

# Walsall

## Personal Details:

**Name:** Mr Adam Hicken  
**Email:** [REDACTED]  
**Postcode:** [REDACTED]  
**Organisation Name:** (District or county councillor)

## Comment text:

**Related subject:** Willenhall North and Short Heath wards

Please see my attached submission for the first stage of this review.

## Attached Documents:

- New Invention community consultation.pdf

## Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission consultation on communities (Walsall borough)

During the first stage of this consultation, I would like to draw to your attention the incredible community and unique historical links that we have in the New Invention area.

### The history of New Invention

The area of New Invention (Willenhall North ward) sits around three miles to the north of Willenhall Town, and between the towns of Wednesfield (west) and Bloxwich (east). Originally this was a small settlement located on the fringes of neighbouring larger towns, but quickly developed its own identity during the later stages of the Industrial Revolution. There are two roads which cross at this location, which appears to be where the settlement first began.



This map shows how New Invention appeared between the 1840s and 1880s. You can see clearly on the map on the left these crossroads, and how the area has developed subsequently around this in the present-day view on the right.

The unusual name of New Invention was documented as early as 1663 and appeared again on a map in 1747. There are varying accounts as to how the area was given this unique name with some say that it was the name of a 'New Invention Pub' or that it was related to the mine workings of the area. However, the more accepted local story that a new style of chimney churn was invented in the area which allowed smoke to dissipate better. There is also a variation on this story that it was actually a hawthorn bush that was placed into a chimney to fulfil the same purpose (there is also subsequently a Hawthorne Road located in the area).

There is also another local story that Methodist preacher John Wesley (b.1703 – d.1791) once stopped in the area after being stoned and forced out of Willenhall. It is said that in those days, New Invention was considerably more isolated from Willenhall than it is today. According to Wesley "I proceeded thence to New Invention, where I met with civility and kindness." Perhaps in recognition of John Wesley, part of the present day A462 road is named Wesley Road, along with a number of Methodist chapels being located in the area.

According to the Willenhall History Society, on March 26<sup>th</sup> 1820 the citizens of Short Heath petitioned for Short Heath, Lane Head and New Invention to separate from Willenhall and become a separate ward. No objections were raised by Willenhall and a government inspector attended a meeting in the Holy Trinity Schools on January 16<sup>th</sup> 1871 in order to hear their case. This resulted in Short Heath forming its own Local Board of Health in 1872, with local industrialist Henry Squire becoming its first chairman.

The Wolverhampton History and Heritage website has a page dedicated to 'Willenhall Through The Ages', and whilst it focuses on Willenhall Town, it also gives reference to both Short Heath and New Invention at this time. It states,

*In order to simplify local government, the Local Government Board was created under the terms of the Local Government Board Act of 1871 to oversee all local government matters. Simplification continued under the terms of the Public Health Act of 1872 which divided the country into local sanitary areas, and extended the power of local authorities. This led to the Willenhall Local Board of Health becoming the Willenhall Urban Sanitary Authority.*

*At this time Willenhall became smaller. The citizens of Short Heath had previously petitioned the Local Board to separate from Willenhall. As a result Short Heath became a separate Urban Sanitary District with its own Local Board, which became Short Heath Urban District Council in 1894. The two areas were separated until they were reunited as a result of the Staffordshire Review Order on 1933, when Willenhall also took over a small part of Bentley.*

The area of Willenhall was well known for lock-making, which continues into the present day. Some famous brands include Chubb, Yale, Union and Squire locks. The Squires' family were very notable individuals, and some relations still live in the area to this day. The famous Squire Lock company was based opposite 'The Square' in New Invention up until the mid-2000's. A branch of the family still operates a lock company in the area which was established in 1927 by Alzo & Elroy Squire, this continues to operate under the name A&E Squire Ltd.

