

An Investigation into the George Sole of Westwell and Woodchurch, co. Kent

By Caleb H. Johnson

In the Autumn 2008 issue of the *Soule Kindred Newsletter*, in an article entitled "Pilgrim George Soule: Update on his Possible Ancestry," Louise Walsh Throop noted there was "one George Sole, apparently of Woodchurch [near Canterbury in Kent]," who "sold land to John Sharpe of Westwell, the elder," mentioned in Sharpe's will of 1593. She went on to suggest that this George Sole "could turn out to be an uncle or grandfather [of the *Mayflower* passenger], if records can be found."

It seemed reasonable, therefore, to undertake some research into this George Sole, to follow up on Throop's hypothesis. I have now reviewed over fifty Soule family wills and probates in the Archdeaconry of Canterbury, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, and Consistory Court of Canterbury, and examined in detail all the parish registers (baptisms, marriages and burials) of Woodchurch, Westwell, and about 100 other surrounding parishes. I also looked at a number of manorial records, tax records, and quarter sessions records. I have managed to put together a fairly thorough record of this George Sole and his family, and many of the other Sole families in Kent as well.

George Sole of Westwell and Woodchurch was born about 1545, probably in the neighboring parish of Hothfield, co. Kent. There, on 6 August 1551, a man named John Sole made out his will, mentioning wife Agnes, and sons Christopher, George, and Henry.¹ Since John Sole did not mention in his will that his children were then underage (George would have only been about 6 years old, yet the George Sole named in the will was bequeathed a substantial sum, £20), there is some doubt that this is George Sole's parents, perhaps John and Agnes were his grandparents, and one of the children (Christopher, George or Henry) was George's father.

In any case, George Sole married Mary Horsmorden on 13 June 1570 at Hothfield, co. Kent, and the couple had four children baptized at Hothfield:

1. Anne, bp. 13 December 1571
2. Thomas, bp. 10 October 1574
3. Godfrey, bp. 26 October 1578
4. Catherine, bp. 28 March 1585

George Sole moved from Hothfield to the neighboring parish of Westwell shortly after the baptism of youngest daughter Catherine, and a couple years later, on 1 November 1588, he made out his will. A complete transcript of this will follows²:

In the name of god amen The firste day of November
and in the xxxth yeare of the Raigne of o[ur] Soveraigne lady Quene
Elizabeth I George Soole of the parishe of Westwell being sicke
in bodye but of whole and p[er]fecte remembrance thanks be to allmightie
do make this my present testamente in manner and forme as followethe
Fyrste I bequeathe my Soule into the handes of god my Creator by
whose mercye I fully hope to be saved by faithe in Christe merittes
my Redemer and to be comforted and sanctified by the holy ghoste and my bodye
to be buried in the accustomed place appointed for the same It[e]m I geve unto
Mary my wife all my housholde stuffe whatsoever it be to her only use
It[e]m I geve unto Mary my wife the one half of all my other goodes whatsoever
quallity they be of, and the other half of my goods w[hi]ch is not houshold stuffe

1 Will of John Sole, PRC 17/27/153. Proved 23 October 1551.

2 PRC 32/36 folio 116b.

I will and geve unto my children and the same to be equally devyded among them out of the w[hi]ch goodes aforegeven to Mary my wife and to my children I will that all my debtes shalbe payd indifferently That is to saye the one half by Mary my wife and the other half to be payd by my children It[e]m I will that Mary my wife shalbe my sole Executrix wittnesses to this Thomas Horsmanden and John Horsmanden overseers Richard Horsmanden [Christ]ofer Soole

The said will was proved bfore lord William Walsall, clerk, substitute of master Stephen Lakes, doctor of laws, commissary-general of the city and diocese of Canterbury, etc, on the 28th of January in the year of the lord according to the course of the church of England 1588 by the oaths of Thomas Horsmanden, clerk, and John Horsmanden, witnesses, sworn, and by the same man approved, etc, and the administration of the goods, etc, was committed by the same man to Mary, the relict and executrix, first of all sworn, saving on the oath of whomsoever.
Inventory £316 13s 4d

In George's will above, he mentions his wife Mary, to whom he bequeaths all his household stuff and one half of his estate. And the other half of his estate was to be equally divided amongst his children (whom he does not specifically name). George was buried in Westwell, co. Kent, on 2 February 1588/9.³

If we are to follow the hypothesis that this George Sole was the grandfather of the *Mayflower* passenger, then we must necessarily trace down his two sons, Thomas and Godfrey, and look to see if they had any sons named George that could be candidates to have been the *Mayflower* George.

