

The history of "Westfield" Lane

by Peter Hawley, Whitchurch and Goring Heath History Society, June 2025

During the recent struggles of residents and visitors to Eastfield Lane, I have been asked whether there has ever been a corresponding Westfield Lane. The answer is that there indeed has. At least we can see on old maps and documents held by the History Society that there was a corresponding lane on the other side of the village in earlier times.

It ran from the High Street close to the north side of Whitchurch House with a narrow entrance from the High Street rather like that of Eastfield Lane and served agricultural land belonging to Whitchurch House and the Manor Farm. Unlike Eastfield Lane it was not to become lined with cottages and a Victorian mansion, but the maps seem to show a northbound branch running behind the houses on the High Street giving farm access all the way to the Hartslock Bridleway. There was another access on the site of the present "Old Gardens" into the rear lands of Whitchurch House and probably into the riverside meadows of Walliscote Farm.

All of this was Manor land and when the Manor was bought from the Whistler family by Samuel Gardiner in 1794 it was all change for Westfield Lane. The entrance from the High Street was widened and gated and furnished with one of several of our characteristic, handsome "bell mouth" entrances.

A typical eighteenth-century lodge or gatehouse was added and the lane widened into a smart driveway with wide verges lined by a handsome beech avenue and ancient yew trees to provide the entrance to Gardiner's new mansion Coombe Lodge. (When this was later renamed Coombe Park its original name was taken over by a smaller residence on the Bridleway, formerly called "Upper Lodge", which some say – mistakenly I think - was once used as the lodge for the Manor itself).



entrance way (or unofficial village car park?) we have today.

Early in the Second World War, when a military camp was established in the grounds of Coombe Park and on the verges of its driveway, the attractive gates were moved from the High Street and its gate house left high and dry facing the side of Whitchurch House, no longer guarding the original entrance to Coombe Park. After the War the now open verges were cleared of military buildings, leaving Manor Road as the open

