

III.

SCREENS AND LOFTS IN SCOTTISH CHURCHES.¹

BY IAN C. HANNAH, M.P., F.S.A. SCOT.

Virtually all mediæval churches were divided by screens. They did much to increase the effect of mystery that is a leading characteristic of Gothic and which made it æsthetically desirable that the whole interior of any building should not be revealed at a glance. They also had important and varied ecclesiological functions.

Screens were by far the most conspicuous of mediæval ecclesiastical fittings as they still are in the eastern church. Very many have disappeared. In Roman Catholic countries they have been very generally removed, but many splendid examples are still to be seen in Lutheran parts of Germany and in certain districts of England, notably the eastern and south-western counties.² In later Gothic work they frequently give the whole atmosphere to the interior. It was a Renaissance idea to give far greater prominence to the altar.

The screens and galleries of Scotland were clearly very distinctive, and although inferior in magnificence to those of England; they helped very much to stamp a national character on many of our churches, including some of the smallest.

In early Christian churches ambons were provided on either side of the chancel for the reading of the gospel and epistle. Some Italian examples survive. Other prototypes have been suggested, but the later pulpitum (the usual western boundary of a quire) appears to have been derived from a screen which connected the ambons. These last

¹ The drawings of this article are by Edith B. Hannah, B.A.

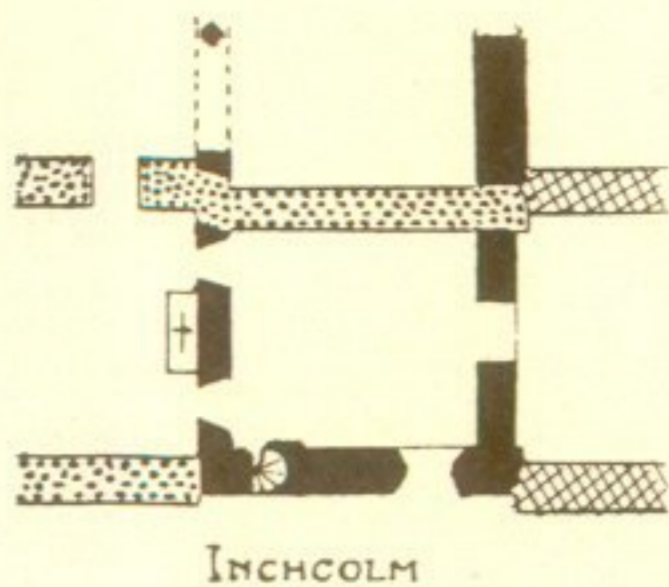
² Excellent English studies are *Screens and Galleries in English Churches* by Francis Bond, Oxford University Press, 1908, and *Quire Screens in English Churches* by Sir William St John Hope, *Archæologia*, 2nd series, vol. xviii. 1917. Innumerable monographs are scattered through the pages of English archæological publications, but nothing seems to exist on the subject of Scottish screens except in connection with separate buildings; and, even so, not much.

soon disappeared and the scriptures were read from the gallery or loft that surmounted the pulpitum. In monastic churches the arrangement eventually developed into two screens, which were sometimes combined into a composite structure, but more frequently were quite separate.

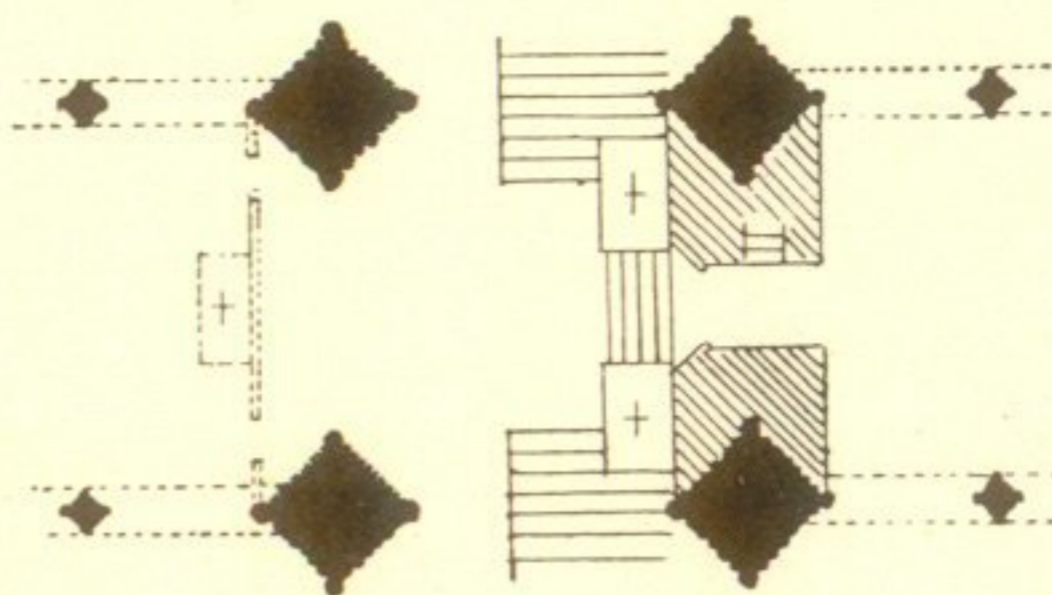
Both screens crossed the building, parallel to each other. Against the eastern one, the pulpitum, the quire stalls were returned, and there was a central doorway, frequently with an altar on either side, which at Glasgow may still be seen. A short distance west was the rood screen, against which was placed the nave altar with a doorway on either side, used by the monks with the pulpitum gateway during the Sunday procession. The name was derived from the fact that the screen was surmounted by the great cross or rood. It seems that as a rule there was no cross immediately on the altar in early mediæval days, certainly none in the Sarum use.

These screens, used in the western church, were thus entirely different both in original design and in use from the eikonostasis of the eastern church, a solid partition in front of the altar, which can only be seen from the nave when the doors have been thrown open.

