Sir George Throckmorton (1489-1552)
- To my mind the most interesting of all the Throckmortons.
- He established the Coughton family as a force in these parts, consolidating the work of his father Sir Robert.
- Physically at Coughton, building its magnificent gatehouse.
- In a landed sense by acquiring Oversley and several other manors from the estate of the disgraced Thomas Cromwell in 1540 (and so becoming overlord of Wixford).
- And by marrying well to Katherine Vaux, a niece of the comptroller of the King's household and later aunt of Queen Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's 6<sup>th</sup> wife.







- As a young man he was a conventional senior courtier; he captained the *Great New Spaniard* in the war against France in 1513.
- He attended the magnificent diplomatic event *The Field of the Cloth of Gold* (1520) when Henry VIII and Francis I outdid each other in extravagant display.
- He represented Warwickshire in the Commons as one of the two knights of the shire
- And he was attached to Cardinal Wolsey

- But to me his importance lies in his rarity, his courage – foolhardiness perhaps – in the years after 1530 when Henry's decision to divorce Queen Katharine of Aragon and wed Anne Boleyn convulsed both England and the courts of Europe.
- It is clear that Throckmorton objected to the legislation which comprised the Break with Rome (which had refused Henry's request for a divorce). These Acts were – Annates, Appeals, culminating in the Act of Supremacy (1533/4) which made Henry Supreme Governor of the Church in England.
- Sir George recalled that, after speaking against these in the Commons, the King sent for him in 1533:







- *'True it is I have spoken against the Act of Appeals, whereupon the King's grace did send for me and spake with me in divers matters.'*
- *I said to the King that it was said he hath meddled with the mother and the sister (referring to Anne Boleyn's relatives) and he said, 'Never with the mother.'* Much later, Cromwell (who was present) said *'not with the daughter either.'*
- You have to hand it to Sir George. That was brave. Henry VIII had a volcanic temper, and such a frank and personal accusation could have resulted in the Tower. Or worse.
- And indeed Sir George's loyalty to Queen Katharine and to the Roman religion would make him a marked man in the 1530s.
- And would set Coughton – and by extension Wixford – off on centuries of Catholic recusancy...



- For a few years he kept his head down. He wrote to Cromwell to explain that he was following his advice '*to stay at home and meddle little in politics*'.
- But though back in Parliament briefly in 1536 and cheered by the news of the fall of Anne Boleyn he was soon in trouble:
- He rashly discussed the Pilgrimage of Grace (in Lincolnshire and the North) in 1536, that great rebellion against Henry's attack on religious houses and on the old Roman religion, led by monks, priests, bishops and some Northern gentry.
- He made a copy of the demands of Robert Aske the rebels' leader. And lent it to others.
- Cromwell had him arrested for treason: Sir George had been painfully slow to raise the troops the King required to crush the Northern Rebellion; and he had spread treasonable literature.
- For a while his life was in the balance. The family said that '*his foes gaped to joint his neck*' (i.e. to hang him). Others were executed.
- His Parr connections at court saved him. And Cromwell warned him: '*the least suspicion would be enough to undo the greatest of his family.*'



