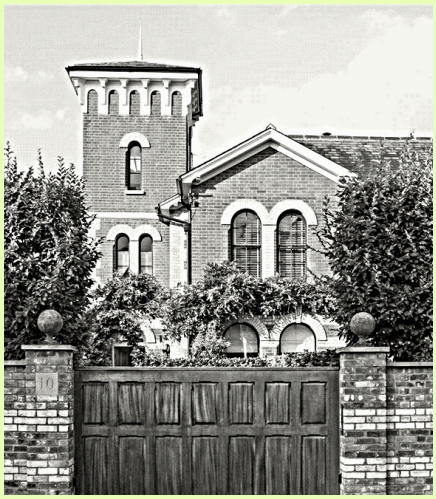
HILLSIDE

The History

Hillside was the third road to be built behind the Swan Inn and livery stables on the Ridgway in the early 1860s. Unlike Thornton Road and South Road, later Denmark Road, Hillside did not continue down the hill to join up with Worple Road due to the much steeper incline. And, unlike the workers' cottages that lined those roads, the houses built on Hillside were large middle-class villas. Until then, there were just fields to the south of the Ridgway, mainly used for pasture and on the site of Hillside and Berkeley Place there were allotments leased by the Churchwardens of St Mary's. To the North side were the garden fences of the great houses that had been built on the Common. The Ridgway had possibly been a salt route in Neolithic times linking Kingston to salt marshes in the Thames estuary at Greenwich. A stone age hand axe, estimated to be at least 50,000 years old, was found in an ancient pond in the garden of one of the Hillside houses indicating activity from a very early age. By the reign of Elizabeth 1 anyone daring to plough within ten feet of a highway called "the Ridgewaye" was liable to a fine of "twelve pence". The tithe map of 1848 shows the Ridgway still as a country lane even though it was the main cattle route from Wimbledon to Kingston market. A map of 1862 (right) shows Hillside, or Victoria Road as it was also called, with houses on the right. The rural setting had gone and the hillside transformed into a suburban area.

The Houses



The period houses developed along Hillside from 1858 were built only on the eastern side to take advantage of the rural views to the south and west. None are statutorily listed but six are locally listed. The most distinctive period house is **No. 10** Hillside, a large detached Italianate villa with its three storey tower (left) dated to the third quarter of the 19th century. **Nos. 11/12** are a pair of semi-detached houses dating from before 1867. **Nos. 13/14** are similar in design. **Far House** (right), designed and built in 1964 by the renowned conservationist and architect Norman Plastow, is also locally listed due to its ingenious design. Thornton Road once may have formed the rear access to the outhouses and stables of the homes on Hillside.

The Inn & Stables

The Swan Inn at 89 Ridgway (left), now the Rushmere, was built in 1862 and before that there was a beer shop. There had been a livery stable at the side of the Swan on the corner of Ridgway and Hillside since at least 1867, at which time Matthew Matthews is listed as both beer retailer and livery stable keeper. Although the Swan was too late for the coaching age, horse drawn carriages could be hired from there to travel down Thornton Road to the station, which had opened in 1838. The stables, later run as a riding school (right), survived until 2017, when the landlord did not renew the lease.

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