

**Blue Trail**  
2¼ miles (3.6 kilometres) – approx. 2 hours

Start the route at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre. Follow the blue waymarkers around the trail. The walk passes the site of Brindley Village, built as a military hospital during the Great War and later used to house miners and their families.

- Leaving the Visitor Centre at post (1), walk over the grassed area to the left of the Visitor Centre to (2).
- Taking care, cross the road and make your way to the corner of the former RAF camp playing field to post (2a).
- Notice the heather regenerating in the closely mown grass and the mature pines planted as a commercial crop to the right. Carefully cross the road to post (3).
- Look out for rowan trees in this area, which provide food for blackbirds, redwings and fieldfares in the winter. Walk through the car park, and with the BT tower on the horizon straight ahead, follow the track to post (4).
- Take the right fork. The carpet-like colonies at the edge of the trees include heather, crowberry, cowberry, bilberry and Cannock Chase berry. Walk towards post (5).
- Fine clearance in this area has left standing birch as songposts for passing birds like long-tailed tits moving between nearby plantations. Mature birch trees may also support the larvae of the Welsh Clearwing moth, for which Cannock Chase is a national stronghold. Deer hoof prints or 'slots' can sometimes be seen in the softer ground, though the deer themselves are rarely seen.
- Continue straight ahead, downhill, to post (6).

In the valley north-west of post (6), you can see the nearest of the four concrete filter beds remaining from

the Great War sewage works. Scattered concrete blocks make an ideal basking place for lizards and adders on a warm summer's day. On the wall of one of the triangular sledge beds you can see an inscription with the date '1916'. The ground nearby, enriched by effluent, has encouraged the growth of Hawthorn shrubs.

- From post (6), bear left and walk down the track which now crosses the original effluent ditch to post (7). The embankment of the former Tackerroo Railway runs through the trees on the left.
- Turn right and notice the purple moor-grass and soft rush, indicative of the former marsh in this area (8).
- With a bank of heather and scattered birch on your left, walk on to the car park. Head past the barrier to post (9), where you head up the slope through trees.
- Emerging from the trees (10), cross a patch of open heath, once the playing field of the former military hospital and later, Brindley Village and school. Look out for puffballs in the autumn, a white spherical fungi, by the track.
- Cross the tarmac of the former school playground (11), noticing the concrete bases of the earlier hospital buildings (12).
- At the post turn right along the curving track, past the mains water manhole cover. Thousands of manhole covers like this one were cast at Black Country iron foundries.
- At (13) take the first left. An interpretation board is at the meeting point of the five paths. You are now at the entrance to Brindley Village, a military hospital from the Great War. The footings of the former Officers' Quarters may be seen in the undergrowth on the left. Walk along the main drive lined by laurels and rhododendrons – most likely planted by recuperating soldiers. The military hospital was built in 1916 to care for casualties

returning from the trenches on the Western Front. The hospital closed in 1923 and the buildings were converted to bungalow-style accommodation for miners and their families working at West Cannock Colliery. The last residents left Brindley Village in 1955 and the school closed in 1959. Over the last fifty years, nature has taken over and the footprint of the buildings is generally overgrown. The trees and bushes are home to many bird species and both green and great-spotted woodpeckers may be seen and heard.

- Post (14) marks the entrance to the military hospital reception block; the concrete flagpole base on the left was in front of the main administrative building. The interpretation board tells the story of the hospital and Brindley Village.
- Continue down the main drive to (15). If you are flagging, turn left and take the alternative route following posts (7) to (1) back to the Visitor Centre.
- To continue on the main Blue Trail, turn right to (16); concrete remains on the left show the site of the hospital Sisters' Quarters.
- Continue downhill to (17), then left along the valley bottom track (Duffields Lane) for half-a-mile to Duffields car park.
- Banks of heather line the track on either side. At (18), heather was cut for packing ceramics in the Potteries up to the 1940s.
- Continue along the valley to post (19) and at the car park turn left onto the Tackerroo railway embankment.
- At post (20) turn right and walk uphill to (21). Bear right and head to Brindley Heath Road, going straight past post (21a). Carefully cross the road at (22) and follow the track to (23). The Visitor Centre and car park are ahead.

Brindley Heath is one of several military heritage sites at Cannock Chase. The Chase is a nationally important landscape, and a special place to discover some of our most important historic heritage. Brindley Heath is steeped in memories, and together with its natural history, offers three circular waymarked trails for everyone to enjoy.

During the Great War, Cannock Chase was a wide, open heath landscape, home to thousands of British and Commonwealth soldiers en route to the Western Front. The extensive military development extended across the west side of the Chase. Soldiers were barracked in wooden huts at two large training camps at Rugeley and Brocton. There is a reconstructed Great War Hut at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre.

