

## Screenwork in the Churches of North-East Somerset.

*(Paper No. 2 of the Series.)*

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THE churches of the more northerly parts of the county present a striking contrast to those of the western and southern extremity. Whilst the latter in most cases reflect to a great degree in their plan and general structure the character of the Devonshire and Cornwall churches, the former approximate more nearly to the average English type found all over the south-midland districts. The division between nave and chancel is more strongly defined; the chancel arch is a customary feature; the nave is generally far superior in height to the aisles, and these are not carried continuously so far to the eastward as is the case in the true West-country type of church.

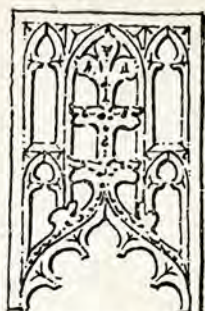
Hence as might be expected, the arrangement of the screenwork is found to exhibit corresponding differences of character, and, saving in one class of churches of an intermediate type, the continuous screen running across nave and aisles without a break does not appear to have been an usual feature, as it is in Devonshire, but in place of this there would appear to have been ordinarily a central high screen between nave and chancel, with its rood-loft, and separate screens to the aisles or aisle chapels, where such existed.

The naves being superior in height to the aisles, and often clerestoried, it is not improbable that the subsidiary screenwork was lower in many cases than the rood-screen.

NORTH  
SOMERSET  
SCREEN WORK.

Comparative Elevations  
of Tracery Heads.

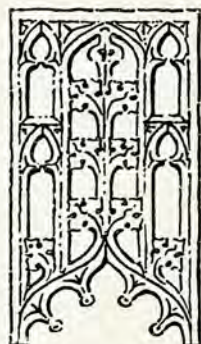
PLATE I.



NUNNEY.



COMPTON MARTIN.



WELLOW.



WEST PENNARD.

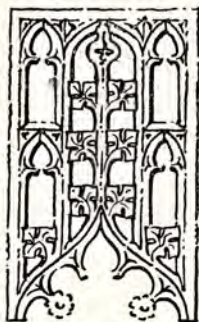


BACKWELL.

PLATE II.



CONGRESBURY.



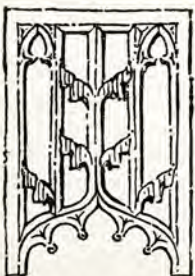
PRIDDY.



PILTON



MELLS.



LOXTON,



YATTON.



Allusion has been made to a class of churches which are intermediate in character between those characterising the two extremities of the county ; and it may be well here to give brief mention of these, though the description of their screenwork must be reserved for a future section.

These churches which lie on the frontier, so to speak, of the south-west peninsula, in which the old British traditions of church building and church art maintained their ground against Saxon influence, are strongly tinged with West-country feeling, and often exhibit a compromise between the two principles. This is seen in the abnormal widening or opening-up of the chancel arch, in the endeavour to reconcile the existence of the structural barrier with the utmost degree of clearness or continuity for the interior. Among churches of this order are those of Glastonbury (St. John), Wrington, Chew Magna, Bishops Lydeard, Long Ashton, etc., etc.—there being a quite extensive list. These churches are occasionally provided with a screen of continuous design—continuous, that is, in the sense of uniformity both of design and height, as at Wrington, Backwell, and Chew Magna, or of diverging patterns, but uniform in height, as at Long Ashton and Cheddar.

But the screenwork which is more especially the subject of this paper is mainly associated with the churches of the north-eastern extremity of the county—churches of the more definitely ‘English’ sort, and those which are still fortunate enough to retain their screenwork are practically all grouped about the Mendip hills and their outlying spurs. (Plates I and II.)

These include Nunney, Wellow, Compton Martin, Congresbury, Backwell, West Pennard, Priddy, and Loxton, all of which churches have more or less perfect specimens remaining ; whilst at Mellis, and perhaps in one or two other places, are fragments of work of a similar description. The aisle screen at Yatton, reproducing the same character, is modern.<sup>1</sup>

1. Executed by the village carving class from the writer's designs, and placed in the church within the past year.

In this part of the county the usual form of rood-screen found is the earlier and simpler form, of which a general description was given in last year's *Proceedings*. It may be well briefly to recall the type. The screens are not all early by any means, but here the later work follows faithfully the older type, instead of constituting a new departure, as in the west.

