

THE HISTORY OF YOUR AREA

Much of 18th century Balham was owned by the Duke of Bedford including 150 acres of prime farmland known as 'Charringtons'. A century later, with farming in decline, the Bedford family sold the land to Richardson Borradaile, a wealthy merchant and MP, who built Bedford Hill House – a beautiful ivy clad mansion, situated where Veronica Road is now, roughly between numbers 12 and 18.

In 1843 the House and its estate were sold to William Cubitt, brother of builder Thomas Cubitt. Together they improved the House and grounds, adding an ornamental lake which lay by Elmbourne Road – between Manville and Huron. The family enjoyed uninterrupted views towards Balham until 1855 when a railway embankment was built along Balham High Road and Bedford Hill. A year later Balham station opened and landowners put under pressure to release land for much needed homes.

Alfred Heaver was an ambitious and visionary housebuilder when he acquired the now empty House and parkland. Ritherdon Road was the first to be laid out in 1888 and was to be the main access to the estate. That same year Heaver applied to construct Streathbourne, Drakefield and Louisville Roads across the grounds of Elms Farm and nearby mansion Streatham Elms, and by the time they were completed in 1892 he was already building more roads running north off Ritherdon Road. With around twelve different styles of property, the Heaver estate had now reached the neglected gardens

around Bedford Hill House and when Veronica Road was built in 1897 it was demolished.

On 4 August 1901, at the age of 60, Alfred Heaver was shot in the back and head as he walked to church with his wife in the village of Westcott near Dorking. His assailant, who turned the gun on himself, was his sister's husband James Young. The inquest stated he had held a grudge against his brother in law for many years and had even filed down the ends of the bullets to cause him maximum injury.

Though Heaver did not live to see the completion of his eponymous estate, it is considered one of the finest examples of 19th century suburban development in London and was made a conservation area on 1978.

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Ritherdon Road, The Heaver Estate c. 1900