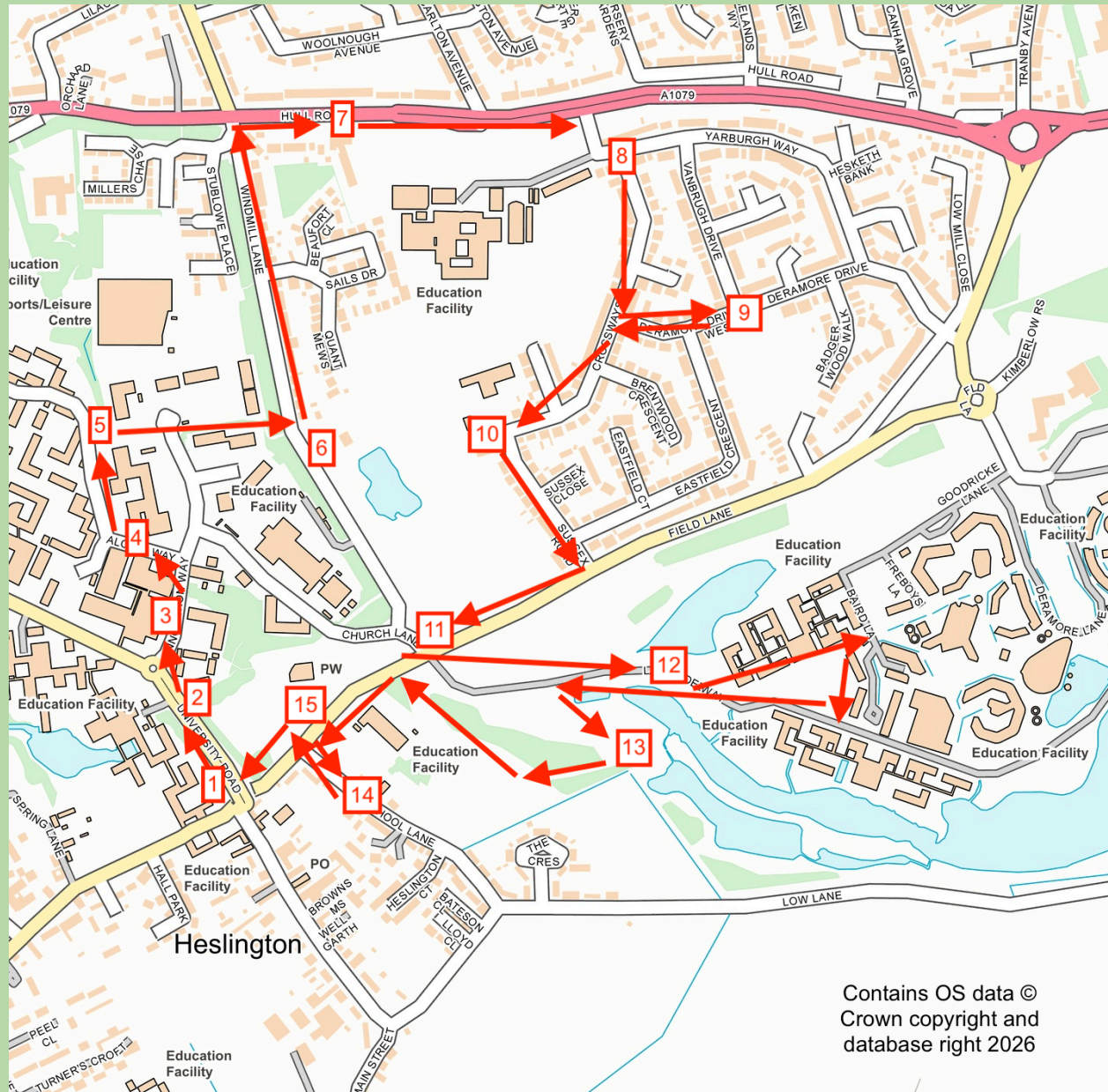


Heslington's botanical history walking trail

This walking trail introduces you to the fascinating history of the Open Fields of Heslington Village, which became a renowned site for rare wildflowers and other plants in the early 19th century, before the fields were enclosed and improved for agriculture in 1857. The trail starts and ends at Heslington Hall and is mainly on roads and paths. It covers just one of the large open fields, Gravel Field.