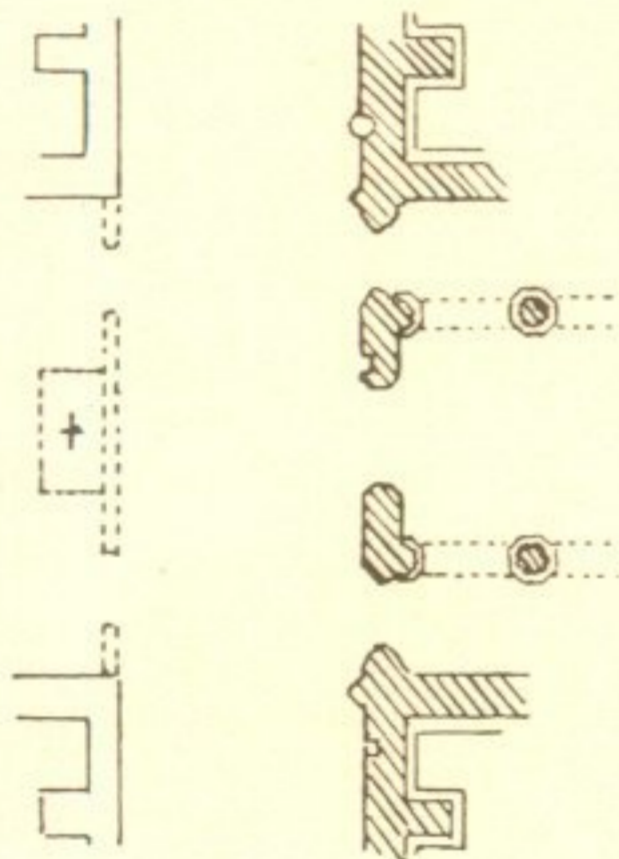
Like quire stalls the pulpitum and rood screen were monastic in origin, and needed because virtually all conventual churches were double, the quire with its stalls being exclusively for the religious, any congregation being admitted to the nave alone. This sometimes formed the parish church with secular clergy, as at Wymondham, Binham, and Boxgrove. Regular canons themselves did parochial work, and so required a separate church for that purpose. In Cistercian churches the nave formed the quire of the conversi. It is probable that in an ordinary Benedictine abbey to which the public had no definite right of access the nave was fitted as a separate church. This was clearly the case at Bury St Edmunds, where Jocelin de Brakelond tells us that Abbot Samson "was wont to preach to the people in English, but in the dialect of Norfolk, where he was born and bred; and so he caused a pulpit to be set up in the church for the ease of the hearers, and for the ornament of the church." Such services would assuredly not be held in the quire of the monks; no part of the great church was parochial. The two parish churches just outside the precincts continue in use to-day. The regulars always tried to keep the parishioners out of their churches. St Margaret's, Westminster, is another example. Very often when this could not be, as at Crowland and Romsey, the parish had only an aisle—not the whole nave. There was always a tendency for monastic arrangements to be copied. The screens are frequently to be found in secular cathedrals and collegiate churches where quire and nave were entirely separate.



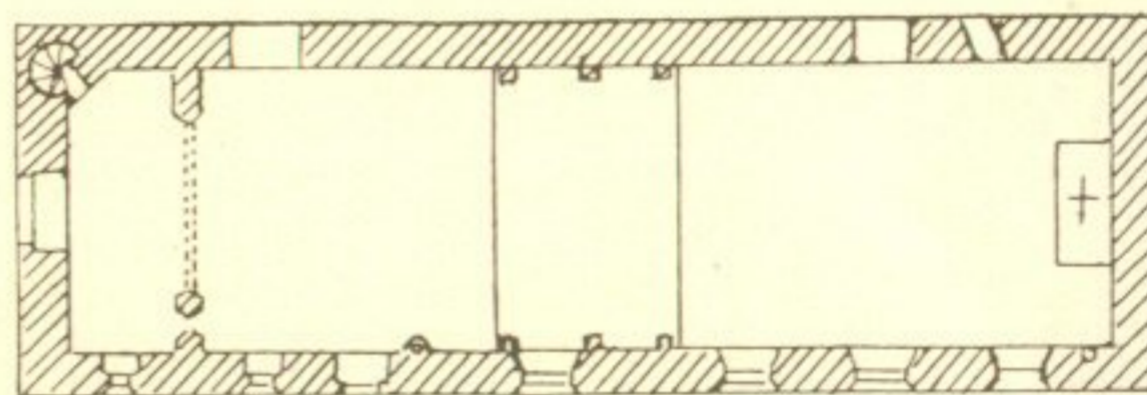
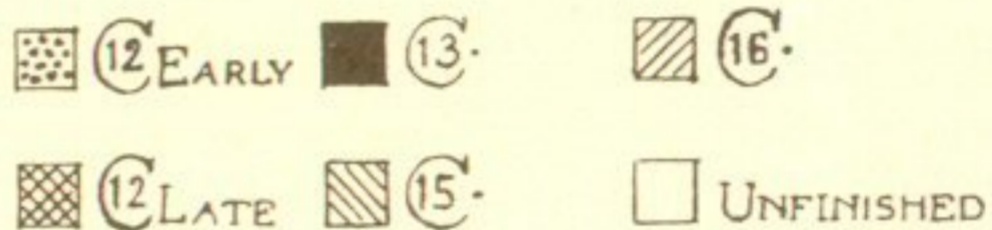
INCHCOLM



