

# Solihull

## Personal Details:

**Name:** Paula Coyle

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**Postcode:** [REDACTED]

**Organisation Name:** Kingshurst Parish Council (Representative of a local organisation)

## Comment text:

As Kingshurst Parish Council, we strongly advocate for boundary changes that accurately reflect the community's identity and cohesion within the proposed ward boundaries.

KPC would like to provide valuable feedback on the current boundary review, with a particular focus on the naming and delineation of certain areas within the proposed wards. It is imperative that any adjustments made accurately reflect community identity and linkage, fostering a sense of representation and connection among residents.

The discrepancies identified in the proposed naming and delineation, especially concerning Smith's Wood and Kingshurst. It is evident that the proposed area designated as Smith's Wood encompasses what most local residents would identify as Kingshurst, while the area named Fordbridge and Kingshurst primarily consists of Fordbridge, with only a portion of what locals recognise as Chelmsley Wood.

We propose renaming the proposed Smith's Wood ward to incorporate North Kingshurst into its title, such as "Smith's Wood and North Kingshurst." This adjustment will ensure that residents feel represented within their ward and better reflect the community's identity.

Kingshurst Parish Council, established in 1955, has been actively representing the interests of their community and In addition, community groups play a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging and cohesion among our residents.

Identifiable boundaries can be established based on natural features such as Babbs Mill Nature Reserve, which was created in 1977 and serves as a significant boundary marker. Rerouting the ward boundary along the length of Cooks Lane, instead of drawing it on the Cooks Lane side of the river, would better reflect community cohesion and natural geographic features, ensuring that the ward boundaries align with the natural landscape of the area and historical significance.

The historical roots of Kingshurst as a Royal Manor, its evolution into a predominantly residential area, and the recent regeneration efforts underscore the importance of the inclusion of Kingshurst within the ward of Smith's Wood by ensuring that Kingshurst is recognised and

represented within its own ward, residents can be assured that their unique identity, history, and ongoing development efforts will be given the attention and consideration they deserve

The recent regeneration efforts, such as the approval of the Kingshurst Village Center after 20 years of anticipation, underscore the importance of including Kingshurst within the ward of Smith's Wood.

Our Residents urge for boundary changes that prioritise community identity, cohesion, and representation. By incorporating North Kingshurst into the Smiths wood ward title, aligning ward boundaries with natural features, and acknowledging the community's interests and historical significance, we can create wards that better serve the needs of our residents.

Kind regards

Paula

Paula Coyle

Clerk to Kingshurst Parish Council

Working hours 9am - 1pm Mon - Friday

Tel: [REDACTED]

## **Attached Documents:**

- [history-of-kingshurst.pdf](#)

## HISTORY OF KINGSHURST

Kingshurst means 'king's wood'. It became part of the Solihull Metropolitan Borough in 1974, having been previously part of Meriden Rural District.

The earliest references to Kingshurst appear in the 13th and 14th centuries and suggest that Kingshurst is part of the parish of Coleshill.

It wasn't until 1st April 1956 that Kingshurst became a parish in its own right.

By about 1352, Kingshurst was owned by Peter de Montfort who died in 1370 without leaving a legitimate heir, although his illegitimate son, Richard, inherited Kingshurst manor whilst Richard's older brother, John, inherited the manor of Coleshill.

The two manors were reunited in the early 15th century, under the control of William Mountford. In 1495, the Mountford lands were confiscated following the support of Sir Simon Mountford for Perkin Warbeck's failed claim on the English throne. Simon Mountford was executed and both Kingshurst and Coleshill were granted to the Digby family by King Henry VII. In 1529, the king restored the manor of Kingshurst to the Mountford family but it was sold back to the Digby family by Edward Mountford in about 1617.

The Digby's administered Kingshurst from their main estate in Ireland and tenants included the Bull family (1610-1743), the Yorks (1743 until at least 1812), and, the Townshends (1876-1960).