The screens of this district are thus of the square-headed order, consisting of a series of narrow vertical divisions or lights, with rectangular heads, filled with a simple but effective kind of tracery (*see* Plates I and II), and in their original and perfect state would have supported a panelled soffit or coving of flat or hollow profile, forming the ceiling beneath the rood-loft floor. It is a fact greatly to be regretted that no specimen now remains of the latter feature within the limits of the county, except at Keynsham, over the screen there—one which belongs to a different category of design. (Plate III.)

But not far off, at Christian Malford in Wilts, a typical instance may be found, and here the tracery also approximates to the Somerset type, and other screens at Milborne Port and Willand, both on the Somerset border, retain the coved head, once common to all these screens, whilst at Ashchurch near Tewkesbury, is a fine Gloucestershire example strongly in affinity with the class under consideration. Avebury, Wiltshire, provides the nearest instance of a screen of this order in a really complete state, with its rood-loft gallery intact.

These lofts usually had their projection to the west of the screen finding support upon a beam or bressummer housed into the nave walls (*vide* sketch of Raddington screen in *Proceedings*, LII, part ii, Plate I), and supported at its extremities by sprandel brackets.

In contradistinction to this arrangement the true West-country screen, such as we see in Devon, is designed to support a loft placed centrally over its length, and there being no proper support for the bressummers at front and back except the framing of the screen itself, these are balanced nicely

PLATE III.



KEYNSHAM.

*From a Photograph by F. Bligh Bond, F.R.I.B.A.*



against one another, by a centralising of the overhang, and the screen is fastened to the piers. But this, as stated in my former article (1906), is a later type of screen, and it seems that in the general reconstruction of churches which went on in the West-country during the latter half of the XV Century, most of the older and simpler screenwork in the western districts was abolished to make room for the more imposing works then in vogue: whilst in the northern part of Somerset, where the churches do not then appear to have undergone quite such sweeping reconstruction, the earlier form of screen arrangement, as elaborated in the XIV and early XV Centuries is not so entirely superseded, having not only been in a large measure retained, but having even been used as a model for later workmanship, to a period as late as the XVI Century.

These North Somerset screens, though simple, have an interest all their own, for they exhibit an unity of design in detail which gives to them a well marked and distinctive character, peculiar to them, since nothing precisely like it appears to exist in other localities.

There is, it is true, a good deal of work in Wiltshire which approximates rather nearly to their pattern, and at Parracombe in North Devon is a closer parallel. There are also some Gloucestershire instances which present a strong likeness, but all these if critically examined will be found to differ materially from the Somerset variety, which constitutes another of those artistic 'formulæ' indicative of a regular school of design.

This fact may perhaps be more readily realised by reference to the table of illustrations (Plates I and II), where a series of comparative diagrams are offered, enabling one to observe the curiously close relationship between some of the instances.

The specimens represented appear to vary considerably in date. Nunney provides what seems undoubtedly the earliest instance. The formation of the crockets, and finial of the canopy, the form of the archlet over the finial, the general

style and character of the execution of the work, all point to an early and good period of the art, other ornament on the screen strengthens the view that this is a work of the early years of the XV Century. Next in point of date are Backwell, Congresbury, Wellow, and Compton Martin (Plates IV, V, VI)—all good vigorous work of the best Perpendicular period; after these comes Priddy, with the same 'motif' but of inferior and later execution, and then Mells, which is peculiar, and Pilton (Plate VII) whose date is known (1508) by the entries in the parish accounts, fortunately preserved. Last of all I place the screen at Loxton, which exhibits a class of workmanship so rude, and design so debased—so palpably a late and inferior copy of the earlier sort—that a date far subsequent to the rest may be safely assigned to it.

The idea naturally occurs—to what school or guild of carvers may these works be attributed. The old parish accounts of Yatton, Croscombe, and Pilton seem to throw some light upon this question, as the employment of professional carvers, probably members of a free guild, is recorded.

In the churchwardens' accounts of Croscombe parish, we find that the whole of the work for Saint George's Chapel at Croscombe was carried out by the Freemasons of Exeter.

At Pilton all the carving of the rood-screen was done by an Exeter carver, and there is an item of 2*s.* 4*d.* in the account for the year 1521 representing the expenses incurred by the churchwarden in visiting Exeter to confer with the carver there.

