



WELCOME TO SOULTON

BEDROOM DIRECTORY

**SOULTON WELCOME
FOLDER AT A GLANCE**

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WELCOME!

It is our very great pleasure to welcome you to Soulton, a place we love and cherish.

We are delighted you have come to see us, and hope you will settle happily here.

We hope you relax while you are with us: let us know if there is anything we can do to make you more comfortable.

In this folder, you'll find administrative-type details about meal times, and how to access anything extra you might need – we are available to help with these things personally as well.

You will also find some information about what is distinctive about this place, if you would like to know more, ranging over:

- *some information about the meals we serve, and where we get our food from;*
- *an over view of our farm and woodland (please explore if you have time!);*
- *a brief sketch of the 1,000 year history of this manor (including a connection to King Cnut);*
- *some information about recent efforts to make sure we are being as sustainable as we can be;*
- *some information about the archaeology here.*

You are warmly encouraged to make yourself at home, to take an interest in the place and its people: we will be delighted to share what we know. Dinner is an ideal opportunity to do this, and mostly guests will begin this with a drink by the fire, or, in fine weather, in the garden.

Again, we are pleased to welcome you here, and hope you enjoy your stay.

Best wishes and kind regards,

The Ashton Family, and everyone at Soulton.

MEALS

Dinner

Dinner is served between 7:30pm and 8:30pm.

Your meal will be cooked fresh from that day's menu for you – mostly guests will come down to the hall (the room you enter first) from 6:30pm to have a drink and order their food, and you will be taken to your table when the food is ready to be served.

Dinner is normally served in the Dining Room (immediately to the left of the front door as you enter); on occasion it may also be served in the Buttery, and for larger private celebrations (+30 guests) meals may be in Soulton Court.

Breakfast

Breakfast is normally served between 8:30am and 9:30am, in the Dining Room.

High Tea

This is available on request at 6:30pm, this is normally for guests who have young children.

Packed Lunches

These are available on request, ideally these should be ordered the night before they are required.

Bar drinks

If you would like a bar drink at any time before the evening, please just let us know, and we will be delighted to serve you.

HOUSEKEEPING

Laundry

Washing, drying and ironing are available on request.

Irons can be requested for guest use, but we respectfully advise that there are some restrictions on where/how they can be used because of the potential risk.

Shoe Cleaning

Shoe cleaning is available on request.

Toiletries

You will find that soap, shower gel, shampoos in your bathroom: please take these home with you, especially if you have begun using them as part used items will be disposed of on your departure.

We keep in addition a small supply of razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste etc – just in case your own have escaped the suit case. Please just ask if you require these further items.

Dogs

Dogs are very welcome here – please be sure to take them on a lovely walk round the farm.

There are some restrictions about where they can go. It is greatly appreciated if they can please keep out of the walled garden, and do not let them into the main hall.

Servicing of Rooms

Servicing of rooms will take place sometime after 10:00am.

COMMUNICATIONS

WiFi

Wireless internet access is available here with our compliments; the signal is strongest in the hall. The signal can struggle to operate past this house's thick walls etc elsewhere in the house. Please ask us for the current password.

We trust you to access our network responsibly.

There is an Acceptable Use Policy which can be found on our website.

Depending on our workload we may be able to make a work space available in the Buttery.

Tablet Computer

There is a tablet computer in the hall for communal use.

Telephones

Increasingly, guests are using their own mobiles for communication.

Many of the rooms have direct dial telephones, on which you can make internal calls. If you would like to make an external call they phone will need to be opened for this, please ask.

If you would like to give out our number to receive calls, it is +44 (0) 1939 232 786.

Emails

We are happy to receive mails for guests; please let us know if you would like us to do this for you.

Printing

We are happy to print things for you either from a memory card or by email; there may be a charge for this service.

OUR FARM

The farm has always been part of this household's life – are always delighted when guests take an interest in it.