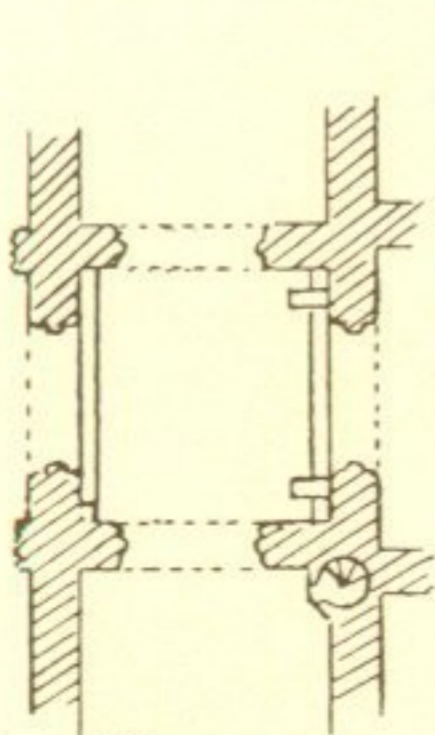
GLASGOW



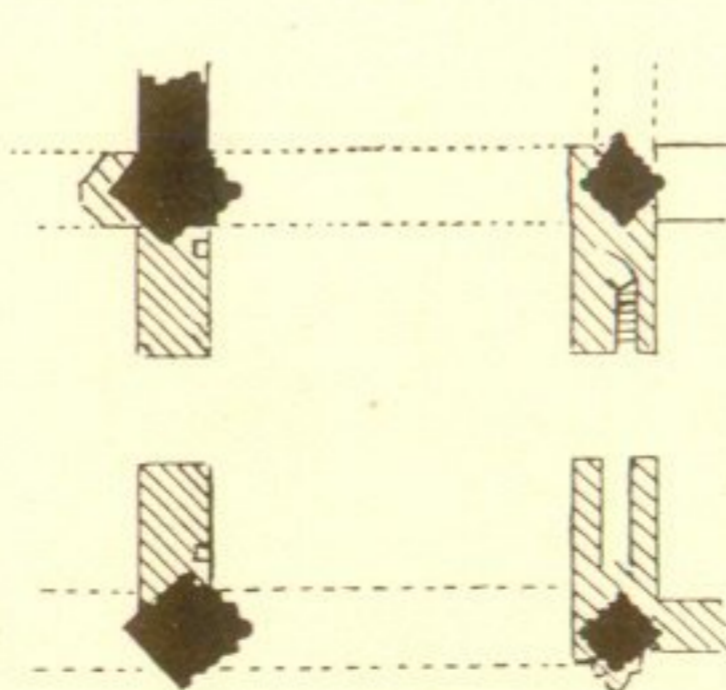
ROSSLYN



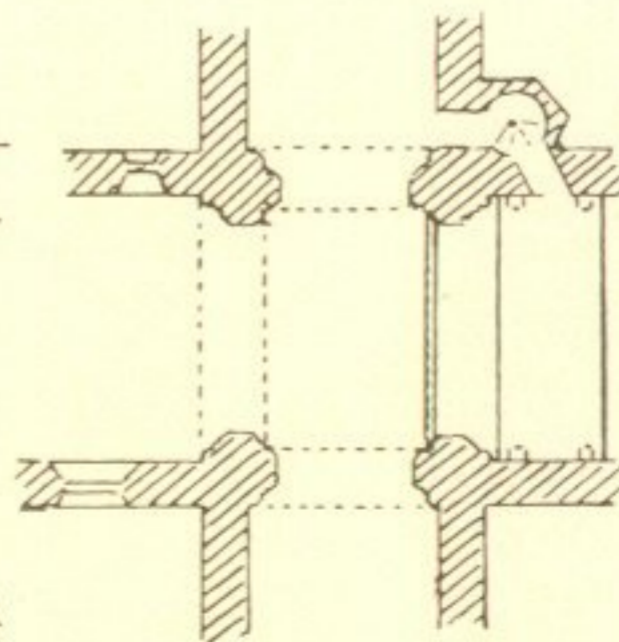
INNERPEFFRAY



SETON



PLUSCARDEN



BIGGAR

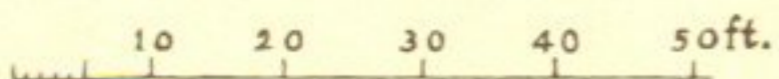


Fig. 1. Plans of seven characteristic Scottish screen arrangements.

How entirely is clearly seen at the collegiate church of St Peter, Wolverhampton, whose lofty pulpit, against a pillar of the south arcade, entirely commands the nave, but hardly looks into the quire at all. In purely parochial churches, intended for congregational use, the two screens were unsuitable, and a compromise was arranged (p. 193).

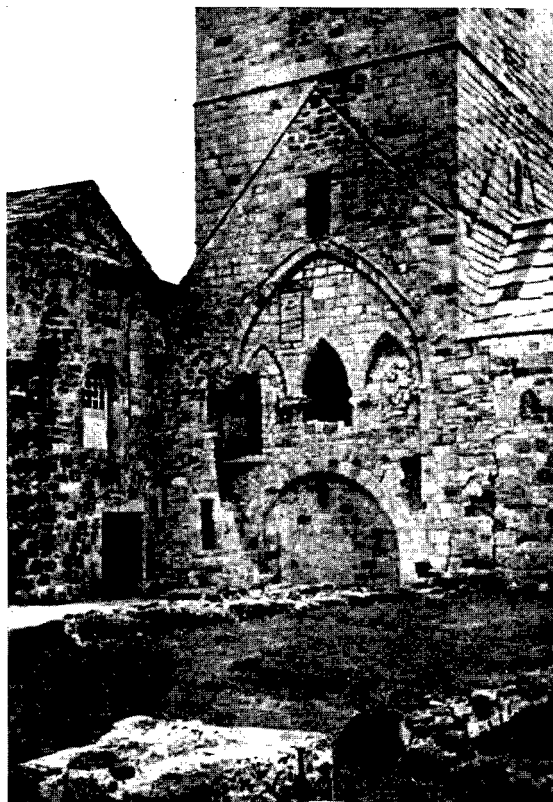
Of the ritual arrangements of churches before the Norman period almost nothing is known, but by that time we find the two screens fully established. At Binham Abbey in Norfolk the twelfth-century rood screen still survives; it is a heavy partition of stone with a plain doorway on either side of the nave altar. This is still in place for the use of the parish, and as the crossing and quire are in ruin the east wall of the existing church is built upon the Norman screen. The Norman pulpitum at Ely was intact until the eighteenth century, and its character is clear from sketches made by James Essex about 1770.

At Iona we have clear evidence of the character of the Norman pulpitum. Against the east wall of the north transept are three twelfth-century arches of which the two side ones open to windows; the central formed some kind of altar recess. They carried a passage from the monks' dormitory to what can only have been a pulpitum loft across the east arch of the crossing. Presumably a night stair led down directly into the quire. This is an early and a very remarkable variation of the usual arrangement of the stair descending from the dormitory into the transept. Unfortunately in the late mediæval reconstruction of the church the pulpitum was scrapped. The gallery now ends abruptly in the south-east corner of the transept; no doorway is visible on the quire side. Presumably the Norman church had rood screen with nave altar across the west arch of the crossing, following a very usual plan.

No English church appears to retain the two screens, though at the Augustinian abbey of Lilleshall (Salop) the bases of both are visible, though in this case the doors in the rood screen are omitted, so that the west end of the nave is entirely shut off from the rest of the church. The position of the two screens is quite clear at Fountains, Bolton, Rievaulx, and elsewhere. In this respect Scotland is more fortunate, both screens surviving at Inchcolm and to some extent at Culross.

The stone rood screen of the latter house is specially interesting from its preservation, not only of the narrow lancet-headed doorways on either side of the altar, but also its piscina, plain thirteenth-century work. When the nave was abandoned to ruin what appears to have been its original west door was slapped through the wall behind where the nave altar once stood. It is of late Norman character with double shafts and moulded round arch, but it can hardly be earlier than 1217, the year of

the foundation of the abbey. This rood screen, though later, is not unlike that of Binham; it now forms part of the west wall of a tower erected by Abbot Mason (1498–1513) over the space between the two screens. Its inner or eastern doorway, which is round-headed with rather ornate late mouldings, is presumably on the site of the pulpitum.



[Photo by Catherine A. Nicolson.]

Fig. 2. Inchcolm—Pulpitum from east. The large round arch is later.

At Inchcolm the two screens are perfectly preserved, the only example in the British Isles. They are beautiful stone work of the thirteenth century, during which period a tower was raised over the square Norman quire, in the middle of the enlarged church. Its eastern arch is filled by the pulpitum (fig. 2), having had a central doorway to the quire, and above three open arches with keeled shafts, three in each jamb, the two pillars quatrefoil in plan; the capitals have foliage in very low relief. The west tower arch is filled by the rood screen, having a narrow pointed

doorway on either side of the nave altar site and two large open arches above, similar to those of the pulpitum. These upper arches with their varied clustered shafts, allowing an imperfect vista between nave and quire, form an integral portion of the fabric, and they must have presented an extremely attractive appearance before they were walled up to convert the Norman nave into an abbot's hall. It appears to be almost without parallel in monastic annals that this desecration was carried out as early as the fourteenth century, and by the Augustinian canons themselves.

These two screens were clearly connected by a floor of timber, which thus formed a gallery open both to nave and quire of unusually generous dimensions, about 19 feet by 15. Doubtless it was used for the reading of gospel and epistle as well as for whatever music was allowed. The doorway, afterwards so usual in friars' churches, opened from the cloister to the space between the screens, beneath the loft. There is a mural rood stair just west of it. It is remarkable that after a use of something like a century the screens were scrapped. There are remains farther east of a rather ordinary later pulpitum against which the stalls of the fifteenth-century quire were returned.

