Thornton Road

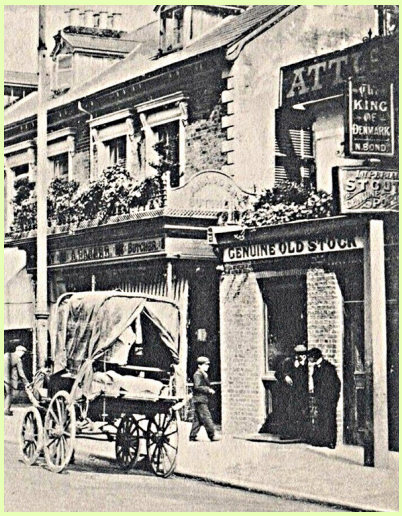
The History

In the early 1800s the Ridgway was just a country lane. To the north were the back gardens of the mansions overlooking the Common, with fields to the south. Thornton Road was built to provide a coach and horses route from the Ridgway to Worple Road and Wimbledon station, which had opened in 1838, and to satisfy the growing need for good housing. It was named after Richard Thornton, reputedly the richest man in Britain and the owner of large tracts of land in Wimbledon, including the land for Thornton Road, which he sold in 1860. When he died in 1865, he left an estate of £2.8 million, the largest fortune to have been valued for probate in England before 1870. Earlier In the 1820s Thornton sold a narrow piece of land behind the Ridgway to William Croft who laid out cottages and the first beer shop on the Ridgway called the Jolly Gardeners. In 1866 this was replaced by the King of Denmark pub, which later gave its name to Denmark Road. This and Thornton Road were the first roads to connect the Ridgway to Worple Road. By 1855 a second beer shop was on the corner of Thornton Road and the Ridgway, which become the Swan pub. Horse-drawn carriages could be hired from here in the 1860s down to the station from the adjoining stables. In order to cope with the steep gradient, a double bend was made between Thornton Road and Thornton Hill.

The Houses

Thornton Road was laid out all on the east side with small houses at the top and larger villas on the slope. The first houses were numbers **13-17** Thornton Road, a terrace of five two storey houses built between 1877 and 1883. Behind, **nos. 4,5,6 & 13a** Thornton Road East (left) a terrace of two storey cottages which, because of their typically Georgian white window reveals and pointed arches over the front doors, may have been built at the same time, or even earlier. **Nos. 28-35**, four pairs of semi-detached houses built in the 1870s. **Nos. 22-27** - a terrace of six two storey houses built between 1882 and 1889. **Nos. 2,3 & 4** Thornton Road - a terrace of three two storey houses - built in 1902 with triple windows on each floor. The terrace of eight Edwardian Houses **nos. 5-12** Thornton Road (right) were built in 1910. Behind, **nos. 1-8** Corbiere Court, two rows of two storey terrace houses, were built in 1965.

The Pubs



The King of Denmark pub (left) was named in celebration of the 1863 marriage of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, to the King of Denmark's daughter Alexandra. In the 1960s the pub was visited by its namesake the King of Denmark with his daughter Princess Marguerite, later Queen. It was knocked down in 2011 and the Co-op now occupies the site. The entrance of the Swan pub (right), now the Rushmere, was originally framed between two stone pillars from the Duke of Wellington's Cottenham Park House. It was rebuilt in 1969 after a lorry crashed into it. In the 1990s ghostly activity was reported by staff: a glass was seen moving across a level table unaided and the jukebox would turn itself on during the night. Nothing though has been experienced since 1994.

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