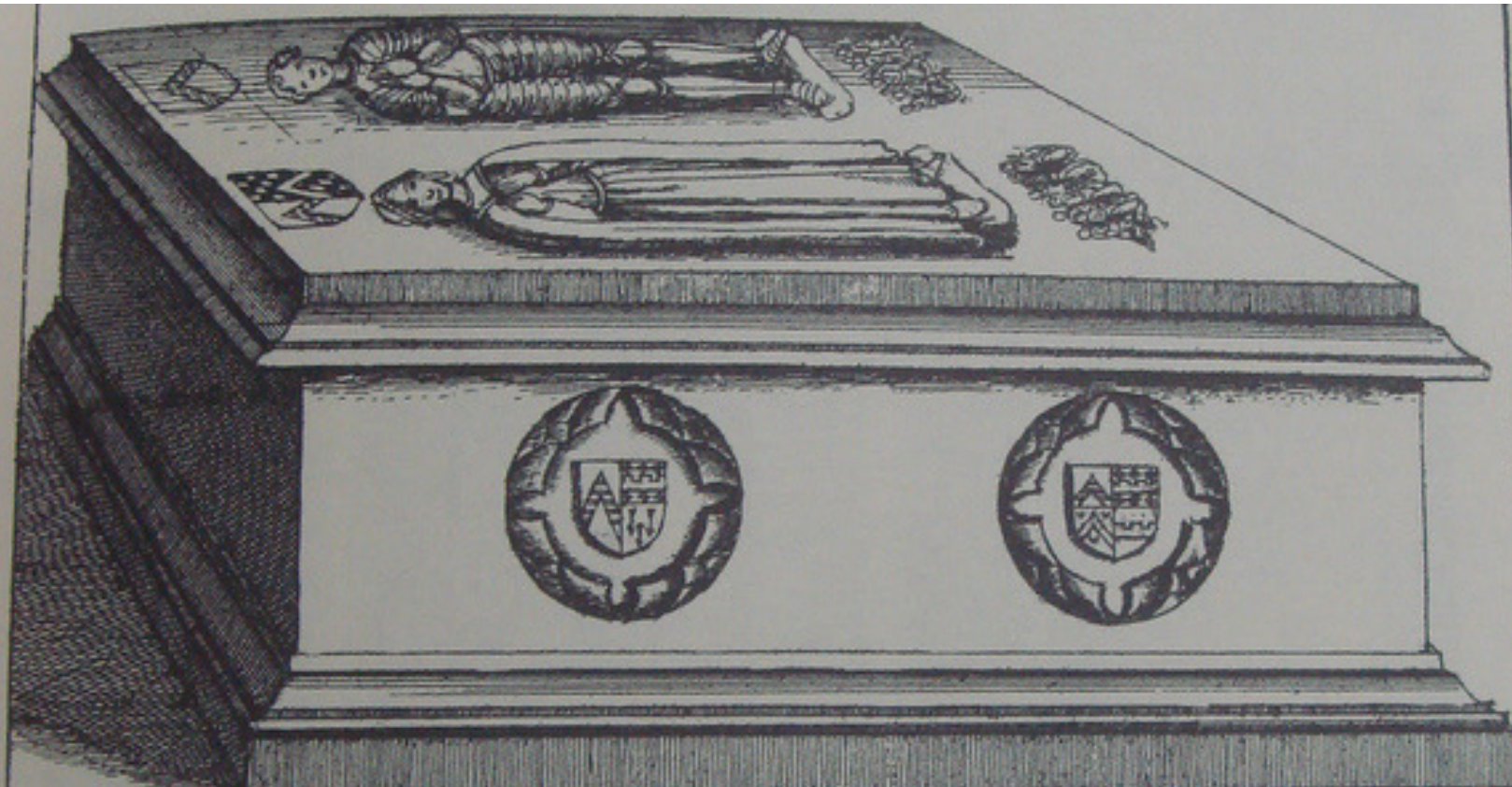




- In fact, he did undergo another arrest: his young brother had shown sympathy for the exiled Catholic Sir Reginald (later Cardinal) Pole and Sir George was tainted by association.
- It was after this in 1538 that his wife's brother William Parr interceded on his behalf and brokered a meeting with the King whereat Sir George admitted his religious errors and gained a full pardon from the King.
- Thereafter things were easier.
- His enemy Thomas Cromwell was disgraced and executed, and enemies of Cromwell's became friends of the King.
- The regime swung away from Protestant to Catholic theology, the King's preference...
- And his wife's niece became Queen Catharine (Parr) in 1543.
- The reign ended with Sir George quietly residing on his Coughton estates.
- He kept a low profile during arch-Protestant Edward VI's reign and lived just long enough to welcome a Catholic Queen – Mary – in 1552.
- His tomb is in Coughton Church...







Of your Charite, praye for the soule of Syr George Throckmorton Knyght and dame Katherine hys Wyfe one of the daughters of Syr Nicholas Vause  
 Knyght lord Harraden, Whiche Syr George decessyd the . . . day of . . . in the yere of the incarnation of our lord god a m cccc . . . and dame  
 Katherine died the . . . day of . . . a m v . . . on Whols soules Hu hana mergo amen.