Godfrey Sole, because of his unique name, is much easier to follow in the records. Godfrey, incidentally, is a common surname in Hothfield, and so was likely the maiden name of his grandmother.⁴ He married twice; his first wife was named Anne, and they were married sometime around 1605 or 1606; she was the mother of Godfrey's three children. Anne was buried at Great Chart, co. Kent on 25 June 1614.⁵ Their children, found in the parish records of Hothfield and Great Chart, were:

1. George, bp. 20 December 1607, Hothfield, co. Kent.
2. Anne, buried 24 October 1610, Great Chart, co. Kent.
3. Susanna, bp. 13 April 1613, Great Chart, co. Kent.

Godfrey remarried at some point, to a woman named Elizabeth, but there is no record of any additional children. They moved a few parishes to the southeast, to Ivychurch, co. Kent, where Godfrey Sole, husbandman, made out his will on 12 July 1625, proved 10 September 1625.⁶ In his will, he gives his entire estate to his wife Elizabeth, including "one Cowe one yearlinge heifer one Calfe and xxvij^{tie} Ewe sheepe two weather sheepe and fifteen lambes and all my Corne hempe and meadowe and all my household stuffe whatsoever wch is now remayninge in the house wherein I now dwell in the said parish of Ivychurch." No mention of any children is made in his will, perhaps because his two surviving children George and Susanna were still underage. Godfrey, amusingly, spends a number of lines of his will explaining that he would "deliver unto his said wife Elizabeth one brasse mortar." It must have been a rather important brass mortar, I wonder if the pestle came with it! The only other person mentioned in the will was John Fagg, who was apparently owed rents that were to be paid from Godfrey's estate.

Godfrey's son George Sole married on 14 January 1629/30 at Ivychurch, to a woman named Ann Watson. That conclusively eliminates him as a candidate for the *Mayflower* passenger (the fact he was baptized

3 Parish registers of Westwell, co. Kent.

4 The 1586 will of Abraham Godfrey of Hothfield (PRC 17/46/365) was witnessed by Thomas and Richard Horsmanden, relatives of George Sole's wife Mary.

5 Parish registers of Great Chart, co. Kent.

6 PRC 32/46 folio 310b. It may be worth noting that Christopher Godfrey, in his will of 1511, mentions lands he owned in the parish of Ivychurch (PRC 17/11/220). So it is quite possible Godfrey Sole's possessions in Ivychurch came down to him through the Godfrey family.

in 1607 would also have made him an improbable candidate, even if this marriage hadn't been located.)

So now on to Godfrey's brother, Thomas—could he have been the father of the *Mayflower* passenger? The parish registers of Hothfield, and all the surrounding parishes (including Great Chart, Westwell, and Woodchurch) show no trace of this Thomas Sole. If Thomas did not die young, then he likely moved out of the immediate vicinity. The nearest Thomas Sole that I was able to locate was the Thomas Soole who married Mary Iddenden on 16 October 1598 at Hawkhurst, co. Kent, which is about fifteen miles to the southwest of Hothfield. The timing, at least, works well—our Thomas would have been 24 years old at the time of this marriage.⁷ This particular couple, Thomas and Mary (Iddenden) Soole, are, quite interestingly, already known to American genealogists. Their daughter, Sarah Soole, baptized at Hawkshurst on 6 June 1600, married Samuel Hinckley, and they came over to the Plymouth Colony, settling in Barnstable, Massachusetts. They are actually maternal ancestors of President Barack Obama. Additionally, Mary Iddenden's sister Katherine married Stephen Hosmer, and they were the parents of James Hosmer, who came on the ship *Elizabeth* in 1635, and settled ultimately in Concord, Massachusetts.

This Thomas Soole family, however, had no son named George. And, so it would seem, we have eliminated George Sole of Hothfield and Westwell, co. Kent, as a direct ancestor of *Mayflower* passenger George Soule.

