

Gwillim Grave Enclosure

The Lady in the Table Tomb

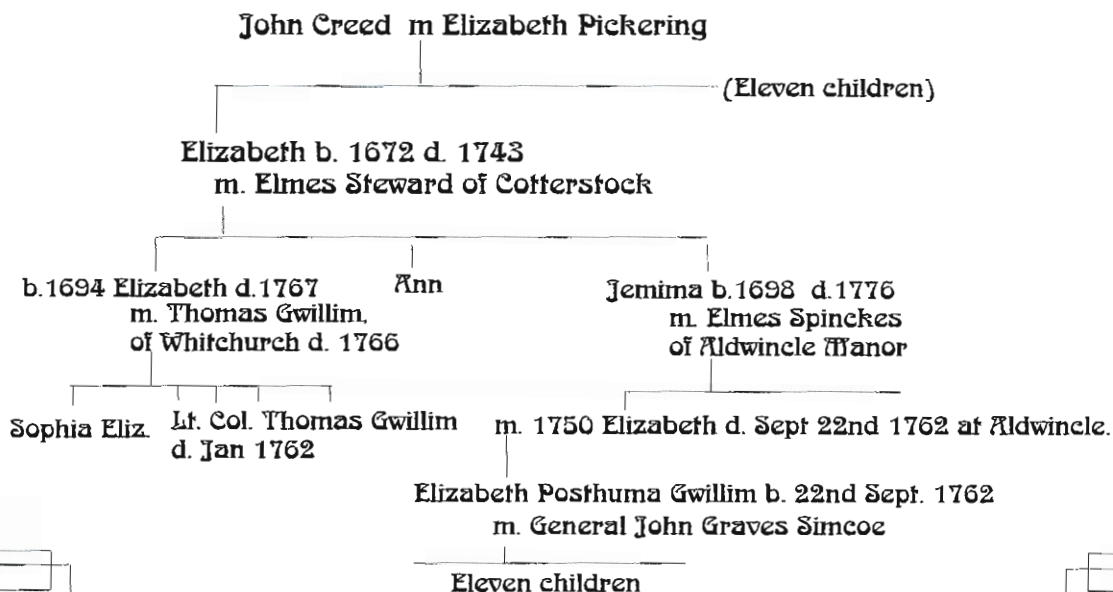
Mrs Elizabeth Steward was the Great-Grandmother of Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim, who married Lt. Governor John Simcoe. She was born Elizabeth Creed in 1672, the eldest of eleven children, six of whom died young. Her father John Creed, was a colleague of Samuel Pepys. He was Secretary of the Tangier Committee, while Pepys was the Treasurer, administering the Tangier territory which came as a dowry with the Portuguese Princess Catherine, who married King Charles 11. John Creed had married Elizabeth Pickering, daughter of Sir Gilbert Pickering of Titchmarsh, and niece of Edward Montague 1st Earl of Sandwich, his boss. Samuel Pepys records this in his diary as 'Devilish presumptuous'!

Elizabeth Pickering had been a lady-in-waiting, and is said to have had painting lessons from Sir Peter Lely. There are painted murals by her in Titchmarsh church. Her daughter (the lady in the tomb) also had artistic talent and some decorations in Canons Ashby (R.T. - home of Erasmus Dryden) are thought to be by her. An artist's palette and brushes can be seen carved on the tomb, to the side of the coat of Arms. (This shows the Creed Arms of three swans and a chevron also the Steward Chequers and Elmes band of elm leaves.)

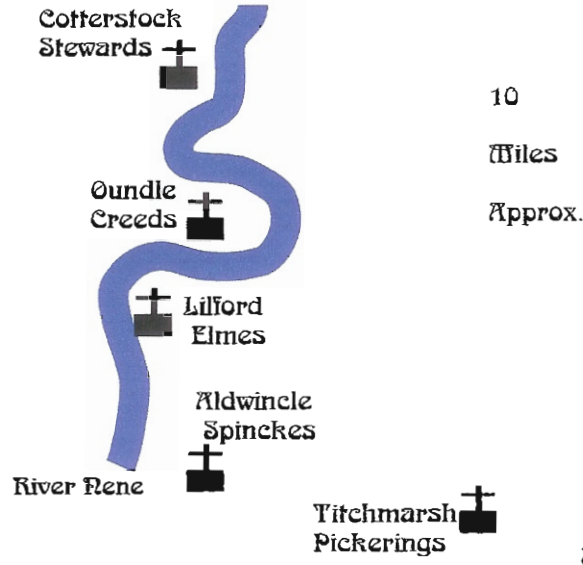
Elizabeth Creed married Elmes Steward, Sheriff of Northamptonshire, of Cotterstock Hall, near Oundle. They had three daughters, Elizabeth, Ann and Jemima. The poet John Dryden was a great friend and relative, spending so much time at Cotterstock Hall that one room is still called 'Dryden's Room'. He described Elizabeth as a very witty and beautiful woman. Her eldest daughter married Thomas Gwillim, of The Old Court, Whitechurch. The couple built the Grave enclosure in 1744 around the table tomb.

Why is she buried here? When her husband died in 1724, Cotterstock Hall was sold, and she moved to the Old Court, with her unmarried daughter, Ann.

Why is her name spelt STUART on the tomb? Her grandfather Sir Gilbert Pickering and many families in the area, supported Cromwell. Some quick political moves had to be made to prove loyalty to the Stuart King Charles 11, so perhaps this was such a tactic. The Steward family can be traced back to 1600.



In Northamptonshire (not to scale)



The John Creed memorial at Titchmarsh Church