This trail was written by © Dr Peter Mayhew of the Department of Biology

Health and Safety Information

This is a self-guided walking trail. Participants are responsible for their own safety and should exercise care throughout the walk.

Accessibility

The route follows a combination of pavements, cycle paths, grassy areas and lakeside footpaths. Surfaces may be uneven, muddy or slippery. There are some gentle gradients and surfaces that may not be suitable for wheelchair users or those with limited mobility. Please assess your own ability before setting out.

Please take extra care when crossing roads.

Please remain alert for cyclists and other traffic.

Wellbeing

Dress appropriately for the weather and wear suitable footwear. Take sufficient drinking water. Parts of the route are near lakes and ponds. Keep a safe distance from the water's edge and supervise children at all times.

Please take extra care if wildlife is present.

Please leave the environment as you found it, taking any litter home with you.

Timing

The trail will take about 2 hours and is about 2.5 miles/4km in length. You can stop at any point and resume at your leisure.

For your safety undertake the walk during daylight hours only. The route may be difficult to navigate after dusk.

If walking alone, consider telling someone your planned route and expected return time.

Emergency

Ensure your mobile phone is sufficiently charged before you begin. In an emergency call **999**.

Use the nearest what3words reference in this guide to help emergency services locate you.

If you are a member of staff, student or visitor at the University of York, you are encouraged to use the **Safezone** app to contact University campus safety when on campus.

Getting to this trail

The trail starts on the pavement outside the main entrance gates to Heslington Hall, what3words: trying.remark.sofa, OS Grid ref: SE 62699 50422. Bike racks are available at the hall and across campus. Free parking is available on the University of York campus pay-and-display car parks at weekends, and the nearest car parks are Campus Central and Campus South. Buses U1, U2 and U3 from York city centre all stop at Heslington Hall.

WARNING: this guide contains information about historic public executions.

Station 1, Heslington Hall. what3words: trying.remark.sofa, OS Grid ref: SE 62699 50422

Heslington is an Anglian settlement, founded during the anglo-saxon migration to Britain following the fall of the Roman Empire. The Angles came from the north German plain and developed a method of agriculture based on the Open Field system. In each settlement, a small number of large fields were farmed in common by the villagers, with crops and fallow rotating between the fields from year to year. Each large field was divided into furlongs, which were areas ploughed in parallel, usually downhill towards a drainage ditch so that water was shed from the fields efficiently. Variation in slope and aspect across the fields meant that adjacent furlongs could be ploughed in very different directions. Each furlong was divided into plough-strips called 'lands' which had a single occupier, and each occupier had many lands dispersed across the fields and furlongs so that their produce was unaffected by the rotation of crops from year to year. After harvest, the village's flock and herds would graze on the field stubble, and in the process manure them, enriching the soil. Fallow years would allow the soil to rest and regenerate.

In the late 18th through to the 19th century enclosure, Heslington had four open fields. This tour is of just one of them, Gravel Field, north-east of the village. The others were Kimberlow Field, to its east, Low Field to its south, and Brend Field to its south. After walking around Gravel Field you will see just how large an open field was, and remember this was a completely open space, largely devoid of fences or trees. At the beginning of the 19th century, collecting natural history specimens became very popular for both scientific purposes and as a hobby. The development of scientific societies in York and elsewhere meant that knowledge of interesting sites and their wildlife could be shared. The developing rail network allowed these places to be visited by everyone. Heslington Fields became locally famous as a "great botanist's resort", with a variety of habitats and rare and interesting plants. On this tour we'll learn about some of the plants, the habitats they lived in and why they were there, and the people who visited them.

