

*CREETING ST MARY CHURCH
SUFFOLK*



A SHORT HISTORY and GUIDE



TO OUR VISITORS

We do hope that you will enjoy the beauty and atmosphere of this ancient church, and that this little Guide will help to show you some of its features and treasures. Above all, we hope that you will feel 'at home' here in Our Father's House and that you will have time to say a prayer here for those whose Spiritual Home this is.

Creeping St Mary folk have tended and cared for this building for 900 years, and few visitors will fail to see the love and care which is lavished upon it by its present-day custodians. Maintaining an ancient church is a difficult and costly task for the people of a small community such as this, and those who have the privilege of keeping St Mary's intact and beautiful for future generations to use and to enjoy, will welcome any contributions that their visitors can spare, which will help them in this vital task.

May God bless and keep you.

'CREETING THREE-CHURCHES' a short history

ST MARY'S CHURCH has one of the finest situations of any of our 500 Suffolk churches. It occupies a commanding position on a knoll overlooking the Gipping Valley — and it may be seen, standing out in splendid isolation, for several miles!

The parish which it services stretches some three miles from its south-west boundary with Needham Market to its north-east extremity, where it borders Stonham Aspal and Crowfield parishes. The community is rather scattered and has a population of about 735, most of whom live along All Saints Road, which runs from the A140 at Creeting Bottoms to the church. At the southern extremity of the parish is Bosmere Hall and near its northern border is Woolney Hall. The church is situated less than half a mile from the parish boundary with Creeting St Peter.

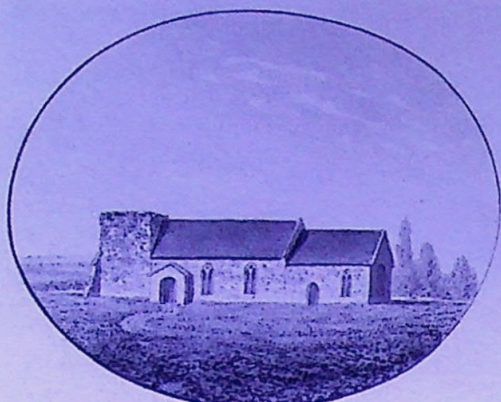
What is now Creeting St Mary was once three parishes, which were officially united in 1884. The area was then about 3,115 acres, of which 1,141 acres formed the original St Mary's parish, 1,286 acres were the former All Saints' parish and 388 acres were St Olave's parish

CREETING ALL SAINTS. The view from the A14 would have looked very impressive were All Saints Church still standing, because its churchyard adjoined that of St Mary's and the church itself stood about 55 yards to the south-west of St Mary's Church — therefore a little lower, but very close. This is one of the rare occurrences of two churchyards adjoining, as may be seen at Trimley near Felixstowe, Willingale, Essex, Reepham, Norfolk and several other places.

In 1764, the churches were described as standing 'very near each other upon an eminence; they are easily seen at some miles distance and are commonly called Creeting Two-Churches'. In 1659, St Mary's was described as the church with 'the spire-steeple' and All Saints as that with 'the round steeple-tower'. This is interesting because Tom Martin in 1732 states that All Saints had a 'round, thick, low steeple, but in Isaac Johnson's drawing of the church, made sometime before 1802, only the lower state of the tower (to the level of the nave roof) had survived — and this was definitely square. H.R. Lingwood suggests that maybe the missing belfry state was octagonal (as at Easton and Pakenham churches) and this is probably why the tower was described as 'round'.

The building consisted of nave, chancel, south porch and the truncated tower, which contained three ancient bells. Unlike St Mary's, the chancel was slightly lower than the nave and the church was lit on the south side by two-light windows, which appear to have been of early 14th century date. There was a 13th century coffin-lid with a foliated cross, also part of another. An inscribed ledger-slab to Bridget, daughter of Thomas Naunton (died 1569) was set in the chancel floor.

