

To keep

POCKET HISTORIES OF SUFFOLK PARISHES.

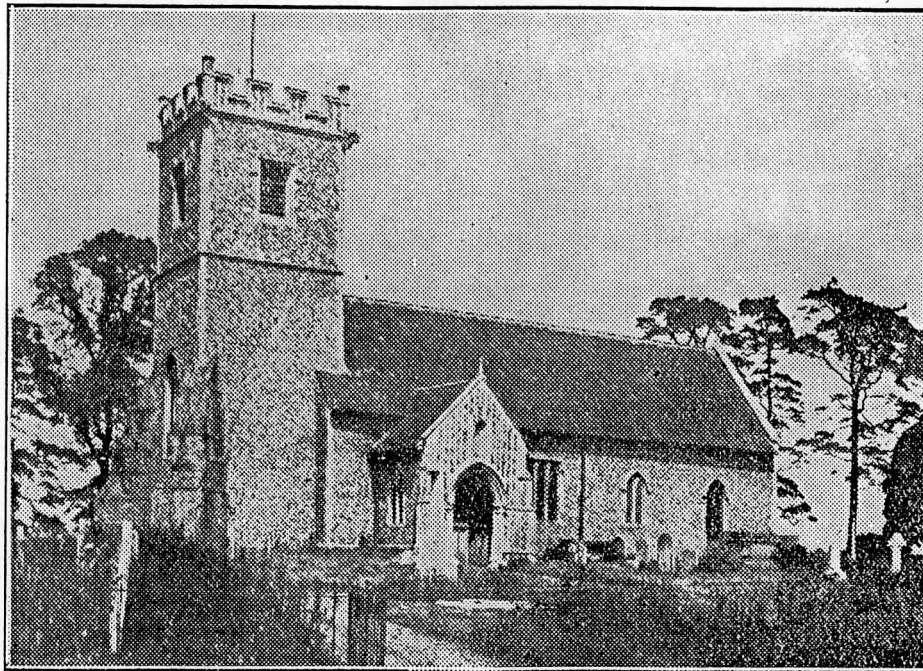
No. 279.—CREETING ST. MARY.

Although the title of this article is Creeting St. Mary, it is really with three parishes that I intend dealing, and, as such a statement is likely to lead to confusion of thought, a certain amount of explanation seems advisable. First of all, then, the village now known as Creeting St. Mary originally comprised three parishes—the place which provides its name, and two others known as Creeting St. Olave and Creeting All Saints—which parishes have now been consolidated into one for all general purposes.

Therefore, it is not surprising to discover that the total area is considerable, and that it is possible to wander into many odd corners of the district and still be within the village confines. It is, however, in Creeting St. Mary proper that the most interesting items of information are to be collected, for the only buildings worthy of note in the other places are the rather picturesque mill by the side of the Gipping and within a short distance of the pleasant expanse of water familiar to many as Bosmere Mere, and the splendid old house known as All Saints' Hall, both of which are in the former parish of All Saints.

It is not so many years ago as age is counted in matters of history that the church belonging to the latter place was demolished, for it was certainly standing in the early part of the last century, and so close was this edifice to its sister building, dedicated to St. Mary, that the two villages "were commonly called Creeting Two Churches." To discover anything connected with St. Olave's house of worship, however, it is necessary to travel much further backwards across the years, for even in 1660—the date that saw the "Merry Monarch" safely installed upon the throne of England,—no mention can be found of the building, and it is believed to have been demolished some hundred years before, or, at the very least, not used for public worship.

Both the church of St. Mary and the church of All Saints were reared upon an eminence, and it is because of this situation that the



CHURCH OF ST. MARY—THAT OF ALL SAINTS' WAS ON THE SAME EMINENCE.

vicinity of St. Mary's provides such a pleasant view of the surrounding countryside, with a delightful rectory near by, and in the foreground the fields and meadows so typical of Suffolk; whilst farther away can be obtained a glimpse of red roofs amidst the trees. Indeed, there are not many parts of the county where such a prospect exists—a prospect provided by the hilly nature of the ground on which the church is situated.

Consisting of chancel, nave, North aisle and transept, South porch, and a Western tower, St. Mary's still retains traces of its early origin, notably in the chancel, which belongs to the

Early English period. As far as the tower is concerned, however, this is frankly modern, as a casual glance at its general appearance and its massive brick buttresses readily convey. In fact, it was only about half a century ago that the present tower came into being, the church being thoroughly renovated at the same time.