## Kingshurst Hall



Kingshurst Hall was a large, red brick building built between the late 13th and 14th centuries. It had its own park and farmland and its tenants included the York family, who gave their name to the small area of the original Kingshurst Hall Park that still remains: Yorkswood.

The hall was rebuilt between 1700 and 1720, but fell into a state of disrepair in the 1950s when its then tenant, Walter Townshend, was unable to maintain it, owing to ill health and the death of his brother, George, in 1950. He moved out to a cottage in Caste Bromwich in 1960 and the hall was demolished in 1962.

This photograph was taken in 1957 by Stanley Jones, who had first glimpsed the building 20

years earlier when attending cub and scout camp in Yorkswood.

He notes that the window pattern varied: sash windows on the main east elevation and on the south side; casement windows on the west side (rear); mullion and transom windows on the north side with one opening casement each. He mentions that a few of the windows on the north and west sides had been bricked up and that the majority of the ground floor windows were all shuttered.

The moat and mound around the hall are the only surviving relics from early Kingshurst, apart from Yorkswood. Later buildings have come and gone on the site, but the mediaeval earthworks still remain.

## **Kingshurst today**

The Kingshurst we see today is a mainly residential area largely created by the growth of Birmingham in the 1960s.

There are four schools, a shopping centre, library, community centre, health clinic and Connexions service. In 2001, its population was 8,126.

## **Kingshurst and the Council**

Regenerating North Solihull is investing £1.8 billion over 15 years to build new schools, increase housing choice, create village centres that will be the 'hearts' of the local community and provide new opportunities such as employment and training.

Education is at the heart of this programme. Students of Forest Oak and Merstone Schools have recently moved into an £8 million eco-school, which caters for children with a range of special needs.

Pupils from Kingshurst Infant and Junior Schools have also chosen the design for their new combined school, which opened as Kingshurst Primary School in September 2007.

Solihull Council has consulted residents on a provisional plan for improvements to the area and Councillors approved the Kingshurst and Babbs Mill Neighbourhood Plan in September 2006.

## **Local Nature Reserves**

### **Babbs Mill**

**Babbs Mill Park** was created to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 1977. In 2002 it was designated a Local Area Nature Reserve in recognition of its diverse habitat.

Project Kingfisher was set up to preserve the stretch of the River Cole from Birmingham to Solihull in 1985.

## Yorkswood

There is a wide variety of trees growing at the reserve, which was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1991. Some of the trees are invasive species and have to be controlled to protect the local wildlife. This is done by a heavy horse to protect the trees and also serves as an educational workshop.

Retired resident Fred Botterill (74) has lived in Kingshurst since 1967.

"The best thing about living in Kingshurst is that I am five minutes away from an ancient wood and ten minutes away from a lake. We have an amazing amount of wildlife here including butterflies, skylarks and woodpeckers.

"I was involved with Project Kingfisher since 1985 and it has been a pleasure to take people out to enjoy the area including taking children out for bugs hunts and habitat walks - a tremendous amount of people are surprised when they realise that all of this is on their doorstep.

"Kingshurst is a nice place to live and has an active community with lots of people getting involved in libraries, courses and local groups. My hope for the future is that more people will get involved in conserving our woodland and lake."