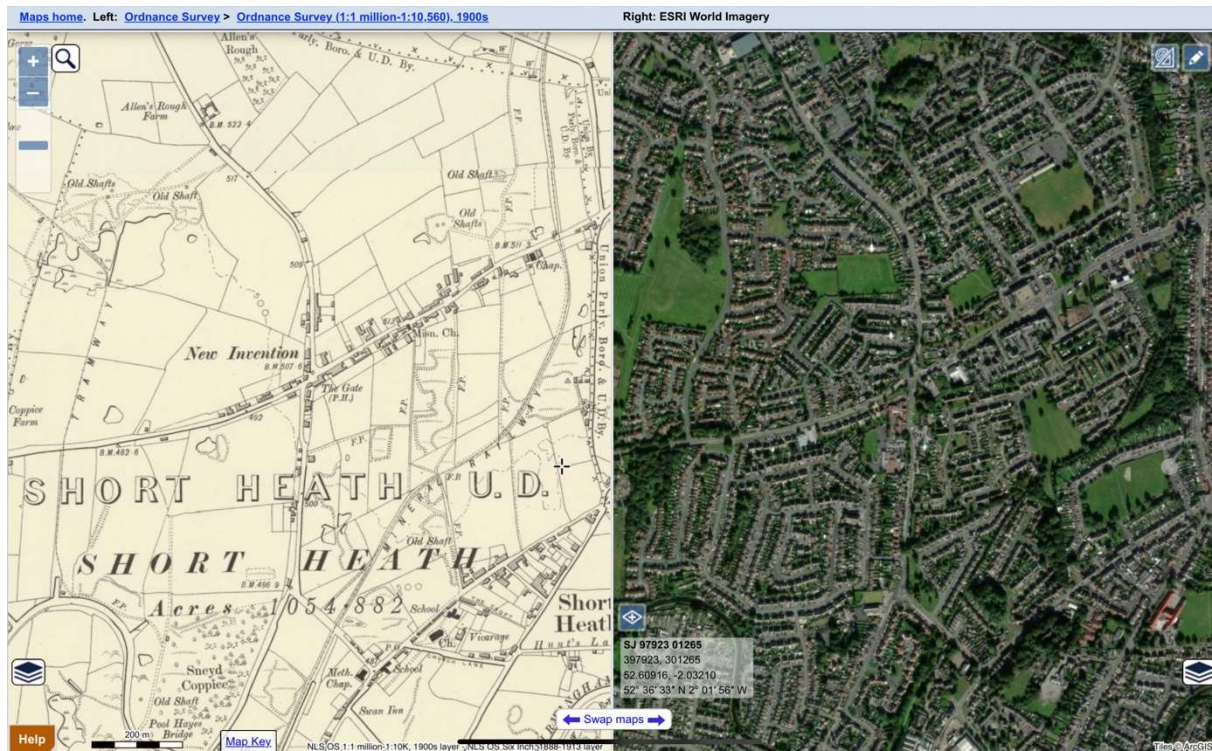
The iconic 'Squire' red tower was a constant feature of the area up until apartments were built over the former factory as can be seen in this photograph taken in 1995.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/walsall1955/5429411382>

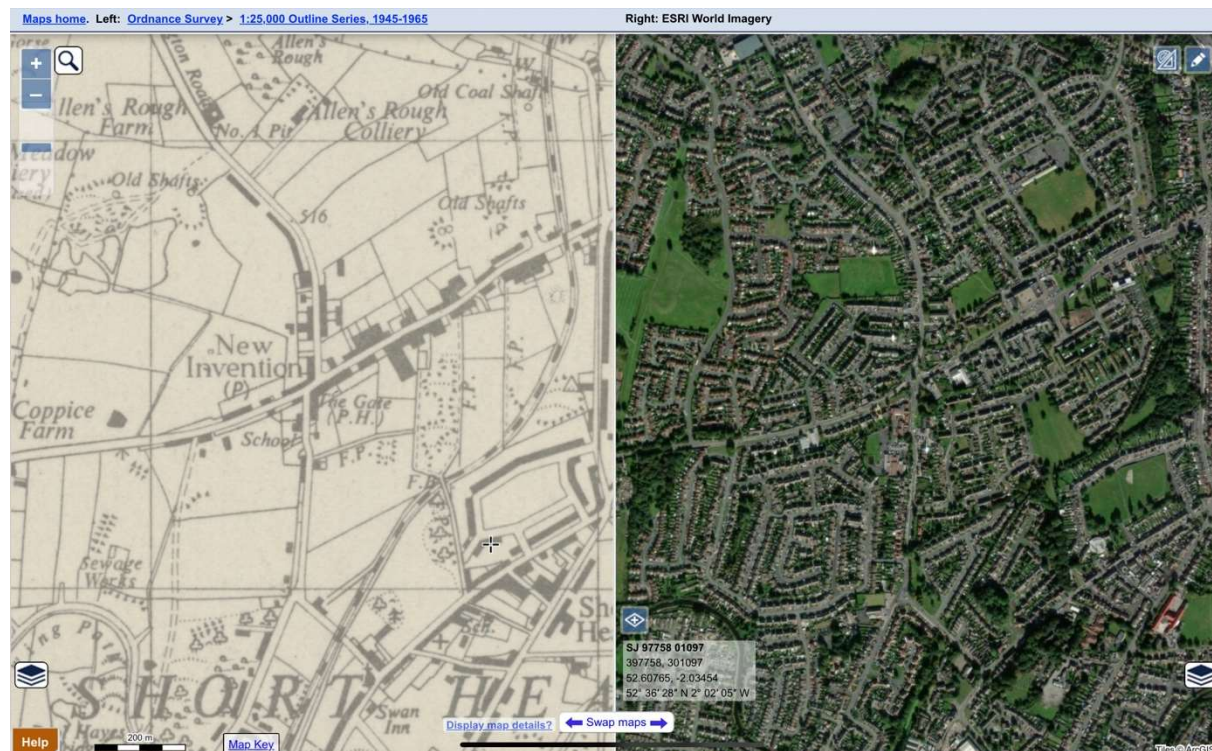
Whilst there are undoubtedly connections with the rest of Willenhall, the areas of Short Heath and New Invention have always been notably distinct places in their own right. This has only grown in recent years as housing estates have been established and the population of these areas have grown.