On the south side of the Chancell  
 betwixt two pillars.



- Next to one of the most prominent opponents of Charles I, a man whose steady determination to reduce the powers of the King led – with his allies – to Parliament making war on the King in 1642.
- He was Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, of Warwick Castle
- And his influence was keenly felt in these parts for he was Lord of the Manor of Alcester, a Protestant parish sandwiched between Catholic Coughton and Wixford.





- Baron Brooke inherited his title and Warwick Castle in 1628. He was already a confirmed Puritan, and one aspect to his opposition to Charles I was religious: he disliked the Catholic court of Queen Henrietta Maria.
- Even more he hated the C of E reforms of Archbishop Laud who was introducing innovations to churches which smacked of Catholic practices. Brooke wanted to ensure bishops had no secular power – should not sit in the Lords or be ministers.
- Beyond this he hated the Personal Rule of Charles I when the king abandoned Parliaments for 11 Years (known as the ‘Tyranny’) and employed prerogative taxes like Ship Money to raise funds and Prerogative courts like Star Chamber to deal with those criticizing him.
- When in 1638/9 Charles made war on the Calvinist/Presbyterian Scots who refused to accept Laud’s Prayer Book and also his new regime of powerful bishops, Brooke refused to raise troops to help the King and to take an oath to him. He was arrested for a while. He was – with reason – deeply suspicious of the King’s motives. Would Charles use the troops to crush critics in England?
- So – Brooke and a few other great Lords - Warwick, Saye, Bedford – formed a Junto, a group allied to critics in the Commons like John Pym – to permanently reduce the powers of the King. They called for a new Parliament and got it in 1640 – the Long Parliament...

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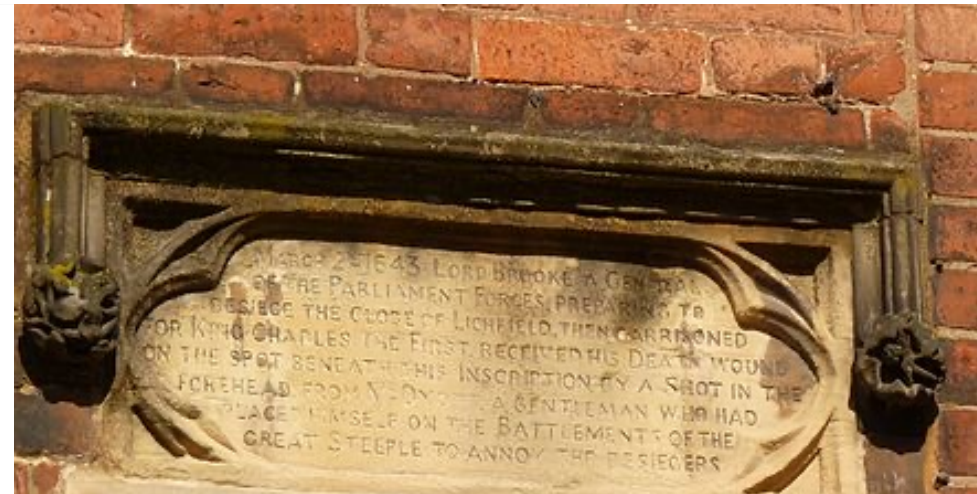
- He was prominent in the run up to the Civil Wars both in impeaching the King's ministers (hated Strafford and Laud) and in grabbing for Parliament the funding and control of the English army recruited to fight the rebel Irish in 1641 fearing Charles would use it against Parliament.
- And it is clear from late 1641 that he thought Charles so unreliable and untrustworthy that war was inevitable. He began purchasing arms then.
- The King's attempt to seize the 5 Members of Parliament (leading opponents) in January 1642 was the final straw for Brooke and he then started to fortify Warwick Castle.



- Brooke became commander of the Warwickshire and Staffordshire Association.
- He led West Midland Parliamentary forces against the Royalists led by Earl of Northampton based on Compton Wynyates and Banbury.
- He raised money in London and he equipped troops (who fought at Edgehill near Kington) the first set-piece battle of the War, October 1642
- In February 1643 he personally led a military strike on unreliable, half-Royalist Stratford. Having blasted Royalist troops with cannon on Welcombe Hills, Brooke's troops chased them out across Clopton Bridge and on back to Banbury.



