

17. SLITTING MILL VILLAGE

Making nails for Staffordshire

This small village once played a vital role in the local iron industry. Its name derives from the rolling and slitting mills that dominated it during the 17th and 18th centuries.

A slitting mill specialises in the production of nails. After iron bars had been flattened (or 'rolled') they were 'slit' into rods. In 1623 Thomas Chetwynd was operating a highly successful mill here, one of the first of its kind in the Midlands. Between 1692 and 1710 it handled most of the output of the Staffordshire ironworks.



After the decline of the iron industry Slitting Mill became a local beauty spot. Visitors would come to see the waterfall, or to gather around Rising Brook for a picnic or a paddle. In winter, people skated on Horns Pool, repairing to the nearby Horns Inn for refreshments.

What's in a name? Stonehouse or Slitting Mill?

This village used to be known as Stonehouse. The name came from the large building that stands on the junction of Slitting Mill Road and Penkridge Bank Road. At the end of the 19th century, the name of the village was changed to Slitting Mill.

The oldest parts of The Stonehouse date from the late 16th or early 17th century. Its name is derived from the large blocks of dressed stone known as 'ashlar' that were used in its construction.

Until the beginning of the 19th century, the Stonehouse remained the property of the Weston family, who built it. In 1807, Sarah Hopkins, a local philanthropist, moved in. During the Second World War, The Stonehouse became the base for the Air Ministry's Number 20 Works Area. By 1957, it had become their No 6 Works Area Headquarters.



A local benefactor

Sarah Hopkins, who lived in The Stonehouse and founded almshouses in Rugeley, was also a great local benefactor. She funded schools in Rugeley, Brereton, and here in Slitting Mill, where Stonehouse Infant School opened in 1830. Upon her death in 1844 Sarah Hopkins left £600 to provide £15 per year for a schoolmistress to teach children aged 2 to 10 years of age. By 1896, after a Mixed National School was built in the village, Stonehouse Infant School had closed, but her legacy was transferred to the new school.

St John the Baptist Church

How often do you see a semi-detached church attached to a modern house? This church, which was opened as a mission chapel in 1871, was originally built onto Stonehouse Infant School. Religious services had been held in the school in the absence of a church, so it made sense to build the church right next to it. The original school building was eventually demolished and a modern house was built on the site around 1970.



St John's Church



Horns Inn c1920-21. When this postcard was written, the landlord was probably Mr Simmonds. His daughter, Lil, was known locally as the pianist who provided live music for the silent movies at the Palace Cinema in Rugeley.

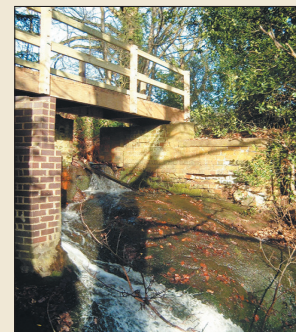
EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

Horns Pool and the tin-plating mill

After the arrival of the rolling and slitting mills, a tin-plating mill was established in the village. In around 1810 Horns Pool (also known as Dutton's Pool) was created to hold the water that drove the mill.

Sluice gates controlled the flow of water into the pool, enabling it to fill up. When the mill was ready to run, the water was released and cascaded down an 18 foot drop (nearly three metres), powering the mill machinery. The water then rejoined Rising Brook.

You can find sluice gates and the waterfall at the end of Horns Pool.



Waterfall at Horns Pool
Images courtesy of Paul Shires

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 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



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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.