

RAF HEDNESFORD

Cannock Chase is also associated with the military history of the Second World War. In 1938 the building of a training school was begun on Brindley Heath, (on the area which is to the south of the modern Visitor Centre). It was opened in 1939 by the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood. Its official title was the No.6 School of Technical Training but it is better known as RAF Hednesford. During the War many thousands of men and a smaller number of women received their basic training at the camp, before being posted to all parts of the country. The training focused on the maintenance of the air frames and engines of the RAF planes.

At its height the camp was the size of a small town with its own facilities including a cinema, NAAFI, YMCA and churches. Later it was unique in having a Jewish Synagogue.

A railway halt was built at Moors Gorse and the recruits had to trudge, with their heavy bags, up the long climb of Marquis Drive. This soon became known as Kit Bag Hill. At the Visitor Centre there is an Old Comrades Book for service personnel who served at RAF Hednesford to sign.

At the end of the war it became a personnel dispatch centre and service personnel were demobilised. Between 1950 and 1956 it was used for National Service training and 81,500 men received basic training there, including the dreaded "square-bashing".

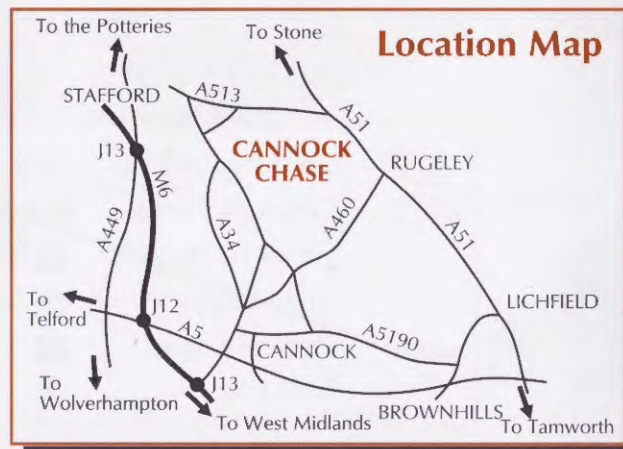
Immediately after it closed as a training camp it was reopened as a resettlement camp for Hungarian refugees fleeing from the Russian Invasion of Budapest. After further weekend use by the Territorial Army, many of the buildings were sold off and the site fell into disrepair. In the 1960's and 70's the remains of the camp were demolished and the whole site became part of the Country Park. All that now remains are the roadways which were in between the dozens of wooden huts. The east of the area is now a quiet wildlife sanctuary, the rest of the site being used for occasional events and providing an excellent surface for wheelchairs.

Various publications are available from the Information Centres, local booksellers and the Cultural and Corporate Services Department, Shire Hall, Market Street, Stafford. ST16 2LQ.

Tel: 01785-277264

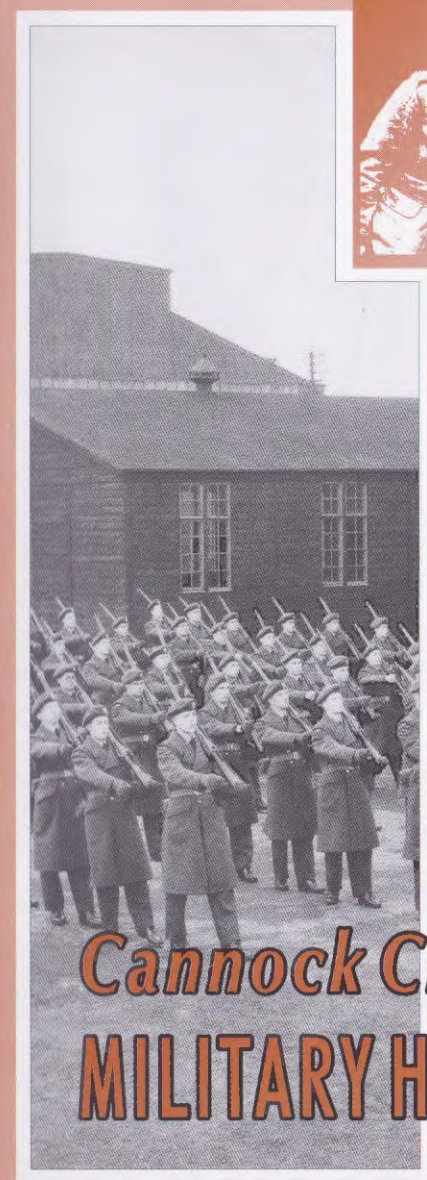
VISIT: Cannock Chase Visitor Centre, Marquis Drive. For details of opening times etc.