- So, Lord Brooke *'beate them out of the towne and took away their arms and drove away the Royal forces.'* He insisted *'none of the army shall pillage or take away any thing from any inhabitants of the towne.'* His insistence on discipline and civilized behaviour was celebrated – so unlike Prince Rupert who razed Birmingham to the ground in 1643.
- But in occupying the town, the soldiers accidentally blew up the new Town Hall (built in 1634) with abandoned Royalist gunpowder.
- Brooke now hurried North to secure Lichfield. And there in February 1643, while sitting at a window in a house on the Cathedral Close he was killed by a bullet shot by a boy on the nearby Cathedral Tower.
- It was a devastating blow to Parliament's cause. Brooke had dominated the Midlands Parliamentarians. He had many friends and allies and was widely admired.
- Thereafter the unity of the Parliamentary cause in these parts was fractured. He was sorely missed; a great and forceful presence in the area.





- In the past two centuries Wixford has come more into the orbit of Birmingham, especially after the railway came to the village in 1866.
- And never more so – politically – in the time of Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914)
- He is unique in modern British history. No other great politician had a wide, secure geographical power base: not Gladstone, Disraeli, Lloyd George or Churchill.
- Yet Chamberlain created a ‘Duchy’ (its nickname) of over 30 seats by 1900, all returning members loyal to him and his party. Until 1906 the constituency of Warwick/Leamington/Stratford (incl. Alcester and little Wixford) returned Conservative MPs loyal to him and his imperial policies.
- He therefore had considerable influence around here.
- So, who was he and why was he important?
- Churchill thought him the most influential, most charismatic, politician in late Victorian England. *‘He was the man who made the political weather.’*





THE CHAMBERLAIN SCREW  
AND ITS PREDECESSOR.

Before Mr. Chamberlain's time screws were made without a point. Mr. Chamberlain secured the patent for the gimlet point, and out of it made a fortune.

- He was firstly a hugely successful businessman, building up Nettlefolds (later GKN) into the world-leading screw manufacturer.
- But experience of working people showed him the lamentable state of English education. So, he taught for years in evening adult school before joining others to lead a national crusade to educate all children.
- He chaired a Birmingham-led National Education League (1869) committed to persuading Gladstone's government to introduce *Free, compulsory, Non-denominational elementary education for all*.
- It took time but by 1889 his far-seeing goal had been achieved.
- Like many other wealthy Birmingham businessmen and professionals he was a Nonconformist and a Liberal who attended the inspiring lectures of George Dawson, a Baptist minister, at the Church of the Saviour in Birmingham.
- Dawson taught the *civic gospel*: that it was the duty of the wealthy and privileged to improve the lives of all citizens, materially and culturally.
- It was unique to Birmingham.
- And no one did more to implement this than Chamberlain.
- In 1869 he was elected to the Town (after 1888 – the City) Council
- And in 1870 he became a member of the School Board which governed Birmingham's new elementary schools (founded in the wake of the Forster Education Act)



- By 1873 he had got himself elected as Chairman of the School Board whereupon he drove through the building of 40 new schools, some of which are still standing – each unique, all beautifully built in the gothic style.
- The same year, now retired from business a wealthy man, he was elected Mayor of Birmingham.
- He would become this country's most famous Mayor.
- In his time, he transformed a formless muddle into what by 1890 was talked about as '*the best governed city in the world*'.
- He strongly believed in the power of municipal action to change lives.
- What he achieved he did by personality and by hard-won business nous.
- He was phenomenally hard-working attending every one of the 16 Council committee meetings (3 hours long or more) each week.
- He chaired Council with drive, decisiveness, ruthlessness and a clear view of what he wanted. He won loyal followers; but he proved an unforgiving enemy when he felt betrayed or let down.