In earlier years, no doubt, most of the beautiful carvings which went to adorn our parish churches were produced within the walls of the monasteries,—those cradles of art and science in troublous times—but with the diffusion of learning and the advent of more settled conditions in the times of Henry VI and VII, there is little doubt that a numerous class of lay craftsmen grew up and contributed in a large measure to supply the demand, which in those days must have been literally enormous, for carved work, sculpture, painting and what not.



The Yatton churchwardens' accounts are interesting. In 1447-8, three men were sent to Easton-in-Gordano, where there was a fine 'alure' or Rood-loft, to inspect this as a model for one which was contemplated for their own church. Others rode to Frome (Selwood) and to Bitton, presumably for the like purpose, and one W. Stubbe was sent to Bristol to view the 'tabylment' or altar-sculpture.

In 1448 we find

Item.	Pd. for the tabyl of the hye awter	.	xj marcs.	xs.
„	In costage of the same tabyl	.	.	xviij <i>d</i> .
„	For costage of 2 wings of ray silk for the hy auter	.	.	xviij <i>d</i> .

(Cloths, wire, and rings, are also charged).

Item.	For the Rodeloffte, to Crosse (the joiner)	.	.	.	vij marcs.	xiijs.
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In 1450

Item.	Payd. to Crosse for the Rodeloffte	.	vjs.	viiij <i>d</i> .
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In 1451

Item.	do.	do.	for the aler (alure)	xxs.
„	„	„	„	vj. viij <i>d</i> .
„	„	„	anoder payment for the aler	ij marcs. iij <i>d</i> .

In 1454

Item.	„	„	Costage yn. setting uppe of the Aler, the first days	.	ijs.	vij <i>d</i> .
„	Payede for divers colers to the Aler	.	vjs.	vj <i>d</i> .		
„	For the paynter ys here a wyke (week)	.	xxd.			

The accounts for this year include also the ceiling<sup>1</sup> boards carried from Southampton with drawings and colours for same.

1. Syler, Schylyng.

Item.	The trussing of the Crosse with the Maryes . . . . .	iiij <i>d.</i>
„	iron to the Rodelofte . . . . .	
„	gold to paint the angele . . . . .	vjs.
	etc., etc.	
	and in 1455	
Item.	To Crosse 'ys ale' for setting uppe of the poste of the Rodelofte . . . . .	iiij <i>d.</i>
„	A crampe of iron in the Sowthe side of the soler . . . . .	xijd.
„	for a chandelier yn the Rodelofte, to Jenken, smyth, of Comysbury . . . . .	xiijs. iiij <i>d.</i>
„	For ale gevyn to Crosse yn certeyn tymis yn hys worke, to make hym wel wellede . . . . .	ijd.
„	for ernest-peny to the image-maker . . . . .	jd.
„	to setting up of the ymages . . . . .	iiij <i>d.</i>
„	for the ymages to the Rodelofte in number lxix. . . . .	£iij .. xs. .. iiij <i>d.</i>