Other Allied Sole Families in Kent

While examining all the Soule wills of co. Kent, one piqued my interest above all others: the will of widow Mary Soule, of Woodchurch, co. Kent. She made out her will on 23 July 1593, and it was proved 10 October 1593.⁸ In her will, widow Mary Sole mentions "my three children George, Richard, and Mary." She later states that George was her "eldest son," and also indicates that none of her children had yet reached adulthood. She also mentions "Richard Tritton my father" and his lands at Great Chart, co. Kent.

With the genealogical information extracted from widow Mary Sole's will, I was able to piece together her family as well. Mary, the daughter of Richard Tritton, was born about 1550, and married Christopher Sole on 3 October 1570 at Great Chart, co. Kent, England. Richard Tritton's will, dated 9 January 1570/1, and proved 4 April 1571, mentions George Snothe (his brother) and Alexander Snothe (apparently Richard's step-son⁹), his daughter Mary Sole, and his daughter Susanne Tritton. He gives his entire estate to daughter Mary Sole wife of Christopher Sole, except for "the messuage wherein he dwells at Chelmyngton in the parish of Great Charte." Christopher Sole was named the executor of the estate.¹⁰

The couple moved to the parish of Bethersden, co. Kent shortly after their marriage, where their children are found in the parish registers¹¹:

1. John, bp. 1 July 1571; buried 17 August 1571.
2. Christopher, buried 16 December 1572.
3. George, bp. 15 May 1575
4. Mary, bp. 11 January 1578/9
5. Richard, bp. 19 November 1581

7 It should be noted that there is an elder John Soole living in the parish of Hawkhurst, who previous researchers have assumed was the father of Thomas Soole. That parentage is equally feasible and nothing in my research disproves that possibility.

8 PRC 32/37, folios 141b-143.

9 The widow Mary Sole refers to Alexander Snothe as her brother in her will.

10 Will of Richard Trytton (PRC 17/41/91).

11 It should be noted that there was another Christopher Sole, of seemingly the same age, living at Hothfield, where children James (baptized 11 August 1572) and Michael (baptized 4 October 1573) are found. Chronologically this could not be the same Christopher Sole, so there must be two men of the same name. Care, therefore, must be taken when assigning records to one Christopher, or the other. We know the records described thus far relate to the husband of Mary (Tritton) Sole, because the names of the children match those found in widow Mary's will.

Christopher Sole was also both an overseer, and witness, to the will of George Snothe, husbandman of Hothfield, dated 13 March 1586, and proved 17 May 1586.¹² In George Snothe's will, he mentions sons Richard and John, and godson George Snothe.

Christopher Sole died and was buried in Woodchurch in 1593. Unfortunately, two Christopher Soles were buried in Woodchurch in 1593, one on 3 February 1592/3 (referred to as a "householder"), and one a few months later on 30 June 1593, so there isn't a way to know for sure which is Mary's husband. The other man, perhaps, is the Christopher Sole of Hothfield mentioned in an earlier footnote, who fathered sons James and Michael.

Now that we have established the foundation of Christopher and Mary (Tritton) Sole's family, it is time to take a closer look at widow Mary's will of 1593, and what made it initially so interesting to me. Since her children were all underage, she appointed each one a guardian. Eldest son George was assigned to William Mayhoe of Woodchurch. Daughter Mary was assigned to Mary's "brother" Alexander Snoth. And youngest son Richard was assigned to John Hasell of Great Chart.

The surnames Hasell and Mayhoe are what first drew my interest to this will. George Soule came on the *Mayflower* as a servant to Edward Winslow. The Leiden marriage record of Edward Winslow to wife Elizabeth Barker, indicates that Jane Hasell, a witness to the marriage, was a "neice" (or cousin) of Elizabeth Barker.¹³ That Leiden record says Elizabeth was from "Chatsun" in England, which many researchers have assumed is Chattisham, co. Suffolk—but there is no reason this couldn't be Chatham, Chartham, or Chart Sutton, in co. Kent.¹⁴ Other Leiden records indicate that the Hasell family of Leiden originated from co. Kent, England.¹⁵ It is entirely plausible that George Soule of the *Mayflower* was in some way acquainted with, or related to, Edward Winslow's wife Elizabeth Barker, since apprentices almost always had some sort of social, neighborly, churchly, or familial connection to their master's family.

