

Whatever happened to the Church Field? By Peter Clarke

Well, there is still Churchfield Lane. As it is about to be the site for the new Care Home, “lane” is barely the right description, and in any case, where and what was the Church Field?

The answer is that it is a bit of Benson that has completely disappeared, and you will have to look hard for the signs. Churchfield Lane did and still does start at the junction of Oxford Road and Littleworth. Back in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century you could have walked its length right down to Preston Crowmarsh. You can pick up that section still by walking in that direction from the bus stop on the riverside.

Quite simply, the first Benson bypass, built in 1932 sliced its way right through the meadow. What you see below is a wide-angle photograph taken we think in about 1870, by a chap called George Wallace Badcock.



I reckon George was standing just about where you now catch the ‘bus to Oxford. Readers recognizing the spot will realize the whole meadow is now filled in with housing and gardens. Perhaps more important historically is that this is the site on which it is thought the royal vill (referred to as Offa’s palace) was built in the 8th century.

Well, we may have lost a lovely field and replaced it with the bypass. But at least an old codger like me can get a free ride on that bus to Oxford, and enjoy that instead. Some you win, some you lose!