Standing by the entrance to Heslington Hall, this Elizabethan manor house was owned by the Yarbrough family in the early 19th century, and they also owned the majority share of land in the open fields, but rented it out to tenant farmers. The present hall is the result of renovations made in the 1850s. The open fields were enclosed and improved for agriculture in 1857 to fund this and other improvement works in the parish, so the loss of the fields and their flora is directly linked to the building next to which you stand. On the right is Main Street, which up until the mid-twentieth century was where the majority of villagers lived. From the Hall turn left up University road, and where convenient and with care, cross the road to the other side. Continue to Station 2, Brigsike, where a small stream running through trees on the right runs under the road.

Station 2: Brigsike. what3words: spine.media.crowd, OS Grid ref: SE 62653 50526

Brigsike was the name of the furlong in the far south west of Gravel field. Here the stream on the right ran under the road to York (now called University Road, but previously called Heslington Road). When the University campus west was built in the 1960s, most of Heslington Road near the village

was built over and its replacement, University Road, was sited slightly to the right and uphill of the old Heslington Road. Brigsike literally means “bridge over a stream”. It is mentioned in documents as early as the 13th Century, and some Heslington residents even took the family name Brigsike. The furlong occupied the land between the stream and the Chemistry buildings, on the hill across the roundabout ahead. The stream is here because of one of the major geological features surrounding York, which forms the slope up ahead. This is the York moraine, a low ridge of gravel, sand and other material deposited by the York glacier towards the end of the last ice age, about 15,000 years ago. Rainwater collecting on the moraine today emerges from streams on its flank which flow south to lower ground. In ancient times, the moraine made this a desirable place to settle as it was higher than the surrounding land, making it better drained, easier to plough, and less liable to flood.

From the stream, walk towards the roundabout and turn slightly right up Innovation Way. Opposite the Chemistry buildings, cross the road to Station 3.

Station 3: Uplands furlong. what3words: mostly.roof.rabble OS Grid ref SE 62639 50631

The Chemistry buildings next to you occupy an elevated position on the moraine, and this land was once known as Uplands furlong. Plough-land contained not only crops, but, in the days before modern seed cleaning and herbicides, was a habitat for many arable weeds which were recorded from the fields and that have since become much rarer. [Field Gromwell](#) is one such plant, and this species was recorded in the fields by [Henry Baines](#) (1793-1878) in his 1840 book *A Flora of Yorkshire*. Baines was born in York, became a gardener at the age of 12, and after some time in Halifax where he encountered many of the local naturalists, returned to York as gardener and then foreman for the Backhouse family, plant-nurserymen of York. In 1829 he was appointed sub-curator and gardener for the Yorkshire Philosophical Society's new museum (now the Yorkshire Museum) in York, where he worked until he retired in 1871. The YPS was then very new, but played an important role in communicating knowledge of wild species in the county, and creating a local community of enthusiasts and experts, connecting them with other institutes and experts nationally. The Society and the museum still exist. In its botanical herbarium collections are many specimens of plants from Heslington Fields.

Follow Innovation Way north a few metres and turn left onto Alcuin Way, and Station 4.

Station 4: Sandhams. What3words: funded.this.guards OS Grid Ref SE 62596 50720

On your right as you walk up Alcuin Way you can see the Innovation Centre, part of the science park that was developed in the 1990s, which occupies the site of a furlong called Sandhams. The old Brigsike stream used to flow from west to east here along the car park access road, but is now not visible above ground. Sandhams literally means Sandy Meadow. The moraine soil varies in texture from place to place, but in low lying areas and along ditches and sikes, soils could become waterlogged. A survey of the open fields in 1775 stated that part of Sandhams was boggy, and another survey made in 1839 showed that some of Sandhams was left unploughed and grassed. Many of the special plants of the open fields lived in boggy grassy areas, such as [Marsh Helleborine](#) orchid. This orchid was recorded from the fields in 1801 by [Samuel Hailstone](#) (1768-1851). Hailstone

grew up in York but trained as a solicitor and settled in Bradford. His interest in gardening and plants led him to collect plants and he soon became an authority on the plants of Yorkshire. His herbarium (collection of pressed flowers) was donated to the Yorkshire Museum after his death, which is how his records from the Fields have come to light.