- From a new Council House (his conception) which physically expressed his belief in municipal activism and Birmingham's civic greatness (like Renaissance Florence) came Chamberlain's solutions to mid-Victorian ill-health and urban squalor.
- He addressed the long-standing sore of inadequate sanitation and public piles of raw sewage, by purchasing the private water companies, so that by 1880 the municipal operation was supplying cheap, clean water to every part of the town.
- He insisted on pavement repairs, on new building regulations. He introduced cheap municipal gas lighting through the borough.
- And determined on slum clearance, he drove Corporation Street through the squalid slums of St Mary's.







- In his own words: *‘The town has been parked, paved, assized, marketed, gas and watered and improved and all in 3 years’*
- He resigned as Mayor in 1876 to embark on a Parliamentary career. But he would now make Birmingham important for than just being outstandingly well-governed.
- He established it as the hub in a great political machine. From his study in Highbury Hall, Moseley he organized a political movement which would split apart his own Liberal Party. This was the defeat in 1886 of Gladstone’s plans for Home Rule (a Parliament in Ireland). Chamberlain argued it would empower terrorist Catholics who would massacre Ulster Protestants and begin the break-up of Empire.
- So, he and Lord Hartington created a new party the Liberal Unionists (over 70 seats in 1886). Chamberlain would lead it. Hence his Duchy of Warwickshire/Staffs/Worcs in which Wixford was a small cog.





- Birmingham would be his base for his Imperial policies (the Boer War 1899-1902) for his constituents were manufacturers looking for markets. A huge pamphleteering/leaflet print operation in the centre of the city produced millions of publications to send round Britain supporting his policies.
- And again when he abandoned Free Trade (1903) to argue for tariffs to protect British goods.
- Meanwhile he raised the enormous sums needed to found the new University (the first Red Brick in England) which consolidated his Birmingham reputation.
- And by 1906 & his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations the love affair with the city was complete. Thousands joined in. Sadly that night he suffered a catastrophic stroke. He lingered on till 1914.
- But Birmingham never forgot their greatest son – even in 1935, 20 years after he died, Labour Party canvassers were being told by old voters – *'I'm voting for Joe like I always done.'*
- And nationally too he is remembered as a visionary social reformer (Old Age Pensions/Graduated taxes/education for all) as well as the great public speaker of his generation.



To this day the Chamberlain Memorial fountain outside the city Museum and the Town Hall dominates Chamberlain Square in the heart of Birmingham.



BREAK



- Just 18 miles away Worcester produced the most important English composer since Purcell and arguably its most famous.
- Edward Elgar (1857-1934) was quintessentially a man of these parts, and his music reflected Worcester and Worcestershire on whose boundary Wixford lies.
- Unlike famous contemporary composers like Stanford and Parry he had no university, no formal education beyond what he learnt at Spetchley Roman Catholic school.
- The title of the school tells you something about him.
- He was a Catholic, an outsider in an Anglican Cathedral city.



- So he was self-taught. His father was a piano-tuner, an organist and had a music shop in Worcester, and the young Elgar learnt from him. And from poring over the music scores in the shop and from texts in the Cathedral's music library when he was 8 or 9 years old.
- And he attended the Cathedral as much as he could – hearing the choir sing Byrd, Tallis and Purcell and going along to the Three Choirs Festival. Soon enough this budding violinist was playing in the Festival orchestra, and listening/watching astonished as Anton Dvorak conducted his 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony (Elgar in first violins) in the Cathedral..
- And gradually he started writing for himself; motets, wind quintets when he was in early teens before moving on to compose for the Festival itself. He found he had an exceptional natural ability to orchestrate: *'the notes, the bars, came unmediated straight on to the page and I never needed to correct them.'* It was said *'he knew unerringly what he wanted in orchestral and choral tone, balance and colour.'*
- By the 1890s his work was becoming known beyond the Festival and pieces like the beautiful *Ave Verum Corpus* were established in the Anglican church tradition.





