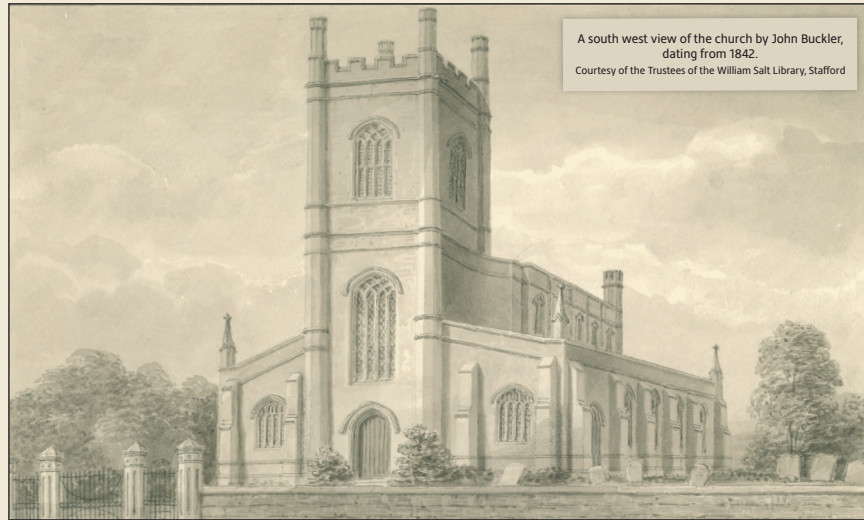


23. ST AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH

A new church for Rugeley

This is St Augustine's church, which was opened in 1823 by the Bishop of Chester. It was built as a replacement for the original parish church, which had become too small for the town's growing congregation and was in a poor state of repair. The remains of the original church stand on the other side of the road.



A south west view of the church by John Buckler, dating from 1842. Courtesy of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford

The land on which the new St Augustine's church was erected was provided by the second Viscount Anson of Shugborough Hall, who later became the First Earl of Lichfield. The building cost £6,501 17s 2d, which was partly met through the sale of materials from the original church.

The new building was of simple design. We can see from the pointed windows and other features that it copied the mediaeval Gothic style of church building.

The chancel

In the late 19th century people were becoming dissatisfied with the church. Its design had suited church services that concentrated on preaching and readings, but the focal point for services had by then returned to the altar.

A new high-quality chancel at the east end of the church was proposed. This would contain an altar and seats for the clergy and choir. In 1905 Lady Alexander Paget laid the foundation stone. The stone contains a time capsule that has a George III crown coin retrieved from the foundation stone of the 1823 church.

The present chancel with its flanking lady chapel, two vestries and organ gallery was designed by Frank L. Pearson. The stained glass of the east window is the work of the well-known designer C.E. Kemp. In the lady chapel there is a fine wooden 'reredos' (an ornamental screen or partition wall behind the altar).

The total cost of the chancel, which was dedicated on 29 June 1906 by the Bishop of Lichfield, was £4,961 19s 7d. The Earl of Lichfield donated the building stone. A new oak pulpit was dedicated as a memorial to Rugeley benefactress Sarah Hopkins, whose legacy provided £2,000 of the building cost.

Yew trees can be found in churchyards throughout the country. Many different explanations of the historical connection between the two have been offered, but the truth is likely to be a combination of these.

The yew tree is poisonous and poses a particular danger to cattle and horses, so could not be grown where animals grazed. However, since mediaeval churchyards were often enclosed, yew could be grown within their grounds without endangering livestock. Some have suggested that yew trees were planted in churchyards to encourage farmers to keep better control of livestock.

The famous English longbow was often made from yew, so it was important for mediaeval villages to have a supply of the timber.

The entrance and the gallery

An oak plaque in the church entrance shows the names of 40 former vicars of the parish, beginning with Henry de Barton in 1276. Inside the gallery the pews still bear the names of the Rugeley families who used them.

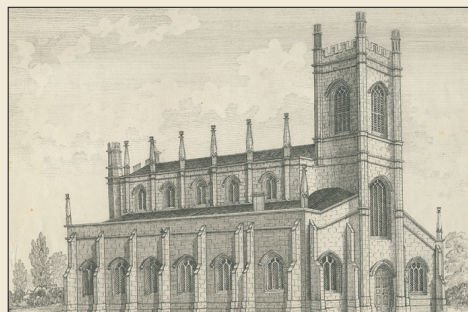
St Augustine's church today

In recent years a number of changes have been made to St Augustine's, including the installation of new lighting and a central heating system. Today the church remains a focal point for the Christian congregation and the wider community.

Looking at the church

As well as a tower, the new building had: a nave: the main central part of a church. Its name comes from the Latin for a ship, navis, probably because it looks like a huge upturned ship. A clerestory: the windowed part of the nave rising above the aisle roof. The Middle English word for 'clear' is clere. Side aisles: the passage ways down the side of the nave, named after the Latin for 'wing', ala.

The strengthening pillars built into the sides of the building are buttresses. These hold up the walls which, filled with large fragile windows, would otherwise buckle under the weight of the roof.



A north west view of the church c1800-1899. Courtesy of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford

Rest in peace

The graves of two murder victims are in this churchyard.



The headstone to Christina Collins' grave. She was murdered on the Trent and Mersey Canal by boatmen.



The grave of John Parsons Cook, for whose murder Dr William Palmer, 'the Rugeley Poisoner', was hanged.

EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

The church bells

When the new tower was built, the six bells of the old church were transferred to it. They were restored, retuned and hung in a new frame to commemorate the new millennium in 2000. A special peal was rung out over the town in 2007 to mark the bells' 300th anniversary.



A 1843 drawing by John Buckler entitled Approach to Rugeley from the Stafford Road. The picture shows the towers of both the current St Augustine's church and the original parish church that it replaced. Courtesy of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford

Bell-ringing is an ancient skill. Each bell has a number, and these numbers interweave with each other in carefully constructed sequences, called 'changes'. Some of the names for these changes are striking in themselves: Grandsire Triples, Bob Major, Oxford Treble Bob, and the one shown below, Plain Hunt Minims.

1 2 3 4
2 1 4 3
2 4 1 3
4 2 3 1
4 3 2 1
3 4 1 2
3 1 4 2
1 3 2 4
1 2 3 4

You can see how each bell moves diagonally to create new combinations.

The more bells that are ringing, the longer it takes to get back to the original sequence.

Five bells take 120 changes to get back to the beginning. Seven bells take 5,040 changes to get back to the beginning. Eight bells take 40,320 changes to get back to the beginning. And twelve bells take just under 480 million changes to get back to the beginning!

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



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.



Chase
Tales
Trail



Hear
Our
Heritage

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