



MOULTON CHURCH, ROOD-SCREEN FROM THE WEST.

THE ROOD-SCREEN OF MOULTON CHURCH,  
LINCOLNSHIRE.

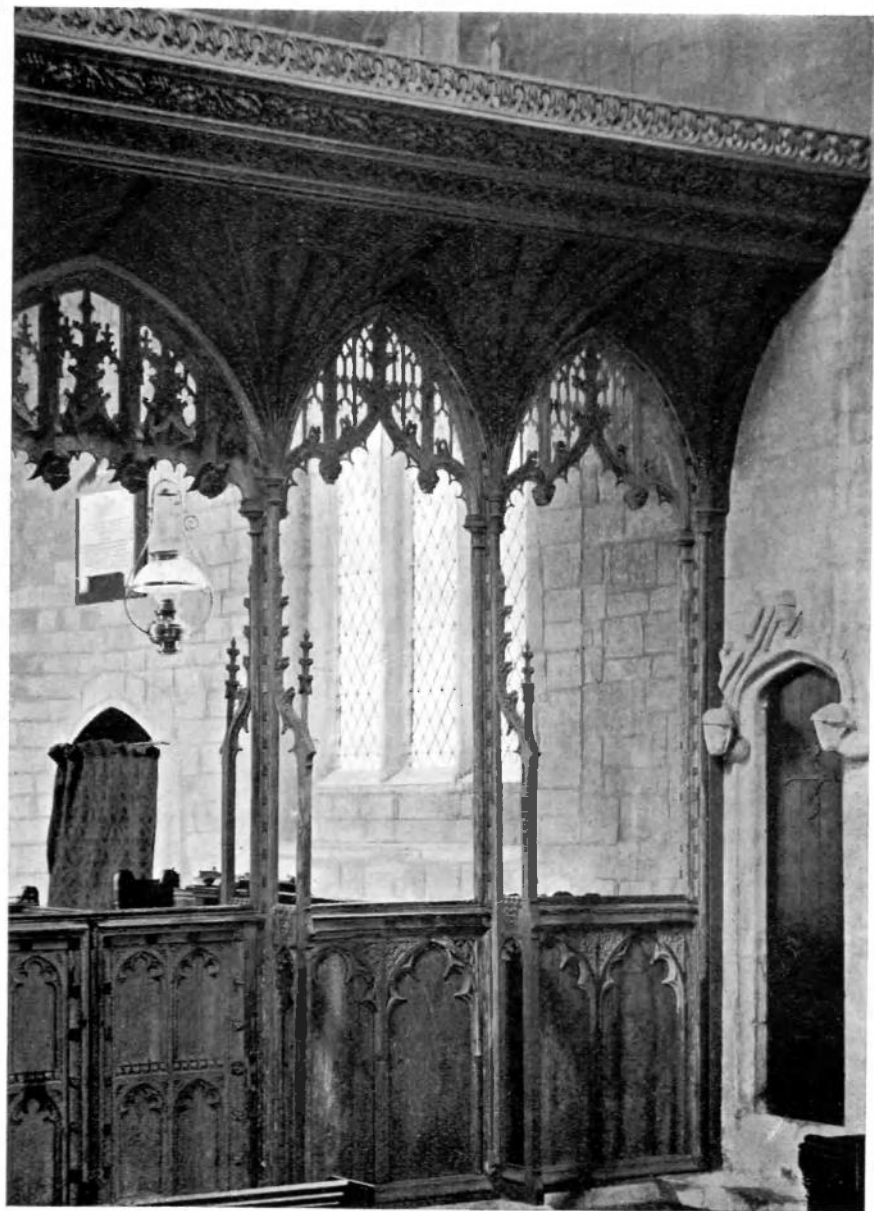
By AYMER VALLANCE.

The oak rood-screen, an extraordinarily beautiful example of early Perpendicular work, dates apparently from the first quarter of the fifteenth century. It is "restored," but not to such excess as to have destroyed certain rare and interesting peculiarities. The screen comprises five bays, of which the middle one, forming the chancel entrance, and protected still by gates of original work (perhaps cut down from loftier doors) centres at 5 ft. 1 in. The two bays on either hand have an average centring of 3 ft. 8 in. each. The total length of the screen is 19 ft. 8 in.