The Churchwardens' Accounts record several improvements to the building in the 18th century, including the painting of the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Commandments in 1763 and their repainting in 1786, the lowering of two tall box-pews, also in 1786 (a third,



Creting, *All Saints*, 13.
(*Taken down*)

All Saints Church, drawn by Isaac Johnson about 1800

owned by Captain Samuel Uvedale of Bosmere Hall, should have been lowered, but following an objection by the Captain, it was left alone). A new set of Royal Arms was purchased in 1800 and much work was done on the bells in the 1760s and 70s. Despite this, the fabric of the building was described as early as 1732 as being 'all in a decaying condition' and on 24 June 1801, a public meeting of parishioners of All Saints and St Mary's parishes, reported that the Bishop's permission to demolish the church had been granted and that the demolition was at that time underway of the building, which was described as being in a 'ruinous' state. At the meeting it was agreed that All Saints parishioners should build an aisle (or rather, a transept) onto the north side of St Mary's Church, which they would use and maintain for their worship. All Saints' folk, mindful that they would have the benefit of St Mary's tower and bell (their own bells were sold for £81 19s towards the cost of the new aisle) agreed to share all the expenses involved in the maintenance of St Mary's tower and bell. Both parishes were to maintain their respective churchyards, although the dividing fence between the two was to be removed and a small post erected to mark the dividing line.

When the church was demolished it was discovered that it had been built entirely without foundations — 'the ground having been merely leveled and built upon'. This being so, it is miraculous that this ancient building lasted as long as it did! David Elisha Davy, on his visit to Creting in 1827, noted that the site of All Saints was still visible, the coffin-lid and the Naunton burial-slab having remained in their original positions

The octagonal font, dated probably from the 14th century, was removed; its base ended up as a bird-bath in the garden of All Saints Rectory and the stem found its way to Ringshall Rectory garden, where it was in use as a sundial! When the new church at Stowupland was built in 1843, the Rectors of Creting and Ringshall agreed that the two parts of the font should be reunited and presented to the new church, to be used for its

rightful purpose. Two babies were baptized in it on the Sunday after the church's consecration in 1843, and it is still in use there.

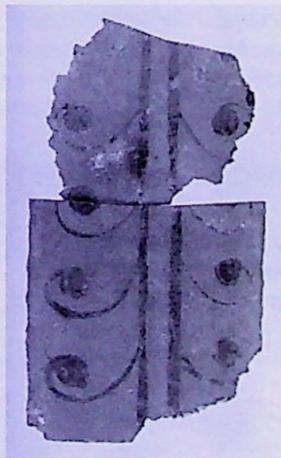
CREETING ST OLAVE (Olaf) possessed one of the very few English churches dedicated to Olaf, King of Norway who died c.1030. This building stood near the northern boundary of the parish, opposite Woolney Hall. The Ordnance Survey Map marks its site just to the south of the footpath leading east from Low Lane, although the 1840 Tithe Map marks 'St Olave's Churchyard' to the north of the footpath.

The church appears to have been in use in 1532, when John Pinkney was buried in its chancel, although in 1553, no church plate is recorded for it. It may have gone out of use gradually during the 16th century and it appears that no church or burial ground existed in 1660.

The parish of Creeting St Olave remained a separate entity for several more years however and occasional Baptisms of St Olave's folk are recorded in St Mary's register. The parish was officially united with All Saints in 1711. Human bones and skulls have been ploughed up in the field which marks the site of the churchyard.



All Saints font, now in Stowupland Church



Painted window glass from St Olave's Church

In 1999, with the aid of funding from the Millennium Commission, a small group of volunteers set out to discover what remained of the churches of All Saints and St Olave. Geophysical survey and fieldwalking established the exact locations of these lost churches and a documentary search revealed more information about their later history and disuse. Interpretation boards have been erected beside the original sites, giving a brief description of each church.

Heritage Lottery funding allowed the remains of St Olave's Church to be excavated. The church was demolished in the early 19th century and had disappeared by the late 20th century leaving no surface trace. Beneath the ploughsoil of the field marked 'churchyard' on the Tithe Map, partial foundations of a medieval church and some burials were located and recorded. Three phases of construction were identified.

