

Road Barn Farm, Wendover

HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT / October 2012

including HS2 high-speed rail line impact assessment

**Buckinghamshire
Archaeological
Society**



SURVEY,
RESEARCH
AND REPORT:
Stewart Moir,
Val Moir
and Karen Pepler,
with additional
research by
Peter Marsden

REPORT NUMBER
BAS/2012-03

This report has
been produced
by the
**Buckinghamshire
Archaeological
Society**



County Museum,
Church Street,
Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire
HP20 2QP

Website:
www.bucksas.org.uk

Road Barn Farm, Wendover



Buckinghamshire
Archaeological
Society

HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT / October 2012

Compiled from field survey notes and documentary research in August and September 2012 by Stewart Moir, Val Moir and Karen Pepler, with additional research by Peter Marsden.
Photographs by Karen Pepler.

This is report number BAS/ 2012-03.



Figure 1: The roadside gable end of stable and hayloft



Figure 2: The farmhouse

1. THE SITE

1.1. Geographical location

Road Barn Farm is one mile from Wendover in Buckinghamshire, directly beside the main road from Wendover south towards Great Missenden (A413).¹ The farm and its fields are within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at Ordnance Survey Grid reference SP 87511 06312.

1.2. Historic context

None of the farm's buildings is Listed by English Heritage, but they stand within a historic landscape which dates back at least 3000 years. Road Barn Farm is less than a mile from the Late Bronze Age hillfort on Boddington Hill and the Iron Age earthworks of Grim's Ditch. In the medieval period its fields lay within the open fields of Wendover. The farm is two miles from the 16th-century manor house of Chequers (country home of the prime minister) and in the 19th century was part of the Halton estate of the banker Alfred de Rothschild.²

2. THE SURVEY

2.1. Type of survey

The survey of Road Barn Farm was carried out by three members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's Historic Buildings Group in September 2012 at the request of Mr Vic Rance. Mr Rance's father had owned the farm until his recent death and his mother was still living in the farmhouse.

The aim of the survey was to establish the age and historic value of the farm in the light of the HS2 high-speed rail plans (see 2.2 below). This was done by inspection and making a photographic record within limits imposed by the current state of the buildings. At the time of the visit, the farmyard was much overgrown and the buildings heavily used for storage. No measurements were taken.

This visit to the site was followed by documentary research into the history of the farm and its immediate surroundings.

2.2. HS2: The high-speed rail line plans

The revised route of the proposed HS2 high-speed rail line between London and Birmingham, defined in January 2012, shows the line passing directly through Road Barn Farm in order to cross the A413 main road on a viaduct.³ Under the plans current at the time of this survey (September 2012) it is expected that all of the farm buildings would be demolished to make way for the line.

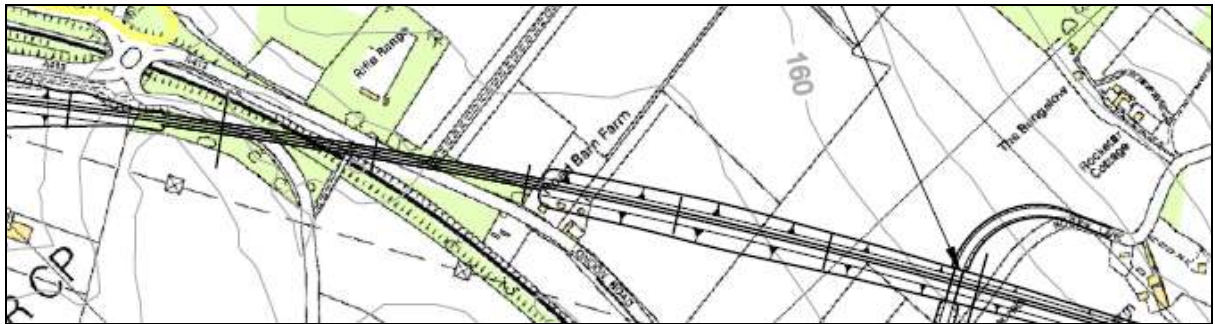


Figure 3: Part of the map issued by HS2 Limited in January 2012 showing (centre) Road Barn Farm directly under the planned high-speed line. The roundabout (top left) is on the southern edge of Wendover.