As in the case of the neighbouring area of Short Heath, New Invention was developed over a period of several decades as the population continued to grow in post-war years. You can see on this map how the area developed from several cottages, a post office, and tavern, to the local amenities and housing estates that you can see today.



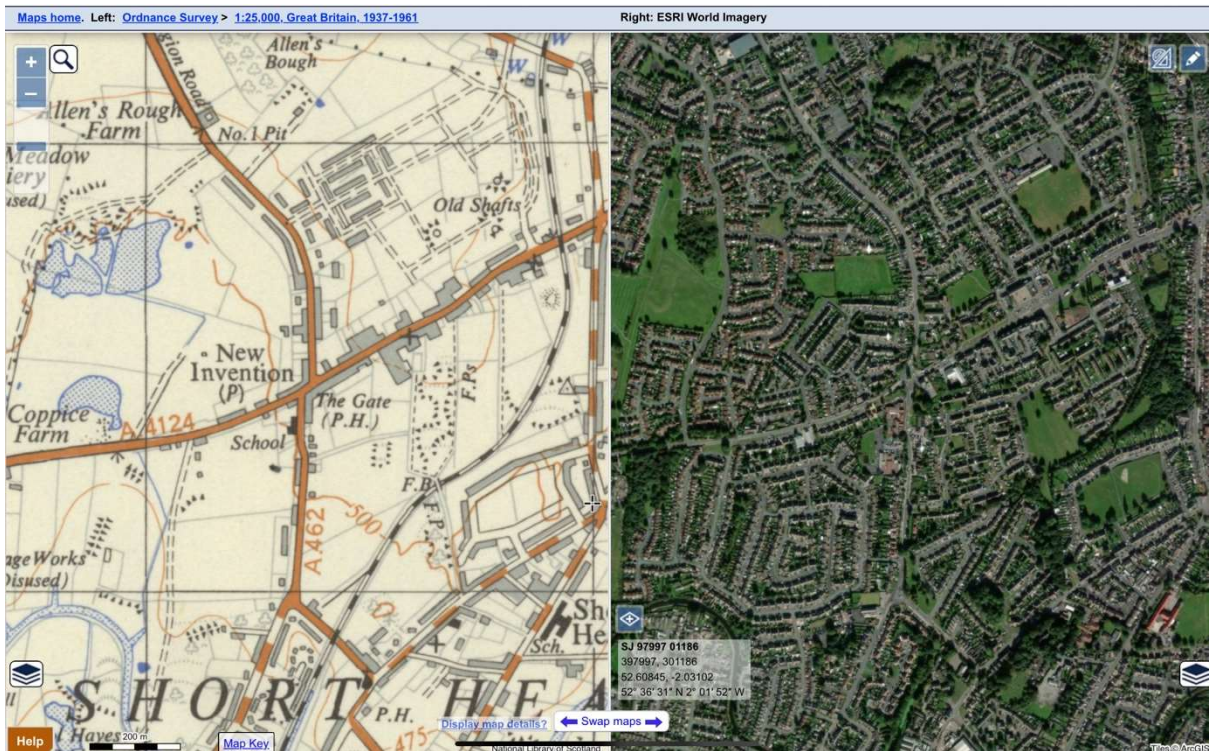


This map shows how New Invention appeared during the 1900s during its time under the Short Heath Urban District Council.



