

OXFORD ROAD BY JOHN ALDRIDGE

We now proceed from Castle Square to Oxford Road and to the 19TH century house, called **The Limes, No5 Oxford Road**. An 1880 map clearly shows most of the garden to the side and rear was covered by buildings which I understand were used for the building and repair of horse-drawn carriages of all descriptions from about 1780 to 1840 and for a few years after that for manufacturing parts of carriages for the Great Western Railway.

To the east is the 17th and 18th century **Three Horseshoes** public house, all in ragstone, flint and brick with clay tile roof. The front elevation is stuccoed. The recorded landlords include Henry Kirby 1822, Elizabeth Frewin 1852, William Cook from about 1864, Henry Lane to 1894, William Neal to 1906, Alice Meal to 1928 and George Pether to 1936.

Next is a modern block of houses, Nos 4,6 and 10. These are built on land that was once the School garden and play area. In the centre was a large Maypole which was used in my school days. The garden extended to the rear of West's Farm and was tilled and planted by the boys in the school on one half day per week which gave us very valuable practical experience for which I am grateful.

The driveway adjoining leads to a new house which I designed and built in 1959 and another built in the early 1920s.

Benson Junior School follows after the foot path to Littleworth. The School Playing Field adjoining was once yet another gravel pit and in my school days was partly covered by a small pond, a boggy area abounding in rushes and reeds and a tangled mass of willows, quickthorn and brambles. This area was filled, levelled and seeded in the early 1940s. Opposite are the remaining buildings of the once active dairy farm of Mr and Mrs Warwick and formerly Mr and Mrs Pengilley. The triangular shaped field adjoining was the farm's home paddock and previously another of the village gravel pits. Minutes of Benson Annual Parish Meetings show that on March 28th 1906 "the proceeds from the sale of gravel pit in Church Field to Mr J Badcock be used to purchase another plot with good gravel subsoil for repair to Benson Parish Highways."

The small corrugated iron clad shed next to 'Meadfoot' was used by Mr Hall as a Barber's shop where my hair was cut when a boy. At the end of the triangular shaped garden of Meadfoot (now developed) was a public house called **The Star**, which my Grandmother remembered being burnt down when she was a child. She also related that in the grounds was a long, single storey thatched

building where travellers could stay for threepence a night -just over one new penny.

Opposite is 'Littleworth End' formerly known as 'Blenheim House' built about 1889 in brick with slate roof.