

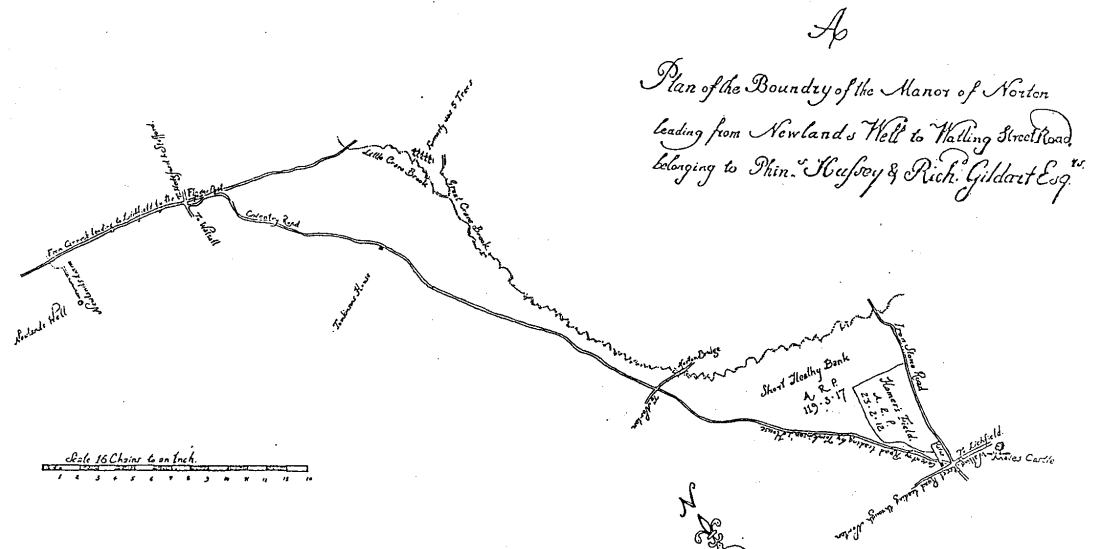
History of Chasewater and its setting

The following chronology attempts to integrate the social and industrial history of the area with the natural history records, which are in green. The more colourful descriptions of the area are in red.

15000+BP	As the last glaciers retreat, boulder clays are deposited over Triassic sandstones and productive coal measures.
500BC - 0	Castle Ring (4 km north of the site of Chasewater) and Castlefort (4 km south-east) hill-forts are occupied around this time by the Celtic Cornovii tribe, which is centred at the hill-fort on the Wrekin in Shropshire. The local population possibly cut peat from deposits at Norton Bog. The local hill-forts are probably abandoned before the arrival of the Romans.
?	Knave's Castle (1.5 Km south-east), a small tumulus enclosed with three ditches and an entrance, may have been a Neolithic burial mound or a Roman guard post. Situated at the junction of three ancient trading routes (Watling Street, Coventry Road, and Ironstone road), it was never excavated prior to being levelled for building in 1902.
43 - 410	The Romans make Watling Street the main route from London to Anglesey. The area is under the protection of the 14th Legion with a small town and military complex at Wall (Letocetum) 6 km to the east.
669	King Wulfhere of Mercia asks Archbishop Theodore to appoint Chad as his new Bishop. Chad chooses Lichfield (field of the dead!) to live, die (of plague) and become venerated as a saint, resulting in many pilgrimages.
886	The Saxon king Alfred makes a treaty with the Dane leader Guthrum. The Watling Street is used as part of the Danelaw boundary.
995	The Saxon settlement of Ogle Hay is first mentioned; the manor belonging to the monastery at Wolverhampton.
1085	Many pilgrims pass through the area, from Wolverhampton and beyond, to the shrine of St.Chad at the newly built Lichfield Cathedral. These pilgrimages continue for at least the next two centuries.
1086	Ogle Hay is mentioned in the Domesday book as a cultivated area of 120 acres.
1391	Clayhanger is first mentioned as a property belonging to the deceased Earl of Stafford.
1500's	Large areas of heath flank either side of 'Canke Wood'. Lord Stafford sells the Manor of Ogle Hay for £15.
1549	Sir William Paget, a minister in the court of Henry VIII, acquires Cannock Chase at the Church's expense and is the first to recognise the value of the area's rich mineral resources. Coal mining and iron smelting grow in importance.
1600's	Extensive felling of 'Canke Wood' creates heathland from south of Stafford to Sutton Park.
1682	Robert Plott marks Brownhill(s) on his map of Staffordshire (made by Joseph Bronne). Norton, Frog Hall and Knave's Castle are marked along Watling Street and Wildmore Hollies to the north of the future site of Chasewater.
Early 1700's	Coal is worked in the Birch Coppice and Slough areas of Brownhills. The coal is mined using bell pits, where men are lowered to the workings by man powered windlass and later by horse powered gin. For five generations the Fowkes and Hussey family are Lords of the Manor of Little Wyrley to which Brownhills belongs.
1730	The Shrewsbury Coach is robbed by a gang at Brownhills, six men and three women are charged with the offence.
1750's	The "Shrewsbury Caravan" is held up by a highwayman in Brownhills.

A detachment of the 38th Foot is prevented from billeting at The Rising Sun by two cases of smallpox. They attempt to bivouac nearby but lose several men and the regimental horse in Norton Bog.

**Circa
1760**



This plan shows the future site of the Reservoir with the Great Crane Brook forming the boundary between the manors of Norton and Hammerwich. The Coventry Road, known locally as Blakes Road, is an ancient trackway, implying that Norton Bog lay to the north of the road.