Separate pulpitum and rood can be traced in two late collegiate churches, the work in both cases having been of timber, erected during the sixteenth century, and apparently rather poor in quality. At Seton, now built up, are clearly defined openings for a beam embedded in the north and south walls, crossing the east tower arch. Just above it, recessed into the wall above the arch and resting upon the beam, two short brackets projected, and quite obviously supported a pulpitum loft. It seems to have been an afterthought, as the turnpike stair in the south-east corner of the tower is not arranged to give access. Likewise within the area of the tower, crossing its western arch, was a rood beam for which the holes exist. As the nave was never built it is very unlikely that the screens were actually erected, but the projected arrangement seems to be perfectly clear.

Another very late and rather unusual rood arrangement is to be studied at the collegiate church of Biggar, begun only in 1545. The east responds of the north and south arches of the crossing were cut into (just one course of stone below the caps) for a rood beam which rested against the responds of the eastern arch. About 1 foot higher and entirely independent a very wide pulpitum loft crossed the west end of the quire, approached by a broad square-headed door from the turnpike stair north-east of the tower. It is interesting to find the two features separated only by the width of the east tower arch, so that the actual rood must have appeared in front of the parapet of the pulpitum

and perhaps 18 inches away. Clearly there were not two screens: probably the only one was beneath the rood beam, resting against the responds.¹

These cases, in which both rood beam and pulpitum can be clearly traced, are interesting, not only from their varied dates, but because they show what very small buildings were divided into double churches—though the existence of nave altars (intended or actual) at Seton and Biggar is not perhaps absolutely certain.

There is every reason to believe that the larger churches of Scotland followed much the same screen arrangements as were usual in England. At St Andrews there are distinct foundations of the pulpitum with its central door, crossing the west tower arch, in the same position as at Chichester and elsewhere. The stalls must have shut off the transepts from the quire, a quite usual arrangement. Foundations beneath the sites of both east arches of the nave arcade suggest that the pulpitum was a fairly complicated fabric, very possibly a composite screen enclosing two little chapels with the nave altar against its western face.

The very normal pulpitum at Melrose is interesting as being of the same build as the fifteenth-century nave piers which it joins, in such a way as to shut off the three east bays from the rest. Thus, as at Norwich, Westminster, and elsewhere, the ritual quire was wholly within the architectural nave. The gateway is vaulted with ribs and bosses, and opens westward by a triple-shafted arch with a foliage band in the outer moulding. A rather similarly enriched cornice is the only other ornament of the fabric, whose ashlar walling is surprisingly plain, despite a large square-headed recess on the south. A stair to the gallery above opens northward from the centre of the gateway and is contained in the thickness of the masonry. It seems impossible to find an English pulpitum of the same importance treated with so severe a simplicity, a fact not without interest seeing that Melrose preserves about the only Cistercian example that has come down to us in the British Isles.

A very usual and convenient arrangement placed the pulpitum across the east arch of the crossing and the rood screen across the west, thus leaving the whole transept open between the screens. This is the only scheme that keeps the stalls wholly within the architectural quire, and it was the arrangement at York, also at Durham, as described in *Rites*. It might be considered the normal plan, but that at least as often as not the stalls extended further west than the architectural quire, frequently

¹ Evidence for the above was clearly brought out in the restoration of 1934-5, but the holes have been so neatly built up as to be difficult to locate. Similarly the tower piers of St Giles, Edinburgh, have been so hacked about for partitions that it is impossible to say which, if any, of their numerous gashes were connected with mediæval screens.

when, as at Ely, there was ample space east of the crossing. In Scotland we find this (Durham) arrangement at Glasgow, Rosslyn, Lincluden, and Pluscarden, besides Iona.

The Glasgow pulpitum (fig. 3) is of interest because its two stone altars still exist (slightly later in date), their fronts presenting figures under canopies with scrolls in low relief. So crowded is the work that

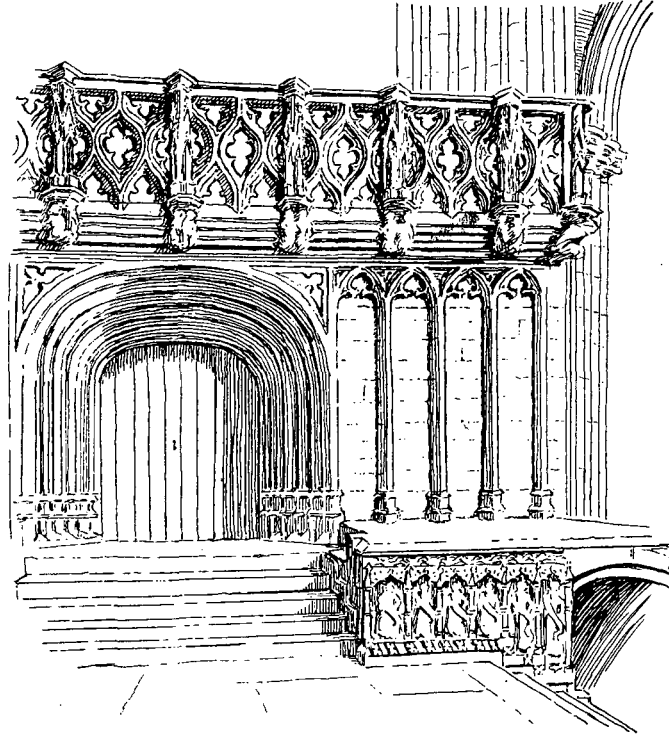


Fig. 3. Glasgow—Pulpitum, west side.

the five steps leading up to the pulpitum gate, and to some extent the side flights leading down to the crypt, actually impinge against the altars. The pulpitum is pierced by a very depressed and ornately moulded archway with shallow trefoiled panelling on either side. The parapet above is pierced by large quatrefoils, figure-corbels supporting crocketed canopies against each alternate one, but nothing rises above the horizontal top. A fifteenth-century date is proved by the moulding of the bases (though the rest retains much of the character of fourteenth-century work); the screen is doubtfully attributed to Bishop Cameron (1425-46), who built the spire. It is remarkable how it blends with the

earlier work. (Glasgow cathedral was always secular, but purely from the internal fittings it must often have been impossible to distinguish between monastic and secular cathedrals.)

At Rosslyn (fig. 4) the pulpitum is an integral part of the fabric. Its gateway is covered by an enriched architrave composed of many stones

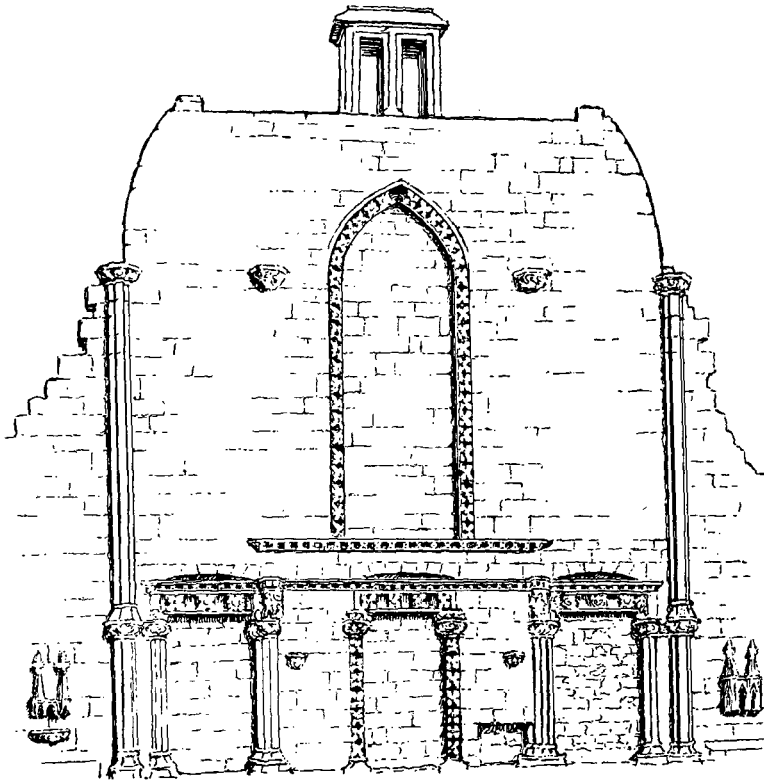


Fig. 4. Rosslyn—Pulpitum after Billings.