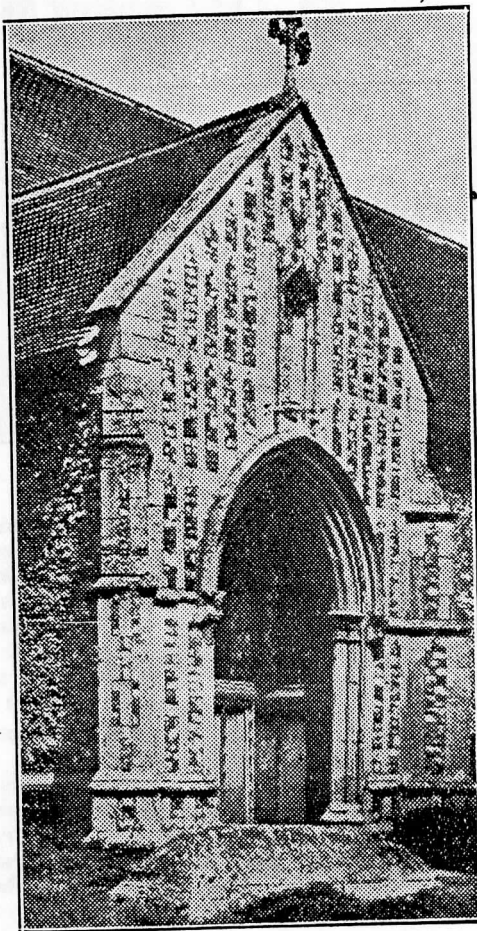
Naturally, the first object one notices is the porch, and over the outer entrance of this is an excellent niche, where a figure once stood, whilst inside is a stoup for Holy Water, fairly well-preserved despite a certain amount of mutilation. The porch itself is of the Perpendicular style, but the inner doorway dates from the

error.
see
correction

→ filled in 1961

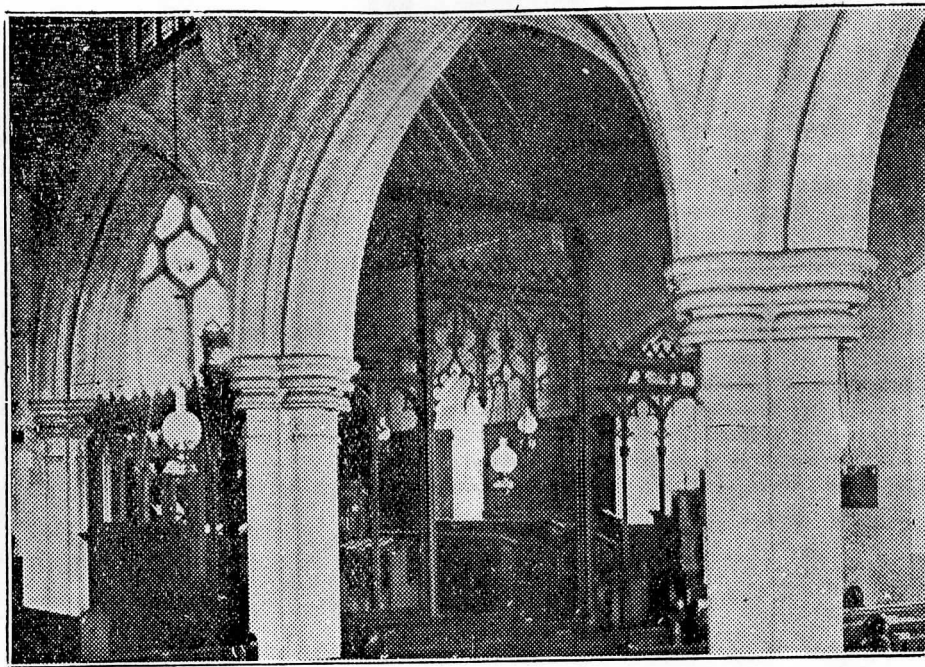
Photo taken between removal of churchyard wall in 1914
and erection of war memorial in 1919 - hence overgrowth?
Wall rebuilt in present position.

Norman period, and is certainly rather uncommon, in one respect at least. For this doorway is undoubtedly the most narrow of its kind that I have encountered—that is, of course, considering its position, but what it lacks in width it makes up in originality.



