



SOULTON HALL

WEM, SHROPSHIRE. SY4 5RS

PRESS RELEASE: TUDOR CODE-BREAKING AND SECRET PRESERVATION AT SOULTON HALL FEATURED ON THE REST IS HISTORY PODCAST

SHROPSHIRE, UK — Soulton Hall and the extraordinary legacy of "Old" Sir Rowland Hill are featured in a newly released bonus episode of the globally renowned podcast **The Rest Is History**, hosted by historians Tom Holland and Dominic Sandbrook.

"A really extraordinary story.. an incredible story... an authentic link to Shakespeare"

– Tom Holland, The Rest Is History podcast

"Wow."

– Dominic Sandbrook, The Rest Is History podcast

Uncovering the Tudor Secrets of Soulton Hall

Soulton Hall and the story of "Old" Sir Rowland Hill is featured in this newly released bonus episode. Listeners can stream the episode right now on major audio platforms to hear Tom Holland and Dominic Sandbrook explore this history, which Tom describes as:

"an amazing story, obviously an amazing ongoing process of discovery with perhaps further surprises awaiting to be found..."

Members of the public wishing to walk the grounds, explore the coded architecture, and see the historic spaces can book heritage tours directly through the Soulton Hall website.

Useful Links at a Glance

- [Statement from the Ashton Family Ahead of The Rest Is History Episode](#)
- [Official press release trailing the episode \(PDF\) – includes note of records in Parliament etc](#)
- [History Overview on the Soulton Hall website](#)
- [Videos for conference proceedings on these matters have been placed on the home page under the heading "A LEGACY OF RESILIENCE AND REDISCOVERY"](#)
- [View video lectures and wider historical interpretation provided by heritage consultants Byrga Geniht Ltd on their YouTube Channel.](#)

- [Selected coverage to this point on these matters \(updated as matters develop\)](#)

Key Findings: The Discoveries at Soulton Hall

- **Art History Lead and Architectural Decoding:** Groundbreaking research by James Wenn and James Syrett of Byrga Geniht proved that Soulton Hall's 1556 proportions deliberately mirror lost monuments and classical references.
- **The Preservation of Saint Erkenwald:** Architectural proportions echo the destroyed shrine of London's patron saint, and ongoing archaeological inquiries investigate a hidden square structure in the central court where sacred material was reinterred.
- **The Lost Altar Stone of Old St Paul's:** The High Altar removed in 1550 was saved rather than destroyed, with a central altar stone smuggled to Soulton and hidden in a basement chamber.
- **Shakespeare's As You Like It Connection:** The estate directly inspired the setting and spirit of reconciliation found in Thomas Lodge's work and William Shakespeare's As You Like It, with the character "Old Sir Rowland de Boys" honoring Sir Rowland Hill.
- **Biographical Confirmation:** Unlocked Sir Rowland Hill's dual role as a Protestant Lord Mayor and clandestine preserver, revealing his hidden campaign to save cultural heritage from state destruction.

Highlighted Quotations from Tom Holland

"Something... a little unexpected, a little bit mysterious... We are going to be exploring the nearest to a Tudor 'Da Vinci Code' I have ever come across... A story in the process of being told."

"One of the most amazing houses you will find anywhere in England."

"A big moment in the story of the Tudor monarchy -- and England more generally -- that is amazing."

"He is the Lord Mayor at a time of violent iconoclasm under Edward VI when the bones of saints are being tipped out..."

"It is a house FULL of mysteries."

"Sir Rowland Hill lives to a ripe old age. By the time he died, he is a figure of immense authority, and to a degree – I guess – of mystery. Perhaps a sense that he has been embroiled in great things. And adding to the aura around him is the fact that there is a Shakespearean connection... His name appears in one of Shakespeare's plays."

"Soulton Hall with its cuboid form... what kind of messages are being conveyed in it? [It presents as] A physical chest... the idea that it contains ideas... a mixture of Biblical and Classical..."

"Soulton Hall is basically a monument to the idea, no matter the doctrinal or denominational difference, these differences may be reconciled... [is that] the message he is making? ... Is he operating on a dimension of Ideals?"

"Once you understand [Soulton Hall], it talks to you..."

"It is clearly an incredibly complicated building that embodies all kinds of rich Renaissance ideas about Platonism, about the Temple of Solomon, the Classical, the Biblical... a kind of profoundly Humanist response to what has been going on – the sectarianism..."

"There is one kind of final mystery, isn't there? And that is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of your research – Rowland Hill was the Lord Mayor at the height of the iconoclasm in the capital ... Woah! So, he brought the High Altar and what? And what of Saint Erkenwald's tomb do you think he might have brought?"