and protected by a relieving arch above, very similar to the openings on either side that connect the quire aisles with the site of the transept. All the openings are in the same walling, as the nave was designed to be of the same width as the quire with its aisles. A rather mysterious niche indents the west side of the wall just north of the pulpitum gate. A little way above is a very lofty arch reaching to the barrel vault of the quire, and so very narrow for its height. It seems clear that a wooden gallery was planned over the three openings, projecting into the transept and open to the quire by the tall arch. Two corbels on the level of the

springing of this arch (and also of the clearstorey eaves of the quire) were presumably for statues; no wooden fabric could possibly have sprawled up so high, and the arrangement certainly implies a rood screen with altar against it between the transept and the nave. The design is eccentric in that no quire arch of the ordinary kind, starting from the pavement, is either provided or even suggested. The enriched corbels between the lower openings would presumably have carried the timber gallery, resting on the continuous stringcourse above, which would thus have left enough solid walling to provide a parapet for the tall arch looking into the quire. The illustration is based on Billings¹ compared with the actual building.

The pulpitum at Lincluden is, like that of Rosslyn, an integral portion of the church, but it is in form a heavy stone screen crossing a quire arch of quite usual form—well moulded and resting upon clustered responds. The screen wall is plain but pierced by a gateway some 6 feet wide, its arch very nearly flat though with curved springs. Along the top of the said screen wall a cornice projects on both sides, that towards the nave carved with scenes in the birth of Christ and angels above, that towards the quire displaying foliage. The loft was reached by a turnpike stair in the angle of the quire and south transept, which also gave access to chambers above the quire, between the two stone roofs. The loft seems to have been extended by timbering toward the east. The nave, of which little remains, was short, nor is there a suggestion of any western screen.

The arrangements at Pluscarden Priory (fig. 5) are puzzling, as a pulpitum with central gateway crosses both east and west arches of the tower. Both are very massive, and obviously erected with a view of supporting the thirteenth-century tower arches, which suffered very badly in 1390 from the burning of the church by the Wolf of Badenoch. Both appear to be the work of the Benedictine prior, John de Boys, who was sent to reform the Valliscaulian convent from Dunfermline in 1460; his work is very massive, but clumsy and rough. The western arch is built up, leaving a simple segmental-headed opening about 8 feet wide with very plainly moulded edges towards the nave, which was never completed. The east arch of the crossing is built up with a huge mass of masonry which takes the form of a lancet arch about 6 feet thick, the straight walling on either side, diversified merely by two stringcourses, blanketing in the eastern responds of the north and

¹ The arrangement is rather concealed on the exterior by the addition of baptistery with organ loft above, but Macgibbon and Ross (*Eccles. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 168) give a view of the present west end as it was before the restoration of the church. A better one will be found in R. W. Billings, *Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland*, vol. iv., here reproduced with slight modifications.

south arches. A thin wall blocks the eastern face of the thick arch, this being pierced by a smaller arch having a splayed square-headed opening on either side. Above the little arch the wall thickens out on a cornice upon the west side alone. On the north this great intrusive mass of walling is penetrated by a turnpike stair opening from the jamb of the large arch and leading up to a stone gallery which crossed at the level of the springing of the smaller arch, so that it would form a pulpitum loft for the quire. This stone gallery has completely fallen; it gave the only access to a large ambry within the mass of masonry of the south side. On the flat soffit of the arch can still be seen on a sunny day traces of St John with his eagle and the apocalyptic vision with the hosts of heaven, which was much more distinct when visited by the antiquary, Charles Cordiner, late in the eighteenth century. The work is entirely unprotected from the weather. This fabric is by no means without impressiveness, but it was evidently erected by amateur builders, like so much Scottish work of its date. As the large quire is very short it seems likely that the west pulpitum was erected with a view to having the stalls under the tower, but that when the eastern arch gave increasing signs of weakness the second pulpitum was, perhaps rather hurriedly, piled up to support it. It appears entirely probable that to it we owe the preservation of the tower, now roofless but otherwise complete.

The fact that at Sweetheart the lower portion of the responds of the west tower arch are broken away seems to indicate that the stalls crossed the tower and came down into the nave (as at Winchester), but there seems to be no trace of the screen. The corbelling off of the responds of the west arch of the crossing at Dundrennan—so that they form no projection at the bottom—appears to show that the arrangement was similar at the old abbey too. At Glenluce the fact that the shaft of the south respond of the east arch of the crossing springs from



Fig. 5. Pluscarden—eastern Pulpitum.
West side.

a corbel high up indicates that, as at St Andrews, the stalls extended under the tower and into the quire.

In the thirteenth century Crosskirk (a Red or Trinitarian friary) at Peebles, in front of the inserted east wall—the lintel of whose doorway is inscribed FEIRE GOD 1656—are stones that seem to have supported an altar platform on the south, and on the north apparent foundations of a screen. The remains are far from clear, but they appear to indicate that the seventeenth-century wall is built on the foundations of a pulpitum which had an altar recessed into it on either side of its gateway.

At Restennet Priory the ancient tower, flush with the south wall of the later Augustinian church but leaving an odd space about 6 feet wide on the north, must have formed a most effective screen between quire and nave. The partition connecting the west face of the tower with the north wall may have been for the purpose of providing a back for the nave altar, which in that case would have stood considerably to the north of the centre, as appears to have been the case at St David's, Wales.

At Jedburgh Abbey, crossing the eastern edge of the east tower arch, are remains of a roughly built sixteenth-century wall from which projected westward some sort of gallery, large corbels with holes in the masonry just above them having supported its beams. The only remaining jamb is in the middle of the work and so placed that any gate into the quire must have been far to the south of the centre. This would be so unprecedented and so inconvenient for a pulpitum that it seems more likely that the wall is post-dissolution, erected to fit the building for Presbyterian services.

The slight remains of the little Carmelite church at Luffness seem to indicate that the gate of the pulpitum there was not quite in the centre.

Presumably on the site of an earlier pulpitum, at Crossraguel a new wall was built between the nave and the quire, apparently during the sixteenth century, before the dissolution of the house. This is thick enough to contain a turnpike stair, and it extends up to the gable top, supporting a bell-cote. The wall is pierced by a central door which could be protected by a wooden bar, so that the separation between quire and nave was exceptionally complete.