3. SUMMARY

Survey and documentary evidence indicate that Road Barn Farm was built in response to the opportunities offered by the building of the turnpike road after 1751 and the enclosure of Wendover's medieval open fields in 1795. The farm site is embedded in local history.

The farm's proposed demolition to make way for the HS2 high-speed rail line would be a damaging loss to the historic environment. If HS2 is to go ahead as planned, a full site and buildings survey is essential, including an archaeological survey to confirm or deny the existence of an earlier farmhouse on the site.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. The Farmhouse

The farmhouse at Road Barn Farm faces south-west on to the A413 Wendover-to-Missenden road. It is built of red brick, two storeys and an attic, with a symmetrical front elevation (figure 2). On each side of a central open porch with gabled, tiled roof are two canted bays rising through two storeys. These



Figure 4: The farmhouses's north gable end.

carry bay windows at both ground and first floor levels. The bays are hung with red, decorative tiles under front-facing gables.

The roof is of red tiles, with end gables to side elevations and twin external chimney stacks (figure 4). A single-storey lean-to on the rear elevation houses a former earth closet, now long disused (figure 5). In the utility room in the main house is a hand-operated cast-iron water pump which previously provided the building's water supply. There is a large cellar.

The house was built by Joseph Rance in 1901.⁴ Apart from the updating of water supply and waste systems, the building has been little changed.

4.2. The Barn

The threshing barn (figure 6) is clearly older than the farmhouse. It stands at a right-angle to the road, timber-framed under a pitched roof of old red clay tiles. The walls are clad with timber weatherboarding above a high brick plinth (figure 7). It has wide doors which open north through to south. It has clearly seen many alterations and adaptations over the years and is still used for storing hay.

The main timber frame is a strutted-purlin roof truss, commonly used in agricultural buildings through many centuries (figure 8). The tie beams are connected to wall plates and posts using tie-beam lap dovetail assemblies with S-shaped curved braces below the main beam (figure 9).

4.3. The Stable

The stable is of two storeys, including a hayloft (figure 1). It is of brick-and-flint construction, typical of the Chilterns, under a low-pitched slate roof. The original hay manger remains attached inside the north wall.

4.4. Other agricultural buildings

A range of open-sided cart or animal shelters abut the stable to the south and run parallel to the road. This too is of brick-and-flint, with a low-pitched slate roof that was rebuilt in the 1980s. Beyond this are the derelict remains of a two-storey granary. There is also some 20th-century garaging.



Figure 5 : Rear elevation, with the lean-to.



Figure 6 : The barn in overgrown farmyard.



Figure 7 : The barn's high brick plinth.



Figure 8 :Barn interior with roof truss.



Figure 9 :Close-up of S-shaped brace in barn.

4.5. Dating the farm buildings

The family believe that the barn dates from around 1780 and the other farm buildings from around 1800.⁵ Our survey would tend to confirm these dates, which concur with documentary evidence (see section 5 below).

4.6. The setting and surrounding landscape

The buildings are set back about 20ft from the road behind a grass verge. The farmhouse has a small front garden and a larger plot at the back. The main entrance to the farm is a gateway to a track which leads between the farmhouse and barn to a much-overgrown farmyard. The farm is surrounded by its former fields.

5. DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

5.1. Dame Mary Wooley's Estate 1620

A map of the estate of Dame Mary Wooley of Wendover, dated 1620,⁶ shows that the area now occupied by Road Barn Farm was then part of the South Field of the village, a common open field. Until the parish of Wendover was enclosed in 1795⁷ this would have been cultivated as ridge-and-furrow strips following the medieval system where individual villagers held small, narrow strips of roughly half an acre.

(The present farmhouse, when built in 1901, was originally named Southfields House – indicating that its first owner, Joseph Rance, knew something of the history of the area.)

5.2. The building of the turnpike 1751

The name 'Road Barn Farm' implies a direct link between the farm and the road by which it stands. It also implies that the 'Road Barn' was in place before it became a farm in its own right.

The settlement name 'Little London', a mile and a half south of Wendover, suggests that the early road south towards Missenden – and eventually London – took the line that is today Smalldean Lane, passing through Little London and continuing southwards. At its closest this passes 350 metres from Road Barn Farm – which is not close enough to give the barn its name.