Follow Alcuin Way as it turns around to the right and join the cycle path on your right heading north towards Station 5. As you walk along the cycle path north, pass a turning to the right: make a note, as this will be our route back east across the science park.

Station 5: Pinder Hill and Broxhill. what3words: lived.firm.codes OS Grid Ref SE 62533 50914

The cycle path you are on occupies the former course of the Brigsike, now dry. Land to the left formed a tiny furlong called Pinder Hill, which was land allotted to the village pinder (=pounder), responsible for rounding up stray animals. Stray animals were a common feature of the open fields and could cause a lot of damage if they got onto the crop land before the harvest. Once restrained by the pinder, their owners had to pay a fine for their release. On the right through the trees a bit further on, you may make out the buildings of the David Lloyd fitness centre. This occupies land once called Broxhill furlong. Broxhill literally means Badger Hill, the hill where badgers lived, and has no connection with the Badger Hill estate nearby, which was named after Henry Walter Badger (1850-1934), a York solicitor who owned some of the nearby land.

One of the special plants that occurred in the fields and possibly here was [Cernuous Thread-moss](#). It is critically endangered, possibly extinct in Great Britain and grew in bare lime-rich soil by ponds or streamsides. The recorder of this moss was an equally remarkable man, [Richard Spruce](#) (1817-1893). He grew up in Ganthorpe in the Howardian Hills, and became a maths teacher at St Peter's school in York, and an expert on mosses as a hobby, contributing specimens to the Yorkshire Museum. This expertise got him onto botanical expeditions in the Pyrenees and later South America, where he spent 15 years collecting plants in the Amazon basin and Andes. He sent plants and seeds of the andean quinine tree, Cinchona, to India to help combat malaria in the colonies, but was left destitute when the bank with all his savings went bust. He retired to Coneysthorpe, close to where he grew up, on a small government pension.

Retrace your steps to the junction of cycle paths and follow the branch to the left, to Windmill Lane and Station 6.

Station 6: The Mill, Mill House and Gravels furlong. what3words: save.marked.rich, OS Grid Ref SE 62795 50873

From the driveway entrance to the old mill house you can see the base of the former windmill and the former house of the miller, but do not approach further or encroach on this private property. Mills were central to the life of the open fields as cereals were a major crop that needed milling to produce flour. By the end of the 18th century Heslington produced a large variety of crops, some of which we will encounter later on the tour. The mill was situated on this elevated location to catch the wind, but closed down shortly before the first world war. This land was part of Gravels furlong in Gravel Field,

and gravel was extracted here from pits and used to improve the roads. To the right behind the mill house you can see an area of willow trees which mark out a boggy area which was mentioned in the 1775 manor tithe survey. The survey document is now stored in the nearby Borthwick Institute for Archives in the University library.

A plant found in the arable land on the fields, and now seriously declining in Great Britain, was [Shepherd's Needle](#). One of the botanists who recorded this was [Henry Tuke Mennell](#) (1835-1923). Mennell was a pupil at the Quaker boy's school in York (now Bootham School) from 1845-1850. Before 1846 it was based at 31 Lawrence Street, close to Heslington Road just outside the city walls (you can still see the house there, which is on the north side of the street and has a blue plaque on the front for Samuel Tuke, asylum reformer and Mennell's grandfather). Quaker education emphasized broad development of the individual, and natural history was encouraged, led by one of the teachers, Silvanus Thompson (1818-1881) who was also a botanist. Several Quakers connected with the school left herbarium specimens from the fields, so it is likely that natural history rambles to the fields were organized. The school's natural history society, founded in 1834, is still running and is the oldest active society of its type in the country.

Walk north along Windmill Lane to the Hull Road and turn right to the Black Bull Pub, Station 7.

