

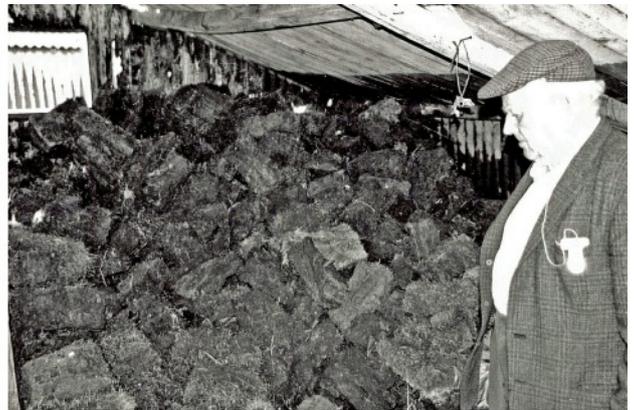
Shrewsbury District and North Wales Branch of the Inland Waterways Association

Our **Winter Walk** will be on Saturday **5 January 2019** exploring **Whixall Moss** and the Llangollen Canal in North Shropshire.

Whixall Moss, a peat bog rich in flora and insect fauna (*thankfully, no mosquitoes in winter*), came into existence at the end of the Ice Age and the peat remains in spite of extensive cutting for fertiliser and fuel. I can remember interviewing a crofter for the BBC and talking about his stack of hand-cut peat blocks alongside his cottage - *a harbinger of today's financial winter fuel allowance*.

We'll start walking at **10.00 am** from the public car park adjacent to Morris's Lift Bridge (No. 45), SY13 2RX, but walkers who'd like a pre-walk coffee and toilet stop can first drive to Whixall Marina, SY13 2RX and then the short distance to the car park by the lift bridge.

Back in 1990, Bill Hamer (pictured below) lived at Whixall and had resident's rights to cut peat for his own use as fuel.. I met him in June 1990 for a BBC interview and he demonstrated using his 'sticker' tool for the main cuts. He also showed me the results of his summertime labours safely stored away under cover next to his cottage as winter fuel.



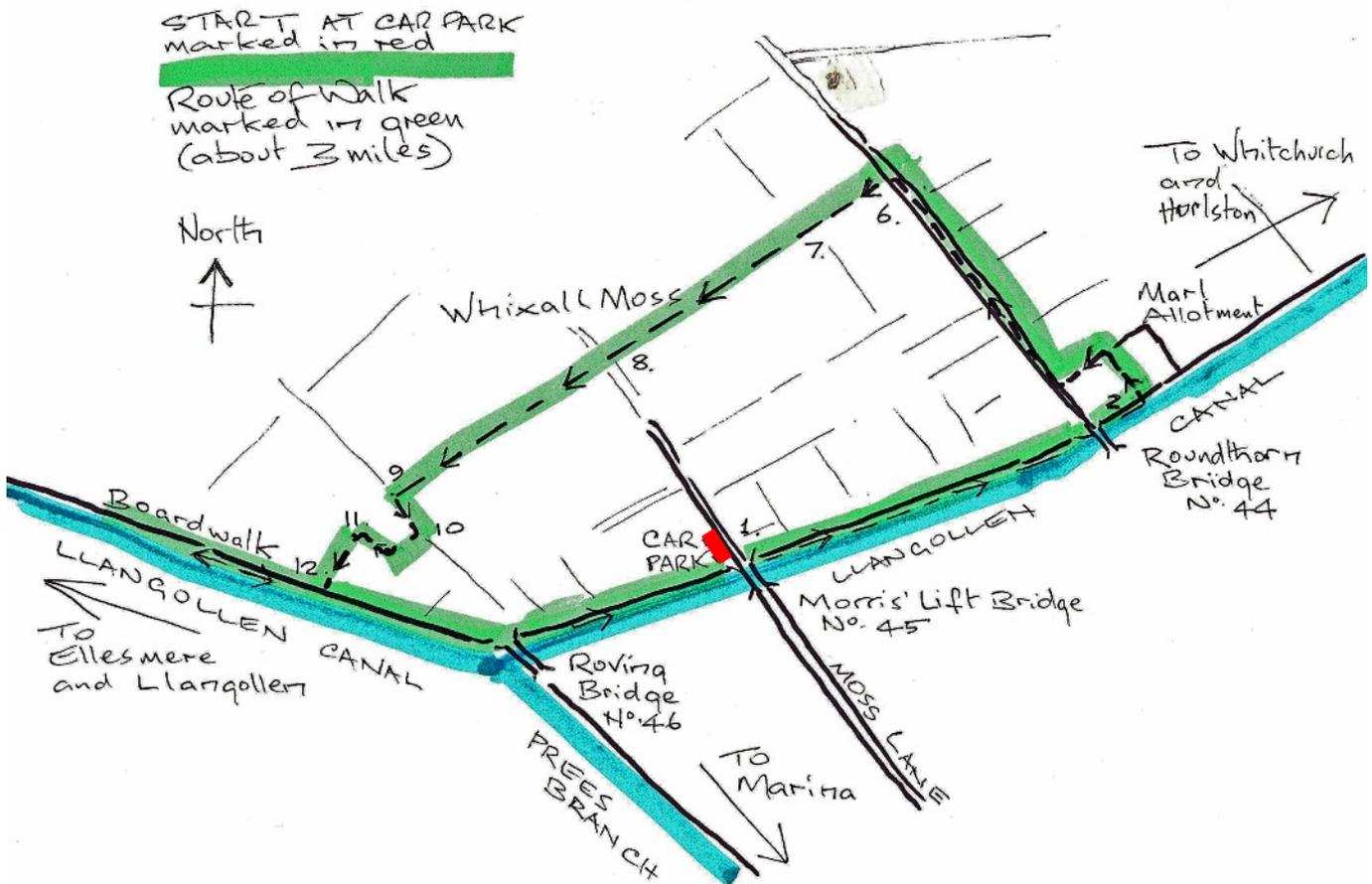
The Ellesmere (now Llangollen) Canal had to have permanent gangs building up its sides to retain water against the constantly sinking mosses and consequently the canal is very deep in this area, as I know from falling off my boat! Today, Fenns, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses are a National Nature Reserve.

