

22. IN AND AROUND MARKET SQUARE

The buildings around Rugeley are a mix of styles and ages, some dating back to the 17th century. The buildings pictured here can be found in and around Market Square. The area was designated a Conservation Area in 1973 because of its special architectural and historic interest.



The Red Lion, which is the oldest licensed premises in the town, is a timber-framed building dating from about 1600. This type of timber-frame is called a box frame.



The NatWest Bank was originally a grand residence, built in 1649 by Erasmus Landor. It was refashioned in the 18th century, but still has its original doorway.



The Shrew in Market Street was used as a coaching inn since at least 1700. Most of The Shrew was built in the early 1800s, but might include parts from the early 1700s. Originally called The Crown, in 1810 it became The Talbot Arms. The inn gained notoriety in 1855 when John Parsons Cook died there - the last victim of the Rugeley poisoner William Palmer. In 1856, in an attempt to disassociate itself from the crime, the inn was renamed The Shrewsbury Arms, and is now The Shrew.



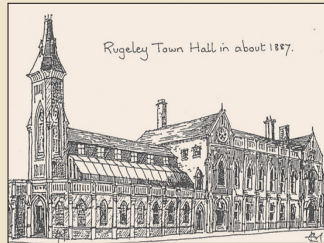
The Pig and Bell, another of Rugeley's many public houses, is just off the Market Square. It was built in the 18th century.



The memorial stone on this Post Office tells us that it was once the Rugeley Foresters Jubilee Hall and Institute, built in 1909.

Market Square building project

In the late 1870s a major building project took place in the Market Square area. The new buildings included a town hall, a clock tower, a market hall, a police station, a fire station, an assembly room and offices. All that remains today is the clock tower. The rest was demolished in 1978, almost 100 years after it was built.



This drawing shows the Town Hall in its heyday. Penny Bank has been transferred to the far end of the building. Drawing courtesy of Edwina Morgan



The clock tower is all that is left of the Town Hall of 1878.

Penny Bank

In 1817 a savings bank was added to the original Town Hall. In 1844 it was rebuilt and known as Penny Bank. There were many such banks all over the country, in which poor people could deposit money for savings. In 1995, Penny Bank was rebuilt once again.



This drawing shows Penny Bank as it was in the 1980s, when it had fallen into a dilapidated condition. Drawing courtesy of Edwina Morgan



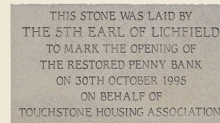
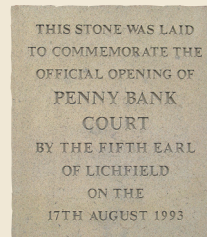
Penny Bank, here in Anson Street, in its third incarnation. Courtesy of Carole & David Perry



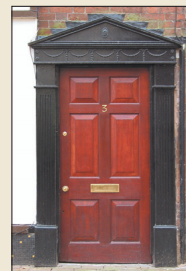
Penny Bank Court was built in 1993. Its design helps it to blend in with older brick buildings. Many modern buildings of the 1950s and 1960s were built not of bricks but of concrete, to look 'state-of-the-art' and impressively modern.

EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

These commemorative stones can be found in and around Market Square. You can find other stones and plaques set into buildings, showing passers-by what people have thought is important in the life of their town.



As you walk around Rugeley you will see many different designs of doorway. Often they convey admiration for classical features such as columns at the side and triangular pediments at the top. Others have decorative carving and pretty glazing.



Paris House, Market Square.



Lloyds Bank.



Bow Street.

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.

22. WORKING LIFE AROUND MARKET SQUARE

Many of Rugeley's former shops and businesses are remembered by the town's inhabitants. Next to the clock tower stood Whitworth's the grocer's (maker of delicious pork pies!), later to become George Mason's. Next to the grocer's was Tunnicliff's, the baker and confectioner. It had been in the town since the late 1800s and remained until the 1950s.

The Phoenix Tannery

There have been tanneries in Rugeley since the 12th century. One of the most recent was the Phoenix Tannery that was established before 1851, and continued until the late 1950s. Hides were soaked in lime before having the hair scraped off them, then laid in open tan pits between layers of oak bark, when water was pumped in. The oak bark was ground by a small factory in Bryan's Lane.