Station 7. Stotfold and Gallows Hole. what3words: index.brands.mutual, OS Grid Ref SE 62853 51278

The Hull Road runs along the northern boundary of Heslington parish. The first edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed from 1846-1851 shows the Black Bull Pub standing by the roadside (then called the York and Hull turnpike), just like it does today, though it was then the only building nearby and must have mainly served the passing traffic. The land behind the pub was Stotfold furlong, literally a horse paddock, now occupied by housing. It is probably no coincidence that land used as a horse paddock should be adjacent to the road and a wayside inn. To the left of the pub are the grounds of Archbishop Holgate's school, which moved here from Lord Mayor's Walk in York (now York St John's campus) in 1963. The land adjacent to the pub in the school grounds was called Gallows Hole, because public hangings occurred here up until the end of the 16th century. Hangings occurred by the roadside to advertise the consequences of serious crime to potential criminals.

Walk past the school along the road and turn right onto Yarburgh way, following it around to the left and then immediately turn right again at the junction with Crossways, which is Station 8.

Station 8: Long and Short Moors. what3words: zips.shunts.candle, OS Grid Ref SE 6321 5122

Yarburgh Way, named after the family that once owned Heslington Hall, crosses a large area that previously comprised Long Moors and Short Moors furlongs in Gravel Field. 'Moor' refers to land that was previously uncultivated and probably used as rough grazing for animals. The land was eventually brought into cultivation and was arable at the time of the 1839 tithe survey. A plant found in the fields and likely here was [Small-flowered Catchfly](#), an arable weed of dry acidic soils, and now vulnerable to extinction in Great Britain. It was recorded in abundance by Henry Ecroyd Smith

(1823-1888) in J.G. Baker's 1854 Supplement to Baines' *Flora of Yorkshire*. Ecroyd Smith was born in Doncaster, to a quaker family, and became first curator of the Liverpool Museum, establishing a reputation as a botanist, antiquarian and archaeologist. He made major contributions to understanding Roman and Medieval sites in Northern England and Wales and no doubt Heslington Fields would have held a dual (botanical and archaeological) significance for him: as well as plants, the site is rich in Roman and pre-historic remains. [John Gilbert Baker \(1834-1920\)](#) started at the quaker school the year it moved from Lawrence Street to Bootham and doubtless went to the fields as a pupil as he was in charge of the school's herbarium (which still exists). He became one of the most highly regarded botanists of his generation, publishing two books that reported records from the fields and other sites in Yorkshire. He became keeper of the Royal Botanic Gardens' herbarium, at Kew, London, from 1890-1899, and was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1878.

Walk south along Crossways, and turn left onto Deramore Drive West to Badger Hill Park (Station 9).

Station 9: Smathorn Bog. what3words: bulb.fails.cost, OS Grid Ref SE 63370 51025

The Badger Hill estate was built in the 1960s but the area of the present park could not be built on because it was a poorly drained glacial kettle hole full of peat. If you look at it carefully you will see that it is bowl-shaped. The dividing fence or hedge between Gravel Field and the open field to its east, Kimberlow Field, ran north south through the middle of the bog, and the western (Gravel Field) part of the bog was part of Smathorns furlong, literally "lightly scrubbed" (containing bushes). The bog was not cultivated but would have formed grazing land when the village flocks and herds were let onto the crop stubble after harvest. One of the special plants of the fields that probably occurred here was [Fibrous Tussock-sedge](#), which can still be found at Askham Bog Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve in York. Two people who collected this species in the fields, and probably did so together, were [William Williamson Newbould](#) (1819-1886) and [Charles Cardale Babington](#) (1808-1895). Both studied at Cambridge University where a shared mentor was the chair of botany John Henslow, who was also Charles Darwin's mentor. From 1842 they went on collecting expeditions together and they both have Heslington specimens dated from 2nd July 1846, suggesting that they came to Heslington as travelling companions. Babington came to York in 1844 for the British Association (for the Advancement of Science) meeting. Newbould became a curate near Cambridge, but resigned in 1860 to pursue botany in London. Babington eventually succeeded Henslow as chair of botany at Cambridge in 1861. In 1884, both Newbould and Babington came back to York for the British Association meeting, but by then the fields had been enclosed, Smathorn Bog had been drained, and its botanical interest lost.

