

## Hangman's Elm, Sevenhampton

There is a curious set of documents with the archives of the Wilts & Swindon History Centre at Chippenham under the heading of '*Hangman's Elm.*' (W&SHC 40/2). There are two documents and a copy of the Will of Henry Southby that relate to this property. It lies within the Manor of Sevenhampton that is within the Parish of Highworth. It was Leasehold, the land belonging to the Manor of Francis Warneford and the property belonged to Henry Southby an Apothecary of Highworth. Simon Wayte of Highworth, a Surgeon, by the direction of Francis Warneford, sold to William Stephens of Kencott, Oxon, Gent, '*All that messuage or tenement with the inclosed ground in Sevenhampton on the right hand side of the way leading from Crossway in Sevenhampton upper field, commonly called White Crossway, towards Highworth and being the boundaries of the Manor of Sevenhampton against Eastrop field which premises are now called or known by the name of Hangman's Elm and contain 9a 3r 15p, heretofore in the occupation of Mr Henry Southby deceased.*' This description is from the '*Lease*' document dated 19<sup>th</sup> May 1769, of the '*Lease and Release*' the legal instruments of sale used at that time.

When looking at the earliest map available today, the Ordnance Survey circa 1880 makes it clear that that the '*Crossway*' must refer to the crossroads where the roads from Shrivenham to Highworth meets the road from Sevenhampton to Fresden. It specifically states that it is on the '*right hand side of the way from the Crossway to Highworth and being the boundaries of the Manor of Sevenhampton against Eastrop field.*' The map extract below shows it can only be the property marked as '*Upper Farm*' that accurately fits the location. The Release document dated the following day as normal, adds the words, '*thereon lately erected and built.*'

Study of the Wills of Henry Southby and his father, also Henry, show that senior owned the land and likely an earlier house upon it, but that it was rebuilt by Henry junior circa 1760. Henry junior had no son but did have two daughters.





We learn from those documents that around the year 1760, the piece of land that became Upper Farm, had a substantial dwelling house built upon it. The inclosed ground stated in the legal documents is what can be seen today, but that attached to it was a piece of land that measured just over nine acres. (Aerial photos above by Neil B. Maw) This piece of land butted up to the land of Eastrop, Highworth. The property became known as '*Hangman's Elm*' but why it acquired such a dramatic name is at present unknown.

This article and listing upon the Shrivenham Heritage Society website, is to record the existence of the property and its location. The modern building work (2026) is approaching closer to it and seems inevitable that it will swallow it up soon.

## Hangman's Elm collection of docs Chippenham Ref: 40/2

There are two Indentures and a copy of a Will that relate to Hangman's Elm, the rest are other prems and land related to the Manor of Sevenhampton.

### Lease and Release

Lease dated 19/5/1769 - Between Simon Wayte of Highworth, Surgeon on the 1<sup>st</sup> part, Francis Warneford of Sevenhampton Place in the Parish of Highworth, Clerk, Doctor of Laws on the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, and William Stephens of Kencott in the County of Oxon, Gent, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> part. Simon Wayte is acting on behalf of Francis Warneford, sells to William Stephens, *'All that messuage or tenement with the inclosed ground in Sevenhampton on the right hand side of the way leading from Crossway in Sevenhampton upper field, commonly called White Crossway, towards Highworth and being the boundaries of the Manor of Sevenhampton against Eastrop field which premises are now called or known by the name of Hangman's Elm and contain 9a 3r 15p, heretofore in the occupation of Mr Henry Southby deceased and now in the occupation of Simon Wayte.'*

Release dated 20/5/1769 - Between Richard Butler of Highworth, Apothecary on the 1<sup>st</sup> part, Simon Wayte of Highworth, Surgeon, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, William Stephens of Kencott, Oxon, Gent, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> part, and Francis Warneford of Sevenhampton, Clerk, Doctor of Laws, of the 4<sup>th</sup> part. It refers to a previous Indenture dated 27/12/1763, between Harriott Southby of Highworth, widow, relict of Henry Southby, Surgeon, deceased, William Wayte, Devisee and Trustees named in the Will of Henry Southby, on the 1<sup>st</sup> part, and Mary York of Swindon, Spinster on the other part, did sell to Mary York, *'All that parcel of land with a messuage or tenement thereon lately erected and built lying on the right hand side of the way leading from the Crossway in Sevenhampton upper field commonly called White Cross Way, towards Highworth and being the boundary of the Manor of Sevenhampton against Eastrop field, called Hangman's Elm furlong, containing 9a 3r 15p and lying and being within the Tything of Sevenhampton for 500 years, at a peppercorn*

*rent, but payment of £200 for the principal money and interest at £4 per £100 yearly.'* (This is a mortgage).

There is a copy of Henry Southby's Will dated 29/11/1762, (and SHS also have his father's Will from 1721). Henry junior owns a lot of property, clearly, he had made a lot of money over his career as an Apothecary of Highworth. Included in the list of property is Hangman's Elm.