SOUTH PORCH.

Directly against the porch as one enters the nave is a floorstone, and it is rather curious that it commemorates a relation of Thomas Bokenham Tyrrell, whose name I mentioned in my article last week in connection with Market Weston. Here, in fact, is buried the "Eldist Daughter of Edmund Tyrrell, Esqr., of Gipping



AN INTERIOR VIEW FROM THE NORTH AISLE.

n this County." She had two husbands, "Jacob Garrard, Esqr., of Dodds, and Lawrence Rous, Esqr., of Baddingham," the latter, of course, being a member of the great family of that name whose records are found far and wide in the story of Suffolk county.

Her death occurred in 1728, and it was Thomas Bokenham Tyrrell who caused the stone to be laid "In Memory of his Dear Aunt." This, moreover, is not the only memorial of a similar nature in the building, for close by are two others referring to the Jacobs, and also dating from the 18th century.

Not many monuments exist in the church of St. Mary, but on the South wall of the nave are several commemorating various members of the Heath family, including one to the Rev. George Heath, who died in 1829, and was rector here for a quarter of a century, whilst his wife and daughter are also mentioned. As far as the general appearance of the interior is concerned, this has been somewhat modernised, but as this has occurred to so many of our places of worship, it is rather the rule than exception.

One of the most interesting items in the building is undoubtedly the font, for this is of the Perpendicular period and exhibits some really good carving, even although it has obviously attracted the attention of the iconoclast, for a certain amount of mutilation is apparent. As I have said, however, the carving is quite good, and certainly distinct, and amongst the subjects utilised by the craftsman for his handiwork are the fairly well-known Emblems of the Evangelists—well known, that is, as far as East Anglia is concerned, where examples can be discovered in many of the churches.

After mentioning that an excellent trefoil piscina remains in the chancel, protected, however, by modern doors, and that the church plate includes a beautifully worked chalice, we must leave this house of worship on the hill, and discover something about the story of the actual village, or, rather, villages. And in the first instance, we find that the manor of Creeting St. Mary was presented by William the Conqueror to the Abbey of Bernay in



THE RECTORY FROM THE GARDEN.

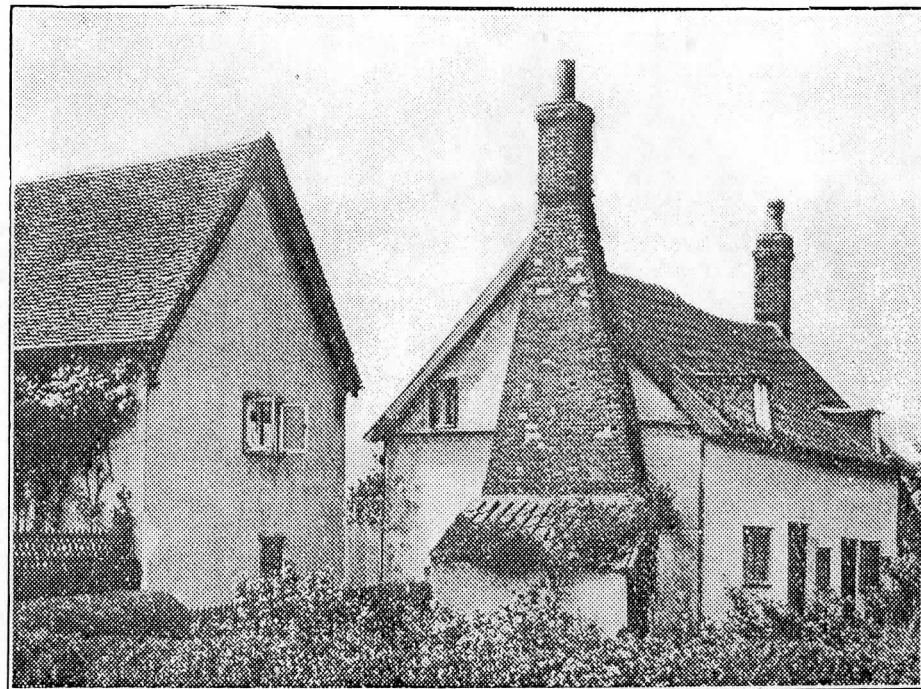
Normandy and during the reign of the second Edward, that is, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, a priory in the village is referred to as a cell of that particular religious establishment. At the dissolution in England of the foreign monasteries, however, the manor was granted to Eton College, and to-day it is in the same ownership.