Today's A413, taking a direct line and passing the farm, was built as a turnpike road in the years after 1751. That year the Wendover and Oak Lane Turnpike Trust was set up by Act of Parliament and started work.⁸ It seems likely that 'the Road Barn' would have been built to take advantage of the new turnpike road sometime after 1751. This concurs with the survey evidence for the barn.

The survey for Thomas Jeffreys' map of Buckinghamshire in 1766-68 shows no buildings on the site, but that done in 1825 for Bryant shows three (figure 10).⁹ This suggests that 'Road Barn Farm' grew around the previously existing



Figure 10 : A section from Bryant's map of 1825 showing the farm buildings, unnamed (centre, above the word 'Tenements').

barn to take the opportunity offered by the enclosure of Wendover's open fields, which was formalised by an Enclosure Act in 1795.

The existence of three buildings on Bryant's map raises the possibility of an earlier farmhouse on the site – and the map also shows a group of 'Tenements' beside the road a little way to the south, perhaps farm labourers' cottages. The 1851 Census lists the inhabitants of these cottages: of twelve families, one is named Rance.

5.3. The 1883 Auction

In July 1883 the Buckinghamshire Herald published a notification of an Auction to be held of Little London Lodge and Road Barn Farms (figure 11). The seller was Mr Joseph Wooster, who, the notice said, 'is leaving'. The auction, which was to be held in the Red Lion Hotel, Wendover, on Wednesday 1 August 'at six o'clock', included standing crops of corn, wheat, oats, barley and 'spring beans'.¹⁰ Road Barn Farm was arable in 1883. Sadly the auction notice does not mention any individual buildings, so offers no clue as to whether an earlier farmhouse preceded that built in 1901.

The purchaser at this auction was most likely Alfred de Rothschild, who was building Halton House during the years 1881-83 and buying land locally to build up his estate. According to the present Mr Rance, his great-grandfather bought the land and farm buildings from Mr Rothschild towards the end of the 19th century.¹¹



Figure 11 : The auction notice from the Bucks Herald, 21 July 1883.

5.4. The Land Valuation Survey 1910

The countrywide Land Valuation Survey set up by Lloyd George in 1910 shows the Road Barn farmhouse with an orchard on a one-acre plot owned and occupied by Joseph Rance.¹²

5.5. The Small Dean map 1913

In 1913 a catalogue for the sale of the neighbouring Small Dean Farm¹³ includes a plan that shows the farm buildings at Road Barn Farm but not the house (figure 12). This was probably drawn from an old plan dating from before 1901.

Also marked on the plan is the 'Site of former Ten Housen' on the east side of the road to the south, indicating that by 1913 the cottages shown on Bryant's map of 1825 had been demolished.

The plan also shows Alfred de Rothschild as owner of the fields to the south,

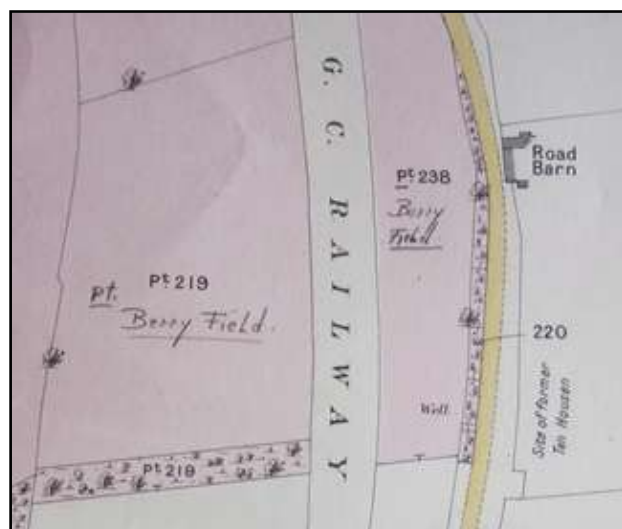


Figure 12 : The 1913 Smalldean sale plan, showing 'Road Barn' (top right) and the 'Ten Housen' site to its south.

