

THE GREAT BARN, HARMONDSWORTH.

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It appears from Tanner's *Notitia Monastica* that there was a priory at Harmondsworth, of the Benedictine order, which was a cell to the abbey of the Holy Trinity at Rouen. In the extent of manors belonging to the alien priories seized by the Crown from 17 Edw. I. (1288) to 10 Richard II. (1386), Harmondsworth is included. The entries which appear to relate to the barn now under notice are these :

It' in guar' ij q'r de f'ri xij s. p'r q'rt vj s.
 It' vj qr. ij buss' mint xxxj s. iij d. p'r. q'r v s.
 It' xxxij q'r bras' iiij li. viij s. p'r q'r iiij s.

The size of this barn is so vast, its condition so excellent, and its features of so striking a character, architecturally, that I am inclined to believe there are few if any buildings of the kind equal to it in the kingdom ; its careful study is therefore well worthy of the attention of antiquaries.

As to the date of this interesting building, judging from the general style of its architecture, I am disposed to put it at not later than 1375. In giving it this somewhat vague date the entire absence throughout the building of any marked decorative features, namely, mouldings, by which the age of buildings such as this may be pretty accurately estimated, must be borne in mind. There is consequently nothing but the style of construction, the general appearance and condition of the woodwork, and the size and shape of the timbers to guide us. The construction is of that kind which was in use at the latter end of the fourteenth century, the whole of the timbers being morticed and pinned together with oak pins. As regards the general appearance of the building it is striking in the extreme, and has the solidity and grandeur inseparable from the works of those masters of building the Benedictines. The excellent condition of Harmondsworth Barn, with its massive forest of sound oak timber, is also very remarkable ; its construction is admirably arranged, and, in spite of a somewhat exposed position with a great extent of roof, in a flat country, subject to the full force of violent winds, no part of the timbering appears to have been dislodged from its position. As an example of mediæval carpentry of the best period it is perhaps unequalled ; and one is almost afraid to think of it in connection with fire, to which, however, it will doubtless some day succumb.

Having made careful measurements a few years ago, I am enabled to give a few of the general dimensions :

| | | | | | Ft. | In. | Ft. | In. | |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Extreme length inside | ... | ... | ... | ... | | | 192 | 0 | |
| " width " | ... | ... | ... | ... | | | 36 | 9 | |
| " height " | ... | ... | ... | ... | | | 39 | 0 | |
| Width of bays inside | ... | ... | ... | ... | | | 15 | 0 | |
| Principal uprights | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 | x | 1 | 2 |
| Tie-beams | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 7 | x | 1 | 2 |
| Collars | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 1 | x | 0 | 8 |
| Plates | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0 | 6½ | x | 0 | 6 |
| Struts | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 0 | x | 0 | 6 |
| Outer uprights | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0 | 9 | x | 0 | 9 |
| Foot-pieces | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 | x | 0 | 9 |

The building is divided into twelve bays, with threshing-floors at the 3rd, 7th, and 10th bays. Whether all of these floors formed part of the original design may possibly be a question; at any rate they are old enough at the present day to be considered ancient. The blocks under the principal uprights are of Tottenhoe stone, while the low side walls are formed partly of "plum-pudding" stone and partly of longer and flatter bricks than are used at the present day, with certain modern and judicious repairs. The sides were originally filled in with plain matched-boarding; some of which may still be observed.

Other large barns may be seen at the following places :—

In Kent :—

Boxley, Maidstone, and Cuxton.

In Somersetshire :—

Woodspring Abbey, Doultling, Glastonbury, and Wells.

In Gloucestershire :—

Postlip, Frocester, and Boxwell.

In Wiltshire :—

Cherhill.

In Oxfordshire :—

Adderbury.

In Dorsetshire :—

Cerne Abbas and Abbotsbury.

In Devonshire :—

Torquay.

In Sussex :—

Hurstmonceaux.

In Middlesex :—

Headstone near Harrow.