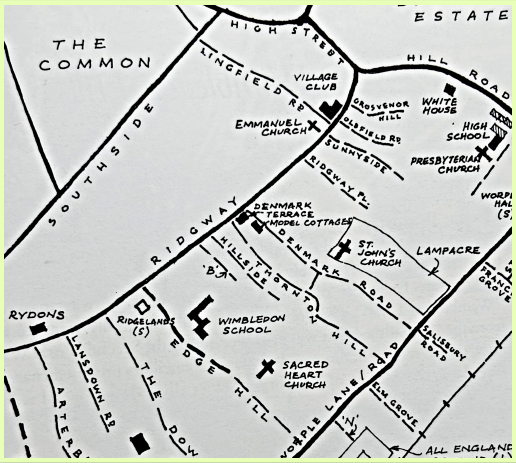
Denmark Road

The History

In the early 19th century, the Ridgway was just a country lane. To the north side were the back gardens of the mansions overlooking Wimbledon Common with fields to the south. Good housing was urgently needed for the workers who serviced the large houses on Southside and Parkside where the 'great and the good' often from Westminster had settled after the opening of Putney Bridge. Workers' cottages were built in the 1860s on what was then South Road, later to become Denmark Road, and a terrace of shops and pubs grew up along the Ridgway - Denmark Terrace. The name Denmark celebrated the marriage of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, to the King of Denmark's daughter Alexandra in 1863.



The Houses

In 1860 the architect Samuel Teulon, who had built Wimbledon Village Hall and Christ Church at Copse Hill, designed and built 12 and later 15 model cottages in Denmark Road (then called South Road) in his Victorian gothic style. They are now numbers **47-73** and Grade II listed (left). They were originally social housing "good suitable dwellings for working classes at moderate rent" offered to people of "good character and cleanly habits" with rents of 4/- (20p) per week. The project was commissioned by the Wimbledon Cottage Improvement Society Ltd. made up of 14 local gentry including Henry Peek (who later saved the Common from sell-off and development), surgeon Joseph Toynbee, publisher Alexander Murray and Thomas Hughes author of Tom Brown's Schooldays. Investors paid £125 each and received a dividend of up to 6% by 1900. The Society ran until 1952 when the cottages were sold off. Most of the other houses and cottages we see today were built in the 1860s or later in the 19th century and often housed shops and businesses. **Nos. 21/22**, **33/34**, **35/36** and **39/40** are locally listed. **No.40** was the first in the road to have electricity.

The Shops

The shops along the Ridgway to the corner of Denmark Road - Denmark Terrace - were built between 1863 and 1865. Henry Jenkins ran a grocer and post office on the corner, it was then W H Cullens and remained a grocer until 1989 when the Lighthouse antique shop opened, later the Lighthouse Restaurant. On the opposite corner, in 1877, Jenkins' brother Edwin opened a chandlers, confectioner & tobacconist. This was also a servant registry where employers could find workers. The Jenkins name and the shop, which later included a post office, survived until 2018 replaced by Beer and Beyond. Other shops followed down Denmark Road. On the left was a garage for over 70 years until 2024 and next door is Belgrave Hall, the club house of the Belgrave Harriers founded in 1887, and originally a methodist hall. At **Nos. 74 & 75** opposite was a brewery. In the 1970s & 80s **No. 74** was Alice's Pantry and next door **No. 75** an off licence. **No.1** - a dairy until 1918, the milk floats and a cow were kept in the back yard. **No.3** - a grocer and later in the 1970s became Manns' Denmark Stores and off-licence (right). **No.5** - a butcher's, later from 1912 to the 1930s a draper's. **No. 6** - a greengrocer from the early 1900s until the 1960s – you can still see "Sarsons Pure Vinegar" etched on the window. After, it was The Wool Parlour until the 1980s. **No. 11** - a coal merchant with coal stored at the rear. There is still a window in the side of the house where people paid. **No.15** a schoolhouse. **Nos. 17 & 18** - a builder's , later knocked into one house. **Nos. 21 & 22,** the tall houses - Blake's a builder. **No.30** - a grocer.

Compiled by members of St John's Area Residents' Association (SJARA)