The surname of "Mayhoe" is a variant of "Mayhew," and its phonetic twin, "Mahieu." And we know that Hester Mahieu of Leiden was called "of Canterbury," in Kent, in her 1603 marriage record to future *Mayflower* passenger Francis Cooke; and there were several other Mahieus at Leiden who were also from co. Kent.¹⁶

Since we expect to find the birth of the *Mayflower* George Sole between 1595 and 1599, Richard Sole (baptized in November 1581) can reasonably be eliminated as a probable father—he would have been only 14-18 years old at the time, just a tad too young to be a likely father of the *Mayflower* passenger. That leaves only son George, who was baptized in 1575, as a candidate father. He would have been 20-24 years of age during the time period we'd expect the birth of the *Mayflower* passenger. So the question we must now examine is: did this George Sole have a child named George, born between 1595 and 1599? With potential Hasell and Mahieu family connections, and a George of the right age, we'd at long last have a circumstantially strong candidate family for the *Mayflower* passenger.

The first step, therefore, was to look for George Sole's marriage, and the baptisms of his children. The obvious first place to look was Great Chart, where his mother owned land that he presumably inherited. Indeed, while no marriage record was found, I did find the baptism records for some of George's children at Great Chart:

1. John, bp. 25 May 1600
2. Joseph, bp. 22 September 1605
3. Anne, bp. 21 February 1607/8

12 Will of George Snothe (PRC 17/46/361a).

13 Johanna W. Tammel, *The Pilgrims and other People from the British Isles in Leiden*, p. 290.

14 It may be worth noting that I have already tried, without success, to find any Elizabeth Barkers in Chattisham, co. Suffolk, as a part of a different research project.

15 James Hasell of Sandwich, co. Kent, married in Leiden 7 June 1624. John Hasell of Sandwich, co. Kent, married in Leiden in 1642. Jessum Hasell of Sandwich, co. Kent, married in Leiden in 1609. Peter Hasell of Sandwich, co. Kent, married in Leiden in 1621. (See Tammel, *ibid.*, p. 118.)

16 Tammel, *ibid.*, p. 180. Hester Mahieu, of Canterbury, co. Kent, was accompanied by her mother "Jenne", and sister "Jenne". There are other Mahieu's in Leiden as well, also from co. Kent, including James Mahieu of Sandwich (married in Leiden in 1630), John Mahieu of Sandwich (married in Leiden in 1606), and Daniel "James' son" Mahieu of Sandwich (married 1632 in Leiden).

Since no marriage record was found at Great Chart, it is entirely possible that George Sole and his wife married elsewhere, and perhaps had an earlier child there, before moving into Great Chart around 1600. An extensive parish register search was undertaken at this point, in an effort to locate such a marriage record, or baptism records for any earlier children. All the primary parishes discussed (Hothfield, Woodchurch, Bethersden, Great Chart, and Westwell) having been thoroughly examined already, a wide swath of surrounding parishes and those on the roads to both Canterbury and Sandwich were examined, minimally from 1590-1605, for George Soule marriages, or additional Soule baptisms. The parish registers that were examined were: Adisham, Appledore, Ash next Sandwich, Ashford, Betteshanger, Bilsington, Boughton Aluph, Badlesmere, Brabourne, Brenzett, Canterbury (all parishes), Challock, Chilham, Charing, Crundale, Eastry, Eastwell, Ebony, Egerton, Elmstead, Fairfield, Godmersham, High Halden, Hinxhill, Ickham, Kenardington, Kennington, Leaveland, Lenham, Little Chart, Mersham, Molash, Nonington, Old Romney, Orlestone, Petham, Pluckley, Ruckinge, Sandwich (St. Mary, St. Peter and St. Clement), Selling, Shadoxhurst, Sheldwich, Snargate, Stanford, Stone, Stowting, Sutton Valence, Tenterden, Thanington, Throwley, Ulcombe, Waltham, Willesborough, Woodnesborough, and Wye. In addition, marriage records (but not baptisms) were examined for Bonnington, Boughton Malherbe, Boughton Munchelsea, Chart Sutton, and East Sutton, and a Kent-wide marriage index was also consulted.

Unfortunately, these searches turned up no trace of George Sole's marriage, or any earlier children.