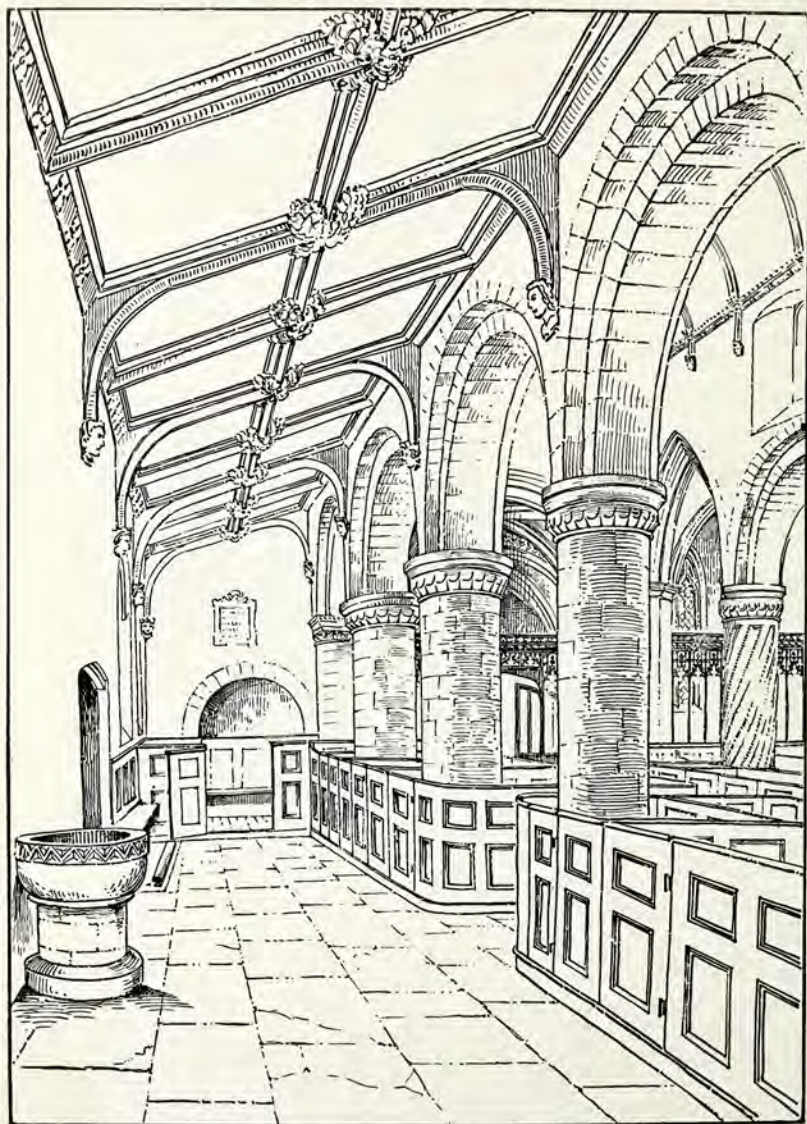
1481

Item.	For the closynge (parclose screens) betwyxte the church and the chaunsell, etc., including nayles . . . . .	xx <i>d.</i>
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It is interesting to note that the images, sixty-nine in number, cost about a shilling apiece.

That it should have been the practice to send so far as Exeter for a carver for the Pilton and Croscombe work is curious, and seems to point to the existence of a superior order of craftsman in that city. History proverbially repeats itself. To-day it is again the practice of many to send to Exeter workshops for precisely this class of work, and often from a much greater distance !

An individual description of the screens enumerated in the present list may fitly conclude this paper, and it will be con-



COMPTON MARTIN.

*From a Pencil Drawing by the late Joseph Wood, F.R.I.B.A.*



venient to include, with this, brief notices of other woodwork in the same churches, and a few notices of screenwork in the district which, though not belonging to the same category, may be conveniently mentioned in the present section.

COMPTON MARTIN (Plates I and IV).—Within living memory there stood in this church a light Perpendicular rood-screen almost precisely reproducing the features of those still standing at Wellow, West Pennard, etc. It is alluded to in an early number of the *Proceedings*, and in a subsequent number (vol. XIX, i, 27), its disappearance is noted. Enquiry as to its ultimate fate has been unsuccessful.

The type of work may be judged of by an examination of the screenwork still remaining, which is a counterpart of it as regards detail, the doorway being like Wellow.

The existing screens enclose a chapel at the end of the south aisle, and offer a favourable specimen of work of this class. The carving is bold and good, and there is a small enrichment incised in the transom rail which is worthy of notice.

*Rutter's Somerset, p. 198.*

*Proc. Bath Field Club, 1, p. 127.*

CONGRESBURY (Plates II and V).—(1). The rood-screen remains in a comparatively perfect state. It is of excellent Perpendicular work, and resembles in its general character the screenwork typical of the district, but has a superiority of design, in that the narrow square-headed lights are grouped in triple series, within well-proportioned panels of heavier framework; and the frame is boldly moulded, with well-developed enrichments inserted in the main hollow between the beads. This remains in the head, but is lost in the upright members.

The cornices have two rows of fine vine-leaf ornament in addition to the enriched member above described, which follows along the head under them, forming a single group.

The tracery heads are exceptionally good of their kind, as will be seen on reference to Plate II.

A peculiar feature of this screen is that the wooden cill

below the lights (which is very massive, and about 12ins. deep) rests upon an ancient stone base about two feet six inches high, having on either side of the central opening, to the west, the remains of small stone buttresses of ornamental character. These have been cut away, however, and but little is left of them.

The screen doors have been taken out, and now (1906) form part of a modern tower-arch screen of good Perpendicular design.

