

# St Andrew's Church, Colebrook

The five bay aisle rood screen (Fig.1) displays many features one would associate with 15th- and 16th-century Breton workmanship. These included linenfold panels in the dado, spiky 'dentelle' tracery above the dado (which echoes lacework patterns from Brittany), spiral turned shafts with a reversal in direction at the ring mid point, double doors supported by a framework comprising a relatively flat door head incorporating small ogee arches at their centre point and mortise holes in the uprights (Fig.2) which were originally intended to facilitate the application of ornamental carvings which are now lost. Linenfold panelling is a common 16th-century feature found in many Brittany churches such as those at Lamballe, Lanmeur, Plelauff, Chapelle Notre Dame de Kerfons, and Ploubezre.



Fig. 1 St Andrew's, Colebrook, Devon. The five-bay rood screen; note the linen-fold panels



Fig. 2. St Andrew's, Colebrook, Devon. Note the holes in the uprights onto which carvings were fixed

The parclose screen at Colebrook, separating the choir from the side chapel (Fig. 3), also includes typical Breton woodwork features such as the spiky 'dentelle' tracery, linenfold panels in the dado, elaborate French butterfly hinges supporting the doors in the screen (Fig. 4) and finials applied at irregular intervals to the top of the cresting rail which are not aligned with the uprights below.

Another important feature at St Andrew's is the 16th-century prieu-dieu (Fig. 5) with one of its outward facing bench ends depicting a wild man or woodwose holding a forked club which has many similarities to male and female figures depicted on the parclose screen at Loc Envel in Brittany.



Fig. 4 St Andrew's, Colebrook, Devon. French style wrought-iron butterfly hinge



Fig. 3 St Andrew's, Colebrook, Devon. The parclose screen



Fig. 5 St Andrew's, Colebrook, Devon. The early 16th-century carved oak prieu-dieu

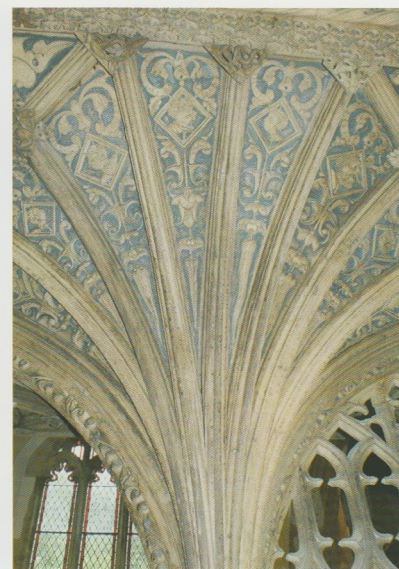


Fig. 6 (above left) St Thomas of Canterbury, Lapford, Devon. The early 16th-century eight-bay rood screen

Fig. 7 (above right) St Thomas of Canterbury, Lapford, Devon. The carved oak ribs that originally supported the rood loft; note the traces of blue paint (photo: Don White)

Fig. 8 (left) St Thomas of Canterbury, Lapford, Devon. Carved oak bench end

Fig. 9 (right) St Thomas of Canterbury, Lapford, Devon. Carved oak bench end



## St Thomas of Canterbury, Lapford

The 16th-century eight-bay rood screen (Fig. 6) that stretches across the nave and aisle include a series of delicately carved bands of foliage forming an integral part of an extraordinary carved rib coving which would have originally supported the rood loft. Within this rib coving Renaissance style figureheads were carved within roundels and diamond frames. The surviving blue background colour emphasises their visual impact (Fig. 7). Evidence still survives of the historic application of paintwork to the rood screen surfaces in all of the three churches we visited.

In a traditional English manner tracery carvings and other mouldings at a lower level have been applied to the flat panels in the dado.

Numerous early, carved pew bench-ends with moulded surrounds still survive throughout the church. Two bench ends include a combination of female and male heads carved in a typical Renaissance manner (Fig. 8) and on another bench end a carved figure is depicted applying a cat of nine tails while a subtle depiction of a face below grimaces (Fig. 9).



Fig. 10 St Mathew, Coldridge, Devon. The twelve-bay, carved and turned oak rood screen

## St Matthew, Coldridge

At Coldridge the 16th-century twelve-bay rood screen (c. 530–50), across the chancel and aisles (Fig. 10), includes bands of delicate and densely carved foliage, comprising vine leaves and bunches of grapes, which are integral to the rib coving (Fig. 11) and clustered shafts that would have originally supported a rood loft. Although such bands or scrolls of foliage are often integral to rood screens in southwest England a few surviving examples are to be found in Brittany at Locmaria and Lanmeur. Each bay has tracery above the dado, which is made up of flat panels decorated with applied mouldings.

The earlier five bay parclose screen across the south side of the Evans Chantry also incorporates a number of Breton features such as the 'dentelle' tracery, linenfold panels within the dado in a similar manner to Colebrook together with an irregular juxtaposition of stubby finials relative to the uprights below the cresting rail to originally support decorative carvings.

By the mid-16th century and subsequent stages of the Reformation, the demand for Breton woodworkers to construct rood screens and lofts would have been curtailed especially when the destruction of screens and lofts was occurring elsewhere in England. This was matched on the continent by one of the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–63) forbidding any further construction of church screens.

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Fig. 11 St Mathew, Coldridge, Devon. The oak ribs of the rood screen