Another important plant that we know was found here was [Marsh Fern](#). Marsh Fern is nationally scarce and largely restricted to peaty habitats. [Henry Ibbotson](#) (1814-1886) wrote a pamphlet on the Ferns of York (1884): he described Marsh Fern as formerly occurring on waste ground, rising between Heslington and Grimston, which almost certainly means Smathorn Bog. Marsh Fern can also still be found at Askham Bog Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve in York. Ibbotson knew Richard Spruce well as they both grew up in Ganthorpe. Like Spruce he became a teacher, but tired of classroom duties and tried to scrape a living from botanical collecting. At times he turned to drink and was for some periods, penniless and a vagrant.

A couple of interesting small furlongs were squeezed between the bog, the field boundary and other furlongs here: they were called Two Square Piece and Shoulder of Mutton: both of these reflect their shape, the latter referring to the triangular shape of a lamb's shoulder.

Reverse your steps to Crossways and turn left, walking over what was previously "Hungry Ings" furlong, meaning a poor (infertile) meadow. Follow the road as it swings around to the right and turn right down to the end of Bishopsway, where you can see the playing fields of Archbishop Holgate's School. This was Swarth Fur which means a grassy furlong, and it still is grassy! Reversing your steps to Crossways and turning right, go right to the end and Station 10.

Station 10: Wranglands. what3words: solve.regime.spots, OS Grid Ref SE 63030 50861

Peering through the broken hedge/fence at the end, you can probably see former Wranglands furlong, literally "twisted or crooked land", likely referring to the hummocky topography of the moraine. Perhaps more than anywhere it conjures the atmosphere of the original open field land. In the distance you can see the boggy area near the mill which contains willow trees. A plant which might have occurred here is [Saw-wort](#), which is now vulnerable to extinction in Great Britain. Saw-wort was recorded in the fields by Oswald Allen Moore (1818-1862) in 1844. Moore came from a medical family and was a surgeon at the York dispensary. He was the second honorary curator of botany at the Yorkshire Museum from 1840, and knew the other local botanists well. When the British Association meeting came to York in 1844, He was on the botanical committee along with CC Babington. He recorded plants at Heslington from 1837 to 1846, making the second highest number of records of any collector there. On his death, he left his herbarium to the museum.

Retrace your footsteps up Crossways and turn immediately right down Sussex Road, and then right again onto Field Lane. Walk down the Lane to the junction with Church Lane and Station 11.

Station 11: High Rook Acres. what3words: bunch.action.seat, OS Grid Ref SE 62967 50596

Looking north to the right of Windmill Lane you can see a hummocky grass Field, which previously was land belonging to three different open field furlongs: Nearest to Field Lane but extending across Church Lane towards the Church was High Rook Acres, named after the birds (rooks). Behind it on the left along Mill Lane was Gravels furlong: you can see the boggy area with trees behind which is next to the mill and house. To its right was Wranglands.

Some of the hollows in the ground in front of you are due to past excavations: there were two gravel pits here and Roman burial remains have also been uncovered here. The dry grassland here likely had a rich flora: [Frog Orchid](#), [Small Scabious](#), [Dyer's Greenweed](#) and [Wild Basil](#) are all plants recorded from the fields that could have occurred here.

Cross Church Lane carefully and then cross Field Lane at the lights, heading directly opposite down the path next to Lakeside Way. The path crosses to the north of Lakeside Way and heads towards the buildings of Campus East. As you approach Anne Lister College, you pass a lake on the left surrounded by trees, Station 12.