That the proportionally very long cruciform church of Beaulieu Priory was divided by a screen is perfectly clear from the existence in the south wall of the ambry and piscina of the nave altar. Both screens were presumably of wood. At St Duthus, Tain, sedilia in the usual position and a piscina in the middle of the south wall indicate that

even this short building of four bays formed a double church, but there is hardly room for two screens. The proportions would best suit a pulpitum with a small nave altar on either side of its gateway.

A magnificent sixteenth-century timber example of an academic pulpitum, which might well challenge comparison with anything of the kind at either Cambridge or Oxford, is to be seen at King's College, Aberdeen. Three canopied stalls on either side are returned against it and splendidly carved doors with open tracery invite admission from the antechapel. The loft above still supports the organ, though the work is very largely restored. There was probably an altar on either side of the gateway, but college chapels, not having naves, had no occasion for any second screen.

At the small Carmelite church in South Queensferry, a building of the fifteenth-century, the east tower arch was crossed by a very low stone screen, gable topped with a roll along the ridge. It was of the same build as the church and only slight sections remain, against the jambs. Doubtless the stalls were returned against it, but it seems likely that there was no second screen, nor altar in the diminutive nave, but that the building, like a parish church, was used as a whole; even so, only very small congregations could be accommodated.

In a church intended to be used as a whole, however large—nave and chancel together—the two screens were combined into one, which had to be a light structure, not seriously blocking the view; it was nearly always of wood. It is generally called the rood screen—because the great crucifix stood either upon it or was supported above—but in form it was more like a pulpitum, affording a wide gate to the chancel, which in a purely parochial building was early fitted with stalls though there was no community to occupy them. The screen was in nearly every case surmounted by a loft, but St Mary's Hospital at Chichester presents a thirteenth-century example without one, and there is another in the fifteenth-century screen at Costessey in Norfolk. Even in England chancel screens are not universal; at West Tarring, Sussex, the panelling against which the stalls are returned is finished at the level of their arms by a series of iron spikes, work of the fifteenth century—proving there was no real screen.

The single screen of light construction was, of course, the normal arrangement for a parish church, where the chancel took the place of a quire, the distinction being that, while the quire was designed for the saying of offices by a community, the chancel was set off for the clergy ministering to a congregation in the nave.

In England as a rule the rood loft is about 4 or 5 feet wide, though

there are examples, as Bere Regis, where it spread over a whole bay, affording accommodation for minstrels. In Scotland the ordinary loft would seem to have been much wider than in England, though we have to judge by rather few examples. At St John's, Perth, one of the finest of Scottish parish churches, the south-west pier of the central tower contains a turnpike stair to the belfry, and this also gave access to the rood loft; both lower and upper doors remain. Two large and

rather widely spaced corbels on either side indicate a very ample loft, which must have filled up the west arch of the crossing in a most impressive way. The work is of the fifteenth century, and a traceried screen beneath the loft may be quite safely visualised.

At Perth the rood loft was evidently part of the original design, but at Dunkeld Cathedral in the same county it was clearly an afterthought. A great rood beam rested upon the capitals of the responds of the quire arch, and the lower arch stones have been hacked away—not very neatly—to receive it. This beam clearly supported the rood, but as the arch is now walled up and the quire is mostly modern (early nineteenth century) the arrangements of screen and loft can only be conjectured. As nearly all the Scottish cathedrals had

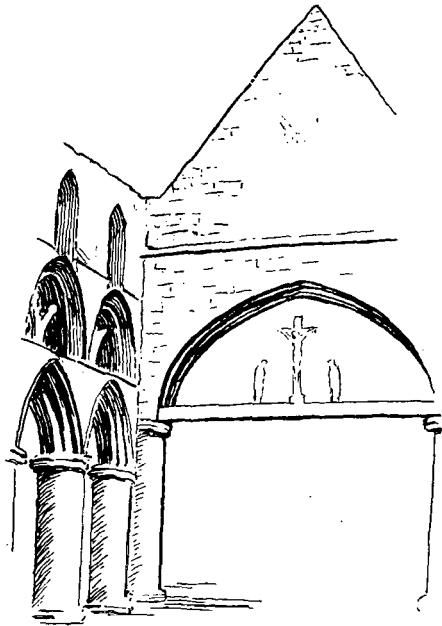


Fig. 6. Dunkeld.—Parochial arrangement in a cathedral. There are no indications of the character of the screen.

to serve as parish churches it is not so surprising as it would be in England or France to find parochial fittings in one of them; and in fact where they existed most of the mediæval arrangements have long since been removed in order that cathedrals that were originally divided may be used as single churches to-day. In France particularly it is only occasionally, as at Albi, that the original partitions survive.

The very remarkable late church at Mid-Calder, begun about 1540 by Master Peter Sandilands, the rector, and never finished, has at the west end of the chancel a heavy arch just over 8 feet wide, with a turnpike stair in the masonry of the north side. The deed by which Sir James Sandilands of Calder binds himself and his heir to complete the

building specifies: "And in the northe angell betuix the foresaid wall vnder the grete brace and northe wall of the kirk syd to rais ane commodious turngreis to serue the rud loft of the said kirk and stepill foresaid als esaly as it may be had."¹ There are clear indications of supports for loft at least as wide as the central arch (on which a small tower was projected), but two large carved corbels have been ridiculously moved to look as if they sustained the modern plaster vault of the chancel. One of these has a rather rude figure and the words PETR' FECIT; the other presents a head and shoulders supporting a shield with the Sandilands-Douglas arms. From this it seems that the rood loft, which would have formed a most striking timber gallery between chancel and nave, was projected and begun by the priestly founder. His nephew became a friend of Knox and an ardent supporter of the Reformation, and this may account for the fact that instead of having a doorway onto the loft the stair is open to it by nothing more than a small square-headed window slit. Though he finished the chancel much as was intended he discarded the rood loft, which had no use in the new services.

In the simple rectangular narrow churches of Scotland without chancel arches it was convenient to support a broad rood loft by beams extending across the building, resting upon corbels in the walls; light was often provided by windows both above and below the galleries, as at Wenhaston in Suffolk. Such corbels, for beams extending from wall to wall, are rare in England; there is an example at Hooe in Sussex. There are good Scottish examples at Greyfriars in Elgin, Fowlis Easter, and Innerpefferay, the two first belonging to the fifteenth century, the third to the early part of the sixteenth.

At Greyfriars, Elgin, there are two corbels on either side and the loft must have been about 10 feet wide at least. On the north side the gallery was lit by a two-light window, the space below having an ogee-headed single-light opening, on the south a door entered from the cloister. As the building was long in ruin no details survive, but from the existence of two little piscinas it is clear that there was a gateway through with an altar on either side. The usual British arrangement in friars' churches was a tall and narrow tower between nave and quire, almost like a tunnel in some cases. As the arch was much narrower than the nave there was space for an altar on each side. At Adare (Co. Limerick) this tower in the Franciscan convent contains the only

¹ The founder gave to his nephew, Sir James, funds for the completion of the church. The deed is printed in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. iii. p. 160, seq. (1862). It is extremely interesting from the detailed description it gives of how the church was to be completed.

door to the cloister, and there are four corbels for a wide loft, much as at Elgin, though on a more elaborate scale.