(2). There is a screen of XIV Century character fencing the chantry chapel on the south side of the chancel.

This is largely of modern workmanship, especially in the upper portion, but contains some interesting old work of an early type, the tracery in the pointed heads being especially noticeable.

This screen appears to have been shortened, and does not fit its present position. The upper part does not seem to belong to the lower, but has been rather roughly fitted to it. The lower part is furnished with a stall to the eastward, with moulded arms—apparently a choir-stall.

(3). The chancel is fenced on the south side by a parclose screen of modern workmanship, in imitation of the work last described, and this is placed upon a panelled stone base, which appears to be old, and corresponds to that on which the chancel screen rests.

(4). Tower screen (modern) containing the old Rood-screen doors, as above described.

*Building News, Sep. 5, 1890. Measured drawings.*

*Worth's Guide to Somerset, p. 74.*

*Proc. Somerset Arch. Soc., X, i, p. 9, illust., and p. 29; also III, ii, 38.*

NUNNEY.—This church, which has been barbarously treated and modernised internally, yet contains a feature of great interest in the arrangement of its chancel opening in which a portion of a very beautiful screen fortunately survives.

The chancel arch here is narrower by several feet than the





CONGRESBURY.

*From a Photograph by F. Crossley, Knutsford.*



chancel itself, and the balance of space on either side is utilised for the formation of hagioscopes. These take the form of small traceried window openings, and belong to a very interesting series, representing in varied forms, an arrangement traditional in the English church, and probably Eastern in its origin.

The screen is of the true North Somerset type, but richer in its detail, and finer in execution than most examples. There are the usual narrow rectangular lights, but the alternate mullions have been removed, and pendants substituted, probably in the XVII Century, whilst the original lower panels have been replaced by later substitutes of a sort of coarse fretwork. (Plate I).

The cornice enrichments are singularly fine, and there is a magnificent and most original cresting of tall proportions, offering a first-rate example for reproduction. The doors are perfect and contain some beautiful tracery-heads under a depressed arch. Above them are a pair of excellent carved spandrels in rich relief.

Altogether, such original work as remains on this screen is worthy of special note<sup>1</sup>.

The screen was removed some years ago and sent to Frome, but in consequence of remarks made at a visit of the Somersetshire Archæological Society it was brought back and refixed. Would that the Society's influence might have prevailed in other cases, such as Ditchet and Compton Martin where also the screens have been removed.

BACKWELL (Plates I and VI).—The screens remain, to nave and both aisles. Though practically uniform in character, the three sections are separate; whether this was originally

1. An examination of the details of the crocketing in the tracery seems to shew that this work has a much earlier date than others. (See comparative diagrams). The finial especially shews this, and the arched compartment enclosing it has not the depressed form characterising the others. It is probably no later than 1400. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxxix, p. 34.

the case is perhaps doubtful. They are at present placed within the thickness of the arches.

The central section is of three main divisions, those on the north and south extremities being of five lights each (the usual narrow rectangular lights, with tracery heads as shewn in Plate I).

The cornice retains two rows of very beautiful vine-leaf enrichment showing coloured decoration. The convex profile of this ornament gives it a very rich appearance. We find the same convexity, with equally good result, at Congresbury and Keynsham. The doors remain, with finely carved heads, like those at Wellow—and the lower panels exhibit the same similarity.

The south aisle screen seems the same in most respects as the central one, and is uniform in elevation, but the north aisle section appears to be about a foot higher.

The chancel piers, which are flat on their west face, each contain a small rectangular hagioscope symmetrically placed. Carved heads are built into the wall above them as corbels at the level of the rood-loft, for the support of the beams.

On the south side of nave, just under the roof by the chancel wall, is a two-light window for the illumination of the loft, which would otherwise have been very much in the dark, as there is no clerestory to this lofty nave.

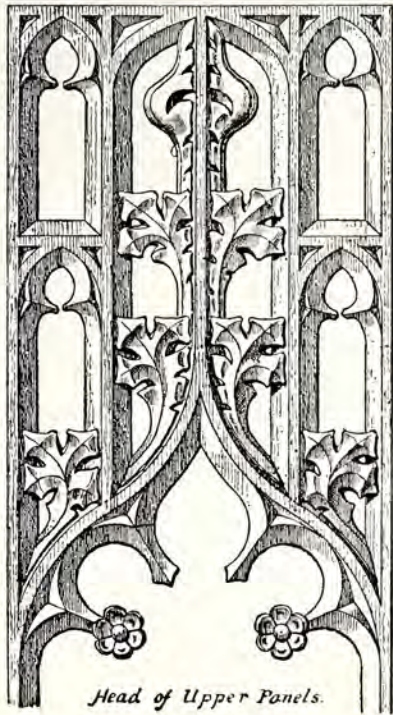
There is also a small stone screen in the church. The pulpit is modern and fairly good ; the benches poor.