The next logical step seemed to be to take a closer look at the Hasell and Mayhoe families that the Sole children were adopted into, to see if any Leiden connections could be found. Certainly uncovering an appropriate baptism for a Hester Mahieu, or seeing some Hasell-Barker connections, or finding some links to other known Leiden families, could clue us in that we are on the right track.

Richard Sole, the youngest son of widow Mary Sole, was given to John Hasell of Great Chart. John Hasell was the son of Thomas Hasell, and grandson of Philip Hasell. He married Silvester Bechinge at Kennington, co. Kent, on 10 June 1577, and in 1593 he assumed custody of Richard Sole. The arrangement did not last long, however, as John Hasell died and was buried at Great Chart on 11 June 1596. In his will, dated 7 June 1596, he named his wife Silvester; his brothers Stephen, Luke, and Thomas Hasell; his uncle Nicholas Marten and Nicholas' children John, Elizabeth and Margaret Marten; his servant Elizabeth Fraunchke; his father Thomas Hasell; his brother-in-law Vincent Bechinge; his nieces Priscilla, Nostrenight and Patience, and nephew Constant, the children of his brother Thomas Hasell; and a number of apparently unrelated individuals including Robert Sturges, Robert Mannys, Thomas Castleden, and Richard, George, and Christopher Missinge. More importantly for our purposes, he mentions an annuity issuing from a tenement and lands in Bethersden near to the windmill there, and states his wife was to pay Richard Sole, son of Christopher Sole, at his age of 21, the sum of £40.¹⁷

So John and Silvester Hasell apparently had no children, and he died in 1596. It is unclear what happened next to Richard Sole, who would not have turned 21 until 1602. He did remain in the area of Hothfield and Great Chart, however, as he is found in the records of the Kent Quarter Sessions court. He got himself into a little trouble when, between October and December 1604, he and five other clothiers from Hothfield broke into a rabbit close owned by William Dutton in Great Chart, and stole some of the conies. And on 18 November 1604, he broke into the park of George Withers of Great Chart, between the hours of 10:00 PM and 1:00 AM. His various nighttime rabbit-heists landed him in court in April 1605.¹⁸

From parish register and probate records, I have pieced together what I could on John Hasell's brothers as well. Brother Thomas Hasell married Patience Huggett in 1579 at Kennington, co. Kent, and they had at least four children: Patience, Priscilla, Constant, and Nostrenight. Thomas Hasell was still in the area in the 1620s,

17 Will of John Hasell, PRC 17/49/420. This will provides conclusive proof, if there was any doubt, that widow Mary Sole's husband was named Christopher Sole.

18 Kent Quarter Sessions Records, Q/SR/5/m.7d, Q/SR/5/m.4d, and QM/Sig/28 and QM/SR1.

when he signed a deed along with brother Stephen to Thomas Waterman.¹⁹ His brother Luke married Jane Pett at Kennington in 1582, and they had at least five children: Anna, John, Daniel, Jane, and Joan. He was buried in Great Chart on 20 April 1627. And brother Stephen married Agnes Spratt in 1583 at Kennington, and they had Mercy, Elizabeth, Mary, John, Thomas, and a daughter who married Thomas Granger. Stephen died at Kennington in 1638.²⁰

So neither John Hasell, nor any of his brothers, ended up in Leiden. The only tidbit of incidental interest is the fact that Luke Hasell had a daughter named Jane Hasell, baptized in 1591. Theoretically, this could be the Jane Hasell that witnessed the marriage of Edward and Elizabeth (Barker) Winslow. But no supporting evidence was found, outside of the name itself. I did not find any Barker/Baker connection to these Hasells either. However, a Hugh Tritton, shoemaker of Essheford, Kent, a possible relative of Richard Tritton, does mention a "daughter" Mary Barker, in his will of 1619.²¹ There is also a John Baker resident in Woodchurch, who died in 1615. His will of that year mentions wife Susan, brother Thomas, sister Mary wife of John Bennett, and sister Elizabeth wife of James Hayward.²²

Turning to the other family of interest, the Mayhoses: George Sole, the eldest son of Christopher and Mary (Tritton) Sole, was assigned to William Mayhoe of Woodchurch, co. Kent in 1593, when he would have been eighteen years of age, so he likely did not remain with the Mayhoe's for more than a few years.