- And the relevance to us at Wixford just a short distance away from Elgar's base is that the cathedral, city of Worcester and Worcestershire deeply affected, inspired and coloured him and his works.
- *The Guardian* in 1901 wrote 'the very walls of the Cathedral cry out to us from the same past that bred his music. His music heard within them is redolent of England.'
- The city influenced him too. It was a Tory, Imperialist, Chamberlain-controlled city. Elgar was very susceptible to the Worcestershire regiment's parades, the flags, the bunting expressing the Imperial dream around 1900 (the Boer War) and the height of Victorian power.
- Hence his famous bombastic *Pomp and Circumstance* marches.

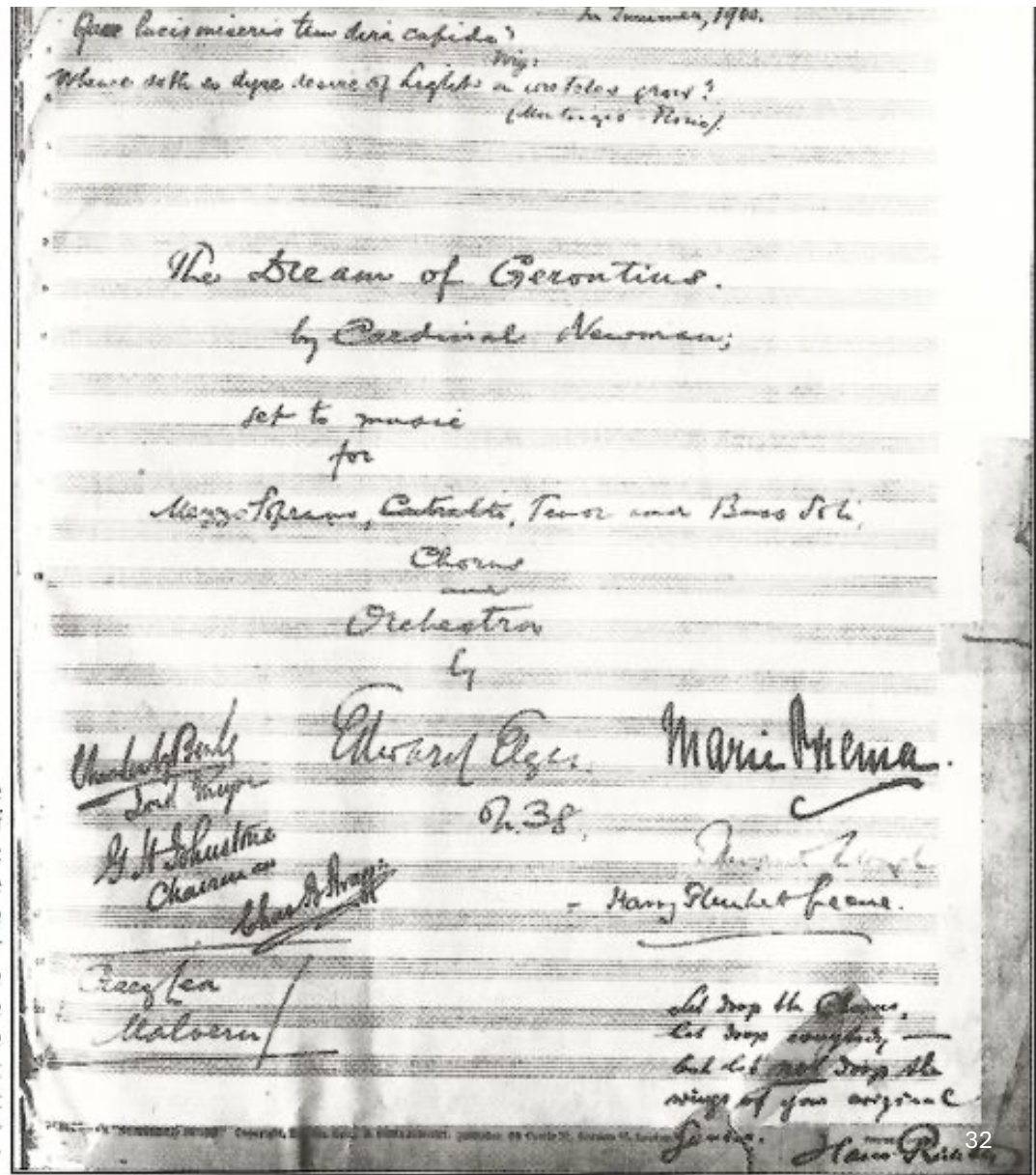


- He lived in Malvern Wells in the 1890s. But even after moving - when a critical success – to London he felt the pull back to the West Midlands – ‘*I long for a sight of my own country.*’
- The death in London of his wife Alice in 1920 led him to write ‘*I like to think of the Worcester days and you and the flowers and the fruit and the warm Malverns’ sun and my cathedral and my music.*’
- His ‘own country’ prompted works like *Caractactus*, *Severn Suite* (with movements dedicated to the castle, cathedral and commandery) and most famously the *Enigma Variations* (a great work first announcing the arrival of a major English talent).
- Each *variation* has a local subject from Worcestershire, a country squire, Malvern architect, local Worcester Philharmonic ladies, the chatelaine of Madresfield – and culminates in the famous *Nimrod* variation.
- But if the pastoral beauties of Worcestershire inspired him, he also had mixed feelings about Worcester.





- His Catholicism which led him to write his greatest work, the *Dream Of Gerontius* (premiered in Birmingham in 1900) illustrates that he was an outsider as far as the Anglican establishment was concerned for this is an intensely Catholic vision, setting Cardinal Newman's poem to memorable music.
- He also felt keenly the fact that others in London and the music establishment saw him as provincial and unacademic.
- This is why he treasured the Honorary Doctorates (strutting round Worcester in his Cambridge Doctor's robes in 1901), and his knighthood and Order of Merit.
- He felt he had missed out while he lived in Worcester, before he was 'discovered.' After all he was a late developer, only becoming famous around 1900 with his *Variations*, his *Dream* and his *Land of Hope and Glory* when he was in his '40s.



- His great productive years were those up to 1914.