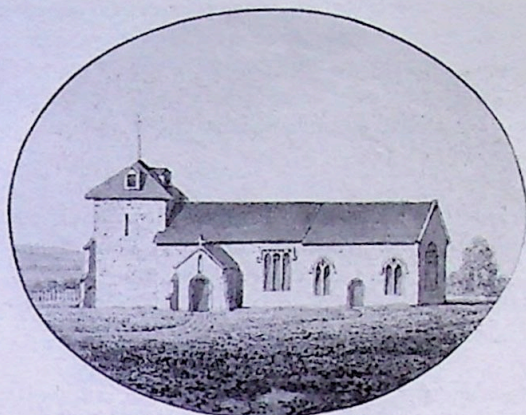


Site of St Olave's Church during excavation in 2002. The remains of the flint rubble foundations, seen from the southeast

A timber building, probably the earliest church, was superseded by a small flint rubble church with a round tower, and then a larger church was created by demolishing the tower and extending the nave westwards to about twice the original size. Some partly robbed flint rubble foundations, graves, patches of floor and a bell-founding pit survived, together with fragments of painted window glass and some pieces of dressed stone. Although the remains of St Olave's Church were partial and badly disturbed, it is one of the few medieval churches in Norfolk and Suffolk to have been excavated. Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service holds the project archive.

Some landmarks in the history of St Mary's Church

It is almost certain that Christian worship has been offered upon this lofty and elevated spot for 900 years or more. The *Domesday* survey of 1086 mentions a church at Creting and this may well refer to St Mary's because its nave is basically Norman. Of this date is the south doorway, and also the core of the south wall, because at the restoration in 1884, a row of blocked Norman windows was discovered there. According to the *Domesday Book*, the church, with 12 acres of land, was owned by the Abbey of Bernay in Normandy. A small priory of Benedictine monks, which was a cell under the care of Bernay Abbey, existed at Creting and so the abbey held the advowson of the living (the right to appoint its Rectors) until, with other alien priories, it was suppressed in 1462 and King Henry VI gave the advowson to his great educational foundation at



Cretington, St Mary. — 15.

St Mary's Church, drawn by Isaac Johnson about 1800

Eton. The Provost and Fellows of Eton College are still the Patrons of the Living here, several members of the college having been Rectors down the centuries.

It is clear that much alteration to the little Norman church took place in the early years of the 14th century. The original chancel windows dated from this time, also the windows in the former north wall of the nave (the style of these has been carefully reproduced in the north aisle windows).

A little later in the 14th century the west tower was built, possibly by William de Ufford, Earl of Suffolk, who died in 1382 and whose arms appear above the west window. What the original belfry stage looked like we do not know, but we do know that at one time the tower was crowned by a wooden spire and that St Mary's was known as 'Creting High Church' and 'Creting Steeple'.

It was during the 15th century that St Mary's received its beautiful south porch, also the three-light windows in the south wall of the nave and the fine East Anglian font. Several bequests were made during the 15th and 16th centuries towards repairs to the church, including two, dated 1547 and 1549, to the steeple.

When Tom Martin visited the church in the 1730s, the tower and spire were still standing, but by the time of David Elisha Davy's visit in 1827, the spire had either collapsed or been taken down, together with the belfry stage of the tower. In fact this was the state of affairs about 1800, when Isaac Johnson made his drawing of the church. Both this drawing and the etching by Henry Davy in 1838 show the tower rising to the level of the nave roof-ridge and crowned with a tiled pyramid cap, which was punctuated by dormer belfry windows each side and was surmounted by a tall pole with a weather-vane.

Tom Martin was (like some 1980s church-crawlers at certain churches) unable to locate the key to the church, but he took a careful look through the windows and noted three shields in medieval glass, showing the Instruments of the Passion, the Crown and Arrows of St Edmund and a coat of arms. D.E. Davy was more successful in gaining access in 1827 and his notes have us some idea of what the interior looked like at that time.

