

Creeksea Place History

Tracing back the fascinating history of Creeksea Place (or Cricksea as it appears in some records) over the centuries we have uncovered some exciting facts and legends about the building and the surrounding area . We know for certain that Creeksea Place (built by Sir Arthur Harris and one of whose sons, John Harris and his wife, emigrated to the New Colony of Virginia in the United States around 1621) probably consisted in those days of three, or possibly, four buildings surrounding a courtyard and with a long wing running from North to South. One of the original lead rain-water heads, complete with the date '1569' moulded on its face side, still exists today. Sadly, in about 1740, the south part of the house, together with the enclosing walls of the garden were dismantled and the materials sold, leaving standing only the outer courtyard enclosure, the North range and the West wing. The house was later restored in modern times with a range built on the foundations of the original East wing and various other additions were made by the Rhone family. However a number of original features still exist such as a moulded oak door frame, original windows with brick mullions, transoms and square moulded labels and superb chimney stacks with octagonal shafts.

Creeksea Place was reputed to have been the home of Anne Boleyn and that her spirit was said to have been seen walking from the old cottage near the Cricksea ferry. Her daughter, Queen Elizabeth, is thought to have met her soldiers here and that they were supposed to have come to meet her through a subterranean tunnel connected with Rochford . Great Tudor drains, full of oyster shells have been uncovered but not the tunnel itself. Lord Mildmay, Keeper of the Crown Jewels for King Charles 1st married into the Harris family and, by the laws of the day, eventually became the owner of Creeksea Place. He is reputed to have been one of the twelve State elders who subsequently signed King Charles 1st death warrant. Following the execution and after the accession to the throne of King Charles 2nd , Lord Mildmay was said to have been arrested at Creeksea and he and the other eleven elders were accused of regicide (the murder of a king or queen), later pardoned but it is said, to make sure they did not forget the enormity of their crime, all twelve were obliged to spend the anniversary date of the King's execution in the Tower of London.

The Great Sword of Creeksea Place, now in safekeeping, had rested for nearly three hundred years on a platform at the head of the oak spiral staircase which led up to the attics of the old house. It a court sword of the early 17th century, its hilt and pommel being covered with chased silver in various designs, the Tudor rose being the most prominent. It is said that one man alone, with the sword in his hand, could have held the stairs against all comers, and protected the women and children of the house from assailants.

A short distance from Creeksea Place is the parish church of All Saints, entirely rebuilt in 1878, but retaining features from the original church built on the site , such as the 14th century South doorway, cinquefoiled ogee lights on either side of the archway and various artefacts within the church. The square stone bowl of the original font, believed to date from the year 1125, was found on the Cricksea glebe being used as a step to the barn. The church stands behind the building known as Creeksea Hall , another building of considerable vintage, and all to be found in the area of Essex known as the Dengie Hundred.

Creeksea Place was used by British military units during World War II but, since that time, the main building has been uninhabited. It is only in recent times that a concerted effort has begun to restore the house to its former elegance by creating a variety of useful purposes for the buildings. The funds deriving from these activities will, it is hoped, allow a gradual, but complete, restoration of Creeksea Place and its magnificent surroundings for the public to appreciate.