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According to local historian Alec Neal, before it closed in 1958 Rugeley's Phoenix Tannery supplied the green leather for the seats in the House of Commons.

Harris' ironmongers and ironworks

Rugeley's iron production started as early as 1231 and became a major industry. There were a number of ironworks in the town. In 1855 a Mr. Harris opened an ironmongery business in Paris House in Market Square. It later moved to the corner of Anson Street, and opened its own foundry, the Phoenix Iron Works, a few doors away. The foundry made metal garden equipment, including garden rollers.



Market Square in the 1930s. Drawing courtesy of Edwina Morgan



Market Square in the 1950s. Drawing courtesy of Edwina Morgan



Stirzaker's Tobacconist and Hairdresser's at 30 Upper Brook Street, c1890-1892. Pictured from left to right are Joe Heatherley, Mr E Stirzaker and Mr Jack Cope. The shop was later taken over by Joe Heatherley. Image courtesy of Staffordshire Arts & Museum Service



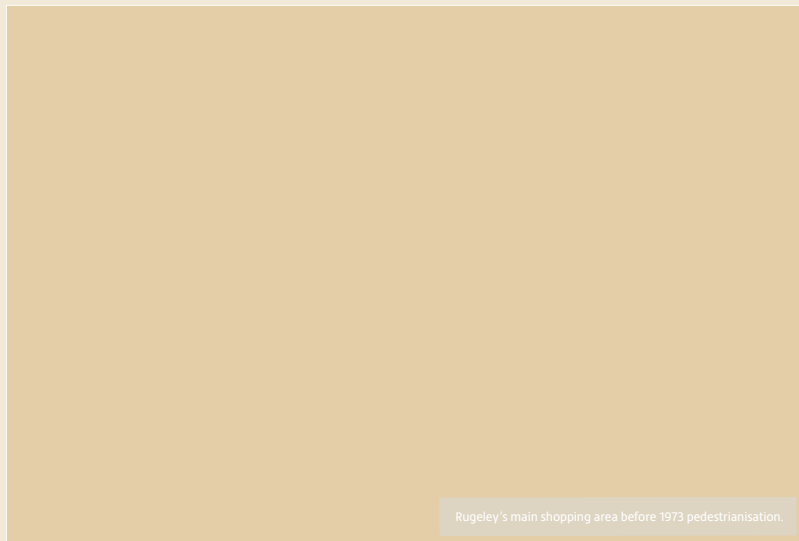
This photograph, taken in 1961, shows the area of the town centre that was cleared later that decade to make way for the indoor market. Pictured is Pamela Logan, Miss Colton 1961 title holder. Image courtesy of Staffordshire Arts & Museum Service

Degg's Garage

Mr Degg, who had started out here in Anson Street making and repairing bicycles, ran a successful garage. In 1902 he became the first car owner in Rugeley. At this time, his garage was the only one between Birmingham and Manchester. During the Great War, he ran a taxi service for the soldiers stationed in nearby military camps. One of the taxis was driven by his sixteen-year-old daughter. The garage closed in the 1960s.

The Palace Cinema

Next to Mr Degg's garage was the Palace Cinema, where the library now stands. In the days of silent films a violinist and a pianist provided live music, with kettle drums adding extra impact to the dramatic scenes.



Rugeley's main shopping area before 1973 pedestrianisation.

EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

George Key and the donkey jacket

In the late 1870s John Key had a draper's shop in nearby Lower Brook Street. In 1888 his son George set up his own business on the second floor. Later that year George introduced a new type of coat made of thick, hard-wearing material, which he had developed for the navvies who were building the Manchester Ship Canal. The coat became known as the Donkey Jacket - named after the 'donkey engines' that some of the navvies worked on. The mail order business, now so popular, was pioneered by George Key through his catalogue, The Keystone. Ladies' clothes were sold by mail order after the First World War, and the firm lasted until 1984.



A man wearing a donkey jacket.

Joseph Richard Hindley's baker's shop at 16a Upper Brook Street, c1920-1929. The firm celebrated its centenary in 1993, when it employed over 70 people. A Rugeley resident recalled that at their other premises in Wharf Road they offered the use of the ovens, as they cooled, for local women to cook their joints of meat. Image courtesy of Staffordshire Arts & Museum Service