

## THE SCREEN



2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011

*The earliest mention of the screen was in the parish magazine 1869*

So said the Reverend Barker in 1890 in his *Eardisland: its Church and Antiquities*. In that booklet<sup>1</sup> Reverend Barker repeats a *brief account of the antecedent history of the church, so far as the Archaeologist can divine* which he says was furnished to him by *Mr Curzon*. Mr Henry Curzon was the Architectural Superintendant of the restoration of the church in 1864. Of the screen Mr Curzon said:

*The chantry screen now placed before the organ is a good example of the woodwork of the fifteenth century.*

It was still in that position in circa 1867.<sup>2</sup>

The Reverend Barker's wording was almost exactly copied by Kelly's Directory in 1895: *...the chantry screen, now placed before the organ, is a good example of 15<sup>th</sup> century woodwork.*

Not very much more recently, in 1903, George Marshall visited the church and recorded: *Across the modern organ recess in N. wall is a nice carved 15<sup>th</sup> cent. screen – originally across the chancel arch.*<sup>3</sup>

The next most recent source to cover this topic is *Record Book*.<sup>4</sup> This was compiled by the Reverend Birley, who was Vicar of Eardisland from 1917 to 1938.

Birley mentions the screen twice on the same page, but under different headings. Under the heading *Faculty Seats* [the first three lines of what follows overleaf] then *The Oak Screen*.

<sup>1</sup> Reprint of his Paper in WFC 1890-92.

<sup>2</sup> Reverend Barker's Notebook. HRO BR67/13, page 4.

<sup>3</sup> HRO BM81/1/19, folio 123L.

<sup>4</sup> HRO BR67/23.

Burton Court also apparently held a large pew on the South side of the Nave, which was screened off by the oak screen now standing in the Tower Arch.

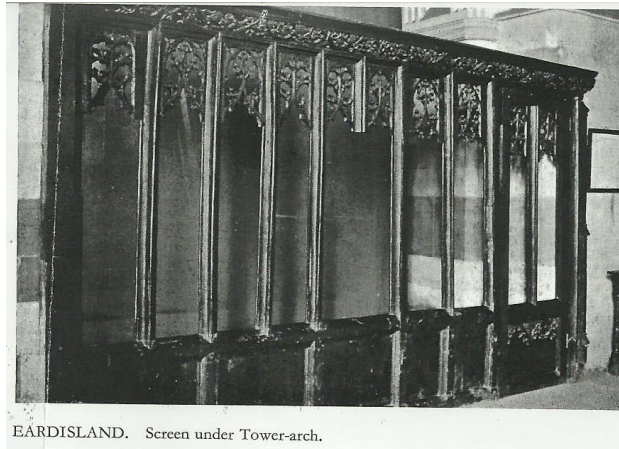
The Oak Screen appears originally to have been the Parclose Screen of a Chantry on the North-east of the Nave. (N.B. Before the restoration the Chancel arch was quite small and therefore the walls much wider.) After the removal of the Chantry Altar the screen remained and enclosed the Burton Court pew. It was at that time painted white. At the restoration the paint was cleaned off, though traces of it still remain, and the screen was removed to the Chancel where it stood in front of the organ, but a mullion was cut out in order that a seat for the Organist might be fixed. On the erection of the existing organ in 1920 the screen was removed to the Tower arch, where it could be fixed without any further mutilation. The screen does not appear to have been a Chancel or Rood Screen (as some suppose), as there is no indication of an entrance and there are no mortice marks for the Rood Figures.

In the context of the dates he quotes for the other entries, which I do not show, under the heading *Faculty seats*, he is talking about the period 1736-1814. In fact the earlier 'box' pews remained until the major alterations of 1864/65. This was the time of the *restoration* [of the building] to which Birley referred under his other heading *The Oak Screen*.

By the time the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments made its Report, published in 1934, the Screen was indeed *under tower-arch*. The Report both describes the screen and includes a photograph of it in that position:

marks and assembly numerals. *Screen* (Plate 77): Now under tower-arch, of eight narrow bays with a modern door incorporating old material at N. end, close lower panels and open upper panels with foiled ogee and traceried heads, moulded posts and cornice with running vine-ornament, probably late 15th-century. *Sedilia* (Plate

"Plate 77" referred to here is overleaf:



The only reference to the screen after 1934 is found at page 73 of the WI Book (1956) which predominantly only regurgitates what the Reverend Birley said in his *Record Book* :

*The beautiful Fifteenth century screen appears to have originally been the Parclose screen of a Chantry on the North-east of the nave, and after the removal of the Chantry altar the screen remained and enclosed the large Burton Court pew<sup>5</sup> and was at that time painted white. At the restoration of 1864 the paint was cleaned off and the screen removed to the Chancel, where it stood in front of the organ. On the erection of the existing organ, in 1920 it was removed to the tower arch, where it still stands.*

Its final move, to the position illustrated at the start of this Paper, took place in 1999<sup>6</sup>. It is positioned north-south across the nave, not far east of the entrance to the church. Only the north portion of the present screen is from the early screen, the south portion having been made by local craftsmen in imitation of the old in 1999.

Opinions differ as to the type of screen it was when first made. Whether it was a Parclose Screen or a Chancel Screen will have dictated its position in the church when it was first erected.

I myself have no expertise in this field of knowledge and am in no position to express an opinion.

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<sup>5</sup> The Burton Court pew was almost certainly on the south side of the nave, close by the finialed tomb arch there which still exists. The WI authors may well have taken this information from the Birley *Record Book*. See pages 1-2 of this.

<sup>6</sup> It was installed as part of a millennium project at the instigation of Barry Freeman. When it was previously across the tower arch, as shown at the top of this page, between it and the ringing chamber was a heavy curtain enclosing a very small robing area. The 1999 millennium project also included the construction of a staircase-ladder serving all stages of the bell tower. Part of the ladder previously used is still (July 2018) in the ringing chamber. Three rows of pews were removed to make space for the resited screen.