The farm is almost exclusively arable, but we have some beef cows grazing fields around the house in the spring, summer and early autumn.

Features on the farm include:

- **Soulton Wood**
50 acres of ancient oak and bluebell woodland. This is a magical place to visit in early spring and in the autumn. Timber from this wood was selected to replace toe wood panelling in the House of Commons following bomb damage in the World War II.
- **Soulton Brook and the River Roden:**
over 1.5 mile of river and brook, which is home to water vole (now very rare) and otter (fortunately recovering), as well as Kingfisher and loads of Mayfly (a bell weather for strong ecology).
- **Archaeological remains:**
of a Norman castle, extensive Medieval gardens, Tudor watermills, and a Bronze Age ring ditch system.

Our farming values the farm's biodiversity:

- **Rare Birds**
the farm hosts at least 11 RSPB red status birds, 14 amber status birds, and welcomes at least 86 species a year – great for bird watchers;
- the rivers and brooks are known to have otters, mayfly and water voles, which are all 'bell weathers' for good ecology;

We recently received a Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) conservation award;

We are a red tractor farm, contributing to quality UK food with high intrinsic quality and full traceability.

The land is sensitively managed by us personally, under established principles of stewardship. Soulton is a Red Tractor farm, meaning produce from the farm goes into quality British produce, marked with the scheme's quality assurance logo.

The farm provides some of food which is used in our restaurant at Soulton Hall, such as hedgerow fruits (blackberries etc) and game and fowl.

Guests are warmly encouraged to enjoy and explore the private estate in which the Hall is set (even if it is just a brief stroll before dinner or after breakfast); there are very gentle walks available on the lanes which run through the farm.

ABOUT OUR FOOD

Whilst it would be silly to pretend we can keep up with our food demands, we are lucky to have our walled gardens, combined with our farm and wonderful Shropshire countryside location.

This enables us to grow a substantial amount of the food used in our meals ourselves, and so our guests, at the right time of year, frequently eat produce picked moments earlier from the garden.

...from the fields, woods and hedges of our farm

Our Farm produces a significant quantity of food. Tonnes of it! Much of our produce is used by millers, other farmers and producers. For example:

- wheat (some goes to feed local livestock, and some goes into flour for baking),
- potatoes (destined for crisps),
- oilseed rape (cooking oil, and a renewable alternative to hydrocarbon oils),
- peas.

There are four beehives kept on the farm, from which we are able to produce our own honey. (In May, when the bees target the bluebells in Soulton Wood, our honey is a distinctive white colour). The farm also has:

- pheasants;
- rabbits;
- and game and fowl for the table, in season.

...from the Gardens

The gardens (including the cottage gardens) produce practically all of the herbs we use, and is particularly productive of fruit, including:

- Mulberries, gooseberries, loganberries, blackberries, raspberries;
- Blackcurrants, redcurrants, and whitecurrants;
- Plums, sugar plums, damsons and greengages;
- Cherries, pears and apples;
- Rhubarb, quinces and crab-apples.

Often this fruit will be served in our desserts or to compliment other courses, but it also finds its way into jams and preserves.

On a final note, all of the logs burnt in the fireplaces at Soulton Hall are collected from trees on the farm. We are careful not to take all dead wood, however, because it is an important habitat for our plentiful wildlife, and we replace all trees as necessary.

Local Food Artisans

The best resource for finding out about Shropshire's local food artisans is Heart of England Fine Foods. They have a visitor centre in nearby Shrewsbury, the Shropshire Food Enterprise Centre.

There are a huge number of artisan food producers in Shropshire and the surrounding area. Many of them are diversified farms, and people we know well. What they produce varies greatly, and includes:

- Maynards Farm Bacon -- smoked and cured meats (we have also begun to do more of this on site here at Soulton, using wood shavings from our own wood),

- Pugh's Piglets -- sausages,
- Rowlands -- fruit and vegetables,
- Appleby Farm House -- award winning cheese,
- Woods Brewery and Salopian Brewery -- bitter beer
- Westons -- cider
- Your Butcher -- local and Welsh meat (some beef cattle graze here in the summer)
- Tanners Wines -- highly regarded Shrewsbury Wine Merchant
- Hill Top Honey -- honey (we are in discussions to bring some of their hives to our farm)
- Cheshire Farm Ice Cream -- ice cream

as well as much other produce.