Tel: 01543-871773



*Many thanks to C.J. & C.P. Whitehouse
in the preparation of this leaflet.*

Produced by the Cultural & Corporate Services Department.



Cannock Chase MILITARY HISTORY

Staffordshire
County Council

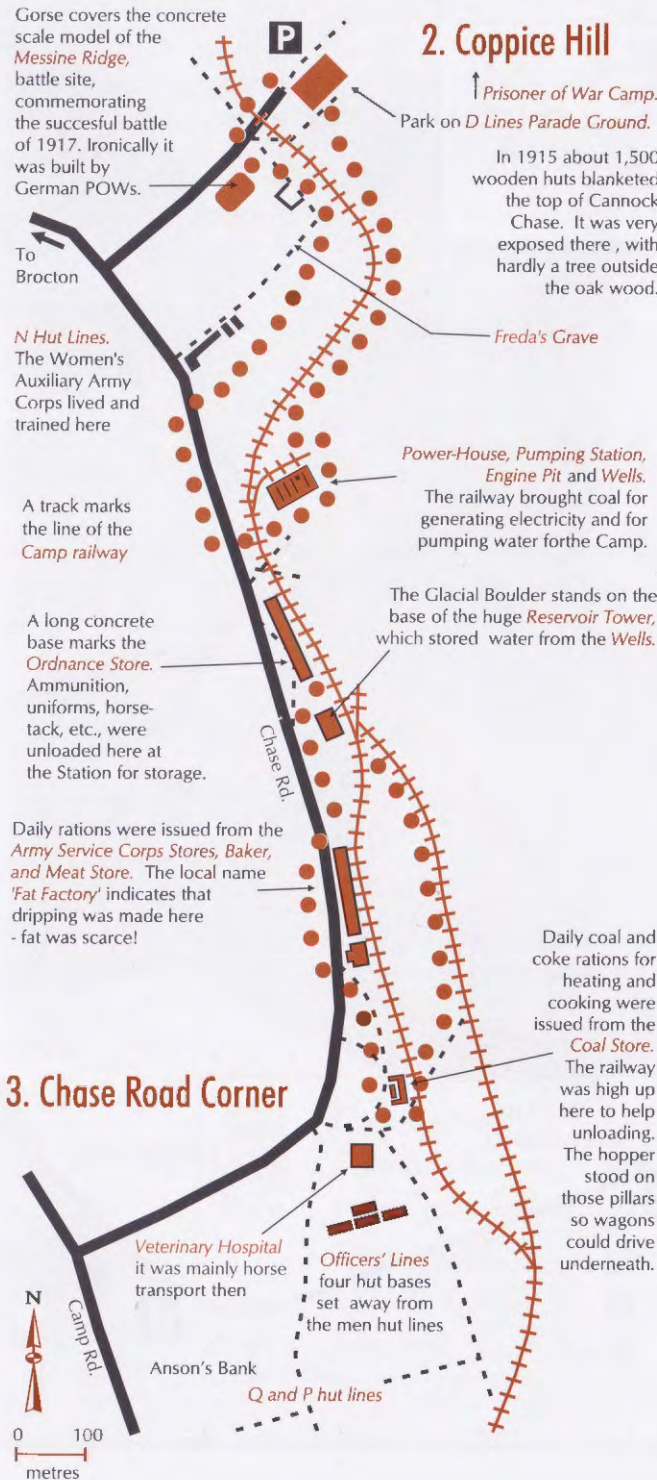
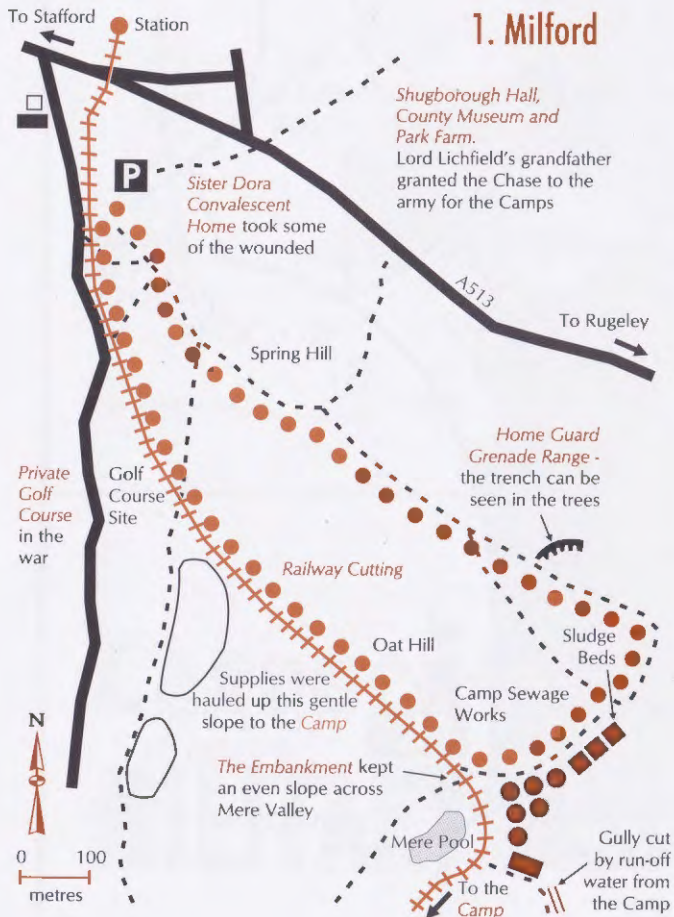
Cultural & Corporate Services