This map shows how New Invention appeared during the at some point in the 1940s.





This map shows how New Invention appeared during the early 1950s with the new Beacon estate being built.

And finally you can see the current Willenhall North ward boundaries (and the extent that this area has been developed) using this link. <https://mapit.mysociety.org/area/9499.html>



Near to the crossroads (The Gate as it is known locally after the former tavern) is The Square, a shopping precinct which three sides. As seen from the photograph taken from The Square (the flickr link above) of the former Squire lock factory, this is a central hub for local amenities and bus routes. This precinct contains a small supermarket, a pharmacy, a dentist, a traditional barber shop, and



other retailers. Along part of the former library is a community space called 'The Hive', which currently hosts as both a youth club and a social club. Outside there is a short-stay and long-stay car park. This area is quite frequently what people remember when you mention 'New Invention' to them.



Opposite The Square is the New Invention Community Green, which contains our local war memorial.





As you can see from these images, there is a great amount of local pride in our area, and a distinct identity amongst the residents of New Invention.

Spreading out from this central point in the ward, you have the Beacon estate, Allens Rough and Sneyd Park to the north. To the west you have the Broadway and Coppice Farm estates. To the south you have Forest Gate and Poets Corner. All these areas have their own unique character and identity but are connected to New Invention as the main focal point.

There have been four local schools within the ward, with another three on its periphery.

#### Primary Schools

- New Invention Infants School
- New Invention Junior School
- Beacon Primary School
- Allens Rough Primary School (now closed)

#### Secondary Schools

- Sneyd Secondary School (now closed)
- Coppice High School (now Coppice Performing Arts School)

The Woodlands Academy of Learning is another primary school which sits on the edge of the ward boundary, and there are also another two nearby secondary schools which pupils from the area attend, those being Pool Hayes Academy and Willenhall E-Act Academy. As you can see from the names of the local schools listed above, they have strong connections to the local area, which further reinforces the link between these communities.

There are several historic and natural borders in the area, with former canals, train tracks, and roads being boundaries that both join and separate areas. The most visible boundary is that of the M6 motorway, which has a raised embankment along its entire route and separates Willenhall North from the Bloxwich area. There are only three access routes into Bloxwich, with one of these being to the former Sneyd Secondary School. As a result, it would make no sense to connect these two separated communities.

The development of this area started in the late 1940s and continued up until the early 1990s with the Coppice Farm estate being built. There are now 9,236 electors registered in the Willenhall North ward, with a projection of 10,258 by 2029. This shows how significantly this area has developed, with

Willenhall North being its own ward for many decades. Over the last few decades there have been little change to our ward boundaries, and at the 2003 local government boundary review no changes were made as part of that review.

From my own experience the name of the ward is confusing as Willenhall North is something which doesn't really exist as an entity. It is hard for those not familiar with the area to identify where 'Willenhall North' would be. As Willenhall North councillors, we often get communication from Willenhall South and Short Heath residents, which shows how this name confuses people.

As part of this review, I believe that it would be a good opportunity to change the name of the Willenhall North ward to something that contains a better link to this area. Whilst each estate has its own identity, the common connection for this area is New Invention. I would be interested to hear feedback from local residents on if they agree that a change to the area name would be acceptable and what it should be.

To the south of the current Willenhall North ward is the Short Heath ward, which also has its own unique identity and proud history. Both of these wards are distinctly different from Willenhall Town (Willenhall South ward) and it would make sense that both of these wards continue to exist with as little change as possible.

As part of this representation, I hope that you can see how New Invention is a separate community in its own right, and that the people who live there deserve to have their own elected representatives. There has been little change in previous boundary reviews, and it would make sense for this area to continue in its current boundaries.

Yours Sincerely,

Councillor Adam Hicken  
Willenhall North ward