

THE SEARCH FOR THE ENGLISH ORIGINS OF  
*MAYFLOWER* PASSENGER GEORGE SOULE  
PART 2: STRENHAM, REDMARLY D'ABITOT,  
DYMOK, BERROW, AND ASPHERTON

By Caleb Johnson

In Part One of this article, it was shown that all George Soules residing in, or with direct ties to, Eckington, co. Worcester, could be accounted for, and that none of them could have been the *Mayflower* passenger. It is time to expand the search beyond the parish of Eckington, to look for other interesting candidates.

**John Soule of Strensham**

In 1929, *Mayflower* researcher Charles Edward Banks published his book, *The English Ancestry and Homes of the Pilgrim Fathers*. Banks, apparently realizing that neither George Soule son of Robert Soule the salter, nor George Soule son of Robert Soule the husbandman, could have been the *Mayflower* passenger, went in search of another candidate father in the vicinity of Eckington. He wrote simply that George Soule “has been tentatively identified as the son of John Soule of Eckington, co. Worcester, and probably kinsman to Robert Soule, a wealthy London salter, ... All other George Soules found in England at that period have been satisfactorily eliminated.” No source, nor any additional details for this new claim, was provided by Banks.

Strangely, there is no John Soule living in Eckington during the time period in question. Banks does mention that “Fuller particulars of this identification will be found in the recently published Soule Genealogy for which a special extensive search covering a number of years was made by the compiler of this book.” That is undoubtedly a reference to the book *History, Biography and Genealogy of the Families Named Soule, Sowle and Soulis* (Lewiston, ME, 1926), by G.T. Ridlon, with contributions by Charles Banks. But this work makes no mention of any John Soule of Eckington during the time period in question either. However, a John Soule of the neighboring parish of Strensham is mentioned. This John Soule was buried in Strensham on 9 July 1615, so on the surface he would seem to make a great candidate for the father of the *Mayflower* passenger (because the most likely time for a son to be apprenticed out is shortly after the father’s death). In addition, John Soule would presumably be closely related to the Soules of Eckington, where the family name of George is regularly in use.

In 1986, Nils Wilkes attempted to follow up on this family for his work, *In Search of George Soule of the Mayflower* [n.d. c1986]. Wilkes reported “I have been unable to link any John Soule to a son George so far. ... A convenient father to George would have been John Soule of Strensham ... His children were being produced at the right time, but there is no George either in the parish register or mentioned in his will of 1615 (I have been unable to locate this will and Banks does not give any references to its whereabouts...) ... Therefore at the present time I am not convinced that John Soule ... was the father to George.<sup>1</sup>”

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<sup>1</sup> Nils Wilkes, *In Search of George Soule of the Mayflower* (n.d. c1986), p. 45.



Roger Soule married Helen Angeworth (sometimes Angel) on 3 June 1588. Their children were:

1. Helen, bp. 27 July 1588
2. Alice, bp. 20 November 1589
3. John, bp. 1 January 1591/2
4. George, bp. 24 March 1593/4
5. Richard, bp. 5 November 1596
6. Joane, bp. 1 January 1598/9

Roger Soule was buried on 27 February 1634/5, and wife Helen was probably the "Eleanor" who was buried a few years earlier on 15 October 1631. The George Soule here would seem to be much more interesting. The baptism of 24 March 1593/4 puts this George Soule within reach of the expected 1596-1599 birth of the *Mayflower* passenger. Could it be that this man is the *Mayflower* passenger? If the *Mayflower* George Soule were baptized in 1594, it would make him a 26-year old servant, which is not a normal arrangement. But perhaps even more conclusive, it would have made him almost two years older than his master, Edward Winslow, who was born on 18 October 1595: an even more unlikely circumstance. And father Roger Soule was still apparently alive in 1620, making a servant arrangement unlikely as well—normally children do not become servants unless the father dies, or is particularly impoverished. Unlikely circumstances aside, this George cannot yet be conclusively eliminated as a candidate. No further record of him has yet been located.

There is only one manorial record listed at the Worcester Records office for Redmarly, dated 1575, and access to it was refused by the staff of the Records office due to renovations; given the early date of the record, it is highly doubtful it would have mentioned any Soules. Tax records at the Public Records Office (class E179) were searched for Dymock and Redmarly, but no Soules were found. A large number of deeds for Dymock also survive and were searched, but no references to any Soules were found.