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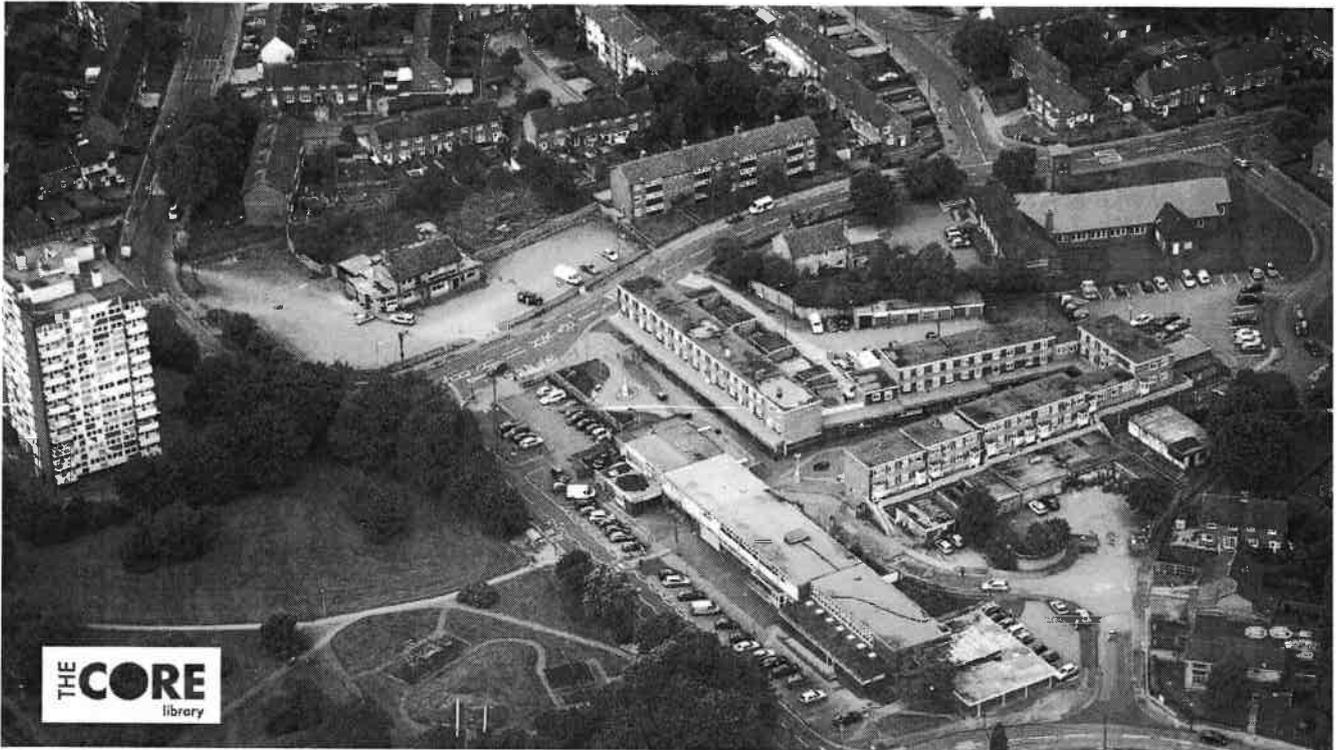




# Solihull Life

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## Kingshurst Hall Estate



The housing development at Kingshurst Hall Estate was the first time that Birmingham Corporation had ever built dwellings outside the city boundaries. It was also the first time that the council had a housing scheme that included owner-occupied housing as well as council housing.

It was an "overspill" housing estate, one of many created in the 1950s on the outskirts of large towns and cities to help relieve overcrowding in urban areas. The intention was to move people from decaying inner cities to better conditions in more rural areas.

Birmingham Corporation had compulsorily purchased Kingshurst Hall and its surrounding farmland, together with other land in Kingshurst, under the *Birmingham (Old Chester Road, Tile Cross &c) Compulsory Purchase Order 1939*, which was dated 17th February 1939.



**Blended then-and-now image showing where Kingshurst Hall was situated**

As the land was outside the city boundaries, Birmingham Corporation had to seek agreement for its proposals from Meriden Rural District Council and also had to obtain planning consent from Warwickshire County Council.

Planning permission for a 261-acre site was forthcoming in 1952 and Birmingham proceeded with plans to build some 2,000 homes for 10,000 city residents at a cost of around £3m. Approximately 20 per cent of the dwellings were to be owner-occupied and 80 per cent were to be municipal housing (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 5th November 1952 and *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 31st December 1952).