Somewhat strangely, the story of Creeting St. Olave is also linked with matters ecclesiastical, for Robert, Earl of Montaigne in Normandy, the tenant when the Domesday Survey was undertaken, presented the manor here to the Abbey of Grestein in his native land. Later on a priory was erected in St. Olave's, and in 1316 we find that this and the manor were under the control of the Priory of Wilmington, in Sussex, which was recognised as the chief cell in England of the Grestein establishment. And mentioning this recalls a fact I omitted to state before in connection with Creeting St. Mary—that the priory here was also known as the premier one in this country as far as its relations with the Abbey of Bernay were concerned.

A rather curious incident emerges from the story of St. Olave's manor, curious inasmuch that it seems to have been presented to somebody who was either too weak to hold his gift,

or else considered it inadvisable to assert his rights—either of which suppositions may apply equally well, for in the middle of the 14th century, when this particular episode occurred, it was often policy to forfeit a privilege in order to avoid a sudden and uncomfortable end. At any rate, in 1347 it is recorded that a certain Tydeman de Lymbergh, who is described merely, and somewhat vaguely, as "a merchant," was granted the lease of the manor of Creeting St. Olave for a thousand years. Yet, as far as can be ascertained, he never attempted to enjoy his own, for the next thing we discover is the Abbot of Grestein selling the manor to William de la Pole, thus placing it in the possession of a family whose members have shed a certain amount of lustre and a considerable element of interest over the by no means uneventful story of Suffolk county.

It was in the hands of the De la Poles that the manor remained until one of them was rash enough to choose the losing side in an argument with the king—an argument in which swords took the place of words and action replaced abuse. In point of fact, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, was so foolish as



A LARGE CHIMNEY TO A SMALL DWELLING.



ALL SAINTS' HALL

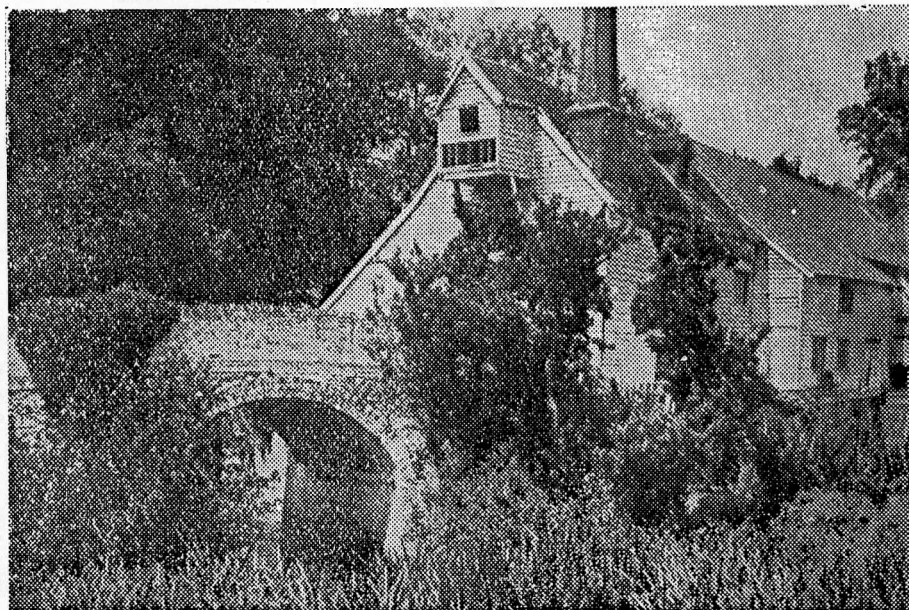
to support the claims of Lambert Simnel—afterwards to gain a certain amount of posthumous notoriety through accepting a menial job in the royal kitchen—to the throne, and, as the seventh Henry had no desire to be deprived of his inheritance, he very naturally proceeded to lead an army against the youthful upstart. It was at Stoke, in the vicinity of Nottingham, that the two forces met, with the result that Simnel's troops, which included a rabble of Irish and Germans, were utterly defeated, and John de la Pole died on the field of battle.