confirming his purchase of Little London Lodge Farm at the 1883 auction. Over the road from 'Ten Housen' a well is marked. This is still there, though fenced off, and its capstan is in the barn at Road Barn Farm. The well is believed to have been dug by the Rothschild estate during a year when other wells ran dry, to serve their farms at Little London, Concorde, Small Dean and, presumably, Road Barn – though the latter had its own well in a shed, now fallen down, beneath a granary.¹⁴

5.6. More than 100 years in one family

The present Mr Rance's great-grandfather purchased Road Barn at the end of the 19th century. One of his sons, Joseph, built the farmhouse in 1902 on land separately purchased in an adjoining field for £182 10 shillings. Three Vance brothers – Joseph, George and Vic – worked the land of both Road Barn and Little London farms in the first half of the 20th century. So one family has owned Road Barn Farm for more than 100 years.¹⁵

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Historic significance

Road Barn Farm is embedded in the local history of Wendover, tying together threads from its medieval open fields, the turnpike road-building of 1751, the enclosure of 1795 with its development of dispersed farmsteads, the influence of the Rothschilds in the 19th century, and the decline of agriculture in the 20th. The Rance family has also held the farm for more than 100 years, providing a thread that runs through local social history.

The historic value of the buildings themselves is less easy to assess because the farmyard is heavily overgrown and the buildings cluttered, making a detailed survey difficult. However observation and documentary evidence agree that the barn most likely dates from the late 18th century, with the stables from the early 19th. The Bryant map of 1825 indicates a possible earlier farmhouse, but some site clearance would be necessary to confirm or deny this.

We believe the findings of this Report demonstrate that Road Barn Farm is a heritage asset of at least moderate value using the significance criteria in the HS2 Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping and Methodology Report (September 2012) and merits detailed investigation (see section 6.3 below).

6.2. The impact of HS2

Road Barn Farm is literally in the way of the planned HS2 high-speed rail line. If the route goes ahead as currently planned, then the farm will be demolished to make way for a viaduct, 35ft-high and 750ft-long, to carry the line across the valley of Wendover Dean. The farm's destruction will be complete, a damaging loss to the historic environment of the area.

6.3. Recommendations

If the route of HS2 is to go ahead as currently planned, then a full site survey is essential, before any potential demolition, including detailed surveys of farmhouse, barn and stables. An archaeological survey of the farmyard site as a whole is also necessary to identify the possible site of an earlier farmhouse, followed by excavation if appropriate.

REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS

BAS : Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society

CBS : Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury

HER : Historic Environment Record for Buckinghamshire

1. See Ordnance Survey Explorer sheet 181 (scale 1:25,000).
2. Buckinghamshire HER numbers 0164500000 (Boddington Camp, near Halton), 0014012000 (Grim's Ditch at The Lee), 0050001000 (Chequers) and 0461602000 (Halton House).
3. ARUP High-Speed 2 Feasibility Study Drawing number HS2-ARP-00-DR-RW-05009 Issue 3.0, viewed on the website of the Department for Transport at <http://assets.dft.gov.uk>.
4. Vic Rance, personal communication.
5. Vic Rance, personal communication.
6. The map is in the Centre for Bucks Studies in Aylesbury, CBS BAS Maps 80 & Ma R 48.
7. Wendover enclosure award 18th June 1795: CBS IR/26.R
8. K Edmonds and others, 'Turnpike Roads of Buckinghamshire', in Records of Buckinghamshire, volume 35 (1995) page 37.
9. Buckinghamshire in the 1760s and 1820s: The County Maps of Jefferys and Bryant (BAS, Aylesbury 2000), pages v, vi, 8 and 22.
10. Buckinghamshire Herald, 21 July 1883.
11. Vic Rance, personal communication.
12. Land Valuation Survey 1910: Valuation Record Book CBS DVD/1/131/ entry 308; Map CBS DVD/2/34/ 9,10,13,14.
13. Small Dean Farm Sale Catalogue: BAS Library Muniments Room, Oversize Box 2, record No 2000/165.
14. Information from the deeds to Road Barn Farm in the possession of Vic Rance, by personal communication.
15. Vic Rance, personal communication.

THANKS

to Vic Rance and his family for allowing access to the land and buildings, and for all the information he has provided.