The council houses would be owned by Birmingham City Council but for all other services, the residents would come under Meriden Rural District Council and Warwickshire County Council. Alderman A. F. Bradbeer, Chairman of Birmingham Corporation's House Building Committee said *"It will be purely a dormitory area, and there are no proposals for setting up industries there."*

Many of the first residents to move in were used to living in back-to-back houses in Birmingham and felt that they were "quite posh" by moving out to a rural district where they had new homes, with hot running water and proper toilets.



Alderman Bradbeer said: *"Kingshurst Hall Estate, when complete, with its green swards, its reservations of trees, shopping centre, tenants' room, community centre, schools &c. will be one of the showpieces of the Midlands"* (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 24th February 1955).

82 owners of private homes petitioned Meriden and Birmingham councils for a redesign of the estate as they were concerned that their homes would be encircled by municipal housing and would be devalued as a result. The petition was rejected by both local authorities.

## A new church for Kingshurst

In March 1955, work began on building a new church on the Kingshurst Hall Estate. It was designed by a Birmingham architect, Mr Maurice A. H. Hobbiss (1915-1982), who described his design as modern in concept but using traditional materials. The foundation stone was laid on 25th September 1955 by Mrs Wilson, wife of the Bishop of Birmingham.

The Bishop of Birmingham's Appeal to raise £1,200,000 for church extension described estates without churches as "circles without centres."

The first priest-in-charge was Rev. Peter Hollis (1920-2002), formerly curate at Yardley parish, who was a curate at Coleshill 1955-57. To begin with, he had no church, no vicarage and no parish called Kingshurst, so from July 1955 he held Sunday morning communion services in his own home (a Council house in Laburnum Avenue) and in other residents' living rooms.

Mr Hollis took many photographs of Kingshurst as it was developed. When he left the area he gave his images to Stan Tarrant (1925-2020) who kindly gave copies to Solihull Libraries. Some of the 1950s images of Kingshurst collected by Stan Tarrant have also been put together as a YouTube video.

**Kingshurst, when it was first built.**



The *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7th December 1955, quoted from Mr Hollis' first edition of his parish magazine, *Kingshurst News*:

It is not easy to settle down among complete strangers and in a new estate with muddy roads and few street lights. It seems a bit lonely at times. That is where the Church comes in. We need more than a lot of families in hundreds of houses before we can feel we belong to Kingshurst. But once we have become a real community, then life will be different. You will have plenty of friends, the youngsters will have things to do and we shall all begin to get to know one another

In May 1956, services moved into the recently-opened Kingshurst East School.

In 1957, St Barnabas' Church was dedicated as a separate ecclesiastical parish from Coleshill and Peter Hollis was then Vicar of Kingshurst 1957-1967.

## Police Station

According to the *History of Kingshurst* booklet, Kingshurst Police Station opened early in 1955 as an office between the two police houses at 430-432 Chester Road. It was extended outwards at the rear of the premises and, by 1962, there were 14 police constables and sergeants.

## Kingshurst Parish Council

In June 1955, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government approved Warwickshire County Council's proposal to create a parish council for Kingshurst – the *County of Warwick (Parishes of Coleshill and Kingshurst) Confirmation Order, 1955*. The parish council would have six members and two representatives would attend meetings of Meriden Rural District Council.

Mr B. L. Stephenson, Meriden Rural District Council's engineer and surveyor, said:

We look upon this as quite a human problem. Some 7,000 people have got to be shifted from Birmingham to here, and we feel that these people from the time they begin to arrive, should be given interest and self-government in the area.

Elections took place on 22nd March 1956, with sixteen candidates contesting the six seats and around 40% of the 2,318 electors turning out to vote.

The *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 23rd March 1956 noted that whilst Kingshurst had been "growing up" over the previous five years, the area's affairs had been managed by the non-political Residents' Association. The Residents' Association sponsored the independent candidates who fought the election under the slogan that party politics should be kept out of local government.