Station 12: Smathorns again. what3words: keeps.view.limbs, OS Grid Ref SE 63289 50568

Smathorns was the largest furlong in Gravel Field, and we encountered it up in Badger Hill park, and now here we are at the bottom of the moraine. The plough strips ran across Field Lane, right down the slope on your left. In the 1775 tithe survey this area was declared as boggy, and funnily during the building of Campus East the land unexpectedly turned boggy again. It was then dug out as a detention basin for water draining off Badger Hill. Fens are herb-rich areas with waterlogged soils, which may not be acidic as there may be ground-water influence which is alkaline, as at Sandhams. A fenland plant that attracted many people to the fields was [Marsh Pea](#), which is 'near-threatened' in Great Britain and regionally rare. A person credited with collecting Marsh Pea in Heslington was [James Backhouse senior](#) (1794-1869). The Backhouses were quakers and nurserymen (growing plants for sale) of York, James moving here from Darlington in 1815. In a tragic year, James senior lost one of his daughters, his wife and his sister-in-law, all in 1827. In 1831, probably needing to get away from the scene of this devastation, he embarked on ten years of missionary work in South Africa and Australia, leaving his surviving offspring in the hands of his brother and sister. He collected plant specimens overseas, and upon returning home embarked on a number of collecting trips around Northern England with his son James junior and other quaker botanists. James is buried in The Retreat on Heslington Road, along with his son, and part of his plant nursery in Holgate remains as West Bank Park. James junior went to the quaker school on Lawrence Street and collected at Heslington Fields as a pupil there.

Walk along the front of Anne Lister College to Baird Lane on your left. Looking up the Hill you can see the hedge along Field Lane. A dip in the ground on the right marked the boundary between Gravel and Kimberlow Fields, which ran towards you down the hill. The boundary followed a ditch draining downhill from Smathorn Bog, alongside which was a furlong called Foulfur, literally muddy furlong. Turning right, walk south towards David Kato College. This occupies a furlong known as Breconhill. This could refer to bracken, or it could mean broken hill, i.e. land that needed breaking up, perhaps because it was difficult to plough. Walk right alongside David Kato college, then along grassland resown with wildflowers and around the lakeshore in front of you. At the end of the lake, turn left around the trees towards the viewpoint and fence where a bird hide used to stand, Station 13.

Station 13: Broad Butts. what3words: tracks.speech.paints, OS Grid Ref SE 63254 50468

The land you see in front of you that is now Campus East lake was once Broad Butts furlong. Butts were short furlongs which "abutted" other furlongs or field boundaries; in this case they abutted the southern end of Gravel Field. All the furlongs along this southern end of the field were listed as boggy in the 1775 tithe survey, so it is perhaps fitting to see the land under water today. A number of plants of the Open Fields were semi-aquatic and would have lived in wet ground such as this. Two of them, [Bogbean](#) and [Flea Sedge](#), were collected by Elizabeth Backhouse, who was probably the daughter of James senior and sister of James junior (1823-1852). She went to the Quaker girls' school in Castlegate, which later became The Mount School, and her Heslington specimens are from 1841 and 1843, at the same time her father and brother were collecting in Yorkshire. Her

collecting stopped in 1846, probably because in 1847 she married quaker Joseph Crosfield and moved to Liverpool where he lived. Crosfield had earlier travelled to America and Canada with another quaker, [James Hack Tuke](#) (1819-1896), uncle of Henry Tuke Mennell, son of asylum reformer Samuel Tuke, and also educated on Lawrence Street. Tuke also collected plants at Heslington Fields. Elizabeth died after giving birth to her fourth child, Albert Joseph Crosfield, who also became a botanist later in life.

Turn right and follow the grassy path through the newly planted trees. The mounds here around you were created using spoil from the lake to create a barrier between the village and the University Campus. When you come to a grassy area on your left with wildflowers, you can see some housing behind them. This housing estate is called The Crescent and occupies two small furlongs of Gravel Field, called Priest Croft Piece and Grass Dales. Both are listed as grass (i.e.; uncultivated) in the 1839 tithe survey, so it is perhaps fitting that this flowery place has been created nearby. "Dales" does not refer to a valley, but doles, or allotments.