The nave and chancel had plaster ceilings. The Communion Table was raised upon one step at the east end and was surrounded on three sides by rails. On the wall above it, and beneath the east window, were framed boards with the Lord's Prayer and Creed, whilst flanking the east window (which was described by Davy as 'modern') were two boards with the Ten Commandments.

At the west end of the nave were the Royal Arms of King George III and beneath them a wooden frame recorded the Charity Benefactions of Mr John Campe (this is now in the schoolroom). The font stood on the north side, near the door and the hexagonal pulpit on the south side, where the present pulpit stands. The north transept, built for All Saints, stretching 24 feet to the north and with a width of 18 feet, was also tiled and ceiled. Against its west wall was the framed Terrier of goods, made in 1814, which now hangs in the schoolroom.

Davy described the stump of the tower (incorrectly) as modern, although he noted the Ufford arms and said that it was capped by a 'cupola, covered with tiles'. He pointed out that it once had a lofty steeple and surmised that this must have been taken down about the time that All Saints was demolished 'which the Clerk told me he well remembered, about 25 or 30 years ago'.



St Mary's Church, drawn by Henry Davy on 25 October 1838

The All Saints 'aisle', or transept was erected in 1801, the work having been done by a Mr Buxton and Mr Robert Lockwood, whose combined bills came to £126 5s 11d, with a further £23 19s 2d paid to a Mr Morris for slate.

At the time of Davy's visit, the two ledger-slabs of the Jacobs were in the chancel, also that to Grace Rous. The wall monument to Samuel Uvedale was on the east wall.

Many of the Rectors during the 19th Century were Fellows of Eton College and were therefore scholars of no mean repute. George John Dupuis (Rector 1840–62) was a Fellow of Kings College Cambridge and of Eton, where he had been Vice Provost. He became Rector of Hemingby (Lincs) before coming to Creeting and he left here for the parish of Worplesdon, Surrey. He was succeeded by the Rev'd William Eliot, whose father had been Rector of Peper Harow, Surrey and he married one Elizabeth Woodyer of Guildford, having been a Fellow and Assistant Master at Eton. It may well be that his wife was related to the eminent architect, Henry Woodyer of Grafham, near Guildford, who designed Creeting's magnificent flint-faced Gothic Rectory, which was built in 1863 — its predecessor having been destroyed by fire two years earlier. One wonders what the church would have looked like had Woodyer supervised its restoration, but this took place during the incumbency of the Rev'd Francis Furse Vidal (Rector 1881–1908) who, whilst on the staff of Eton College, was Curate (1864–1868) to Canon T.T. Carter, the renowned Anglo Catholic Vicar of Clewer. Vidal was clearly influenced by the Anglo Catholic movement and during his time here the Holy Communion was celebrated weekly rather than monthly. Also true to the principles of the Oxford Movement, he had the church thoroughly restored and, in fact, transformed into the building that we see today.

Before the restoration, high wooden box-pews filled every space available and the prominent feature of the interior was the pulpit, which was surmounted by a sounding-board. A commodious gallery filled the base of the tower and extended some ten feet into the nave. The aim of the restorers was to carefully retain every piece of ancient craftsmanship and to re-use it in the new work.

The north transept was taken down, also the gallery, and a new aisle, more in keeping with the medieval style, was built, with an arcade to divide it from the nave. The old north doorway was placed in its wall, also careful reproductions of the medieval north nave windows. To the east of this an organ chamber and vestry were added, although at the time the funds did not run to the purchase of an organ. The plan was to restore the medieval nave and chancel roof but when the plaster ceiling was removed, the woodwork was found to be too decayed, so new roofs of pitch-pine were erected. The chancel floor was raised by three steps and a new oak pulpit and reading desk were installed. The floors were paved with Minton tiles and the church was seated with oak choir stalls in the chancel and pitch-pine benches in the nave and aisle. The aisle was separated from the chancel by an oak screen and the new communion rails (in memory of the Rev'd W.L. Eliot) were constructed.

During the restoration work the medieval piscina was discovered in the sanctuary wall, a row of Norman windows were uncovered in the south wall and the Norman doorway

was revealed in its full glory after the removal of a considerable amount of plaster which had covered it. All the external rendering was taken from the walls and the flintwork was repaired.

