

Upper Gore End Barn:

The barn is part of a farm complex on the western end of Birchington. The farm was given to St John's College Cambridge in the will of Henry Robinson in 1642.¹ When researching the old farmhouse last year, the writer realised that although the barn looked very unprepossessing from the outside, on closer inspection, it was a much older than it first appeared. The great span of its slate roof is very imposing, but it sits on brick walls that seem too small to hold so huge a structure. With the help of Nick Dermott, Thanet Council's Conservation Architect, the barn is now a Grade II listed building.

The schedule states: -

Exterior:

"Former threshing barn.

Northernmost three and a half bays probably C 16, southernmost three bays late C17 with some re-cladding and re-raftering in the mid C19.

Aisled timber framed barn clad in brickwork on part flint plinth.

Slate roof, half-hipped to the south and hipped to the north.

Southwest end has late C17 brickwork on flint plinth and weatherboarded, half-hipped gable with two openings, with iron pintle hinges.

Northwest elevation is clad in C19 English bond brickwork, with alternate courses of red and yellow brickwork, two cart entrances and three brick buttresses.

Southeast elevation has similar brickwork, two cart entrances and two C20 brick and one concrete buttresses.

Interior: Six and a half bays long. Northernmost three and a half bays are the earliest, probably C16 in date.

Jowled arcade posts with passing braces, tie beams with curved windbrace and collar beams with windbraces.

Some timbers still retain the bark.

The structure was extended by three bays to the south, probably in the late C17.² This section has upright posts without jowls, passing braces, tie beams with curved windbraces, but the roof structure has staggered side purlins and ridgepiece. Some timbers have been re-used and some rafters replaced in the C19 and C20.

Some of the internal southern walls appeared to have late C17 brickwork, but were not entirely visible, because of stacked boxes at the time of inspection."

The barn lies on an exposed part of Thanet and could well have suffered damage from high winds, as it has done in more modern times. When the bricks in the walling were inspected recently, it was realised that the top two rows had been shaped to fit under the old rafters, indicating that the rafters were there first, standing on a timber frame. When this began to cause problems, new brick walls was put in to replace the rotting lower framework.

¹ Document held in St John's College Cambridge

² In a lease for re-letting the farm in 1739, Richard Wilson was granted the lease on condition that he build a 'new barn'. From the evidence we see today, it appears that he only repaired the old one.

When Thomas Hill drew up the plans for the farm, it was being leased to a new tenant in 1679 and consisted of a large number of isolated plots of land dispersed around the village in a similar spread to the map drawn up for the sale of Church Hill Farm in 1688. This pattern appears to be a consequence of the devastation caused by the Black Death, when so many small land holdings were left untended. Men like Henry Robinson probably inherited some of these pieces, but also added to them.