The wainscot at the bottom stands 4 ft. 0½ in. high, or, including a modern stone plinth, 4 ft. 5 in. The head of the wainscoting is enriched, in familiar fashion, with carved and cinquefoiled ornament, which, however, is articulated differently from the general usage of screens, inasmuch as it is executed with the grain running vertically, an exceptional treatment; moreover, it has no joint at the cord-line, but some seven inches lower, or altogether 20 inches from the top of the ornament. A moulded vertical strip, running in continuation from the head ornament down to the bottom, divides the wainscoting of each bay into two panels. The spandrels of the head ornament are solid and sculptured with various subjects, as follow in order from north to south: 1. a five-petalled flower; 2. a lion's head and forepaws; 3. a lion's head; 4. a five-petalled flower; 5. three birds pecking at a sheaf of corn; 6 and 7. dragons; 8. a bird. South of the gates are: 9. a griffin; 10. a bearded man's head, the brow encircled by a fillet, with rosettes; 11. a pair of dragons, their necks intertwined; 12. a griffin; and the rest, 13 to 16 inclusive, conventional Gothic foliage. The middle rail is moulded, having, across the side bays, though not along the top of the gates, a sunk horizontal void

space,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch high, from which all the ornament has disappeared. It may have contained either an inscription, or else a sculptured leafage trail, like that which yet occupies a corresponding position in Bratoft church parclofes.

Above the middle rail the two-centred openings are not subdivided by minor muntins; but the pierced tracery, which fills the fenestration heads to the depth of 30 inches from the apex, has well-defined vertical divisions, four in each side bay and five in the middle bay. The tracery of the side bays is all of one uniform design, but that over the entrance is totally distinct, and comprises a series of five shallow hoods or canopies, groined in miniature underneath, to simulate vaulting. The "restored" demi-angels at the pendent extremities between each hood are neither better nor worse than the generality of modern "Gothic" figure sculpture. The treatment of the fenestration traceries is remarkable for two reasons: firstly, because it is fretted in the flat board, the edges of the perforations being without the customary mouldings; and secondly, because the crockets and finials, with which the subarcuation is enriched, are worked in the same board out of the solid. This mode of construction is at once more laborious and more organically sound than that, subsequently developed and adopted generally, of superimposing separate pieces of relief carving, not integral, and on that account the more liable to become damaged, or detached and lost. The fenestration tracery springs, just as the vaulting itself naturally springs, from polygonal moulded and embattled caps; only the level of the vault springing (5 ft.  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in. above the middle rail) is 5 inches above the level of the cord-line. The caps in the jambs of the fenestration have all been renewed in conjectural restoration of the originals. They rest on an inner order, which exactly corresponds with the boutel shafts on the face of the uprights, and is carried down the jambs to the middle rail and along the top edge of the latter in a continuous bead-moulding. This is an uncommon device in screen-work, but something very like its counterpart in stone occurs in the cloister of Brown's Hospital at Stamford. Between the boutel and the bead there runs round each arched opening a shallow cavetto, occupied at short



MOULTON CHURCH, SOUTH PART OF ROOD-SCREEN, FROM THE NORTH-WEST.