Alan Wilding, Dec 2018

Shrewsbury District and North Wales Branch of the Inland Waterways Association

The walk planned will be just under three miles and takes in canal towpath as well as grass and peaty tracks across the mosses.

Our leaders are canal enthusiasts Steve and Kath Bristow from Shrewsbury. The walk will return to the start point and those who'd like lunch can then drive back to the Marina. Further details from 01743 359 650 or email: alan.wilding@waterways.org.uk. *Just so that you know in advance, this area is known as the 'Bermuda triangle' of Shropshire so it will be well worth a bit of pre-research on how to reach the starting point.*



Start and end of walk is at the car park near Morris's Lift Bridge (No 45) on the Llangollen Canal. The Roving Bridge shown on the map is at the junction with the Prees Branch which leads to Whixall Marina.

Winter Walk driving directions to start and Marina

To get to Whixall Marina SY13 2QS from Wem Town Centre

Coming from Shrewsbury, turn **Left** at the Church onto High Street (B5063). After 0.3 miles, turn **Right** just after the Fox Inn onto Lowe Hill Rd for 1.5 miles. In Lowe, turn **Left** and then immediately **Right** and follow Ossage Lane/Chapel Lane for 3 miles. Cross the Prees Branch of the canal at Dobson's Bridge and shortly thereafter turn **Right** onto Alders Lane. The Marina is 0.2 miles on your **Right**.
(Travel time from Wem should be about ten minutes.)

If coming from Ellesmere, take A495 to Welshampton, then B5063 to Wem, turning **Left** just before the Fox Inn or (more directly) take **Left** turn on B5063 at Northwood and after 1.5 miles follow Chapel Lane towards Dobson's Bridge as above.

To get to Morris' Bridge Car Park SY13 2RX from Whixall Marina, Alders Lane, Whixall SY13 2QS

From Marina car park, turn **Left** and follow Alders Lane for 0.1 mile, then turn **Right** and bear **Left**, continuing straight on for 0.5 miles (do not turn onto Rack Lane). Turn **Left** signposted Whixall Moss NNR onto Moss Lane (no through road sign on right) and cross Morris' Bridge. Car park is on **Left**.