The work took just over six months to complete, during which time the services were held in the schoolroom. The re-opening services took place on 3 December 1884, beginning with Holy communion at 8am. For the 11am Matins, the Rector had trained a large number of young people from the village to sing and to form a choir; the preacher was the Rev'd R.C.M. Rouse, the Rector of Woodbridge. The Rector preached at the 3pm service and the preacher at 6.30pm was the Rev'd R.C. Edwards, Vicar of Speen, near Newbury. During one of the services, the Rector announced that the Rev'd Dupuis had been laid to rest only 13 days before; he had taken a great interest in the work and had lived to see its near completion.

The architect for the restoration was Mr C.J. Kohler of Upper Gloucester Place, London. This little-known architect also restored the church at Cookley, near Halesworth, in 1892-4. The contractor was Mr R.S. Smith of Northgate Works, Ipswich and the woodcarving was done by Messrs. Groom and Son of Lancaster Road, Ipswich. The estimated cost was £1,800.

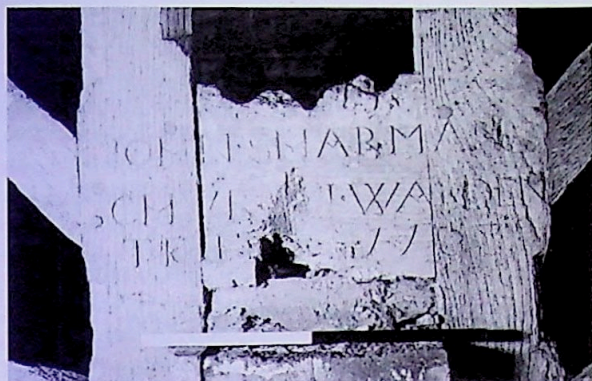
The second phase of the restoration took place in 1887, when the tower received its new belfry stage and parapet. A newspaper report of the Royal Jubilee celebrations at Creting in June 1887 mentioned that the work was then in progress.

Mr Vidal remained at Creting until his death in 1908 — long enough to see his church further beautified by the addition of the rood screen in 1902, the restoration of the font cover in 1907 and several of the windows filled with stained glass from the firm of C.E. Kempe. The panelling which lines the chancel walls was erected in 1911-12 in his memory. He was succeeded by the Rev'd Henry Arthur Fleetwood, who arrived here from a curacy at Charles Church, Plymouth and was to remain here for 45 years, until his death in 1953. He was made an Honorary Canon in 1938. During his long incumbency, and since, much has been done to beautify the church, details of which will be noted later.

What to see inside St Mary's Church

The interior is homely and beautifully cared for. The nave and chancel are short and compact (their total length is only 58 feet) and the north aisle, by contrast, seems broad and spacious. Much of what we see here dates from the 1884 restoration and later, although a few features remain from earlier times.

The simple TOWER ARCH is 14th century and on the wall beneath the tower have been placed the COMMANDMENT BOARDS, which were painted during the 19th century for the east wall, above the altar. Two BLOCKED ARCHES in the north wall of the tower mark the upper and lower entrances to the former staircase to the gallery which filled this space and extended some ten feet into the nave. The Incorporated Church Building Society made a grant in 1842 towards its erection, to provide extra seating for the church.



the inscription on the bell frame in St Mary's reads
John Sharman, Churchwarden, I.....FF 1733

Access to the upper chambers of the tower today is by ladders. The tower contains one BELL, cast by Thomas Gardiner of Sudbury in 1727, hung in a chestnut FRAME and WHEEL with a dated inscription.