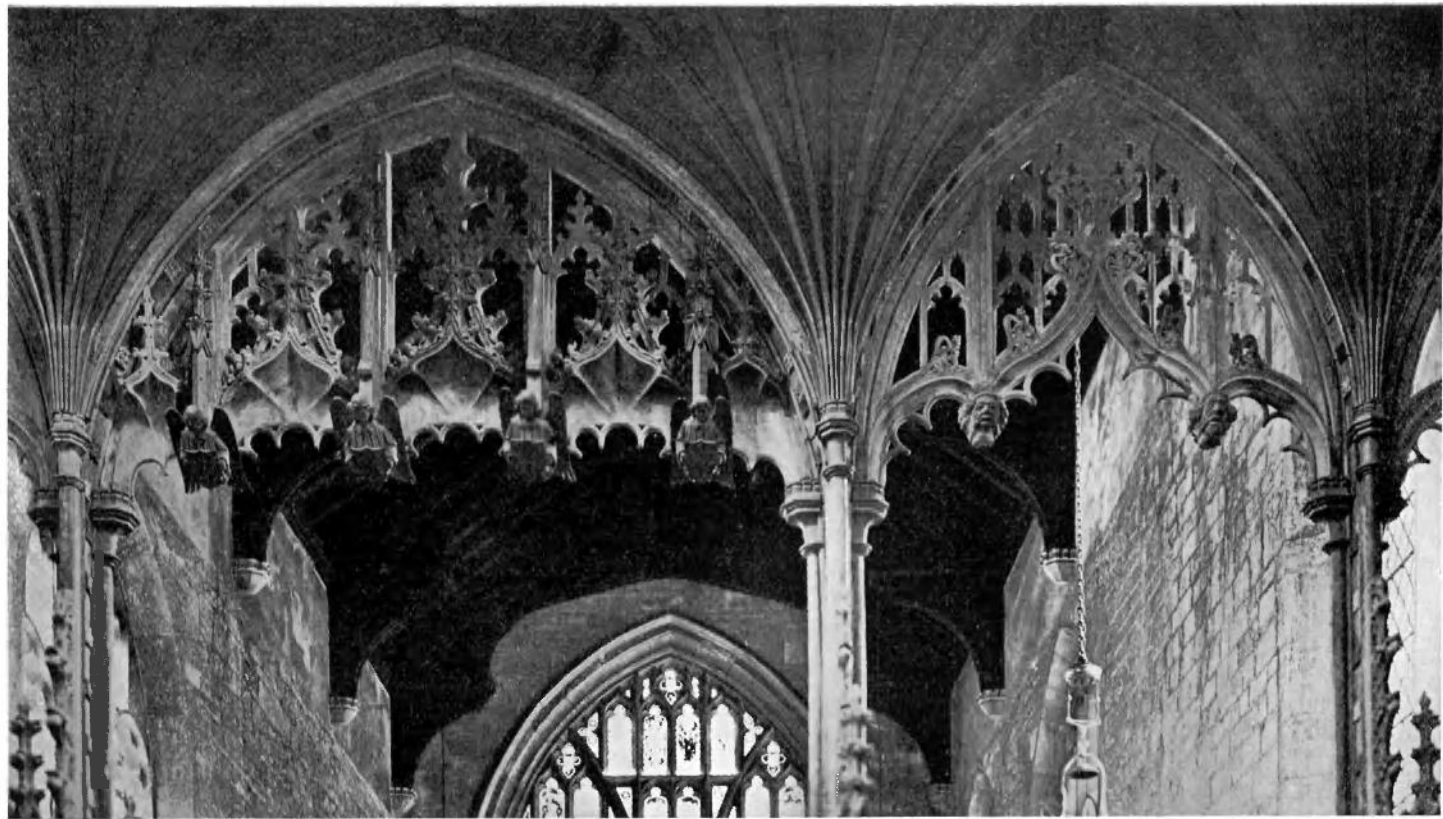
intervals by Gothic square pateras, the majority of them renewed. A similar cavetto with pateras runs all round the frame of both gates. The latter are divided by a vertical moulding and an embattled transom into four panels apiece, the panels occupying thus two tiers, and having, each of them, cinquefoil cusping in the head. The effect of the whole composition is much enhanced by graceful flying buttresses, attached to the main uprights and projecting almost as far as 15 inches in advance of the axial line of the screen. Minute traces of red and blue prove that formerly the surface of the woodwork was decorated in polychrome.

In the south wall of the chancel, at about two feet distant from the screen, projects a plain stone corbel, the level of which is some 13 feet above the nave floor. From its position this corbel seems to have had some connection with the support of the now long destroyed rood-loft. The same remark applies to two moulded stone corbels, both embattled round their upper edge, in the wall of the nave, and in the eastern abutment of the north arcade. One of these brackets is close to the respond cap of the arcade, its level being 9 ft. 8 in. above the floor. The other, nearer to the screen, and serving to support the modern overhanging vault, is 3 ft. 8 in. higher than the neighbouring corbel, or 13 ft. 4 in. above the nave floor. There has been no attempt to replace the demolished vaulting on the eastward side of the screen. The total height of the screen, as "restored," is 15 feet from the nave floor, or, exclusive of the stone plinth underneath, about 14 ft. 3 in.

The rood-stair is entered from the nave in the eastern abutment wall of the south arcade, through a four-centred doorway, 1 ft. 11 in. wide by 6 ft. 5 in. high. Over the latter is a crocketed ogee-shaped over-door, now much mutilated, with a head and bust (the features not unlike Henry IV's) in the middle, and a coarsely executed head for label-termination at either side. The doorway is fitted with a modern door, opening inwards onto the stairs. The steps mount turning on a stone newel; but the issue onto the rood-loft has been obliterated, probably at the rebuilding of the new chancel-arch, the church having been subjected to a thorough process of "restoration"

in 1867-1868. The staircase, cylindrical internally, is contained partly within the hollow of the wall and partly in a rood-turret. The presence of the stair is evidenced in the south aisle by a slight filling of the north-east corner of the same, the additional masonry being carried on a concave squinch, like a miniature arch, springing about 4 ft. 6 in. above the floor level. Externally a polygonal rood-turret stands in the re-entering angle between the chancel and the south aisle. The turret is embattled at the top, and is girdled by a string-course in the hollow moulding of which are, at intervals, square pateras, formed each of a group of four convex pellets. The stair is lit from without by a quatrefoil window, the cusped spandrels of which contain each three pellets, like those in the string-course. Above the quatrefoil is a narrow rectangular loop.

It may be mentioned that a rough drawing by Mr. Hanslip Fletcher, showing the screen as it was previously to "restoration," was published in the *Transactions of the Associated Architectural Societies*, xx (1890).



MOULTON CHURCH. DETAIL OF ROOD-SCREEN.