The six parish councillors elected were three independents (Dr H. M. King, Mr F. J. Ash, and Mr W. F. Schofield), two Labour (Mr W. A. Bradley and Mr D. A. Harrison) and one Conservative (Mr N. E. Hasluck). Mr Schofield became the first Chairman of Kingshurst Parish Council.

The first meeting of Kingshurst Parish Council took place on 17th April 1956 in Kingshurst East School. An article in the *Birmingham Weekly Post* of 11th May 1956 talked of the community coming into being, with a school nurse and welfare officer in residence, temporary shops about to open and 30 permanent shops being planned. There were plans for schools, police and health services, as well as the hope of a branch library.

A tenants' room was also under construction so that weddings, meetings and other functions too large for the home could be accommodated. It was opened on Friday 9th November 1956 by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham.

Organisations such as Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Guides had also become established by May 1956. A 17-year-old apprentice radio engineer also started a record club in his home in Laburnum Avenue, attracting 30 teenagers on a Tuesday evening!

## Schools

Two junior schools – Kingshurst East (later Kingshurst Primary School) in Meriden Drive, and Kingshurst West (later Yorkswood Primary School) in Kingshurst Way – had opened by March 1956, each catering for about 300 pupils. Extensions to the junior schools were carried out in 1958 as it was said that there were more children on the estate than planners had anticipated – averaging 3½ children per household rather than the 2½ expected. The extensions would extend the capacity of the two junior schools by fifty per cent if needed.

An infants school opened towards the end of 1956 on the corner of Meriden Drive and Fordbridge Way and then a Catholic Junior and Infant School opened at the end of Gilson Way. St Anthony's Junior School, Fordbridge Road, opened in September 1960.

Planning permission was granted in May 1956 for a three-stream secondary modern school at Kingshurst for about 450 children. Kingshurst High School for Boys and Girls opened in Cooks Lane in September 1958.

At the request of the Kingshurst and Castle Bromwich Road Safety Committee, Kingshurst Parish Council called a public meeting in August 1958 as a result of concerns over children having to walk along a road which was derestricted and cross a bridge which had no footpath. Parents threatened a boycott unless safety measures were improved. One request from the parents was a 30 mph speed limit along Cooks Lane, which the Minister of Transport said would be accepted if Warwickshire County Council put forward a request. In February 1959, the county council's Roads Committee recommended widening the pathless bridge, at a cost of £8,500.

Until the new school opened, pupils from Kingshurst attended Park Hall Secondary Modern in Castle Bromwich. If children passed their 11+ examination, they moved onto the grammar school in Coleshill.

By January 1960, there were some 1250 children attending the four primary schools and about 400 pupils at Kingshurst High School.

A proposal to merge the boys' and girls' schools at Kingshurst High School into one comprehensive school was made by Warwickshire Education Committee in 1971. The joint Board of Governors of the School described the decision not to retain a sixth form at the merged school as "a gross injustice" and launched a parish-wide petition to ask the Minister for Education to intervene.

## Shops

At first, there were no shops and the early residents who moved into the estate had to manage with twice-weekly visits from a mobile greengrocer and a mobile Co-op grocer. Woodlands Farm on the Chester Road supplied eggs, as well as turkeys for Christmas dinner.

In 1956, temporary pre-fabricated shops were set up on the recreation ground before The Parade was built. There were four shops and a post office. In 2010, a community film-maker working with Solihull Libraries, recorded residents' memories of the early shops:

## Kinghurst Memories: Shops and Shopping



*Castle Bromwich Advertiser*, 14th July 1961, carried an article about the new “pedestrian shopping precinct” at Kinghurst, which had been designed with safety in mind. By being away from the busy road, parents were reassured that they could move around freely, without having to worry about children darting into traffic.

The initial plans would see 28 shops developed, with a further nine to follow. Each shop had a service road entrance so that deliveries could be made to the door, whilst still keeping vehicles and shoppers separated.

## Multi-storey flats

In May 1957, Birmingham Council’s House-building Committee approved the erection of five blocks of flats on the Kinghurst Hall Estate and submitted a planning application to Warwickshire County Council for approval.

