

WALKING WITH THE WANDERER



Heslington and the Tillmire

Time: 3 hours Distance: 6 ½ miles

Heslington and the Tillmire

Most Heslington walks focus on the various university campuses and lakes. This stroll, very suitable for a short winter's day, explores a very different side of the area, the quiet farming countryside south of the village and the large unimproved grazing area known as the Tillmire.

Is this walk for me?

This is an undemanding walk. About half the route follows quiet tarmac lanes which carry virtually no traffic. Most of the rest of the route is on firm paths except the section through the Tillmire (Direction Point 4) which can be wet and partially flooded after heavy rain. The only slopes are on the approaches to the A64 bridges. There are no stiles.

Getting there

The walk starts from Heslington Hall. Street parking in Heslington is very limited, especially on weekdays, so the best option is to use the very frequent bus services 66 or 67 that run from the railway station and Merchantgate. The journey time from the station is about 25 minutes. Alight at the stop opposite Heslington Hall.

Refreshments

There are no stops on the walk, but there are two pubs in Heslington main street that are open daily, and a bakery selling takeaway sandwiches (excluding weekends).

What to see

The walk traverses a little-known area of quiet farming countryside with good hedgerows and areas of woodland. The Tillmire is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a parcel of unimproved wet pasture now rare in the Vale of York, which provides a habitat for a range of threatened species. Enjoy the tranquillity of this area while you can! If proposals in the draft local plan go ahead, it will be close to a new 'garden village' of up to 4,000 houses.

1. Starting from the bus stop opposite Heslington Hall, keep to the left of the roundabout, then turn left down Heslington Main Street, passing the pubs and bakery. At the mini-roundabout go right. After a short distance, as the road bends right, take the tarmac lane (The Outgang) on the right. In 50 metres arrive at Heslington Sports Field parking area going left to take an earth track protected by a metal barrier.

2. Walk on this clear track with a hedge right and trees left. Where the main track bends sharp left keep ahead fringed by trees. In a further 100 metres, make sure to maintain the same direction as the track doglegs into the field on the right (hedge now on the left only). At the field corner, remain ahead on a narrower track towards the road (A64). Arriving close to the road, don't go through the narrow hedge gap ahead but turn right along the edge of the field with the hedge/A64 left. Keep going to pass through a metal gate following the track right away from the A64 for a short distance to a turning circle and a pylon. Here, turn left (signed Heslington Tillmire) crossing the bridge.

3. Over this, follow the tarmac as it turns left but at a brideway sign, take the earth track to the left walking alongside a ditch/trees to the right. Continue for 350 metres to a brideway sign, here turning right ('Keep Out' sign ahead) now walking with open fields left and the golf course right. Remain on this track to the end of the golf course to reach a three-way direction post.

4. Here, take the left-hand path through the metal gate into the Tillmire. Now, follow the left edge of this large grassy expanse, remaining close to the hedge and dodging any wetter areas. Towards the Tillmire's far left

corner, lookout for a bridge on the left guarded by two metal gates. Head over this turning right alongside the ditch. At the field corner, go left with a ditch right to reach the end of a tarmac lane at a direction post.

5. Follow this straight lane for about 1,400 metres to a junction. Here, turn sharp left (not ahead on the brideway) to continue once again on a straight stretch of lane for a similar distance. Keep going through a right bend heading up a slope toward a bridge.

6. Just before the actual bridge, take a tarmac track on the right (Ox Close Farm) with the A64 to the left. When the tarmac ends, keep the farm buildings to the left continuing on a rougher track. Where this turns right towards a farm, take the signed footpath left walking beside a hedge. Continue to cross the A64 on a bridge. Over this descend to reach a sports area ahead.

7. Here, it's possible to head right to circle York University's Campus East, but the recommended route is to turn left with the fenced sports area to the right on an earth track. This swings left and right to reach the end of a narrow tarmac lane. Continue on this, mainly between hedges, for about 1,500 metres. Eventually, reach houses on the right to arrive at a road junction.

8. Ignore the left turn (Low Lane) to continue right on a residential road soon passing the entrance to Heslington School to then reach a T junction. Here, turn left to return to the roundabout by Heslington Hall - in front of which is a bus stop/shelter for services back to the city centre.