CANNOCK CHASE & THE GREAT WAR

At the beginning of the 20th Century Cannock Chase was very different from the way it is now. It was a very bleak landscape with none of now familiar Forestry Commission pine trees.

Between 1914 and 1918 two huge Army Training Camps were built. Up to 1/4 million British and Commonwealth troops, destined for the trenches, passed through.

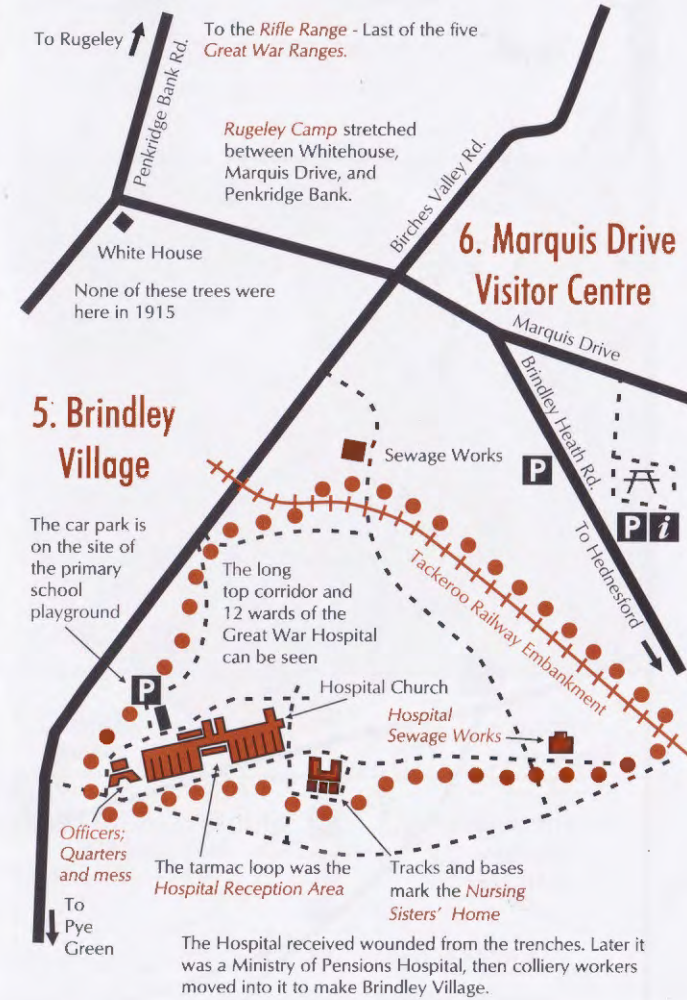
Remains of these camps and the railways which supplied them can still be seen, throughout the Chase, if you look closely.