1775

William Yates' map shows Cannock Chase extending south through Knaves Castle, Shire Oaks, Aldridge Common and into Sutton Park. There are several anomalies with the 1760 map. The extract shows Biddulph's Pool just north of the 'C' in 'Chase' with the stream flowing from it not joining Crane Brook but flowing into the present day Gain's Brook and the Penk system. Crane Brook is shown rising near Lamb's Lodge (still present near Triangle). The Coventry Road, passing by Tomkinson, seems to disappear into the southern edge of the unmarked Norton Bog!



<p>1770's</p>	<p>The will of Phineas Hussey refers to a pumping engine at his Brownhills Collieries. This was probably of the Newcomen type and situated in Engine Lane.</p>
<p>1790's</p>	<p>Large open fields with 'ridge and furrow' are developed on the heath as an effort to maximise food production during the early stages of the Napoleonic Wars (1793 – 1815). (These are still discernible on Chasewater's north shore).</p>
<p>1794</p>	<p>An Act of Parliament is passed to enable the Wyrley and Essington Canal Co. to extend its existing Cannock to Wolverhampton branch. Powers are given to demolish any buildings and cut through and damage any land on its proposed route.</p>
<p>1794-97</p>	<p>Gangs of 'navigators' cut the 'contour' canal from Birchhills, through Goscote, Pelsall, Catshill (where Roman coins are found), Brownhills and Ogley Hay. It passes through a series of 8 locks along a gradient of 50 feet, and then on to Huddlesford Junction near Lichfield, where it joins the Coventry Canal System and gives access to the ports of Hull and Liverpool.</p>
<p>1795</p>	<p>The Act insists that the Wyrley & Essington Canal Co. must provide a water source to keep the canal topped up. It is first suggested to create a reservoir by flooding the Crane Brook valley between Shireoaks and Muckley Corner but the Lichfield to Walsall Turnpike road runs through this area of farmland. Approaches are made to Henry William, Earl of Uxbridge, Baron Paget, Phineas Hussey and Richard Gilbert for permission to use their lands between Norton and the Watling Street. The ancient Coventry Road runs through this area but it is almost deserted in favour of the Chester Road and a track crosses the Crane Brook at Norton Footbridge. Agreements are quickly reached as the Lords are offered 3/6p per acre rent per</p>

	annum, which is very good for an area of unenclosed open fields and barren bog. A total area of 156 acres is rented.
1796	Work begins on the reservoir. The Crane brook is diverted away from the area and a team of 'navies' dig out the floor of the reservoir and use the excavations to build earthen-work dams at the eastern and western edges. The Crane Brook, flowing towards the Tame, is dammed by the eastern embankment and the western embankment dams a stream flowing west into the Penk system. The deepest part of the reservoir is 35 feet near to the eastern end of the reservoir. A feeder channel is also cut through from the eastern dam to the top of the locks at Ogley Hay, passing by Knaves Castle.
1797	The canal is opened on 8th May but soon closes due to a lack of water. The Ogley lock system uses 25,000 gallons of water each time a boat passes through and are now dry. The Company is under extreme pressure to open the canal again so the Crane Brook is re-diverted to fill the reservoir. The reservoir soon fills and the accumulated water is fed into the canal system.
1799	In June, the eastern dam bursts, sending millions of gallons of water down the valley towards Shenstone. Roads and bridges are washed away, fields are flooded and livestock drowned. The canal company pays compensation to all who have suffered loses, and immediately sets about rebuilding the dam. It is decided the new dam will be thicker and wider and the inner walls will be lined with limestone.
1800	In January, the canal company recruit as many men as are needed to make sure the reservoir is opened as quickly as possible. By March the dam is rebuilt and the reservoir refilled. As a safeguard against further damage to the dam the company builds a watch house and employs a full time watchman to inspect the dam and report any defects. The first watchman is William Wall who pays the company £2 per year to rent the house and gardens.
1801	Lesser Skullcap is recorded and there are unconfirmed reports of Marsh Clubmoss and Bog Orchid at Norton Bog.
1806	John Cary's New Map of Staffordshire dated 1806 (but probably surveyed at least five years earlier) shows two pools, perhaps reflecting the situation immediately after the collapse of the dam (in 1799) since the eastern pool appears to occupy the area of the Anglesey Basin.





<p>1840</p>	<p>The Wyrley & Essington company amalgamates with the Birmingham Canal Navigations. The BCN had previously had to pay to top up their canals with water from the reservoir. (The boundary posts of the BCN can still be found around Chasewater and Anglesey basin).</p>
<p>1841</p>	<p>Maps from the Brownhills Colliery show over 50 mine shafts over Brownhills Common and present day Highfield Farm and Raceway Heath areas. Most of the deep coal has been cleared but the ground under the south shore of the 'Great Pool' (Chasewater) is referred to as 'solid'.</p>
<p>1842</p>	<p>Robert Garner in <i>Natural History of the County of Stafford</i> refers to 'Great numbers of Arctic Terns visited north and south Staffordshire in May.' (Although there was no direct reference to Norton Pool)</p>
<p>1844</p>	<p>Garner refers to 'The fine pool near Norton, on Cannock Chase is one mile long, by three quarters broad.'</p>
<p>1847</p>	<p>The Marquis of Anglesey plans to open his pits near to the reservoir and conducts a survey to see if the channel can be made navigable, in order to transport his coal. The branch will be 1.5 miles long from the reservoir to Ogley locks.</p>
<p>1848</p>	<p>Work starts on the Anglesey Branch. Most of the cost is met by the South Staffs Railway due to the terms of the Railways Act of Parliament.</p>
<p>1849</p>	<p>In December, the Marquis or Hammerwich Pit is opened by the Marquis of Anglesey. The pit is later known as the Cannock Chase No. 1. The South Staffordshire Railway is opened between Walsall and Lichfield: its Senior Engineer is John Robinson McClean.</p>