Beneath the door stands the beautiful 15th century octagonal FONT. Its structure follows the pattern of many East Anglian fonts of the period. Around the stem are four buttresses and four somewhat defaced lions. The angels beneath the bowl are

larger than those usually found in this position in East Anglian fonts. In the eight panels of the bowl are the emblems of the four Evangelists, alternation with three angels, bearing shields, and one large shield on the north-east side, which shows the Crown and Arrows of St Edmund. Working round in a clockwise direction from this shield, we see the Lion of St Mark, a defaced shield, the Eagle of St John, defaced shield with the emblem of the Trinity, the Ox of St Luke, defaced shield and the Angel of St Matthew. The two shields defaced beyond recognition, once displayed the crossed swords of St Paul and the arms of the de la Pole family, who held the manor for a time during the middle ages.

The beautiful onion-shaped FONT COVER, although much restored and renewed, does incorporate original 15th century work, particularly in its eight medieval crocketed ribs. The inscription round its base informs us that it was restored in 1907 in memory of the Rev'd George Dupuis by his son, the Rev'd Edward John Gore Dupuis (Rector of Alphington, Devon) who was baptized in the font in 1843.

The 1884 work designed by C.J. Kohler is tasteful, although not over elaborate, and very fitting for a small village church. The pitch-pine ROOFS are of simple open-timber construction, the nave roof having collar beams, with pleasantly carved spandrels. The three-bay ARCADE dividing the north aisle from the nave, is quite stately, with quatrefoil piers supporting shallow arches. The pitch-pine BENCHES have simple circular motifs in their ends. The east end of the north aisle has been cleared of superfluous benches to provide a useful open space, furnished with a table and chair which were once in the Rectory.

Kohler's NORTH SCREEN has single divisions and was given by the surviving members of the Rev'd B.G. Heath's (Rector 1803-29) family in memory of Ann Walne Heath. The PULPIT (given by Miss Cunliffe and the Misses Vidal) is a fine piece of woodcarving in oak, on a stone base; it has three panels which are carved with Perpendicular tracery. More fine woodcarving (by Groom of Ipswich) may be seen in the dignified CHANCEL STALLS,

also of oak and with traceried fronts. The COMMUNION RAIL again of 1884, is of oak and brass and was given in memory of the Rev'd W.L. Eliot (Rector 1862–77).

The CHANCEL SCREEN is a memorial to a former Churchwarden — Charles Turner, who died in 1901, and his wife Marther, whose death occurred 20 years earlier. It was erected in the Spring of 1902. Its wide entrance (above which are three arches with delicate tracery) and the cinquefoil headed arched openings each side, allow the maximum amount of visibility into the chancel.

The chancel and sanctuary walls are lined with OAK PANELLING, which is covered on the east wall and is surmounted by carved cresting. This is a memorial to Francis Vidal (Rector 1881–1908) and his wife, Lucy. The faculty for its erection is dated September 1911 and the cost of the work was £50.

In the south wall of the sanctuary is a large 14th century trefoil headed PISCINA. Into its drain was poured the water from the washing of the priest's hands at the Eucharist. The windowsill beside it is lowered to form a SEDILIA, where the clergy sit during parts of the medieval Eucharist.

The ALTAR is one of the finest 17th century Communion Tables in the county and has magnificently carved legs. Beneath it (and once fixed to its underside) is a cylindrical metal container for documents (almost certainly the Tithe Map and Apportionments for the parish). The SANCTUARY CHAIR may also be 17th century.

The chamber to the north of the chancel contains the ORGAN, which was built by Gildersleeve of Bury St Edmunds. This instrument is unusually large for a church of this size, having three manuals, pedals and 18 speaking stops.

Although no traces remain of the church's medieval glass, the 19th and 20th century STAINED GLASS is of a very high quality, the majority of the windows being the work of either Charles Eamer Kempe, or W.E. Tower who succeeded him. This firm was one of the finest stained glass manufacturers of this period. Several windows commemorate members of the Tidwell family of Bosmere Hall.

The east window shows Christ crucified, flanked by His Mother and St John, with St Alban and St Olaf in panels beneath, also three pairs of figures reading at lecterns. Windows in the chancel show Saints Lawrence and Stephen; Saints Cecilia and Agnes. The window in the nave depicts three scenes with King David. Windows in the aisle show Saints George and Edmund, the Annunciation, and the nativity.