Kinghurst Parish Council sent in a petition signed by 2,171 residents protesting against the “skyscraper” 12-storey blocks.

The *Birmingham Daily Post* reported on 1st May 1959 that the firm of Morriss and Jacombs had been awarded a £397,000 contract to build 144 dwellings on the Kinghurst Hall Estate. This would appear to be for the building of four nine-storey blocks – Wingfield House, Catesby House, Digby House and DeMontfort House – each of which had 36 flats.



**Redwood House, c. 1983**

In 1961, approval was given for the construction in Oakthorpe Drive of the 12-storey Redwood House, which was built in 1962 by Wimpey and contained 68 flats. At the official opening, some children apparently went all the way to the top of the building and sat on the edge, much to the alarm of their parents!

The final block to be built was Kingshurst House, a nine-storey block of 36 flats which was granted approval in February 1963 and built in 1964 by C. Bryant & Son Ltd at a cost of £109,000.

## Public Houses

The first pub on the Kingshurst Hall Estate was the Mountfort, Overgreen Drive. It was announced in April 1957 that the new pub would take over the licence of The Globe Inn, Park Street, Leamington Spa. The intention was that provision could be made for overspill housing areas without increasing the overall number of licensed premises in the county. The pub was forced to close in 2008 and was acquired by Solihull Council c.2013 after which it was demolished.

The Punchbowl, on the corner of Wheeley Moor Road and Meriden Drive, apparently took over the licence of the Masons Arms, Rugby Road, Leamington Spa. The Punchbowl was formally opened at lunchtime on Wednesday 21st September 1960, when one of the Coleshill licensing justices pulled the first pint. The pub opened to the public on the evening of the same day.



**The Punchbowl, 1983**

## Kingshurst social centre

A new social centre building – comprising a library, youth centre and clinic – was opened in February 1964 at the junction of Marston Drive and Gilson Way. The building was designed by Birmingham architect, John Madin, in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council's architect, Eric Davies.



**Kingshurst Library c.1990**

## Public transport

The Meriden Guide, 1971 noted that Kingshurst had good road communications with Birmingham and easy access to all parts, thanks to the old London to Chester road passing through its eastern boundary.

The guide listed the Midland Red bus services that either terminated at Kingshurst or provided transport to it:

- o No. 160 – Birmingham to Kingshurst
- o No. 163 – Birmingham to Chelmsley Wood
- o No. 169 – Birmingham to Bacon’s End
- o No. 168 – Birmingham to Coleshill via Kingshurst
- o No. 175 – Shirley to Sutton Coldfield via Kingshurst

## Transfer of housing to Solihull

When local government reorganisation came into effect in 1974 and Kingshurst was transferred from Meriden Rural District Council and Warwickshire County Council to Solihull, it was agreed that Birmingham City Council would retain responsibility for council housing in Kingshurst for five years.

In 1979, Birmingham City Council had to decide whether to transfer responsibility for the 13,500 council homes in Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, which it did with effect from September 1980. For the following five years tenants had the option of transferring to Birmingham’s housing waiting list but, after September 1985, this option expired. Birmingham City Council refused to extend it, despite some 800 Solihull residents still being on Birmingham’s council house waiting list.

In 1986, Solihull Council embarked on a programme of demolition of some of the properties in Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood and around 100 families applied for a transfer under the National Mobility Scheme. This allowed transfers between local authority housing waiting lists if it could be demonstrated that a move was required as a result of work or for social reason. About half of the applicants were successful.

## 1980s Regeneration

In August 1986, house-builder Wimpey took on a £1million conversion project in a joint venture with Solihull Council to transform four-storey maisonettes in Kingshurst into two-storey homes.

According to local newspapers, the maisonettes off Fordbridge Road had become too expensive to repair and re-let. The conversion saw the properties rewired, equipped with a modern kitchen and bathroom, and brought up to the latest building regulation standards. The houses were then sold “at low-cost” with first option being given to people on the council’s housing waiting list who were nominated by Solihull Council.

