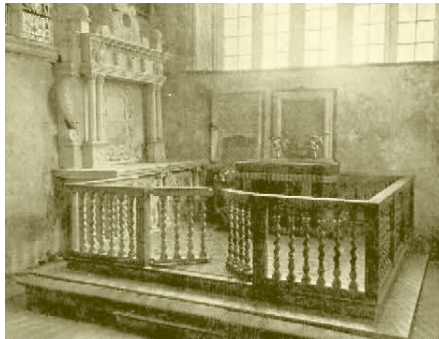


Did You Know? An Anglican Glossary

Altar Rails



Above: Altar at Branscombe. Devon
Below: Puritan Enthusiasm, 1543.

Altar rails were installed to protect altars when roodscreens or chancel screens that divided the altar area from the nave were removed from churches in the 16th century. The rails were one of many targets for the anger of the Puritans. They disliked the idea that the altar was somehow sacred and destroyed the rails along with other hated objects.

In 1654 Archbishop Laud ordered altars to be restored to the east wall (They had been banished to the body of the church) and that altar rails be placed around them. However, in 1641 Parliament ordered the rails removed, and they were not put back until the Restoration in 1660.