BRIEF HISTORY

There is a great deal of history at Soulton. Our Bronze Age archaeology (ring ditches) north of Soulton Hall indicate settlement here as long ago as 1000BC.

While the current hall was begun around 1390 and enhanced substantially in 1556, we still have the moated remains of the Norman castle which came before, built shortly after 1066 and occupied for about 300 years.

Saxon and Norman Soulton

The first named inhabitant of Soulton (Beorhtric, brother of Edric Streon, the last Earl of the Kingdom of Mercia and son-in-law of King Ethelred the Unready) was murdered by King Cnut on Christmas Day, 1017. This happened in London, not here.

Beorhtric was described as "lubricus, fleeting, ambitious and proud" by Roger of Hoveden, an 12th-century English chronicler. King Cnut is of course the legendary early English king who attempted to order the tide not to come in.

For a long time Soulton was literally the last manor in England before Wales. A deed granting the manor in 1399 established our boundary as 'following the ancient [even then!] marker stones of England'.

Indeed, this was frontier country for centuries; in the time called by some the 'Dark Ages', Soulton sat on the frontiers of Powys and Mercia. Whilst discussing this period, it's perhaps quickly worth saying that some historians place the real King Arthur in our neighbourhood as "Owain Ddantgwyn - The Bear", hence several legends of King Arthur and the Holy Grail in this area.

1086 Record of Soulton

Directly after the Conquest, a Mote and Bailey castle was built here, and we still have its remains to this day.

The manor is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086, which records that William the Conqueror's councillor Roger, First Earl of Shrewsbury, included the profit of the manor of Soulton in the endowment of the Royal Chapel in Shrewsbury Castle.

'THE CASTLE CHURCH OF ST MICHEAL itself holds SVLESTONE: The Saxon Beorhtric held it freely [pre-Conquest]. There is one hide paying gels [c.120 acres paying tax]. There is land for 1 plough. There is half a plough. It was worth 5s; now 4d more'.

Later the castle was to demand bundle of box wood every Easter, for use in the Palm Sunday service.

Mediæval Soulton

In the 1100s the de Saultons were lords of Soulton, and in the mid 1200s Roger Kynaston is recorded as Lord of Soulton.

The house at this time would have been a motte and bailey/fortified manor house, situated on the mound site we continue to look after on the farm. At this time a case about Soulton reached the Court of Chancery before the Archbishop of Canterbury, but we only have fragments sadly. Possibly it related to a boundary dispute, certainly there was room for one. An early deed sought to settle a controversy declaring:

"the boundary shall go from the bend in the river, to the pile of stones, to the damaged tree"(!)

By the thirteenth century Robert Corbett and his family were living at Soulton, which was then probably a fortified manor house on the site of the Norman castle.

Later in the 1200s there was another case, which this time reached the law courts at Westminster: Sulandia de Soulton, a widow and her daughter then living at Soulton, were in dispute about money with Robert Corbet. Corbet's lawyer, later Yvo de Soulton, won the case for him. However, his fees were such that in the end he came to have the ownership of the manor.

Yvo went on to represent Shropshire at two parliaments, as a Knight of the Shire. Basically he was one of Shropshire's first MPs.

The Keeper's Cottage was begun at around this time. It was originally a mill keeper's cottage. Some of the most elaborate documents that survive are the leases of the three water mills that were here.

Circa 1420 Fire & Relocation

1399 Grant: Manor of Soulton Sometime between 1390 and 1450, the manor house on the moated site was burnt down. Perhaps by a Welsh raiding party, others prefer to think it was part of the Wars of the Roses.