**WEST PENNARD.**—This church retains its rood-screen in a very perfect state, the cornices being in exceptionally good order. It has the usual row of narrow lights set in a rectangular framework. The spandrels of the door-head contain the Tudor rose and pomegranate on the north and south side respectively, suggesting as a date for this work the first years of Henry VIII.

The tracery heads, as will be seen in Plate I, are shorter than most of the others, and of a slightly different detail, a necking being introduced around the finial.



BACKWELL CHURCH, *Somerset.*  
PANELS OF SCREENS .



*Head of Upper Panels.*



*Head of Lower Panels.*

*Mullion.*



*Half Real Size.*

*Drawn by G. P. W. 1850  
Engraved by J. H. Mansel  
Mant.*



Below the transom rail on the south side of the screen are some very good panels of early Perpendicular character, those on the north being of a different design and apparently 'restoration' work, and within the wide 'squint' or hagnoscope on the south side of the chancel arch is a low barrier, or framework, containing three more panels of a rather different design, which look as if they had belonged to the old rood-loft gallery front.

The two side ones are the best, and are carved with a sort of enlarged oak leaf, or smooth-edged vine-leaf, filling the elongated quatrefoils in their upper part—a rather original composition. The centre panel is more ordinary. The great width of the squint by the chancel arch has been already the subject of comment in this journal.<sup>1</sup> There is a similar feature at Ditcheat, barricaded also with an old piece of XV Century screenwork.

The church of West Pennard also retains fine old Perpendicular roofs to the north aisle and chancel, and the excellent XV Century traceried doors to the west and south entrances are specially worthy of note.

WELLOW (St. Julian).—(1). The chancel screen survives, and is in good condition. It is of oak, well carved, having the usual range of narrow upright divisions, separated by moulded standards, and with tracery of the customary kind (*see* Plate I). The lights are grouped in three compartments, the two extreme ones each containing four divisions, set in a stout moulded framework. The doors, with another four lights over, occupy the centre. They are perfect, and the door-head (which shews the usual depressed arch) has some exquisite work in the spandrels.

The transom rail is enriched with a sunk ornament on the face, and the lower panels are traceried in the manner common

1.—It contains the approach to the rood-loft stair-case, which is entered by a door on the outer, *i.e.* south, side, half-way through the passage. *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc. XXVI, i, p. 71.*

to many screens—with an ogee cinquefoil archlet beneath two quatrefoiled circles forming the spandrels.<sup>1</sup>

(2). In the north aisle arch is a second screen of a subsidiary order, much plainer in design than the first, and lower in elevation. It has a little tracery in the heads of simple cusps-work, of Perpendicular type, and its chief interest lies in the amount of old colour enrichment it has retained. This screen fences a chapel which was at one time the chapel of the Hungerford family, and which still retains traces of its old magnificence in the very fine oak ceiling with its carved and coloured enrichments. The shields on the ceiling display the Arms of the Hungerfords of Wellow, and the Tropnells of Hassage, a local manor.

During the restoration of this chapel, two specimens of old oak panelling carrying remains of early painting were found supporting the lead flat adjoining the chancel roof, and these appear to have formed originally part of one of the screens, probably the parclose on the chancel side (now gone).

The old oak benches in this church are a notable feature. The ends have bold poppy-head finials, and sunk panelled enrichment. Both these and the screenwork are probably of early XV Century date. The church itself dates chiefly from 1372 when it was rebuilt, and is interesting as evidence of the early prevalence of the Perpendicular style in the district.

