

10. HEDNESFORD PARK

The whole of Hednesford Park was once Hednesford Pool, a large body of water that covered 27 acres of land. The 1834 edition of White's History Gazetteer & Directory of Staffordshire tells us that the pool abounded in pike, perch and roach.

In 1874 a coal mine was opened on the opposite side of the road in a valley behind Cockpit Hill on Hednesford Hills (a few hundred metres away). It became known as the Valley Pit but was originally called the Pool Pit because the pool still remained. However, in order to prevent the mine flooding, the colliery company diverted the brook that fed the pool. As a result the pool began to dry up and by 1900 it had dried up completely.

The information about the park has been provided courtesy of Anthony Hunt.



Today people visit Hednesford Park for active recreation, to enjoy the Park's amenities and its diverse habitats. It is difficult to imagine that the place on which Hednesford Park now stands was once submerged underwater.

Further information about Hednesford Park is available by Cannock Chase Council in the book 'From Pools to Park - A history of Hednesford Park and War Memorial'



Looking across Hednesford Park towards Hednesford Hills. The road near the centre of the image, winding into the distance, is now known as Valley Road. Once the site of a colliery, today it is a mainly residential area and the location of the Museum of Cannock Chase. Image courtesy of the Museum of Cannock Chase



The approach to Hednesford War Memorial. Together with the memorial, these wrought iron gates were supplied and erected by Messrs. WH Fraley and Sons of Birmingham. Image courtesy of the Museum of Cannock Chase

Some years later, in 1931, Hednesford Park was opened. It was handed over to the local Council by Cannock Chase Miners' Welfare Committee. Funds for the park had been raised over a number of years by placing a levy of one penny per ton on all coal produced by local mines. By 1930 some £15,000 had been collected.

During the opening ceremony, Colonel Williamson, chairman of the committee, declared that he 'hoped the ground would be appreciated and be a big success and a blessing to the people of Hednesford'.

The new park had two bowling greens, eight tennis courts, putting greens, a cricket pitch and a pavilion with changing facilities. Although the putting greens and cricket pitch have now gone and the original pavilion has since been replaced, the park remains largely unchanged.

The information about the park has been provided courtesy of Anthony Hunt.

Hednesford War Memorial

Hednesford war memorial stands on the opposite side of the road (the Rugeley Road), on the edge of Hednesford Hills. It was erected to pay tribute to local people who gave their lives during the Great War.

At a committee meeting on 31 May 1920, three suggestions for ways of commemorating the war dead were made. A monument on Hednesford Hills was proposed, as was a public hall, and lastly, conversion of this site into a lake or park with an adjoining monument.

On 24 September 1920, after Hednesford Hills had been chosen as the desired location, the Marquis of Anglesey gave two acres of land along the Rugeley Road. The memorial was built of grey granite at a total cost of £1,215, and on 9 November 1922 it was unveiled by Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, who was accompanied by her husband.



H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Althone, and her husband the Earl of Althone, on 9th November 1922. Copyright unknown.



The war memorial site as it looked c1932. Image courtesy of the War Memorial Preservation Society.

The memorial is approximately 8.5m high and bears a bronze inverted sword with sprays of olive and palm. At its base are four bronze laurel wreaths that are inscribed with the names of 234 men who fell during the Great War.

The front tablet reads:
To the glorious and immortal memory of the gallant men of Hednesford and district who made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of liberty 1914-1918.

In later years a further stone plaque was added at the base of the memorial to commemorate those who died during the Second World War and the Korean War. Two large artillery shells stand in front of the column.



A postcard of Hednesford War Memorial c1922. Image courtesy of Ray Smith



The approach to Hednesford War Memorial. Together with the memorial, these wrought iron gates were supplied and erected by Messrs. WH Fraley and Sons of Birmingham. Image courtesy of the Museum of Cannock Chase

CANNOCK CHASE HERITAGE TRAIL

Cannock Chase Heritage Trail is a 10-mile route linking the towns of Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley. It passes through, or close to sites of historic or environmental interest, with interpretation boards along the way that tell the story of each location. Intended to support a healthy lifestyle, the trail is a facility for walkers and cyclists, offering walks and off-road cycle routes. The trail was initially funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and several project partners in 2008.

The trail consists of mixed surfaces of tarmac, gravel and concrete. Gradients in some of the rural sections of the trail can be difficult for manual wheelchairs and buggies.

These include:

- A short section between Hednesford Park (along the former railway line) and Rugeley Road (A460).
- A short section near the concrete standing area adjacent to Brindley Heath Road.
- A short section between Cannock Chase Visitor Centre and Cannock Chase Forest Centre.

The trail passes close to wildlife sites of international importance. Cycle wheels, horse hooves, and feet, can severely damage these sites, and out of control dogs disturb wildlife. Please help us to protect wildlife by remaining on designated routes and by keeping dogs under close control.

Remember to follow the Cannock Chase Code.



Scan the QR code to download a map of the Cannock Chase Heritage Trail



Take on the Cannock Chase Heritage Trail Challenge with the Cannock Chase Can App!

Cannock Chase Can is an exciting health and wellbeing programme to help you make healthier lifestyle choices. It hosts a variety of wellness challenges which can be undertaken as an individual, group or family. Here's how you can get involved...

Download the App for FREE today by visiting Google Play and the App Store and searching for 'Cannock Chase Can'.



Scan the QR codes on each interpretation board to bring to life elements of the Trail. Content has been created by local schoolchildren alongside professional artists and The Birmingham Repertory Theatre.



Collect all the QR codes for each themed trail to complete the challenge and gain points and rewards for your efforts.