

# 5. MILL GREEN AND HAWKS GREEN

This is Mill Green and Hawks Green Nature Reserve. Its areas of grassland, wetland and woodland are valuable habitats that provide a home for a wide variety of wildlife. The area also has an interesting agricultural history.

## Grassland

Part of Mill Green includes ancient pastures and a 0.9 hectare section of hay meadow, which provides a home for a number of rare species of invertebrates. Botanical evidence suggests that the pastures have never been ploughed, re-seeded or heavily fertilised.

In recent years, traditional land management techniques have been reintroduced to the grassland areas of Mill Green. A small herd of Dexter cattle help maintain the pastures through periodic grazing. Once a year the meadows are cut and the hay that is produced is baled.



Bee orchid, *Ophrys apifera*, is so-called because when it flowers in June or July, it is said to resemble a bumblebee.  
Image courtesy of Andrea Edwards



Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*. You may spot a wren in low vegetation in search of insects. Despite being very small, it has a surprisingly loud song and a distinctive rattling alarm call.  
Image courtesy of Dirk Kotzert



Bullfinch, *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*. This is a male bullfinch, which can be easily recognised by its bright chest and black cap. The female has duller colours. Bullfinches can be found in woodland scrub and hedgerows.  
Image courtesy of Gert Hilbink



Image courtesy of Ray Keller

## Woodland

The beech wood alongside the railway line was originally planted as a shelterbelt. Many of the trees are over 100 years old and are slowly dying,



Greater stichwort, *Stellaria holostea*, and native bluebells, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, which can be found in the woodland areas of Mill Green.  
Image courtesy of Floresphotographic

but a long-term programme to secure this woodland is under way. At the northern end of Mill Green is an ancient oak woodland - one of the few remaining examples in the district. The multi-stemmed trees show that this wood was once coppiced (which involved cutting a tree to just above ground level to encourage new growth).

## Farming in the 17th century

During the creation of a new hay meadow and cattle refuges, archaeological works uncovered evidence of previous tree clearance for agriculture. The clay pipe fragments that were found dated the clearance to the 17th century.

## The balancing reservoir

The body of water in the centre of Mill Green fulfils an important role as a balancing reservoir. Floodwater entering the site from Ridings Brook is contained by the large dam, which prevents flooding downstream.

The dam had a history of overflowing, but between 2005 and 2006 the Environment Agency carried out remedial work that included raising the height of the dam. Improved pathways supported by the development of the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Village adjacent to the nature reserve allow visitors to enjoy this special area.

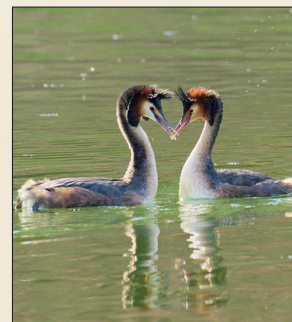
## Wetland

Ducks such as mallard feed in the shallow water, while in the deeper areas you may spot diving birds such as little and great crested grebes. Water fowl such as snipe and teal live on the mudflats and reedbeds, which are visited by other species during winter.

Ridings Brook flows through the site. Its banks are home to a small colony of water voles, a nationally-rare mammal that has recently suffered a dramatic decline in numbers.



Wild Water vole peeping from burrow  
Image courtesy of Fungirlslim



Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)  
Image courtesy of Dr John A Horsfall

## EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

### The mill and the farm

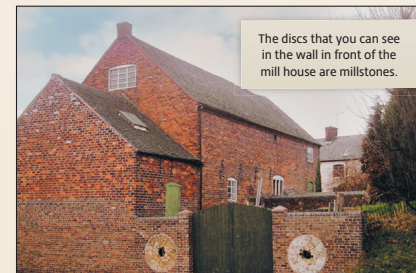
Records show that there was a mill in Cannock since at least 1247. Evidence from 1697 refers to Cannock Mill, which was probably nearby.

Next to the Mill Farm public house on the Lichfield Road is a mill house, built along Ridings Brook in around 1800. It had a water-wheel, and a two acre pool at the rear. Although no longer a working mill, the building still contains the original machinery. The mill farmhouse stands nearby.

Richard Hardware worked at the mill between 1949 and 1958. He recalls helping with agricultural work such as milking cows and ploughing the land:

All the wheat etc. to be milled went up to the very top and was fed by gravity to the stones. In the early days we could grind at any time. However, after the canal [now the Eastern Bypass] had collapsed onto the stream beneath, the mill leat was filled by the canal and the mill pool topped up. The mill could only run for a couple of days a week. Every now and again the stones were opened and redressed, which was a tedious task spent with a chisel.

The flour was used by Taylor's bakery, which was delivered by a horse-drawn cart every day. The driver used to take a break to have a drink in a pub on the way. He got away with this for ages until one day when he was sick and the farmer had to drive the cart. The horse stopped in the pub as usual.



The discs that you can see in the wall in front of the mill house are millstones.



Please note that the mill and farmhouse are private property and are not accessible to the public.

## 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. The trail was initially funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and several project partners in 2008.



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.