Memorial inscriptions. Apart from the windows and furnishings already described, there are several memorials commemorating people of the past who have been associated with this church and parish, including a Roll of Honour which lists those who lost their lives in the first and second world wars. The oldest memorials are the 17th and 18th century ledger slabs in the floor near the entrance.

What to see outside St Mary's Church

One of the most remarkable features of this church is its truly magnificent situation. It occupies a superb vantage-point of a knoll, just over 125 feet above sea-level, affording panoramic views across the Gipping Valley. The church is also visible for several miles across the countryside and there is a fine view of it from the A14 trunk road. St Mary's stands in grand isolation, aloof from the road and from its main centre of population. A short distance to the east, in the trees, stands Henry Woodyer's fine flint-faced Rectory, which was for several years a private school.

The drive leading to Creeting's spacious and cared-for churchyard, is entered by means of a set of handsome wrought-iron GATES, dedicated in 1939. They are the work of S.C. Pearce of Bredfield and the gift of Evelyn, wife of Canon Fleetwood, in memory of her parents. In the same year the southern churchyard extension was consecrated. The CHURCHYARD itself slopes dramatically downhill towards the south and west. About 55 yards south-south-west of the church, and therefore in a lower position, stood the church of Creeting All Saints.

To the north of the church is the OLD SCHOOLROOM, which was built in 1837 of white Suffolk brick. This building is a good example of its period, with 'Gothick' windows, which have iron divisions and tracery. When the larger school building was erected in 1871, this building became a vestry and meeting-room for the church. Inside it now are stored the board giving details of the Terrier of Tenements and Premises belonging to the poor of Creeting All Saints in 1814, also John Campe's Benefaction Board, which is now very faded, and the flagpole and weathercock which once surmounted the tower.

The church itself is built of FLINT RUBBLE and its walls contain a mixture of knapped and whole flints, pebbles, tiles, pieces of dressed stone, *etc.* Many of the windows have been carefully renewed and the north aisle and organ chamber are entirely work of 1884, although their walls incorporate medieval masonry from the old north walls and from the demolished church of All Saints.

The NAVE AND CHANCEL are continuous, under a single tiled roof. The nave wall is lit by a three-light square-headed 15th century window, and the south wall of the chancel by a pair of two-light windows, with 'Y' tracery, in the style of c.1300. The east window, which was renewed in the 19th century, was reticulated (net-like) tracery, which was in fashion about 1330. The NORTH AISLE has its own gabled roof. Its three-light west window is in the 15th century style and the three north windows are replicas of the early 14th century windows in the former north wall of the nave. The nave's north doorway has also been re-set here. In its east wall is an attractive circular wheel-window. Outside the doorway to the vestry is a medieval burial-slab.

The TOWER is strengthened at its western corners by sturdy brick buttresses of late 18th century date. The lower parts of the tower date from the second half of the 14th century and the two-light west window is remarkably tall and elegant; its dripstone rests upon original male and female corbel heads. Note the large stones in the masonry beneath this

window, also the engrailed cross of the Uffords, carved in stone above it. Slender rectangular apertures light the ringing chamber on the north and south sides. The belfry state and parapet were added in 1887. The single belfry windows are rectangular and beneath the embattled flushwork parapet are large and grotesque gargoyles at the four corners. The tower rises to a height of 47½ feet.

The SOUTH PORCH is a beautifully restored piece of 15th century craftsmanship, with two-light east and west windows in the Perpendicular style. The south face and buttresses are covered with flushwork panelling in flint and stone — the flints having been ‘knapped’ to expose their cores. The handsome 15th century entrance arch is flanked by angel corbels, of which the eastern one is decayed. Above is a tall cinquefoil-headed niche, terminating in a foliated finial, flanked by pinnacles. Upon its pedestal now stands a beautiful statue in Bath Stone of the Virgin and Child, designed and sculpted in 1961 by John Green of Burstall and given as a memorial to Canon Fleetwood by his sister-in-law. Inside, the timbers and cornices of the roof are the 15th century originals, having been preserved for many years by a plaster ceiling. The porch shelters a tall Norman SOUTH DOORWAY of c.1100, which has been carefully restored. Its scalloped capitals support a semi-circular arch, embellished with roll-moulding and bordered with raised semi-circles.