In 1916, a military hospital was built at Brindley Heath. Hospital staff cared for casualties returning from the trenches as well as troops stationed at the training camps. The hospital closed in 1923. From 1924, miners working at West Cannock Colliery were housed, with their families, in the recently abandoned buildings. 'Brindley Village' was born and by 1926 a club and school had been installed, and the hospital chapel re-dedicated as St Mary's Church. The village thrived until 1955 when the buildings were demolished, but remains may still be found amongst the vegetation. Brindley Village school closed in 1959.



Entrance to Brindley Village, c1928

**CANNOCK CHASE**  
A NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

**protect · respect · enjoy**

Be a Chase Champion – Follow the Cannock Chase Code

Main military heritage sites on Cannock Chase

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Discover more about the landscape, nature and heritage of Cannock Chase on our website or by visiting one of the visitor centres/hubs in the area.

[www.cannock-chase.co.uk](http://www.cannock-chase.co.uk)



# Brindley Heath Trails



**Waymarked Trails**  
Three circular walks on country paths  
1¼ to 2¼ miles / 2 to 3.6 kms (1 to 2 hours)

Photographs by Robert Cartwright, Dave Emley and Brindley Village Legacy Group. Illustration by Dave Thompson



## Red Trail

1¼ miles (2 kilometres) – approx. 1 hour

A short walk from Cannock Chase Visitor Centre. Follow the red waymarkers around the route.

⑦ Follow the Blue Trail as far as post (7), then turn left at the crossroads of the Tackeroo railway embankment. You will pass, on the left, the pool and bridge which are part of the Toc-H trail for people with disabilities.

⑦a You will see ahead at post (7a) the alternating strips of grass where rail sleepers were removed after the war, and in between, traces of ash and ballast. You're now following the line of the Tackeroo Express. In 1915 the Tackeroo Express was cajoled into making its five mile journey from No. 5 Pit sidings past the White House and Anson Bank to the Army Service Corps Stores at the head of Oldacre Valley and then on to Milford. An earlier railway took the line of the present road up Marquis Drive, but it proved too steep for the light colliery locomotives, and the route across Brindley Heath provided a gentler gradient.

⑳ Continue down the track to post (20) and follow the blue waymarkers back to the Visitor Centre.



Along the line of the Tackeroo Express



Cannock Chase berry

## Green Trail

2 miles (3.2 kilometres) – approx. 2 hours

Start the route at Brindley Village car park. Follow the green waymarkers around the route.

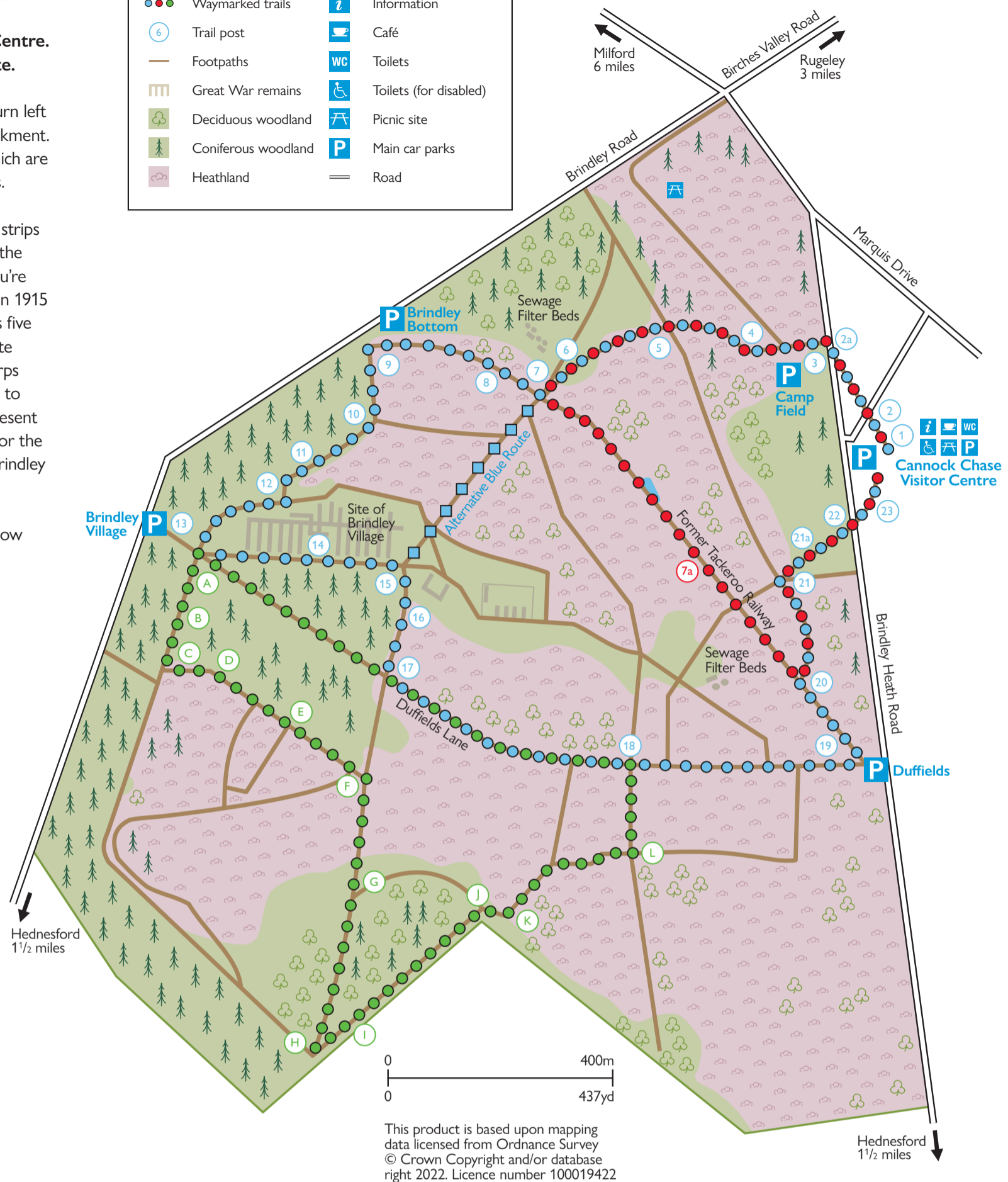
Ⓐ From the car park, walk a few metres to the interpretation board, turning right immediately to trail post (A).

