

A Survey of Kent by Richard Kilburne
- A topographie or survey of the County of Kent 1659 -

BIRCHINTON

Birchingstone lieth at the North east side of the County nere the Sea, in the Isle of Thanet, about six miles (towards the North) distant from Sandwich, in the Bailiwick of Bridge and Petham, Lath of St Augustine, and East division of the County, it is a member of the Town and Port of Dovor, and within the division of the Justices of the same, the liberty of St Augustine claimeth there and the Liberty of the late Dean of Canterbury claimeth over so much thereof as is in the Mannour of Brokesend, [being given to that Church by King Hen. 8 in the 33th year of his reigne]; but the liberty of the Cinque Ports and of the aforesaid Town and Port claim over the same: it was in the Deanery of west Beere and Diocess of Canterbury.

In the time of King Hen. 8 it was questioned to be assessed in the subsidies (as lying in the forraign) but (to take away the question) that King, by letters patents, united the same to Dovor.

** Gorend is in the Parish and antiently had a Church standing at the Sea side, but the decay of the Cliffe nere thereunto ruined the same, and forced the Inhabitants to build the Church now standing (which was called All-Saints).

Anciently this Parish was called sometimes Birchington in Gorend, and at other times Gorend in Birchington, but this day is all one, and most usually called Birchington.

This Gorend is conceived to have been the first place that was united to Dover, and hath so been ever since the time of King Edw. 1.

[The spelling of the original copy from Kilburne's Survey had been adhered to.]

** The theory that there was once a church at Gorend was a misreading of the 1414 map by Thomas of Elmham. The church that was mistaken for Gorend church was, in fact, standing and active at **Shuart**, just north of St Nicholas-at-Wade, until c. 1475. Services ceased to be held there about this date and the building was slowly vandalised for its good building stone and timber beams (some of which can be seen in Shuart Farmhouse and farm buildings).

In his 'Survey', Richard Kilburn states that Birchington's Church **was built with these stones** – but it was no longer in need of further additions by that date. There was already a nave and small chancel by 1250. Then in c. 1250 the SE tower was constructed, the chancel was rebuilt and Quex and St Margaret's Chapels were all added. These were followed by half aisles on the north and south of the nave, and a new steeple placed on the tower in the 1350s. Finally the south porch was added in c. 1450. No new work was done until 1910, when the two vestries were added in memory of Bishop Charles Ellicott of Gloucester. The church at Shuart gradually 'disappeared' into oblivion, until the drought of 1976, when parch marks in the fields near Shuart Farmhouse appeared and encouraged a systematic excavation of the site. The foundations of the old church were uncovered, indicating similar measurements to All Saints Birchington.