

OUR WAR GRAVES YOUR HISTORY

CANNOCK CHASE WAR CEMETERY



In the autumn of 1914, the British Army began constructing camps at Brocton and Rugeley on Cannock Chase. Housing up to 40,000 men at any one time, the camps were used first as transit camps for soldiers heading to the Western Front. Cannock Chase subsequently became a training facility for various Commonwealth units, and as many as 500,000 troops were trained here during the First World War.

A hospital serving both Brocton and Rugeley camps was established at Brindley Heath in 1916. The hospital had a total of 1,000 beds as well as housing convalescing soldiers from the Western Front. The cemetery was created in 1917 to serve as the final resting place for men who died while being treated in the hospital. The majority of the Commonwealth burials are New Zealanders, many of whom died in the flu pandemic that broke out toward the end of the war.

In April 1917, part of the camp at Brocton was turned into a prisoner of war camp and hospital for captured German soldiers and the cemetery was also used for German burials.

Key CWGC features to look out for:

What is interesting about this cemetery is that the majority of the burials are not UK or Commonwealth, but German. The style of headstone is a slightly different design from those used for Commonwealth casualties. You will also find differed headstone designs used in other cemeteries for non-Commonwealth war dead.



Points of interest...

Commemorations: **379**
First World War: **97**
Commonwealth, **286** German
Second World War: **3**
Commonwealth, **25** German

Casualties from the following nations

Germany
Poland
New Zealand
UK

Things to look out for...

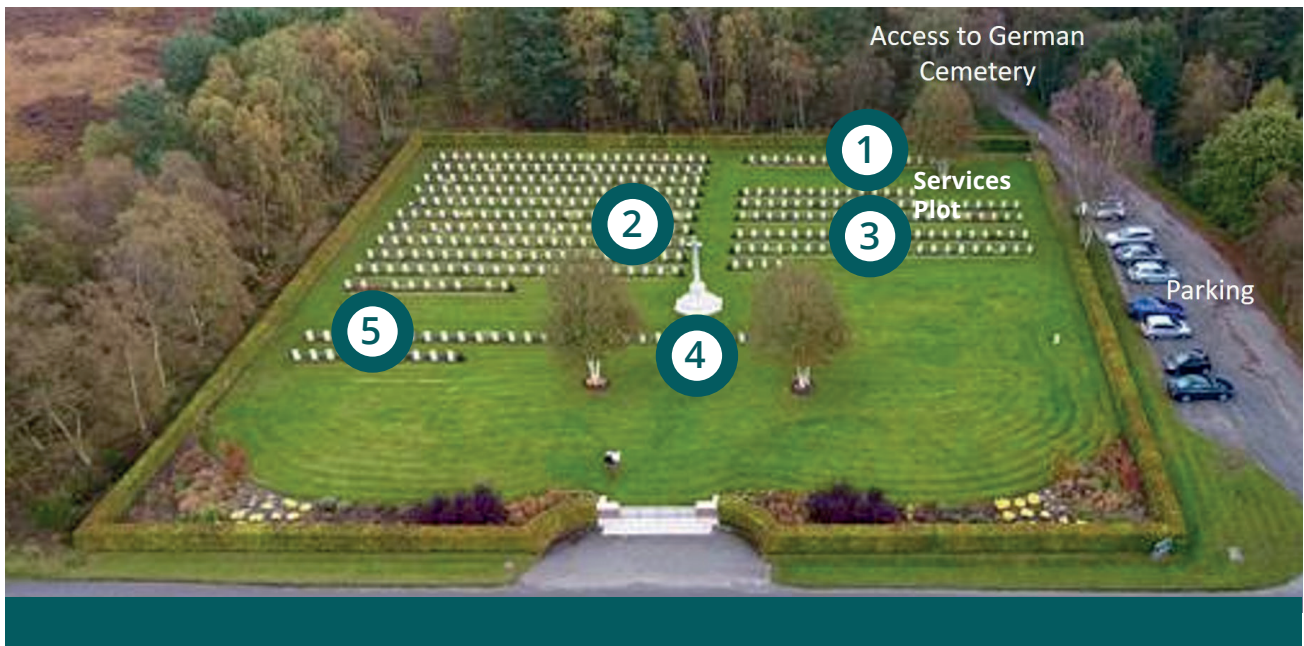
Boy soldier – **Albert Urell** of the Royal Garrison Artillery

Aircraftman 1st Class, George Edgar Hicks who was run over and killed by a bus on Sandon Road Stafford, in the blackout. A coroner's verdict of accidental death was recorded. He is the oldest casualty in the cemetery.