Records on the Mayhoe family are scarcer than those for the Hasells, and so are somewhat more difficult to piece together. William Mayhoe may have been the son of widow Elizabeth Mayhowe of Marden, who appoints her son William as executor of her estate in 1602.²³ Her will is also witnessed by John Baker, perhaps the John Baker of Woodchurch.²⁴ William Mayhoe's marriage record was not located, but he had a few children baptized or buried in the parish of Great Chart, namely Thomas (buried 7 February 1576/7), John (bp. 12 January 1577/8), Katherine (bp. 2 April 1580), and Thomas (bp. 12 February 1586/7). He removed at some point to Woodchurch, where in 1593 he was assigned custody of George Sole. At Woodchurch on 19 January 1595/6, his youngest son Thomas was buried. No burial or probate record was found for William or his wife.

I had been hopeful that this William might have been the father of Hester Mahieu, who later married Francis Cooke at Leiden, but no record of any baptism for a daughter Hester was found. Since the Mayhoe family seems to disappear from the area, it is possible they headed off to Sandwich or Canterbury, and later to Leiden, but no evidence of this was uncovered—and in any case, George Sole was back at Great Chart in 1600, when he started having children there.

Unfortunately, while the Hasell and Mayhoe surnames initially appeared very promising in connection to this Sole family, no Leiden ties could be pinpointed. And with no evidence that George Sole, son of Christopher, had any children earlier than John baptized in 1600 at Great Chart, we must conclude, at least for now, that George Sole, son of Christopher Sole, was not the *Mayflower* passenger's father.

Notes on some other Sole families in Kent

Because of the extensive number of records and regions covered during my research, I stumbled across several additional Sole families and records, some of which may be of value to future research efforts and so seemed worth publishing as well.

19 Canterbury Cathedral Archives U101/II/B2/6, undated but apparently between 1619-1626.

20 Will of Stephen Hasell, PRC 17/70/542.

21 Will of Hugh Tritton, PRC 17/66/330.

22 Will of John Baker, PRC 32/43/42.

23 Will of Elizabeth Mayhowe, PRC 17/53/94a.

24 John Baker of Woodchurch made out his will on 7 July 1615, mentioning brother Thomas (and Thomas' son John), sister Mary Bennett wife of John Bennett of Bethersden, sister Elizabeth Hayward wife of James Hayward, and her eldest daughter Elizabeth; his wife Susan; cousin Thomas Parker; among others. PRC 32/43/42.

One interesting family turned up when searching through the records of Ash, a parish immediately adjacent to Sandwich that is often referred to as "Ash near Sandwich." In this parish is found the baptisms of the children of Thomas "Sollye", namely Sarah (bp. 10 October 1592), Joan (bp. 10 March 1593/4), Susan (bp. 7 November 1596), George (bp. 29 December 1598), Mary (bp. 25 June 1600/1), and Thomas (bp. 22 May 1603). George Sollye would make a great chronological candidate for the *Mayflower* passenger—in all the extensive searches that I have undertaken thus far in Worchester, Gloucester, Bedford, and now Kent, this is the first George Soule-like baptism that falls within the 1595-1599 range that should be expected of the *Mayflower* passenger.

Following up on the Solly surname a little further, I examined a number of Solly/Sollye probate records throughout east Kent, namely William Solly (1558), Thomas Sollye (1559), John Sollye (1583), Nicholas Solly (1609/10), William Solley (1621), John Solley (1624), and William Solly (1634). Of them, one turned up another interesting tidbit. The will of Nicholas Solly of Old Romney (a parish that neighbors Ivychurch, where Godfrey Sole resided), dated 18 March 1609/10 and proved 20 April 1610, mentions sons Reinold, George, and Anne Solly.

And yet another George Sole of possible interest to future research: on 25 April 1594, George Sole of Nonington was charged at the Kent Quarter Sessions for assaulting Oliver Huson of Betteshanger, constable of Eastry Hundred, at Woodnesborough, and was fined 16 shillings, 8 pence.²⁵ The parishes of Nonington, Betteshanger, and Woodnesborough all border Sandwich, co. Kent, and are right next to Ash as well. Many assaults such as this were youthful indiscretions, so perhaps this George Sole is the right age to be another candidate father of the *Mayflower* passenger.

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25 Kent Quarter Sessions, QM/SI/1594/4/7.