At the exceedingly interesting little church of Fowlis Easter, a simple rectangle of approximately 90 by 30 feet, the rood loft was only destroyed in 1889 during a most unfortunate restoration of the building. Its preservation till then was due to the fact that the chancel formed the burial-place of the Gray family, and so was conveniently separated from the church. The four corbels that supported the beams of the loft, two in the north wall and two in the south, may still be seen; in addition there is a lower corbel on the north which clearly supported the stair. This in Scotland was generally of wood; in England it was nearly always a turnpike of stone, even in the smallest churches. The loft was about 7 feet wide. In the south wall are windows to light it and the space immediately below—the upper square-headed, the lower trefoiled. On the north a corresponding lower window is the only one on that side of the church.

Apparently on the front of the rood beam, facing the nave, at any rate below the large painting, was a black letter inscription, which is given by James Stuart,¹ not very convincingly, “*ndo · hoc · templū · mernerō · cōstruxere · beato · Si · queras · quoto · semel · M^o · c · quad · t · iii · Anno · quo · fuit · is · rome · ceu · dūs · pegre.*” This he proposes to render, “They built this church to the blessed Merinochus. If you ask, in regard to time, in the year 1143. In which year he was called to Rome as Pope.” Dalgetty, modifying this reading of the Latin, gives the far better rendering. Andrew Lord Gray and his Lady “built this church to Saint Marnock: if you ask when, in 1453, the year in which he was abroad as ambassador at Rome.” The lettering seems to belong to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The existing church was built by Sir Andrew Gray in the fifteenth. No portion seems earlier.

The screen was presumably flush with the east face of the loft, which thus projected towards the nave in the usual way. A splendid example of such a screen in an aisleless nave with its two side altars complete may still be seen in the beautiful church of St Helen at Ranworth among the Norfolk Broads, but that fine East Anglican example has a grace and finish to which Fowlis can hardly aspire; while the English details are very different indeed.

The beautiful gates of the Fowlis screen have below solid linen panelling; open tracery of very late flowing character forms the middle

¹ In a very interesting little work, *Historical Sketches of the Church and Parish of Fowlis Easter*, printed in Dundee, 1865. A later work on the building by Arthur B. Dalgetty, *History of the Church of Fowlis Easter*, 1933, suggests (p. 44) that the screen was about 5 feet east of the loft, but gives no convincing reason for this most improbable theory.

panels, and above pinnacles are treated as balusters, rather widely spaced to afford a view of the high altar from the nave. They are now moved to the west end. Macgibbon and Ross (*Eccles. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 197) give a good illustration. On either side of the gates were paintings on oaken boards that must have formed the backings for the two nave altars under the loft. These are very fragmentary, and one appears to be a palimpsest. Among the subjects represented is the descent from the cross.

Above the loft the screen was formed of a really very fine painting of the crucifixion (13 feet 3 inches by 5 feet 3 inches), surmounted by figures of saints. The large painting, which formed a rather unusual rood—for this, as a rule, consisted of an actual crucifix, with sometimes side figures as well—represents the scene on Calvary in great detail. The colouring is wonderfully vivid—despite Protestant whitewash, now removed—the very numerous figures are rather crowded together, including several horses; but the work is really spirited, and the whole appears to throb with life as a mounted centurion exclaims “Vero filius dei erat iste”—“Truly this was the Son of God.”

The character of the work is Flemish, and though it is hardly a masterpiece the general effect is exceedingly striking. It is painted upon eighteen oaken boards, which had to be taken down one by one. Above ¹ this painting was a series of portraits, extending for exactly the same width and rising 1 foot and 7 inches above. James Stuart, who saw them in position, enumerates fifteen—armed figure with eagle, St Peter, St John, St Andrew, St Paul, St Matthew, St Thomas, St Catherine, St Philip, St James, St Bridget, Simon Zelotes, the painter, and two monks. Those that still remain, placed like all the other paintings against the walls of the church, are identified as St Catherine of Alexandria, St Matthias, St Thomas, St Simon, St John Evangelist, Christ, St Peter, St Antony, St James the less, St Paul, St Ninian.

This splendid screen must have shut off the chancel from the nave as completely as does an eikonostasis in an eastern church. Its wanton destruction is greatly to be regretted as it does not seem that anything very like it survives elsewhere. No such large paintings belonging to a rood screen appear to exist in the British Isles, but in more magnificent surroundings slightly similar ones may be seen in the great Marienkirche at Lübeck.

The effect must have been greatly enhanced by the fact that the church walls were also covered with paintings representing the life of

¹ It should be noted that James Thomson in an unpublished *Tours through Parts of Forfar, Perth, and Fifeshires*, 1833, says that the saints were then beneath the crucifixion.

Christ which existed in the memory of an old inhabitant with whom Mr Stuart had a talk. It is deplorable that this most interesting church should have survived the storms of the Reformation only to meet with such rough treatment during the nineteenth century.

At the most interesting but not very beautiful late church at Innerpeffray (near Crieff), a simple rectangle some 80 by 27 feet, begun in 1508, a pulpitum gallery about 15 feet wide crossed the centre of the

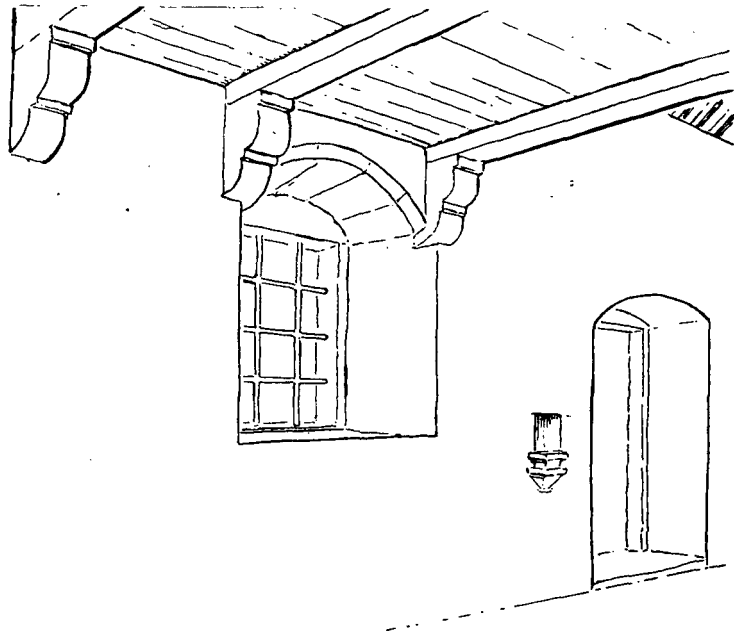


Fig. 7. Innerpeffray—Loft looking south-west (restored).

building (fig. 7). On the south the three corbels on which the beams rested still survive, the depressed arch of a window that lit the space below the loft abutting against two of them. Only one remains on the north; the other two were removed to make way for a monument. Across the church, close to the west end, is a plain chamfered round arch whose jambs retain the holes for a screen. That this was not an open one seems to be indicated by the existence of a hagioscope through the wall just south of the arch; the fact that this appears to be intended to afford a view of the high altar (which is still in place against the east wall) may indicate that here the rood screen was liberally pierced.