Casualties of the **Spanish Flu** in 1919

Franz Worock and three others who died on 11 November 1918

Discovering CWGC graves at Cannock Chase War Cemetery



The CWGC war cemetery at Cannock Chase is close to the road and there is parking to the side. Further down the lane, you will discover the German Military Cemetery.

1 Point 1

Entering by the gate at the side of the cemetery, next to the parking area, pause and look across the site towards the Cross of Sacrifice. From here, you will notice the difference in the shapes of the headstones. The headstones immediately on the right give an example of the style used for Commonwealth dead. Some of the headstones include a personal inscription. However, you won't find inscriptions on the headstones of the New Zealanders, as the NZ government decided that families wouldn't be given the option of having a personal inscription. You will also notice that many of the graves have a more pointed shape to the top. These denote the graves of German soldiers. Of the 379 burials in the cemetery, 311 are German soldiers.

2 Point 2

Walk towards the Cross of sacrifice. The Cross of Sacrifice was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, one of the commission's leading architects, and was intended to represent the faith of the majority. Any CWGC site with more than 40 burials will have a Cross of Sacrifice, which differs size depending on the number of burials.

In the first two rows, take note of the dates of death on the headstones of the servicemen of all nationalities. These are predominantly from the Autumn/Winter of 1918. These months represent the height of the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic. It is estimated that 50 million+ people died worldwide. Also buried here are a number of German soldiers, including **Franz Worock** who died on 11 November 1918 – the day the armistice was signed. He is buried in Plot 3. Row E. Grave 15.



Cannock Chase War Cemetery

3 Point 3

In plot 4 you will find the grave of **Albert Edward Easter Urell**. Notice his rank is given as 'BOY'. He is the youngest casualty buried in the cemetery. One of four children and born into a military family in Kent, Albert Urell was educated at the Duke of York's Royal Military School in Dover. He enlisted in July 1916, aged 14, into the Royal Garrison Artillery as a boy bugler, a non-combatant role. Albert became ill and died in the military hospital here. At this point his family were living in Plymouth and chose the personal inscription "Peace Perfect Peace" for their son. He is buried in Plot 4. Row G. Grave 13.



Cannock Chase War Cemetery

4 Point 4

There are only a small number of Second World War burials at this site. One of those is **Pilot Officer Robert Bowran** an RAF Volunteer Reservist from 96 Squadron. He died when the Defiant fighter plane he was flying crashed during a low-level practice attack. He was 27 years old. He is buried in Plot 2. Row A. Grave 2.

5 Point 5

Buried in Plot 1 is **Rifleman Albert Bridgewater** from Wellington, New Zealand. He enlisted 24 October 1916. Prior to this he was an apprentice painter. In 1917 he embarked on the vessel Navua for Davenport UK. Albert was the eldest of twins and also had an older brother, both of whom served in the war. Arguably, Albert may have been seen as having the least dangerous posting to Cannock, as his siblings had seen action at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. They both survived the war but sadly Albert died in December 1918 in the military hospital, of pleurisy, a lung condition, age 21. He is buried in Plot 1. Row B. Grave 7.



Cannock Chase War Cemetery

Nearby

A short walk from CWGC Cannock War Cemetery is **Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery**, which contains the graves nearly 5,000 German and Austrian servicemen and civilians of the two world wars. In 1959, an agreement was concluded by the governments of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany concerning the future care of German war graves in the United Kingdom. All graves not situated in cemeteries and plots maintained by the Commission were transferred to Cannock Chase. The cemetery was dedicated in 1967. In the centre of the Hall of Honour, resting on a large block of stone, is a bronze sculpture of a fallen warrior, by the eminent German sculptor, Professor Hans Wimmer.