*Proc. Somerset Arch. Soc. (Bath Branch.) 1905 (?)*

*Peach's Rambles about Bath.*

*Proc. Bath Field Club, II, 356, and IV, 244.*

*Tunstall's Rambles about Bath, p. 157.*

*South Kensington list of painted screens.*

PILTON (Plates II and VII).—This beautiful church has been despoiled of its choicest interior features. The rood-

1. The Rood-loft entrance is in the east wall of the nave, high up on the south side of the chancel arch. Its position shows that there must have been a very lofty coving over the screen to bring the work up to the level required for the floor.



screen which originally stood one bay west of the chancel arch (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXIV, i, 63) was removed when the church was renovated, and after remaining for many years in the care of the Gale family, was offered to North Cheriton Church, and there re-erected as a chancel-screen with considerable alterations, and the addition of modern work.

The chancel-arch in this church is a composition of great beauty, late Perpendicular in style, richly panelled in the soffit and obviously designed in this case for the rood-loft—to be revealed in its full proportions beneath the loft, and not cut or hidden by it, so that all its delicate detail would appear within the symmetrical graining of the rood-screen. This is evident from the comparatively low proportion and depressed head of the arch, leaving a large balance of wall space over, in which may still be seen the set-off or shelf which indicates the position of the loft floor, the door of access to which is in the northern angle of the chancel wall.

It is probable that the loft extended westwards to meet the rood-screen, but this can only be a conjecture, since no positive evidence remains. The alternative would be a rood-loft gallery of narrower dimensions, independent of the screen, and hanging against the wall over the chancel arch,—a less likely supposition.

The screen was of tall and dignified proportions; the detail, so far as may be judged from what remains at North Cheriton, was of late character, probably coeval or nearly so with the chancel arch. The parish accounts of 1498 mention a payment to Robert “Carver” for the “Trayle under the Rood-lofte,” and in 1508, David Jonys “the peynter” is paid for his work.

The wall above the chancel opening is of great height, and formerly exhibited a large fresco, which was blotted out by the vandals in 1850. It has been described as a picture of three kings meeting death in the guise of three skeletons.

The Rood and attendant images no doubt found a place over the loft in their customary position and contributed to what



must have been a singularly rich and stately whole. The position of the rood-beam has not been ascertained, but there remains in the south wall of the chancel an "angel" corbel for the support of a secondary beam or screen before the altar, as we have at Leigh-on-Mendip and elsewhere.

The screen (now at North Cheriton) is said to retain traces of mediæval colour. The openings have four-centre arched heads, each divided by mullions into four lights, and the heads filled with late Perpendicular tracery. The central mullion is thickened and ascends unbroken into the heads of the arches. Beneath the transom rail (which has a sunk enrichment) are some very handsome traceried panels. The work has been a good deal pulled about to adapt it to its present place, and the head of the middle compartment has been lifted bodily above the screen, whilst in order to fill up the space within the limb of the arch, a quantity of spurious "Gothic" tracery work has been added, giving a general effect curious and, on the whole, not unpleasing.

But although the rood-screen has gone from Pilton, that church retains its north aisle screen, with a return or parclose of similar design, and consisting of a range of narrow vertical rectangular lights containing tracery of the "North Somerset" type illustrated in Plate II. These screens enclose a chantry chapel at the east end of the north aisle, now alas! invaded by the hideous, varnished pewing, with which this church is crammed.

The section crossing the aisle contains a pair of gates, later than the screen, and a subsequent insertion. They are probably of early XVII Century work, having a strong Renaissance admixture with a general Gothic form, and the tracery-heads over have been mutilated for their reception.

Below the transom of the screen are wide panels of a similar late character, exhibiting a variety of arabesques and foliage in low relief.

There is an excellent vine-leaf cornice enrichment on the



PILTON.

*From a Photograph by F. Bligh Bond, F.R.I.B.A.*



screen, probably dating from about 1498 when the screens were erected. The ancient colour upon this screen is preserved in comparative perfection.

There was standing in Pilton church not many years ago a fine Jacobean pulpit, dated 1618, but this again was turned out to make room for a modern vulgarity, and has been re-erected in a Yorkshire church. The old pulpit cloth was made from an ancient cope (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XIII, i, 21).

*Som. Record Soc., Pilton Churchwardens' Accounts.*

PRIDDY.—There are three sections of screenwork in this church, all of the representative local type. The rood-screen stands in the chancel arch, and the others in the arches north and south, in line with the same.

Both the rood-screen and that on the north are ancient, but the south aisle section has been added in recent years, being the gift of a local family. It is designed in conformity with the old, but is not so good in detail.