### **Ashperton, co. Herefordshire**

Roger Soule of Redmarly d'Abitot, co. Worcester, was married in 1588. Most men during this period married around the age of 25, so we can estimate that Roger Soule was born about 1563. So it is very interesting to note the baptism of Roger Soule on 12 October 1561 at Ashperton, co. Hereford, a parish that lies about 10 miles to the west of Redmarly d'Abitot. The parish registers of Ashperton, co. Herefordshire, are very faded in parts, making their transcription extremely difficult. Some of the entries are missing from the International Genealogical Index. Examination of the parish registers reveals the following baptism entries (illegible letters are in brackets and are simply guesses at what the name originally was; entries with an asterisk are not found in the IGI):

- 18 March 1559/60 [A]nne, daughter of George Soule\*
- 12 October 1561 Roger, son of George Soule
- 10 February 1562/3 [Kathe]rine, daughter of George Soule\*
- 24 June 1564 John, son of George Soule
- 2 November 1567 John, son of George Soule

There were no marriage or burial records relating to the Soule family in Ashperton. It would appear that the Roger Soule of Redmarly d'Abitot was the son of George Soule of Ashperton, co. Hereford. While we have reasonably eliminated Roger



Soule as being the father of the *Mayflower* passenger (his son George being born a little too early), brother John Soule would necessarily be of interest. Baptized on 2 November 1567, if he survived to adulthood he would have been married perhaps about 1592. And since his father was named George, it would be reasonable that he would name a son George as well.

One quite reasonable possibility is that the John Soule baptized in 1567 at Ashperton is the same as John Soule of Strensham, who was married in 1596. The timing is about right, and he did name a daughter Katherine, perhaps named after his sister; and the Soules in this region apparently had ties to John Soule of Strensham, because the will of John Soule of Berrow calls him a kinsman.

Additional research in Herefordshire has proven very difficult. Archdeaconry wills for co. Hereford were apparently lost or destroyed during the English Civil War, and do not exist prior to 1660. All that remains are some wills in the Episcopal Consistory of Hereford. There is only one Soule will recorded, that of William Soule of Castle Frome, co. Hereford, dated 27 June 1567. In his will, he bequeaths everything he owns to John Flooke alias Mutlowe, with the exception of a lamb and a shirt, which he bequeaths to Anne Abbottes, a servant to William Unett, gentleman. So it is clear from the will that this William Soule did not have a surviving wife or children.

Manorial records, likewise, do not exist for Ashperton. There are some surviving deeds for co. Hereford; these were searched, but contained no references to Soules.

In co. Gloucester, there are only five Soule wills, none of which provide any mentions of the name George. They are:

- William Soule of Slymbrydge, Gloucester, dated 20 June 1577. Mentions son William, and wife Bridget. Ref: 1577/206.
- Andrew Soule of Brockthropp, Gloucester, dated 24 September 1598. Mentions Robert Lymbrygg, Robert Payne, Elizabeth Lord daughter of Reynold Lord, along with Mary, Richard, Frances, John, William, and Edward Soule (no relation specified) and Andrew Soule (kinsman). Also mentioned are Richard Smyth, minister; Robert Wynston, and Richard Harris. Ref: 1598/5.
- John Soule of Newport, Barkley, Gloucester, dated 14 September 1573. Mentions "four children" (not named) and wife Alice. Ref: 1573/100.
- John Soule of Eveington, Leigh, Gloucester, dated 16 May 1634, yeoman. Mentions son John, wife Johan. Overseers John Eagles and John Cooke of Derehurst Walton, yeomen. Ref: 1639/33.
- Stephen Soule of Brockthorpe, Gloucester, dated 11 June 1551, husbandman. Mentions children Thomas, Edward, William, Andrew, Margaret, and Anne. Mentions brother Thomas, Jone (his sister's daughter), Robert Awood the elder (friend), and William Payne and Thomas Graynger. Ref: 1551/112.

At this point, we have exhausted every probate, manorial, deed, and tax records in the regions of co. Hereford, co. Gloucester, and co. Worcester known to have been the home of a George Soule. All known George Soules' in these areas can now be conclusively eliminated as having been the *Mayflower* passenger, with the possible exception of the George Soule of Redmarly d'Abitot who was baptized on 24 March 1593/4. However, some doubt was also shed on that record, he still being baptized a tad too early to have made a likely candidate for the *Mayflower* passenger.



In Part III of this research, I will move on to the Soule families of Bedfordshire, where the name of George Soule is found in use in the parishes of Tingrith and Flitwick.

*Caleb Johnson is the author and webmaster of the MayflowerHistory.com website, a website he has researched and maintained for the past eight years. His research into the ancestry of George Soule is being funded by the Soule Kindred in America. Simon Neal of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, is accessing English records, and translating them where necessary, in support of this project. Simon is a noted genealogist and records researcher in England, has an M.A. in Latin, and has worked with Caleb on several Mayflower-related projects in the past, including a research project on the Dorking records of William Mullins', funded in part by the Alden Kindred of America, and published with the Peter Browne discoveries in The American Genealogist 79(July 2004):161-178. Caleb is a descendant of Mayflower passenger George Soule, and is also a descendant of John Alden/Priscilla Mullins, Myles Standish, Edward Doty, Henry Samson, and Richard Warren.*