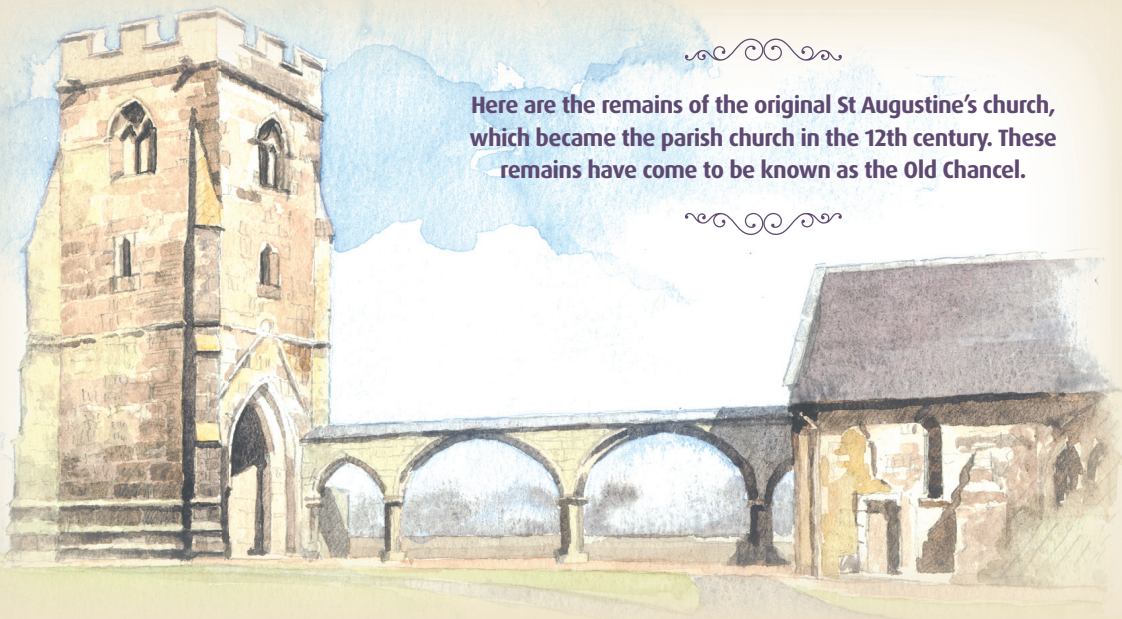


# 24. THE OLD CHANCEL



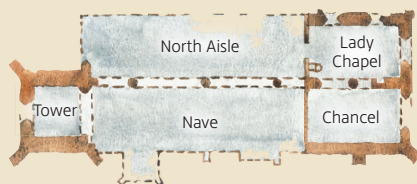
Here are the remains of the original St Augustine's church, which became the parish church in the 12th century. These remains have come to be known as the Old Chancel.

The 12th-century church had just a nave and a chancel. A lady chapel was added in the 13th century, and a tower in the 14th. A north aisle was added, too. By the 19th century the church had become too small for the town's growing population and was in a poor state of repair. A new St Augustine's, which was dedicated in January 1923, was built on a plot of land opposite.

Shortly afterwards, the nave, north aisle, porch and vestry of the original church were demolished. The tower, arcade, lady chapel and chancel are all that remain.

## Plan of the original St Augustine's Church

The nave is where people gathered for worship. In the chancel and lady chapel is a sedile, which is a recess in the wall where the priest sat during a service - this remains today. The lady chapel and chancel are not normally accessible to visitors.



## The churchyard

In the churchyard you can find the remains of a late 14th-century cross. Before the Reformation in the 16th century it would have served as a single memorial to everyone buried here. Much of the stepped base is now below ground level but you can see the deep recess at its top. This is where a penitent (a person who repents their sins) would have knelt.

The graveyard was landscaped in 1974 and the displaced gravestones now pave the area where the nave and north aisle once stood.

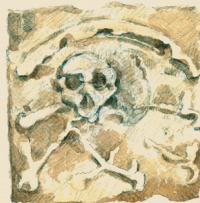


The original St Augustine's Church has changed little since this sepia drawing of the church was made by J. Buckler in 1845. Courtesy of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford.



## The tomb of the two sisters

To the east of the chancel is the unusual tomb of two sisters - Elizabeth Cuting, who died in 1695, and Emma Hollinhurst, who died in 1696. On its top are carved effigies of two figures, each tied at the top and bottom in a shroud. These curious effigies are behind a local legend that the sisters were buried alive in sacks by Oliver Cromwell - despite Cromwell having died earlier, in 1658.



The true story of the tomb is connected to a Parliamentary Act of 17 years earlier, which required corpses to be buried in wool. These ladies, among others, preferred to be buried in linen, and defied the Act, as the burial register shows. Defiance would have resulted in a fine.

At one end of the tomb is a skull and cross bones, a symbol that signified mortality. This was a common adornment on tombs at the time.

## EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

### A church for the Parish

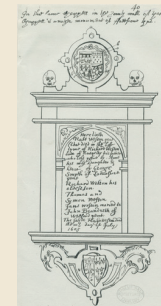
Records show there was a church in Rugeley in 1189. Other evidence suggests the church may have been built earlier in around 1150, possibly under the direction of the De Puys family, who were local landowners at that time.

In the south wall of the 12th century chancel you can find the walled-up remains of a priest's door, a late 13th-century window and a lancet window containing 14th-century glass. The large east window of the chancel is a late Victorian replacement of earlier windows.



A lancet window is narrow, with a pointed arch

When the main body of the church was demolished, several memorials were moved into the lady chapel for preservation. The fine memorial to John Weston dating from 1566, is one of several dedicated to members of the Weston family. The Westons were a prominent family in the area. At one time they held the manor of Hagley, as well as land in Rugeley and Brereton. The lady chapel also contains memorials to the Landor family.



This 1836 pen and ink drawing depicts one of the monuments to the Weston family now kept in the lady chapel. It shows a memorial to Rafe Weston, who died in 1605. Courtesy of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford.

A large and elaborate memorial with coats of arms is to Thomas Landor, who died in 1670.

Six bells were cast in 1706, by the Rudhall family of Gloucester. They were later transferred to the new St Augustine's church, where they can still be heard.



A pen and ink drawing from 1835 depicting a south east view of the church. Courtesy of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford.

## 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.



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