

### A Buckinghamshire Poet

Edmund Waller was an English poet and politician who sat in the House of Commons at various times between 1624 and 1679. He was the eldest son of Robert Waller of Coleshill, now in Herts, but formerly in Bucks, and Anne Hampden, his wife; thus he was first cousin to John Hampden. He was descended from the Waller family of Groombridge Place, Kent. Early in his childhood his father moved the family to Beaconsfield. Of Waller's early education all we know is his own account that he "was bred under several ill, dull and ignorant schoolmasters, until he went to Mr Dobson at Wycombe, who was a good schoolmaster and had been an Eton scholar." He entered Parliament early and was at first an active member of the opposition. Later he became a Royalist, and in 1643 was leader in a plot to seize London for Charles I. For this he was imprisoned, fined, and banished. He made his peace with Cromwell in 1651, returned to England, and was restored to favour at the Restoration. Waller wrote, as early as 1625, a complimentary piece on Prince Charles's escape from shipwreck at Santander in heroic couplets, one of the first examples of a form that prevailed in English poetry for some two centuries. His verse is of a polished simplicity; Dryden repeatedly praised his 'sweetness' and linked his name with Denham's as poets who brought in the Augustan age. His early poems include 'On a Girdle' and 'Go, lovely rose'; his later 'Instructions to a Painter' and 'Of the Last Verses in the Book', include the famous lines, 'The Soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed / Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made.'

Waller bought a cottage at Coleshill near Amersham where he was born, meaning to die there; "a stag," he said, "when he is hunted, and near spent, always returns home." He actually died, however, at Hall Barn, with his children and his grandchildren about him, on 21 October 1687, in a tomb in the churchyard of St Mary and All Saints Church, Beaconsfield.

### Tea.

A Venus her myrtle, Phoebus has her bays;  
Tea both excels, which she vouchsafes to praise.  
The best of Queens, and best of herbs, we owe  
To that bold nation, which the way did show  
To the fair region where the sun doth rise,  
Whose rich productions we so justly prize.  
The Muse's friend, tea does our fancy aid,  
Repress those vapours which the head invade,  
And keep the palace of the soul serene,  
Fit on her birthday to salute the Queen.

**Edmund Waller**