The rood-screen, as it now stands, shews six narrow lights, with the usual crocketed tracery-heads, to the north side of the central opening; four in the central compartment over the door-head, and four more on the south. Probably the last section was originally wider, but no doubt the screen must have been narrowed when set back. There is the usual flat 4-centre door-head, but the doors are missing; and the cornice enrichments and cresting have also disappeared. The lower compartments exhibit the usual pattern in the heads, of a cinque-foiled ogee-arch supporting two quatrefoiled circles. (Plate II.)

The screen in the north aisle is precisely similar in detail, but smaller, having three lights over the door, and two on each side. The hollows for two rows of enrichment remain in the cornice, but these were missing in 1902, when these notes were made.

A remarkable stone pulpit stands engaged with the pier respond on the south side of the chancel arch, the wall behind it being curiously cut away.

MELLS.—This church had originally a very lofty chancel-screen in keeping with the stately proportions of the fabric ; as is evidenced by the great height of the doorway of access to the rood-loft, which still remains in the wall on the north side of the chancel arch.

A number of carved traceried panels from the old screen remain, and are incorporated with the lectern, altar-rails, credence table, book-rest over same, and elsewhere, but the present chancel-screen, which was reconstructed in 1881, is virtually a new composition, and can hardly be commended as a design, since it fails not only to reproduce the ancient character of screens in this neighbourhood, but also to exhibit that grace and lightness of design which the old work shews. The lights are headed by very ponderous canopies of depressed ogee pattern, singularly heavy and clumsy, and this feature mars the good effect of the tracery work above, which is excellent. There is a rood upon the screen several sizes too big for it.

The parclose and aisle screens are the really interesting features of this church. Here we have a really scholarly and artistic reconstruction incorporating a number of panels, apparently ancient, the design of which accords to some extent with the rest of the series, though it has points of originality. (Plate II.)

The effect of these screens, with their excellent cornices and crestings, is singularly good, and, taken into combination with the new chancel fittings, which are of a most praiseworthy character, and the well intended (if somewhat mistaken) design of the chancel-screen, is undoubtedly good and inspires a sense of reverence, beauty, and order.

The church was originally seated with Jacobean benches, having tall ends of striking and original character, but at a recent date the writer saw these relegated to the vestry, where they were acting as a wall-panelling, excepting a few still "in situ" at the west end of the church.



LOXTON.—The screen here forms the sole distinction between nave and sanctuary.

It is of curiously rude and debased workmanship, all the detail being degraded. The lower panels show the linen-fold pattern, which the others of the "North Somerset" order do not. (Plate II.)

NORTON ST. PHILIP.—There is no rood-screen, but in each aisle there stands a high screen of carved oak, rather elaborate, but not of the best period either in design or workmanship. They are in fact a sort of debased imitation of Gothic work, and may very probably date from the XVII Century.

In addition to the screenwork noted in the foregoing list, this part of the country also contains screenwork of other types and periods, notice of which must be reserved for another article. The post-Reformation screenwork at Croscombe and Rodney Stoke is the best in the county: and there are interesting old screens at Whitchurch (Bristol), which come into another class of design, as also do those of Cheddar, Wrington, and Chew Magna.

Within recent years new screens having some claim to represent the traditional features have been erected at Frome (where the rood-loft is restored in its entirety), Camerton, Wraxall, Radstock, Nempnett and Yatton, whilst there are others of varying design at East Pennard, Chew Stoke, Baltousborough, Weston (Bath), and elsewhere. It seems to be a golden rule in these matters to adhere as strongly as possible to local type, and to introduce such minor variations as will give special interest without destroying the unity of the work with its class. Especially is the use of oak to be commended in revivals of screenwork.

Where materials foreign to their position are introduced, such as iron, copper, alabaster, or marble, no permanently happy or harmonious result can well be obtained. This mistake was often made in the Victorian restorations, with the result

that much money and effort, spent to beautify, was utterly wasted. In such cases as Kilmersdon, where a chancel-screen in hammered iron (good in itself) has been established side by side with an ancient screen of massive stone, the incongruity is painful. The iron is hopelessly "déclassé." The same may be said of work like that at Doultling and South Stoke, where iron and oak in the one case, and iron and copper in the other, are brought into combination.

The old North Somerset type of screen is simple, sensible, and inexpensive, and is earnestly commended by the writer to the attention of future screen builders.