

Whixall Moss and Fenns Meadow memorial walk August 6th 2022

I arrived at the headquarters of the Meres and Mosses Manor House, late as usual, to find nearly everyone already there. I'd made a new sign to show the way but it was obviously not needed. Several members had brought native wildflower plants from their gardens to be planted on John's grave at Fenns Meadow Burial Ground. These had been carefully chosen as suitable from a list provided by the owners of the site.

We quickly set off down the lane, a short walk, to reach the towpath by the little humpback bridge at Platt Lane. Following the towpath north in just under a mile we reached the lift bridge over the Llangollen Canal. We'd be crossing this to take the lane to Brickwalls Farm but meanwhile we had to wait for a narrowboat to lift the bridge and lower it again.

Turning left at Brickwalls Farm, we took this quiet lane which gently climbs up to Fenns Meadow on the left and which runs alongside the Shropshire Way footpath or bridleway in this instance. We all passed through the kissing gate into the meadow. Not usually open to the general public we had special permission on this day. We stood at the bottom of the meadow where last year in September several members of the MFS had attended John's funeral, a few weeks following his death on August 6th. We walked to the left along a footpath cut especially for the purpose, to take visitors around the outer edge of the meadow and not through it. It had been cut a few weeks earlier so there was nothing much to see in the meadow itself but a corner had been planted with native trees and a plaque in memory of John had been placed at the foot of one of the largest Rowans. The owners of the site, James and Emma had tied yellow and green ribbons, which represented John's association with cricket, around the tree so it was easy to spot.

We continued on to the top of the field where the graves are, we stopped there to eat our picnics and for members to plant their wildflowers. Liz Wilson kindly played a special song on her phone which John had picked out for me and we sat quietly for a few minutes reflection before moving on. Near the top exit of the field is a pond with a bench and also another more mature planting of trees. This is where ashes can be scattered if wished. We took the bridleway and field paths to Alkington House and then turning left and left again along more quiet lanes towards the Blackoe area. We crossed the canal again, where another path could be taken back to the burial ground, or the towpath back to the start or as most of us did we continued along the lane. We stopped to admire and talk at length to the owner of a new house and garden and he told us the history of the place.

We carried on to the 'main' road crossing over and taking a route past a maize field and a wood past a large lake near to an old industrial estate built on the site of old smelting works. Crossing another field, we reached the entrance to Whixall Moss and 'The Long Mile' path back to the Manor House. This lovely path runs through plantations on both side although the wood to the east of the path is privately owned. We noted that there is a car park near the end of the The Long Mile for anyone who wants to do a 'History Trail'. Useful, if there is ever no parking available at the Manor House or the village.

We took our tea which had been made for me by a friend at Welshampton Village Hall where we were joined by a couple of friends of mine from Stoke. One was a big help in the kitchen as the other friend, after laying it out, had to leave, so was not able to see her hard work enjoyed. The money we paid to her was given by her to a charity close to her heart, for the Kawasaki Disease. I think it's similar to Rheumatic fever which used to trouble young children in our parents' times. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/kawasaki-disease/>

As this was to be my last MFS outing I had mentioned to Sue Southam that it was quite poignant because the very first outing I had organised had been to Whixall Moss as a coach trip in 2007 with Mr Gittins, our driver for many years. Sue had done some looking back and said that I'd organised 31 outings. I have loved doing them all and hope there is someone reading this ready to take my place. There is plenty of help from the more experienced members if you feel you'd like to but not sure how to go about it, but if you have a favourite place then share it with us. I will remain a member even though I'm moving to Staffordshire. Now, that's a thought. Anyone remember Motte Meadows?

Sue Bosson