The former maisonettes lost their two top storeys and became “three-bedroom houses, with pitched roofs, decorative timber balconies, and cottage-style porches.” They were priced at £23,000 and each had a garden, with some having a new garage at the back or a detached car-port at the front.

Derelict garages were demolished and replaced with 17 newly-built houses, most of which were two-bedroom semi-detached homes, selling for £20,000 each.

The pioneer development was named Millside and was officially opened in March 1987 by Housing Minister, John Patten.

## Regeneration

In May 2005, SMBC created the North Solihull Partnership (comprising In Partnership Ltd, Bellway Homes and WM Housing Group) to bring about the physical, social and economic regeneration of North Solihull and a shared ambition to transform the three wards of Chelmsley Wood, Smith’s Wood and Kingshurst & Fordbridge.

In 2020, Solihull Council approved proposals for the regeneration of Kingshurst Village Centre – the third village centre regeneration following those at Chelmond’s Cross and Smiths Wood.

## Further reading

*Reminiscences of Kingshurst* – booklet produced by Solihull Libraries in 1994 to mark the 30th anniversary of the opening of Kingshurst Library

Kingshurst Hall and the Townshends

History of Kingshurst by Solihull Community Enterprise led by Denise Biddle. Available to borrow from Solihull Libraries

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## Kingshurst Hall and the Townshends



By the time of its demolition in 1962, the grade II-listed Kingshurst Hall, believed to have been built in the early 18th century, was in a state of disrepair. It was surrounded by tower blocks on the new Kingshurst Hall Estate, which was built by Birmingham City Council as overspill housing.

The Council had compulsorily purchased Kingshurst Hall and its surrounding farmland, together with other land in Kingshurst, under the *Birmingham (Old Chester Road, Tile Cross &c) Compulsory Purchase Order 1939*, which was dated 17th February 1939.

Presumably, the Second World War delayed plans to develop the land so it wasn't until 1952 that Birmingham City Corporation approached Meriden and Warwickshire Council with an intention to build a new housing estate – its first outside the city boundaries – to house some 10,000 of the city's "surplus" population.

In July 1956 it was reported that the Corporation was anxious to preserve Kingshurst Hall itself, but by June 1957, the decision had been made to demolish the building. However, the city council said it would delay demolition to allow the 71-year-old occupant, Walter John Townshend, to continue living there for the rest of his life.

Walter John Townshend was born at Kingshurst Hall on 22nd December 1886 and baptised at Coleshill on 23rd January 1887. He was the second child of parents Henry Townshend, a farmer from Netherseal, and Phoebe (née Dabbs) who had married at Coleshill on 19th June 1884. The Townshends were a farming family, who are known to have farmed in the Coleshill area for around 125 years from the late 19th century.

### **The Townshends of Gilson Hall Farm, Coleshill**

Although born in Netherseal, Walter's father, Henry, was the son of a Warwickshire-born farmer, William Townshend. It seems that the family moved to Leicestershire c.1850 and returned to Warwickshire sometime between October 1880 and September 1881, when William Townshend was recorded as a farmer at Gilson Hall, Coleshill. He died there on 9th November 1885.

His will, written five days before his death, left the contents of his house and farm at Gilson, and all his tenant rights in and about the farm to his eldest son, William.

His son, William, a bachelor, continued farming at Gilson until his own death in 1904, after which the farm was taken over by his brother, John (1846-1929). John's son, John Leslie Townshend (1891-1972) took over the farm from his father, having been working on the farm with his father since at least 1911.

The announcement of John Leslie Townshend's death gave his address as Grangewood, Gilson, formerly of Gilson Hall Farm. His son, David Neil Townshend (1927-2016), a great-grandson of the first of the Townshends to farm at Gilson, was still farming at Gilson Hall in 1973.