After this, the manor of Creeting St. Olave, naturally enough, was seized by the Crown—who would expect otherwise in the days when disloyalty to the throne was the most heinous offence possible?—but a few years later the estate was restored to a brother of the de la Pole who paid the supreme price of his folly. The new owner was the second Duke of Suffolk, Edmond de la Pole, but he also was fated to come to an unfortunate end, as, in 1513, history relates that he was "treacherously delivered up" for his Yorkist proclivities, with

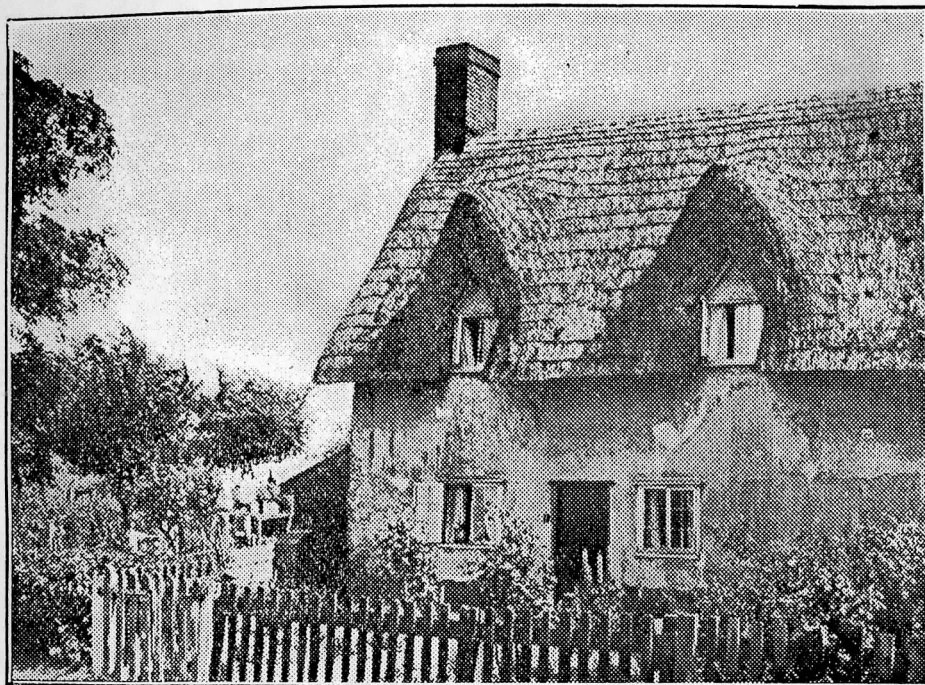
the result that he lost his head on the block at Tower Hill.

Once again, therefore, the manor came to the Crown, but within a short time it was presented to Sir Thomas Howard, apparently because he had been farseeing enough to marry Anne, daughter of the fourth Edward, and later on still we find the manor of Creeting St. Olave linked with another great name, that of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk and husband of Mary Tudor, although since then it has been in the hands of several families.

Therefore Creeting can claim to have possessed associations with people whose stories are writ large upon the scroll of endeavour, but besides those connected with the manors we find another person of note, although in this particular instance there emerges no hint of martial endeavour or the glamour which always clings to those who lived their lives in an atmosphere of pugnacity and the pomp and pageantry of war. This other man of Creeting—for so we will call him in view of his associations with the village—was a business man—a man who dealt with the far less inspiring



BOSMERE MILL—A PICTURESQUE RUIN.



THATCHED COTTAGES IN THE VILLAGE STREET.

affairs of commerce—no less a person, indeed, than Sir Thomas Gresham, founder of the Royal Exchange in London, and who took to wife a daughter of William Fernley, resident in Creting parish.

But the story of Creting, inasmuch as the different people connected with it are concerned, is very similar to many other places in Suffolk, for as I have pointed out before it is impossible almost to discover even the smallest village which lacks an association with mighty names. Even allowing for this, however, the erstwhile three villages now consolidated into Creting St. Mary are singularly interesting, for apart from the people of note who have played their parts in their history, the two priories existing here in ancient times add a peculiar attraction—the attraction cradled in the past and belonging to the past, and yet an attraction which adds a touch of dignity and a certain fascination to the Cretings as they exist to-day.

YEOMAN.

Reprinted from the *Suffolk Chronicle and Mercury*, July 29th, 1932.

* Correction. The crenellated upper third of the tower is the only 'modern' section, having been added in 1885. The lower (at one time steepled) part was built, probably, by William de Ufford, 2nd. Earl of Suffolk, who died in 1392.