- Only the wonderful *Cello Concerto* and the *Severn Suite* appeared after that. Though he lived long enough to compose, as Master of the King's Music, the *Nursery Suite* dedicated to Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret.
- The War profoundly affected him; the optimism and confidence of Edwardian England evaporated on the Western Front.
- And after the War the jingoistic brio of *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* seemed out of joint, and out of touch with the misery of post-War years.
- Still Worcester loved – and loves – him. He continued to conduct at the Three Choirs Festivals until he died in 1934. And statues and memorials remind us that he was the musical voice of England, and of the West Midlands.







- Finally – Wixford's most famous MP of modern times, Sir Anthony Eden, MP for Warwick and Leamington (including Stratford, Alcester and Wixford) 1923 – 1957. Although in 1950 Stratford, Alcester etc received their own MP and so while he was Prime Minister he was no longer our MP.
- So, for all the War years and up to 1950 Eden represented us and this seat was the only one he ever represented before becoming Earl of Avon and Viscount Eden of the County of Warwick (the choice of titles showing his affection for these parts).
- But he wasn't a Midlander by birth. He was scion of Durham landed gentry. And before winning a by-election at Leamington/Warwick November 1923 he had a colourful young life.
- He had a most distinguished war record, winning the MC for outstanding bravery (rescuing a wounded man from No Man's land on the Ypres salient in 1916) and ending the war at 20 the youngest Brigade Major in the British Army.





- He came out of the War with a strong sympathy for the men he shared trench life with; it coloured his politics.
- And, after Oxford and a Double First (rare indeed those days) in Oriental Languages he wanted to serve in politics.
- Unfeasibly handsome and charming, evidently very clever, he would soon enough be labelled a coming man. His gift for languages saw him become an acknowledged expert on foreign affairs.
- By 1926 he was PPS to Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary and in 1931 he became Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Macdonald's National Government.
- He was still (after his 1914-18 experiences) anti-war as were most British people and so he gained plaudits for defending the government's disarmament measures against Churchill's criticism in 1933.
  - He would soon learn better.