### The Townshends of Kingshurst Hall

Whilst his father and brothers worked at Gilson Hall, Henry Townshend took up residency at nearby Kingshurst Hall Farm, apparently moving in on his wedding day in 1884. His father's will, dated 4th November 1885, left Henry all the household goods in and about his house at Kingshurst, as well as all the farming stock and William's tenant rights in and upon the farm at Kingshurst.

After Henry's death in 1937, his sons George Henry Townshend (1885-1950) and Walter John Townshend (1886-1961) continued to live at the farm and work together, remaining as tenants after Birmingham City Council compulsorily purchased the farm and estate in 1939. The brothers also had a sister, Lilian Margaret Townshend (1890-1955).

Lilian was the only one of the three children to marry and she seems to have had one son, Arthur Townshend (1914-1990). By 1939, Lilian was widowed and living alone in Hurst Lane, Castle Bromwich, where she died in 1955. Her occupation in 1939 was recorded as a haulage contractor.

In September 1939, her son, Arthur, a lorry driver, was living at Kingshurst Hall Farm with his uncles, George and Walter. Shortly after this, between October-December 1939, Arthur married Ivy Blanche Aucott and, the couple set up home at Mill Cottage, Babb's Mill, which was part of the Kingshurst Hall estate and described in the 1919 sale catalogue as having parlour, kitchen, scullery and three bedrooms. It doesn't appear that the couple had any children and, by 1961, Arthur was working as a pig farmer.

George died in 1950, leaving his brother Walter to continue working the farm on his own. It seems that Walter's failing health meant that he struggled to maintain the 20-roomed property and the building deteriorated. The farm lands also became overgrown.

A local [*Birmingham Mail*] newspaper report from 20th June 1957 indicated that the farmhouse was in a dilapidated condition, with woodworm-infested timbers and the interior decorations being in a bad condition. The property had no gas, electricity, damp course or piped water. The only water supply was from an old pump, which Walter Townshend was pictured using. The article said that he lived alone at the hall, with only two terriers for company. It was noted that vandals were wrecking the property, with 32 window panes being smashed in one night.

In 1957 Stanley Robert Jones (1927-2017), an art teacher from Birmingham with a passion for recording vernacular architecture, made a trip to see Kingshurst Hall. He took along his Sanderson quarter-plate camera and photographed the exterior of the hall. He considered asking to photograph the interior but decided it would be too much of an intrusion for Walter Townshend. He wrote down his experience and his description of the hall for us and gave us copies of his photograph and the drawing he made. We have taken his photograph of the hall from 1957 and blended it with a modern photo of the same site (pictured at the top of the page).

An article in the *Birmingham Daily Post* of 20th October 1958 describes Walter Townshend's experience of the situation at the Hall, which he said was being pulled down around him, as the new estate had encroached to within 100 yards of his front door.

The article said that local children were believed to be responsible for breaking every one of the more than 500 windows, as well as causing thousands of pounds worth of damage to brickwork at the hall and outside buildings, tearing oak doors and gates off their hinges, and wrecking farm equipment. Walter Townshend – apparently known locally as "Old Wally" – and aged 72 at the time, spoke of his anguish:

I shout and plead with the youngsters, but I am ignored. They know I cannot run after them and I can only stand and watch. I love children, but it seems the generation responsible for this are completely irresponsible and out of control. Police, the local school and the council authorities are doing all they can – but still they come

In August 1960, Walter moved out of Kingshurst Hall, where he had lived for the whole of his life. He moved to New Road, Castle Bromwich, and died there eight months later, on 7th April 1961. He was 74 years old. His funeral took place at Coleshill parish church.

The *Birmingham Daily Post* of Monday 11th December 1961 carried the headline:

**Hall to be Demolished** and went on to say that it was expected that "work will start next year on demolishing Kingshurst Hall, a 17th century moated hall, now derelict, which stands in the shadow of modern blocks of flats at Kingshurst estate, near Castle Bromwich."