Head on up the path back up to Field Lane, turn left and left again down School Lane to the old school building, Station 14.

Station 14: Hempland. what3words: wells.cool.shin, OS Grid Ref SE 62877 50409

The beautiful old school building in front of you was actually new at the time of the enclosure of the open fields, and was erected, as you can read from the prominent plaque on its front, in the very year in which the enclosure was completed in 1857. Yarburgh Yarburgh, Lord of the Manor, instigated the enclosure to fund renovations to the Hall, as well as the school, and the church, which we will visit next. This was a time of great upheaval for the village. One of the incentives for promoting the enclosure of open fields was the need to feed a growing population, and in Heslington the growing population had also outgrown the school and church, which needed enlarging.

The school was also where the manor courts were held. One of the challenges of the open field system was making sure that all the farmers using a field conformed to the rules that allowed common cultivation. When they didn't, they could be fined at the manor courts: typically crimes included letting your animals roam over the field before harvest, letting a diseased animal mix with other village animals on the fields or common, not cleaning your ditches, or not repairing your fences. Bylawsmen were appointed from the populace to oversee the field management: they were provided with guns to shoot pests, a roller to roll the field balks (grassy strips left unploughed in the fields), and their activities were funded by renting out the field balks (presumably for hay). The money raised could be used to pay villagers for killing crop pests, including crows, moles and sparrows. The court records were kept in books, which are now in the Borthwick Institute for Archives in the University Library.

The school grounds behind the building were absorbed from a Gravel Field furlong called Hempland. Hemp was grown to make rope, and many villages had a Hempland furlong for this purpose, usually adjacent to the village as this was. York had several prominent rope makers, including the Ellerker family who operated out of 25 Walmgate, now a restaurant and ale house. Other furlongs of the open fields identified crops: in Low Field, just over the hedge at the bottom of School Lane, there

was a furlong called Linelands, named after the [Flax](#) plant *Linum*, literally the land where flax was grown. Flax fibres were turned into linen, and before milling, they were bleached. There was a bleach works north-west of the village, on the site now occupied by the Biology department. It boiled the flax which was hung out to bleach in the sun in bleachfields. The moraine slopes were ideal for this as they were south-facing, hence warm and sunny. One of the plants collected by Samuel Hailstone here was Flax. Another crop grown locally was [Chicory](#), which had several uses: its roots were bitter and were used as a tea/coffee substitute: the Tuke family (who owned the York tea, coffee and cocoa works later acquired by Rowntree) had a chicory workshop in their premises in Castlegate. The plant was also an excellent fodder crop for animals. Chicory also appears in the botanical records for the fields.

Walk back up School Lane and cross field Lane carefully on the right and head straight into the church car park, Station 15.

Station 15: Gravel Field Pond. what3words: jabs.locate.swing, OS Grid Ref SE 62810 50506

The open fields needed to provide water for animals because after crops had been harvested, the fields were “thrown open” to the parish flocks and herds. Each of the four fields had its own pond, and Gravel Field pond lay in the area between the church car park and the large oak in the grassy area to your left. The ponds and ditches of the fields were known to be the habitat for several aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, including four pondweeds. All of these are now of conservation importance nationally or regionally: [Fen Pondweed](#), [Bog Pondweed](#), [Opposite-leaved Pondweed](#), and [Horned Pondweed](#). The field ponds were drained and leveled as part of the field enclosure.

Before returning to the starting point at Heslington Hall, take a moment to reflect on:

- the richness of past biodiversity on this site
- the habitats that used to be found in open fields
- the institutions such as the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and the Quaker School (now Bootham) that encouraged the botanists who left us the records we have
- the archives and museums that keep records and specimens that have allowed us to understand how the past once was
- how the countryside has changed since the early nineteenth century
- the potential on Campus East to restore some of the biodiversity and habitats that have been lost

To return to Heslington Hall, either retrace your footsteps to Field Lane and turn right down it, or walk across the grassy area to the left of the car park and cross University Road where convenient.