

## Soley's Orchard: The Bounds and Humphrey Soley

The architectural historian who wrote the listing for Soley's Orchard is clear that, in origin, it is a sixteenth century timber-framed house, although "with evidence of at least 2 stages of building." The "two large late sixteenth century rear wall chimney stacks with diagonally set paired brick shafts" are noted, together with, inside, "two fine later sixteenth century Tudor arched fireplaces with moulded jambs and spandrels." Alan Brooks in the latest edition of *The Buildings of England: Worcestershire* adds that he believes that the house was once bigger than it now is. This conclusion is borne out by the 1707 inventory of the contents of Soley's Orchard on Humphrey Soley's death (*Inventories of the Landed Gentry WHS. NS 16 1998*), which, even in its incomplete state, indicates a substantial house, and in the references in Humphrey Soley's 1706 will to "My Capitall Messuage wherein I now inhabit."

Before Humphrey Soley, of whom more later, the house has always been associated with the Bound family and especially Thomas Bound. The Bounds were important in seventeenth century Upton. Philip Bound a brother of Thomas, was a mercer whose name keeps occurring in documents and records of land purchase, and amongst whose children were a younger Philip, a cleric ordained by the Bishop of Oxford in 1676, Benjamin, who went to seek his fortune in London, and, probably, William, also an Upton mercer. Nicholas Bound, another brother or cousin and his family are also often mentioned. Captain Thomas Bound became notorious after his death through the stories which were told about him: he was, to Mrs Lawson in *The Nation in the Parish*, "Our Ghost". He was the son of Thomas, a glover by trade, and Anne Bound who had themselves been active in the parish, he as a churchwarden and she as a god-parent. Both lived until the 1650s. Thomas Bound the younger was himself a churchwarden and a frequent god-parent: his churchmanship, like many in Upton, was puritan,. It is unlikely that he fought abroad as W. S. Symonds has him doing in his historical novel *Hanley Castle*: the captaincy probably came from his involvement in the parliamentary army between the death of his first wife in 1640 and his marriage to his second in 1646. He was married four times. Mary, his first wife was buried just four days after their son, the first of two called Thomas, in 1640, the second, also Mary, was buried eight days after their daughter in 1647. Margaret, his third wife whom he married in 1648 lived until 1658 and had a number of children, including the second Thomas. In 1661 he married another Mary, the widow of Giles Collier at the church of St Nicholas in Worcester. Another son, Samuel, was born. Captain Thomas Bound himself died in 1667. In his will he left property to two daughters and to Samuel. He had certainly lived at Southend for he is described as "of Southend" in the registers. He may have lived at what became known as Soley's Orchard, although the Hearth Tax returns in the 1660s show Philip Bound living at a more substantial house than Thomas, but as suggested by Thomas's will he might have been renting it from Thomas.

After his death the stories about Thomas Bound's life and subsequent appearances grew. One cannot improve upon the detailed accounts in Mrs Lawson's two books in which there is also the picture of Our Ghost, by a well known Victorian artist, Charles Cattermole. He is shown riding his grey horse back from the Ham, where he was said to have been moving the marking posts: he is dragging his measuring chain behind him.



W. S. Symonds, exercising a historical novelist's licence, has his hero encountering the ghost of Captain Bound by the pool on the causeway between Southend and Soley's Orchard more than ten years before he actually died, but the story is typical:

*"Here seated on this stone, I again beheld Captain Bound.....He was indeed changed; and I was startled at the unearthly expression of its countenance, its deathlike hue, and the stony appearance of his eyes. He looked me full in the face, as I approached, and pointed with a thin and shadowy hand into the black and dismal pool. His lips quivered as if he would speak but could not, and then as the last rays of the setting sun lit up the pool, and stone, and bushes, the body of Captain Bound faded away into space."*

More recent sightings have been reported, and not in novels. In 1939 a grocer's errand boy, returning down Ham Court Drive after making a delivery, was so worried by what he had seen between the drive and Soley's Orchard - on the golf course - that he went back to Upton via Southend Lane and Newbridge Green.

Humphrey Soley appears to have been the only member of his family to have lived in Upton-upon-Severn. The family came from further north, from Bordesley, from Stratford, from Hindlip and especially from the hamlet of Smite, just to the east of Hindlip. In the 1682-83 visitation of Worcestershire by the heralds of the College of Arms the family of Solley of Upton-on-Severn is identified (Arms: *argent a chevron between three sole fish*) in the person of Humphrey, aged 32 and married to Sarah, daughter of George Alseabrook of Nottingham. His purchase of what became known as Soley's Orchard is perhaps the transaction enigmatically recorded in the Worcestershire Fines for 1679 when Humphrey Soley is shown purchasing an unidentified property in Upton from Phillip Bound. (A fine was then a lawyer's device for transferring property.) Certainly Soley was settled enough to be named as a churchwarden in 1687 and in 1689, when his father-in-law died, aged 87, he was buried in Upton and a tomb erected. Nash records the inscription

*Grace in his life, faith in his death he shewed  
And as he weaker grew both these renewed  
Which proves the soul distinct from matter quite  
For as this darker grew that grew more light.*

Sarah Soley died in 1699, aged 64, and was buried in Upton. In 1701 Soley married again, this time to Susannah Fenzell of the parish of St Nicholas in Worcester and in the following year their daughter, Dorothy, was baptised in Upton. In 1703 Humphrey Soley was High Sheriff of Worcestershire. In the following year, however, Susannah Soley died in childbirth aged 32. Also, in the oldest of Upton's parish churches, there was a memorial to a nineteen year old female cousin of Humphrey Soley, who died in 1705. Might she have been looking after Dorothy after her mother's death? Humphrey Soley died in 1707, and, in his will Dorothy is placed in the guardianship of John Soley of Lickhill. Among the appraisers of Soley's estate was William Bound.

After Soley's death "Soley's Orchard" found its way back into the ownership of the Bound family. When the Marriage Settlement of Ebenezer Hankins and Mary Avenant was drawn up in 1722 Soley's Orchard was recorded as having been bought from Benjamin Bound, citizen of London, Stationer. This is probably the son of the same Philip Bound from whom the original purchase may have been made by Humphrey Soley. Born in 1659 Benjamin Bound had prospered in London, married and become a respected figure in the parish of St Verdast, Foster Lane and St Michael Le Quesne. He had no need of property in Upton, hence the sale.