



### A unique group of 15th century buildings

The medieval ensemble of buildings that comprise God's House in Ewelme was founded by Alyce and William de la Pole in the mid-15th century. Despite their venerable age, the church, the school and the almshouses are still in daily use and form the heart of the community. The great de la Pole mansion which once stood across the road from King's Pool has not survived. A more modest manor house now stands on the site.

Alyce herself lies in the magnificent alabaster tomb, shown above. It is of the finest craftsmanship and is the only cadaver tomb of a female to survive in England. These buildings will be open throughout the weekend, including the school where you will find a free exhibition of Alyce's life and times.

### Tickets:

To attend the talks in person, an all day ticket	£35
To attend all day on both Saturday & Sunday	£58
To attend on line only	£20
To attend on line on both days	£33
The Fount & Origin concert on Friday evening	£20

Further details of the programme and tickets available on the website: <https://alycechaucer.uk>

*Any profits will be distributed to local charities and organisations.*

Use the postcode OX10 6PG



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# Alyce Chaucer Festival

Her Life &  
Times

Ewelme

16 -18 May  
2025

A Festival of events to mark the 550th anniversary of the death of Alyce Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk, and to celebrate her remarkable life.







# The Programme



## Friday, 16th May

### Maypole dancing on the Green

3.00 pm: by the pupils of Ewelme School

### A Free Exhibition in the School

Exhibits of rarely seen documents and artefacts.

The Exhibition will be open on all three days.

Friday 3.30-6.00pm; Saturday 9.30-6.00pm; Sunday 9.30- 5.30 pm

### A concert of 15th century music in the church

Performed by Fount & Origin at 6.00 pm

## Saturday, 17th May

### A two-day programme of illustrated talks which will take place in a marquee on the Ewelme sports ground

10.00-11.00am Dr. Rowena Archer, Lecturer in medieval history at Oxford University: **Who was Alyce Chaucer?**

11.30 -12.30pm John Goodall, Architectural Editor of Country Life and author of God's House at Ewelme: **Ewelme's medieval buildings.**

12.30 -1.30pm Prof. Nicholas Orme, FRHistS, emeritus Professor of History, Exeter University: **Benches, Books and Beatings: life in a medieval school.**

2.30 - 4.00 pm John Letts, farmer and heritage grains expert; Dr Simon Townley, Editor of the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire; and Richard Fitch, Historic Kitchens Manager at Hampton Court Palace: **What did people eat and how it was grown?**

4.30 - 5.30pm Prof. Maria Hayward FRHistS, professor of History University of Southampton: **Dressing the Part: the role of cloth, colour and fur in defining 15<sup>th</sup> century men and women.**

## Sunday, 18th May

10.00 -11.00 am Christina Hardymont, author of a trilogy based on the life of Alyce: **Alyce Chaucer: Weaving the Facts into Fictions.**

11.00 -11.45 am John Goodall's second talk: **Alyce's Tomb: a masterpiece with many different messages**

**At noon** there will be a commemorative service for Alyce Chaucer in Ewelme church. It will be accompanied by the medieval specialist group **Fount & Origin** singing *Missa Caput*, a medieval setting of the mass. Attendance is free but it must be booked in advance as space is limited in the church.

2.30-3.30pm Sir John Bell CH FRS, former master of the Ewelme Trusts and former Regius Prof. of Medicine, University of Oxford: **Surviving Medicine in the Middle Ages.**

4-5.00pm A panel session on **Alyce's Legacy and the Downfall of the de la Poles** with Rowena Archer, John Goodall, Christina Hardymont and Carol Sawbridge.

Please note lunch is not provided. The Friends of Ewelme School will be serving tea, coffee and cakes in the breaks and there will be a food truck serving street food. If you would like to bring your own picnic, undercover seating will be available.

There will be ample car parking with stewards on hand to help.

*The cloister plan of the almshouses matches the quasi-monastic regime followed by the almsmen.*



Alyce Chaucer (1404-1475) is buried in the magnificent alabaster tomb in the church in Ewelme, where she lived in the manor and where she died. She was granddaughter of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, and next to her tomb is that of her parents. Alyce inherited Ewelme Manor from her mother, Matilda Burghersh, and her father, Thomas Chaucer, statesman, diplomat and five times Speaker of the House of Commons. In the mid- fifteenth century Alyce's third husband, William de la Pole, played a leading role in both the war with France and political affairs at home.

Although Alyce was born a commoner, she died in 1475 as a 'Serene Princess.' This Festival traces the remarkable story of her ascent to the very centre of power and the world in which she lived.

An astute courtier, Alyce was also pious. In addition to rebuilding St Mary's church and adding to it a chantry chapel, she and William de la Pole, founded the Ewelme almshouses, a grammar school and provided for two priests to teach at the school and minister to the parish. Her creation of God's House in Ewelme has benefited the community for nearly 600 years and continues to do so today.