When the manor house came to be re-built, a dryer, more suitable site was chosen: that of the present Soulton Hall.

Originally, this rebuilding constituted a late Medieval/Tudor long house of timber framed construction, remnants of which can be seen in the present Hall. By the mid-1500s, Soulton was lived in by Edward Twyniho.

Tudor and Elizabethan Soulton

In 1556, Sir Roland Hill (who had been the first protestant Lord Mayor of London in 1549 and was a creditor to Henry VIII) acquired Soulton from the Twynihos. His portrait is in the hall by the dining room door.

At one point he was briefly sent to the Tower of London, whilst MP for London, for asserting the privileges of Parliament against the King, and his memorial stone notes him as:

'A foe of vie and vehment corrector'.

He extended and re-modeled the Tudor long house at Soulton into the impressive Elizabethan brick building which can be seen today.

Sometime after Rowland Hill's purchase, it is thought, the near end of Soulton Court was built, either as a banqueting house or as the moot hall for this manor. A moot hall being the place where the court baron and community gathering were held, in the days when the lordship of the manor (which still exists and is still held) invoked its jurisdictions and privileges (e.g. the regulation of baking and brewing, assisting those who farmed the land with their copy-hold ownership transfers, and dealing with minor civil matters).

In 1668, his descendant, Thomas Hill, High Sheriff of Shropshire and a friend of Samuel Pepys, placed his marital coat of arms above the front door.

Georgian Soulton

In the years since Thomas Hill's death Soulton has been cared for and enjoyed by descendants of the same family.

In 1783, Soulton Court was extended to make a semi-quadrangle with Soulton Hall, and became more agricultural in its use.

In 1801 the ancient Soulton Bridge was replaced (having got into a very bad state); the replacement humpback bridge, again in sandstone, was an early work of Thomas Telford, the famous engineer.

As an aside, the manor of Soulton had traditionally been responsible for this bridge, but it was conclusively settled at that time that the County would take this responsibility from then on...

There is a legend that Soulton Brook was used by the Duke of Bridgewater to trial the creation of canals in this period.

Coat of Arms

From time to time we are asked about the coat of arms which are carved above our front door and are used in our livery. It is the marital coat of arms of Thomas Hill and his wife Sarah, which was formed when they married in 1668.

The blazens of the quarterings are as follows (left to right, starting on the top row):

- Hill of Court of Hill ermine, on a fesse sable a triple towered castle argent
- Hill of Longslow: Sable, a lion rampant argent, langued and armed, crowned or between three crofted fromee fitchee of the second;
- Evans of Watstay, Co Denbigh Argent, a fesse between three fleur-de-lys, sable;
- Eyton of Rhiwabon C Denbigh ermine, a lion rampant crowned or, langued and armed;
- Bird of Charleton, per pale or and argent, an eagle displayed, beaked and armed;
- Hill of Buntinsdale; gules, a chevron between three pheons argent, points downwards;
- Lloyd, (Bishop of St Asaph, 1680) argent, a chevron between three crows sable, each holding in its beak an ermine spot;
- Griffith, Lord of Bromfield Play of eight argent and gules, a lion rampant sable.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is important to us, and we have chosen to make a responsible attitude to this issue one of the important values of this place.

We have therefore invested in some things which will mean, without impacting on your comfort, we are placing less weight on the climate, and making vastly reduced calls on finite resources.

From time to time guests here are interested in this, and will be happy to share our experiences if you want to know more.

The eye-catching/capital aspects of this most recently have been:

1. **Ground Source Heating**

The heating of the Hall and Carriage House is by ground source heat pump.

This system draws the summer's accumulated heat out of the soil, sends it through a compressor, and thus generates heat.

This system generates both our hot water and our space heating. There are 3.2km of collector pipes under an area of three acres behind Soulton Hall.

The system is between 300% and 500% efficient (depending on the time of year), and is partly driven by the green energy we produce here via our solar array.