- His ‘soundness’ and attractiveness was rewarded with promotion to Foreign Secretary in 1936, very young (in those days) at 38.
- But when Neville Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin as Prime Minister things rapidly fell apart.
- Eden could not agree in 1937 with Chamberlain’s policy of befriending Mussolini, the Fascist invader of Abyssinia as a way to controlling Hitler’s increasingly aggressive European policy.
- And he was deeply offended by Chamberlain’s rejection of President Roosevelt’s offer to host a peace conference – without even telling Eden, his Foreign Secretary. He resigned in protest in February 1938 to immense public sympathy.
- Churchill wrote: *‘that night I lay in bed consumed by sorrow and fear. There seemed one strong young figure standing up against long, dismal, drawling tides of drift and surrender. He seemed to me to embody the life-hope of the British nation. Now he was gone.’*
- Eden would become one of the Churchill allies, critics of Chamberlain’s Munich appeasement and calling for Hitler to be confronted.
- And as a result, Churchill made him Foreign Secretary with a seat in the War Cabinet in May 1940.
- He became Churchill’s confidant and his bag man.

During the War Anthony Eden played a key diplomatic part; sometimes standing in for Churchill on visits to the North African theatre of war, and to the USA to keep relations with Roosevelt warm.

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- He was an able lieutenant to Churchill at the meeting of the Big 3 to decided the future of Post-War Europe.

He had a particular responsibility for the Free French and for negotiating with the difficult, arrogant De Gaulle.

And even by 1942 Churchill was talking of Eden as his successor. He was the golden boy, designated heir to the throne.

Except that as War ended, and with a General Election, Labour and Clement Attlee swept to power.

Now Eden (and Churchill) were in opposition for 6 years

But in 1951 on return to power Churchill made Eden Foreign Secretary once more.

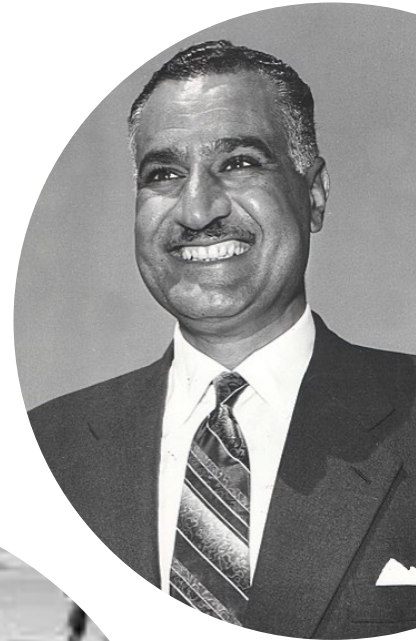


- Back in office an impatient Eden chafed at Churchill continuing to hold of the Prime Ministership.
- And he and Churchill differed: Eden recognized that Britain would have to de-colonise, while Churchill clung to notions of past Imperial glory.
- In 1954 as part of the retreat from colonial outposts Eden (with Churchill's reluctant support) withdrew troops stationed on the Suez canal.
- He provoked furious Conservative right wing back-bench resistance (led by Enoch Powell) against this 'weak' defeatist policy and Eden (not Winston) was blamed.
- In 1955 Eden at last assumed the top job. There was no contest. That often goes wrong – eg Blair to Brown, Macmillan to Home.
- And he was immediately in trouble. Having looked so impressive for decades, a debonair, able, experienced leader, he now showed stress, bad judgement, an inability to delegate and trust others and build alliances. Compounded by ill health – intermittent fevers...





- So, when in 1956 President Nasser of Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal (having failed to get foreign loans to develop Egypt) Eden acted, seeing Nasser as a new Hitler.
- Sensitive to those right-wing criticisms of British defeatism he decided to act.
- He ignored American opposition (though Britain needed American support in the world).
- He colluded secretly with Israel and France; Israel would invade Egypt and Britain and France would send troops to intervene and secure their 'windpipe' the Canal.
- British paratroopers poured in and took the canal.
- To world-wide condemnation. America threatened to ruin our economy. British opinion was deeply split, passions running high (like Brexit) and his own Cabinet – men like Macmillan – withdrew their support for him.



- So Eden, now seriously ill, decided to resign in 1957.
- What a tragedy that he should have waited in the wings so long and that when the hour came to take centre stage, he failed comprehensively.
- In the one area for which he had a glowing international reputation, his statesmanship and mastery of foreign affairs...