Ⓑ Walk towards post (B), noticing on your left, a variety of planted tree species including Scots pine, Japanese larch and sweet chestnut. Notice the difference between the conifers such as the finer leaves of the larch and the different cone shapes. A spring creates a damp area where soft rush grows.

Ⓒ At post (C), turn left.

Ⓓ A little further on the right at (D) is an area of open heathland with heather and scrub, managed to keep the scrub at the right levels to support wildlife. Imagine this place 200 years ago – hardly a tree in sight with huge flocks of the now extinct Cannock Grey-Face sheep roaming across the landscape, keeping the heathland

Key			
● ● ●	Waymarked trails	<b>i</b>	Information
⑥	Trail post	<b>☕</b>	Café
—	Footpaths	<b>WC</b>	Toilets
⌘	Great War remains	<b>♿</b>	Toilets (for disabled)
🌳	Deciduous woodland	<b>🍷</b>	Picnic site
🌲	Coniferous woodland	<b>P</b>	Main car parks
🌱	Heathland	—	Road



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open. The heathland today represents a key wildlife habitat, designated as part of the Cannock Chase Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). More recently, these important heathland communities became a Special Area of Conservation or SAC. This puts the Chase heaths firmly on the map as an area of international significance.

Ⓔ There have been many unplanned fires in this area, including a devastating one in 1976. Some charring may still be seen on older trees in the area. Further down the track at (E), birch and pine invasion has been controlled, but it quickly re-invades without further management. In the past, grazing kept these areas open and in its absence mechanical methods have to be used to maintain the important open heathland areas.

Ⓕ Ahead at the track junction at (F) is a stand of Corsican pines, planted as a timber crop; notice the grey bark and longer, twisted needles when compared to Scots pines. Turn right here and continue down and then up the slope to (G).

Ⓖ There has been large scale clearance of pine and birch in this area to restore the rare heathland. Walk ahead through the woodland. As the gradient levels out, you

emerge from the trees; follow the track past a small field and continue to post (H).

Ⓖ Turn sharp left and walk along the path beside a hawthorn hedgerow on your right hand side.

Ⓘ Head past post (I). On the left the woodland in this area is a mixture of self-sown oak, pine, silver birch and rowan.

Ⓛ Continue to post (J) and turn right at the tracks' crossing point.

Ⓚ Take the left fork to post (K), where you bear right. You are now passing through an area where grazing and bracken control trials took place on the heathland in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Ⓛ At post (L), turn left; walking downhill, you pass an area where heather was cut for packing ceramics in the Potteries up to the 1940s. Turn left onto the main track (Duffields Lane) at post (18) between banks of heather, bilberry and cowberry. A programme of bracken control here has enabled these species to flourish again. Follow the track for half-a-mile to return to Brindley Village car park.