"So, the relics of Saint Erkenwald – the first Bishop of London – and the Altar Stone of St Paul's Cathedral – both dismantled when he had civic responsibility for St Paul's... you think he brought them to Soulton Hall."

"It is an amazing story, obviously an amazing ongoing process of discovery with perhaps further surprises awaiting to be found..."

How to Find the Podcast Episode

Listeners can access the newly released bonus episode of The Rest Is History right now.

- **Streaming Platforms:** Available on major podcast players including Apple Podcasts, [Spotify](#), here the text intro says.

THE TUDOR DA VINCI CODE

What remarkable secrets does Soulton Hall, a famous Tudor Manor House, whisper through its peculiar walls? Who was the mystical Sir Rowland Hill, and why does he feature in one of Shakespeare's plays? Was he the subject of religious persecution? And, might Soulton contain the ancient relics of the foundation of Christianity in England...?

and via [The Rest Is History official website](#).

- **Details:** Hosted by historians Tom Holland and Dominic Sandbrook, this special release features a deep dive into the Tudor secrets, coded architecture, and hidden history of Soulton Hall.

What's Next: A Saint Protected and Respected at Soulton

Soulton Hall near Wem has been making international headlines as the newly rediscovered final resting place of a seventh-century bishop — St Erkenwald, the Patron Saint of the City of London.

Soulton was built by Old Sir Rowland Hill, Lord Mayor of London and native of Shropshire. According to research led by Byrga Geniht consultancy, who have been working with Soulton, the house was built to evoke the shrine of St Erkenwald just after Old Sir Rowland had been ordered to destroy the relics and the high altar stone during the Reformation, showing that he took them under his wing.

The rooms containing the stone have recently been conserved and registered as a Place of Worship, with ecumenical services across the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches embracing all. The spot identified by James D. Wenn as the burial place was investigated through photographic evidence of marks in the lawn, as well as advanced geophysics from the University of Exeter.

Since the winter, Tim Ashton (the incumbent at Soultton) has joined with others to secure the burial spot using some very heavy art.

'Feretory' is a welded sculpture made from steel farm roof trusses, painted red like the cross in the flag of the City of London — a flag which flies every day from the roof of the Hall. It was made with advice from James D. Wenn and James Syrett from Byrga Geniht, along with internationally renowned sculptor Jamie McCarney. The sculpture's welding is by Phil Wheeler, the Engineer for Soultton Farm, and so 'Feretory' also nods to the way the working farm has taken care of Soultton's secrets all the way to the Hall's new chapter in visitor welcome.

Wenn describes some of the clever features of the work:

"Old Sir Rowland's Soultton is a red cube which had a pyramid on top, and if you add pyramids to each face of a cube you get this special shape called a rhombic dodecahedron that was a symbol for virtue and the eternity of the soul in the middle ages and beyond. It is the 'multifaceted polyhedron' the Pope referenced in his recent Encyclical, where he talked about harmony across a diversity of perspectives. The sculpture hints at a pyramid on top of the lined box in the soil found by the geophysics that contains St Erkenwald."

McCarney reflects that:

"The strength of 'Feretory' is how strongly it answered the immediate security needs at the time, in advance of the story breaking. Plans are underway for a permanent solution for which I understand the fundraising is in progress."

Jacob Chandler, another well-renowned sculptor associated with Soultton, presented a landmark series of works inspired by the links between Soultton and Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in 2024. Chandler notes:

"My permanent works capture fleeting moments in time as can be seen in my study focused on the dance of harmony at the end of *As You Like It*. 'Feretory' is something temporary that references deep eternal truths."

Chandler has collaborated with Byrga Geniht in the work *In Hoc Signo*, part of which explains the 3D geometry in the Flag of London, Soultton's Tudor design, and also in *Feretory*.

Byrga Geniht has drawn up plans for a permanent relandscaping solution for the site at Soultton, incorporating a bronze memorial tablet to honour St Erkenwald. This received approval in ecumenical conference meetings in Westminster and Whitehall, but will be the culmination of a fundraising campaign that is in its early days. Funding and financial support would be welcome to help expand access, participation, and the realization of these permanent enhancements.

Syrett adds:

"James Wenn and I are based in Essex, and Erkenwald was a prince and a bishop of the East Saxons. It is deeply meaningful to contribute to honouring one of our own in this way — a story that touches hearts across the country."

Expanding Routine Access

While there is ambition to expand access further, substantial experiences are already happening today. Visitors are invited to engage directly through current offerings of heritage stays, special

drama events, and limited guided tours. As the estate looks toward future routine admissions and an estate cafe, this growth is approached as an active family home with careful stewardship.