

Birchington 1400 – 1800

Medieval Birchington was a tight-knit community based around the church and the triangular green at the crossroads in what we now call the Square. There were also a number of dwellings down the hill south of the church, connected with the farms that stood there. Among them were Church Hill Farm, Street Farm and South End Farm and buildings from the last two farms are still standing. The trackway that led to Gore End had two farms, Upper Gore End and Lower Gore End, as well as the cottage later known as Gore End Cottage. The last two buildings are, again, still in situ. The old mansion at Quex was demolished in 1809 and another ten medieval houses have been demolished during the 20th century.

From 1600-1750, there was a large amount of rebuilding took place particularly around the Square, with the introduction of cheaper, locally made bricks. Many of them show Dutch influence and were built over the foundations of the older properties, with the original cellars providing the evidence for this. With the turmoil of the Reformation behind us, some areas of the village began to prosper, but there were some very poor harvests and expensive wars, causing taxes to rise dramatically.

In the latter end of the 18th century, the poor became so poor that the Churchwardens bought in barley and then sold it on to the worst cases at a lower rate, with the difference being made up from the rates, collected from the more well-to-do. Smuggling began to feature more prominently in the family budget, as one of the few means of staving off starvation and remaining independent. The threat of the Poor House was ever with them and to be labeled a 'pauper' carried a terrible stigma. The gap between the 'Haves' and the 'Have-nots' was getting wider with each generation.