To the east of the doorway is a recess for a HOLY WATER STOUP, with little 15th century flowers carved in its borders. It once had a fine canopy, which has now gone, leaving a plain triangular head to the recess.

The Churchyard and the Rectory by O.R.H. Jones

Creting St Mary churchyard is almost unique, in that, excluding the drive and the cemetery in current use, for about 200 of its 250 yard perimeter, it is bounded by a flint wall.

The original wall was built sometime between 1800 and 1838, for whereas it does not appear in Isaac Johnson’s drawing (c.1800) it is a prominent feature in the Henry Davy etching in 1838. Incidentally, the Johnson sketch shows a fence of palings on the north side of the churchyard.

In 1914, a portion of the wall seen in Davy’s etching was dismantled and rebuilt in its present position to form one boundary of the ground which was consecrated in that year. With the excess and further material the wall was continued along the southern boundary of the old All Saints churchyard, but not along the western (or Church Lane) side of it. This omission is the only large gap in the wall’s length. The cost of the operation was met by contributions from most of the parishioners.

Much of the walling forms a retainer: the Church Lane portion has a ‘downside’ height of about seven feet, but an ‘upside’ height of from three to five feet. Between it and the lane had been excavated at some time in the past (and rabbits still excavate by this wall). Perhaps this could be the subject of the entry in the Church Wardens’ Account Book for the year 1804 which states ‘Pd Pollard: raising sand’.



The south doorway and holy water stoup

Outside the wall, in what is now a meadow, was built in 1811 a house, for in the same Accounts Book an entry reads 'carting materials to house in Churchyard, £24 9s 7½'. This property was gutted by fire on Christmas Day 1911 and the destruction was witnessed by a few of the parish elderlies still living when this guide was written. The land still belonged to the church in 1811. At a later date the land must have been sold; care having been taken to guarantee access to the church. On the 1904 six-inch Ordnance Survey Map, the drive is numbered 231 (0.07 acres) with the wording 'The Rectory' underneath.

It is not known for certain where St Mary's Rectory stood. A glebe terrier of 1706 describes it as a parsonage with bake house, barn, two ponds, a garden plot and 'a great yard', fronting Pickman's Street between Camps Orchard and Parsonage Close. In 1799 the buildings were

demolished and the materials used at All Saints Rectory, by then sole rectory for the parish. The land remained church property. It is likely from the description that the site is now occupied by Creting St Mary School (built 1871), where traces of ponds survive.

Somewhat surprisingly, H.R. Lingwood makes no reference to the fire which destroyed much of the former All Saints Rectory in 1861 — the building which replaced a previous parsonage destroyed by fire in 1705. The Rev'd G.J. Dupuis was the Rector at the time, but since he was also Vice Provost at Eton, he lived mainly at the college, leaving the care of the parish in the hands of a Curate. College pupils boarded at the Rectory during holiday times for coaching.

Henry Woodyer, the architect engaged for the rebuilding, anticipated Sir Basil Spence by some 90 years in his marrying of two architectural styles in one building, for at Creting Rectory we have the Victorian Gothic joined with the pebbles and pantiles in the part of the house which survived the fire.

In common with several other Victorian architects, Woodyer designed down to the last detail — door-knobs, window-catches, *etc.* One of the staples, with its characteristic twist, is in use on the outer door of the church porch. More importantly, he engaged masons of great skill in the building of the Rectory. This excellent example of Gothic Revival architecture, although ignored by some who still dismiss 19th century craftsmanship, has been visited and admired by eminent people like Gordon Barnes, the noteworthy ecclesiologist and photographer.



Amongst the church PLATE, which is in safe-keeping and not on display, is a very beautiful silver gilt standing cup. It is believed to have been made in 1613 and it was given its fine cover in 1616. One expert however had dated it at about 1593. It is one of the most magnificent chalices of its period in the county.

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