As the church had four altars¹ there must have been one on each side of its doorway; these probably stood under the loft (see plan, fig. 1).

It is safe to assume that variety and charm was given to most or all of the plain long churches² of Scotland by these wide corbelled lofts with open screens below. They were probably placed relatively far west and they suited the lines of the building.³

Where (as at Dunkeld, fig. 6) a chancel arch is still intact, traces of the rood screen and loft are not uncommon. The Norman arch at Dalmeny has its capitals hacked about and roughly channelled for a wide loft which was obviously supported by a wooden screen. It was clearly late work and (as is so often the case in England) very little care was taken to make a neat job of the junction of wood and stone. At St Fillan's, Aberdour, another church of Norman date, the abaci of the chancel arch are cut through and holes are made in the outer order of the arch for the insertion of a rood beam. At the fifteenth-century collegiate church of Dunglass the soffit of the east tower arch, immediately above the abaci on each side, is morticed for the rood beam, which was probably contemporary. At the fifteenth-century ruined church of Muthill the chancel arch has no responds; in the soffit each side is a hole for the rood beam and on the north side the stone above is pared away for some part of the loft or screen.

Parclose screens, separating chapels and aisles, which in England are a magnificent feature of many great churches, have in Scotland left hardly a trace. At the fourteenth-century south aisle of Fortrose Cathedral—whose most conspicuous feature is what looks exactly like a rood turret, though it did not serve any such purpose—there are ruined tombs beneath the weather-worn arches which suggest the glories of Tewkesbury quire; but this stands almost alone. This aisle has the appearance of having been a separate church. At Carlisle, Chichester, and Norwich parts of the cathedrals were parochial.

At Torphichen Priory during the fifteenth century timber screens were placed across the west, north, and south arches of the crossing. The former was a most clumsy piece of work. The middle shafts of the fine old Norman arch are removed on either side, and in the jambs behind are square holes to receive the screen about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the ground.

¹ D. Philips, *Chronicles of Strathearn*, Crieff, 1896, quoted by Macgibbon and Ross, *Eccles. Arch. Scot.*, vol. iii. p. 513. The fourth altar was probably in the sacristy.

² Such as the monastic ones of Beaully and Greyfriars, Elgin, or such parochial buildings as Fowlis Wester and Gamrie, Banffshire.

³ A chancel arch inserted in the church of Fowlis Wester during a recent restoration looks strangely out of place.

As it seems too narrow to have been pierced by a door the screen probably formed the back for the altar of the nave. The south arch has a deep channel cut through the bases and there are oblong holes about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet up (fig. 8); the north arch has its bases hacked about and there are separate mortices some 5 and 8 feet respectively from the ground. Presumably another screen crossed the east tower arch with the quire stalls stretching beyond.

As a rule we get little help as to the arrangements of screens from

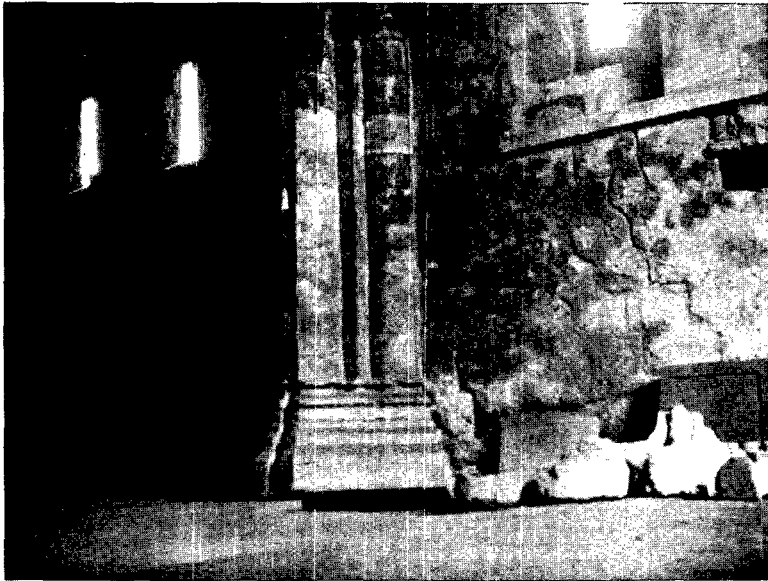


Fig. 8. Torphichen—South transept arch showing channelling for screen.

mediæval documents. Bower, however, gives an interesting account of the plundering of the pilgrimage shrine at Whitekirk during the burnt Candlemas of 1356.¹ An English freebooter jumping on to the high altar at Quhytkirk snatched a ring from the statue of the virgin and violently broke off a finger. Then, placing his foot on the head of the image, he got up into a loft (*solarium*) above and stole certain valuables deposited there for safety, which he threw down to accomplices in the quire (*in choro*). Unfortunately the present building is about a century later; the east end has the not uncommon Scottish peculiarity of no east window (or only a tiny one high up), but no gallery of any kind. Apparently the church that existed in the fourteenth century had some

¹ *Scotichronicon*, Fordun and Bower, ed. Walter Goodall, 1759, lib. xiv. cap. xiv. vol. ii. p. 355.

sort of triforium crossing the east end, or possibly that part was double with a roof across half-way up, as may still be seen at the Norman church of Compton, near Guildford. The solarium can hardly have been any sort of pulpitum or rood loft, as when the scoundrels were leaving the chancel (*cancellarium*) there suddenly fell from above an image of the crucified, as if to avenge his mother, and the ringleader received a mortal injury. There can be little doubt that it was the rood that fell down; very likely it was suspended from the chancel arch.

Some of the finest of English screens are post-Reformation work, particularly at Oxford and Cambridge. In Scotland we have very few. At Falkland Palace the antechapel is partitioned off by a fine seventeenth-century screen, displaying panels below and turned balusters, delightfully varied, above. The character is entirely classic. In St Olaf's Church at Kirkwall is a screen formed of carved cornices and panels in relief made up from the episcopal gallery erected in the cathedral by Bishop George Graham in the reign of Charles I.; but these seem to stand nearly alone.

Scottish church screens are few. Even if only slight traces be counted the total hardly exceeds forty or fifty. In England the corresponding number must run far into the thousands. At least half her mediæval churches retain some memory of screens. But all these naturally fall into a few obvious groups, while the scanty surviving Scottish screens are so miscellaneous in character that they obstinately refuse to be classified. In both countries, however, it is clear that the screen and not the altar was by far the most conspicuous feature of a mediæval church or chapel, whether parochial, monastic, cathedral, collegiate, academic, or domestic.

This is not without a certain appropriateness, for while an altar of some sort is the common property of almost every faith in the world (except Islam) the rood loft and screen are wholly and exclusively Christian. They were developed purely in the Christian service; they have no analogy in the fabrics of any other religion on earth.

General help from Professor Hamilton Thompson and James S. Richardson is gratefully acknowledged. I am also much indebted for information about Fowlis Easter to our fellow, Mackenzie Shaw, W.S., who remembers the rood loft as a boy, and to Rev. John Burr, of Bowden, who was actually present when the work was destroyed in 1889. I am indebted to another Fellow, Leslie Hunter, for useful information.