4. Commonwealth & German Military Cemetery

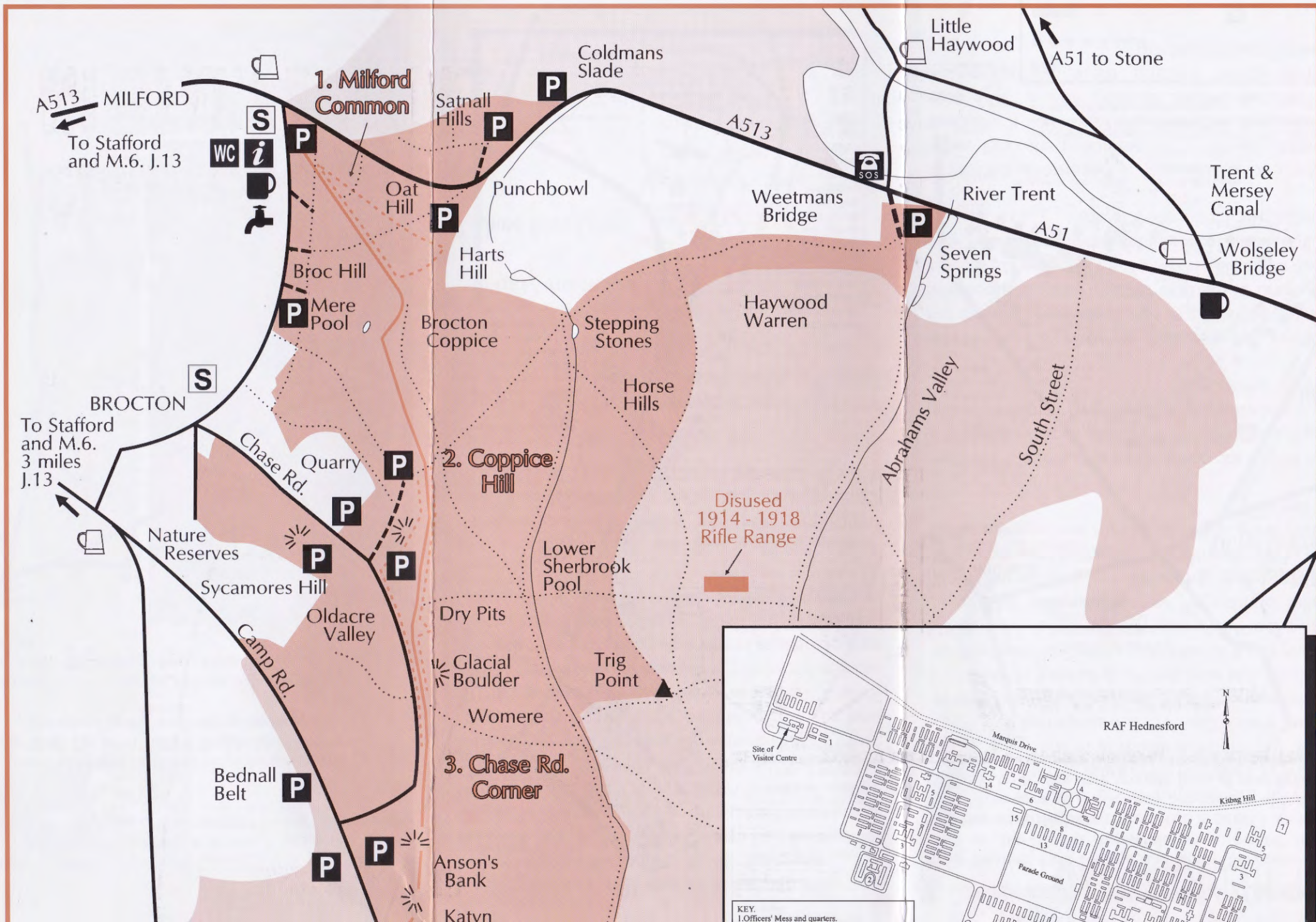
Many German, New Zealand and British Servicemen who died in the Camp Hospitals were buried in the Commonwealth Cemetery.

In 1967 remains of all German Servicemen who died in Britain in both wars were brought from all over Britain for reburial in the beautiful German Cemetery, which has its own visitor facilities.



KEY

- ● ● Walk Route
- Track
- Army Camp Remains
- P Car Park
- ++++ 1914 - 18 Railway Line (now removed)



A513 MILFORD

To Stafford and M.6. J.13

1. Milford Common

Coldmans Slade

Little Haywood

A51 to Stone

WC

i

Satnall Hills

P

A513

SOS

Oat Hill

P

Punchbowl

Weetmans Bridge

River Trent

Trent & Mersey Canal

A51

Wolseley Bridge

Broc Hill

Mere Pool

P

Harts Hill

Brocton Coppice

Stepping Stones

Haywood Warren

Seven Springs

Abrahams Valley

South Street

To Stafford and M.6. 3 miles J.13

BROCTON

S

Chase Rd.

Quarry

P

2. Coppice Hill

Disused 1914 - 1918 Rifle Range

Nature Reserves

P

Sycamores Hill

P

P

Lower Sherbrook Pool

Camp Rd.

Oldacre Valley

Dry Pits

Glacial Boulder

Trig Point

Womere

Bednall Belt

P

3. Chase Rd. Corner

Anson's Bank

P

P

Katyn



