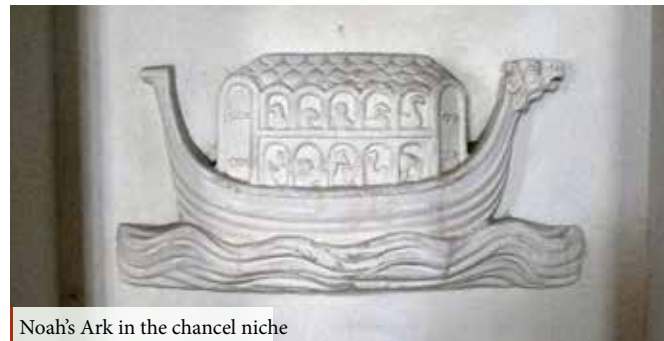


The name 'Crichel' may evoke in the mind the 'Crichel Down Affair' of 1954, supposedly the last time that a Minister of the Crown resigned office because of a mistake by his officials. Or it may suggest the 'Crichel Boys' who bought Crichel House in 1945, and formed an artistic coterie there that included Desmond Shawe Taylor, the music critic, Raymond Mortimer, and the painter, Derek Hills. The novelist Rose Macaulay (1881-1958) of *The Towers of Trebizond* fame, once stayed there, and recorded her impressions of attending Evensong in the church; St Mary's, after an uncertain future of a good ten years, was vested with the Friends of Friendless Churches in 2011.



## History

St Mary's is a fine picturesque design that combines a late medieval tower and a nave, transept and apse built progressively between 1852 and 1875. Nikolaus Pevsner said of it 'It is really a Georgian space in Perpendicular form, long, uniform, well-lit – it might be a schoolroom.' The identity of the architect was unknown when Pevsner was writing in 1972, but research by Michael Hill has uncovered evidence that suggests a distinguished trio were responsible. He credits the rebuilding of the nave of 1852 and the elaborate 'Flamboyant' west door surround, complete with sculpted bishop's mitre, to P.C. Hardwick, son of the designer of the much-lamented Euston Arch. William Burn, designer of country houses, did some work apparently in 1854, but it was MacVicar Anderson, also better known for his houses, who is credited with the two transepts, that to the south and shorter almost certainly the family chapel of the 'big house', and that to the north, and larger, shielded by a screen, intended as a schoolroom.



Noah's Ark in the chancel niche



Timber-panelled ceiling with reticulated tracery



## Points of Interest

Remains of heraldic glass in the south transept would confirm its status as the family chapel, as would the grand pew, relocated to the sanctuary. A particularly interesting feature of the church is the collection of ceilings, which strongly reinforce the secular feel that Pevsner noted – timber panels with reticulated tracery that appear straight out of a fashionable drawing room, or even the lesser Pugin interiors of the Palace of Westminster. Other highlights include three survivors from the earlier church, the late medieval font, the tiny monumental brass in the sanctuary, 1360, and the oldest in the county (now reset in a 19th century coffin lid) and the flattened Gothic niche on the exterior north face of the tower. The most eccentric presence is the Noah's Ark set in the niche by the communion rail, complete with animals staring out, and a camel's head doubling as a figurehead. The glass in the west window shows the Emblems of the Passion, those associated with the trial and crucifixion of Christ, including the nails, the ladder and the sponge dipped in vinegar.

We hope that you enjoy your visit to this unusual and rather special building.

Text: Matthew Saunders, revised John Morgan-Guy.





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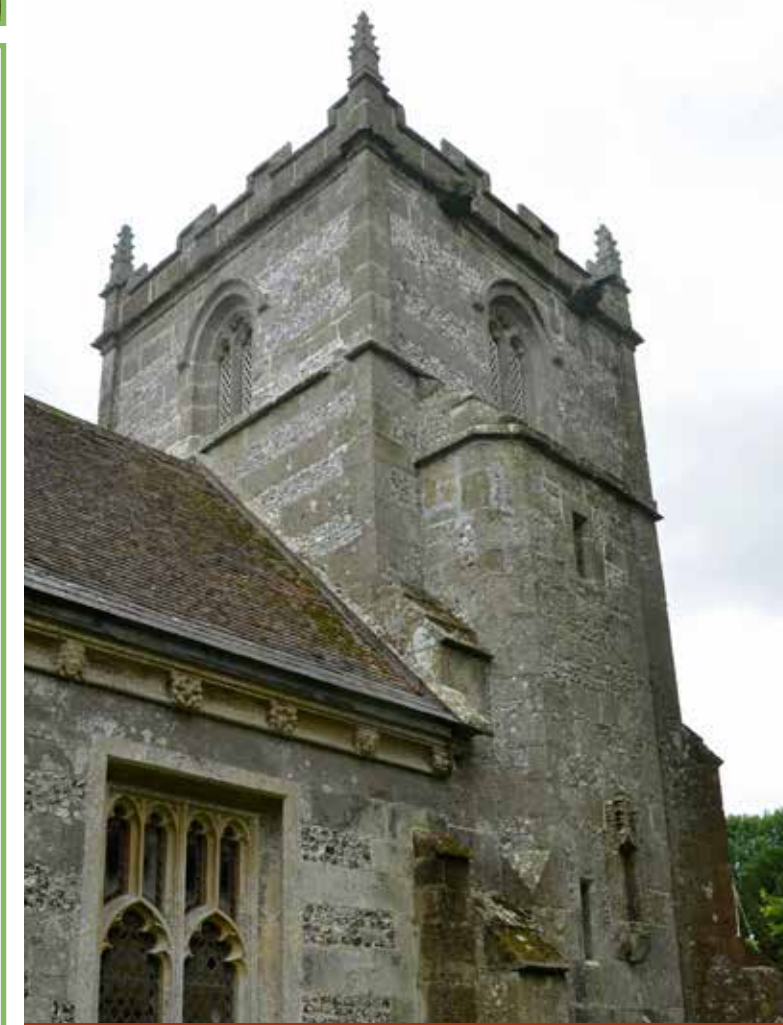
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*Church of St Mary*  
**Long Crichel**  
**a guide to its history**