2. **Solar Array**

We have 204 solar panels generating at least as much electricity for this site as we consume in a year.

These panels are located on the farm's grain store roofs away to the west from the hall and other buildings.

This installation is able to generate enough electricity for 10 'regular houses', which is unfortunately roughly how much energy this household will use in a year.

3. **Biomass**

The farm looks after quite a few acres, 1.5 miles of river/waterway, and has a significant woodland along with many individual trees.

Maintaining these things means that we have an inevitable amount of 'spare' wood in any year; dealing with these things involves quite a lot of labour, however we store up the wood, log, and split it and thereby get fuel for the fire in hall, and also for the wood stove in Soulton Court.

ARCHEOLOGY

As this manor has over 1,000 years of history, there are some archaeological remains over the farm which may be of interest. These are as follows:

4. Bronze Age Ring Ditches

These are the remains from c. 1,000BC. They are located at the very north of this farm, and would have been the remains of a few farmsteads. It is distinctly visible on satellite/aerial imagery, but not easily interpreted from the ground.

5. Norman Mote and Bailey Castle

This is located north of the hall (on the opposite side of the road). This was built almost as soon as the Norman Conquest was over. It is now a very distinct earthwork, some 25 feet high, and occupying, with its associated precinct remains some 5 acres.

6. Norman Mote and Bailey Castle

This is located north of the hall (on the opposite side of the road). This was built almost as soon as the Norman Conquest was over. It is now a very distinct earthwork, some 25 feet high, and occupying, with its associated precinct remains some 5 acres.

7. Tudor Water Mills

These are to be found on the bank to the south of the field by Keeper's Cottage. There would have been three of these and they ran from some time in the 1300s until the middle 1800s. The water was collected from the brook at the Bridge and ran in a race that ran all the way around the outside of the wood.

8. Soulton Bridge

This was one of Thomas Telford's early projects when he was county surveyor for Shropshire. It is listed at grade one. It is a fine stone bridge.

PRIVATE DINING

From time to time guests wish to dine in private; this may be possible. There is an additional charge for this service.

MEETINGS

Facilities are available for meetings here. In the hall we can help you to host meetings for up to 16. For larger numbers (up to 120 for a theatre style presentation) or up to 200 for a reception, there are generous facilities in Soulton Court.

WEDDINGS

We are delighted to be able to welcome a number of wedding celebrations. These can be for just the couple themselves, right up to receptions with 400 guests. Excepting where these celebrations are very intimate, weddings are only ever available on an exclusive use basis.

FIRE ACTION

Background

For your safety and protection there is a comprehensive and sensitive fire detection system here, as well as fire fighting equipment.

Please respect this equipment, and please do not smoke inside any building.

On arrival you are asked to make us aware of any special needs you might have in the event of need of evacuation.

If you discover a Fire

1. Operate the nearest call point.
2. Leave the building by the nearest exit.
3. Report to the Assembly Point (the Soulton Court Terrace).
4. One of our team will take a register, and they will call the fire brigade if necessary.

If you hear the alarm

1. Leave the building by the nearest exit
2. Report to the Assembly Point (the Soulton Court Terrace).
3. One of our team will take a register, and they will call the fire brigade.

Do not

1. Re-enter the building until told it is safe to do so.
2. Stop to collect personal belongings.
3. Smoke in any building.

SATISFACTION

Constructive Criticism

Constructive criticism is great!

We are always working on improving Souldon, and what we do.

Thoughtful suggestions of things that will help with this are always, always, welcome and are often best made in person.

Complaints

We are here to help you, and we are keen that you should enjoy your time with us.

We are committed to resolving a queries or issues you may have; so in the first instance, please approach us to discuss whatever it is as soon as it comes to your attention. It can be very difficult/mutually embarrassing to resolve, when an account is due, a thing known about by a guest for many hours or days.

In the event that you or we regard your complaint as serious, we would ask that the complaint is made in writing.