

HOB MOOR

Historic Stray & Local Nature Reserve



Tucked between Acomb and Tadcaster Road, Hob Moor's ninety acres are home to a rich diversity of birds, mammals, insects and wild plants. As a Local Nature Reserve, the Moor has been recognised as having special ecological value.

Come and hear the lyrical song of the skylark, or see the Moor carpeted with buttercups in early summer. Look out for a flash of stunning blue as a kingfisher darts along the becks.

As well as being rich in wildlife, both Hob Moor and Little Hob Moor have features of archaeological and historical interest. As part of Micklegate Stray, Hob Moor is one of the two ancient commons of the City of York, on which freemen have had rights of pasture since ancient times. Cattle still graze on the Moor today, between May 1st and Hallowe'en.

You can still see visible traces of the past on the Moor, from medieval farming strips to a reminder of darker times in York's history: the deadly plagues.



A WALK ROUND HOB MOOR

- 1 The main expanse of the Moor (the original ancient common) has plants typical of old pastureland: there are meadow and bulbous buttercup, common sorrel and pignut, and ladysmock on the damper patches. The open habitat is perfect for meadow pipits and skylarks, both of which breed here. Listen out for the beautiful song of the skylark on sunny days in spring and summer.

There are fine views of the Minster from the old causeway leading north-eastwards to the Holly Bank Road access. This is part of an old footpath that used to lead across the fields from Askham Bryan to York.



- 2 Walking northwards from the central area, you will notice humps and troughs in the ground. These are ridge and furrow cultivation strips. They are straight and narrow, and are aligned roughly east to west. The strips date from the Napoleonic Wars of the early 1800s, when the Moor was horse-ploughed for food production.
- 3 The parallel curving ridges and furrows of medieval cultivation strips can be seen here. These are broader and deeper than the Napoleonic ridge and furrow (see 2). In medieval times, land was divided into long, narrow strips and a family would cultivate one or more of these.
- 4 What is now only a small ditch on the west side of the Moor was once part of the city boundary, separating York from Acomb.
- 5 For at least 100 years, there were brickworks around the Moor. In the south-west corner is the site of Kelsey's Pond, a former clay-pit which filled with water some time in the early 1900s and became a popular spot for fishing for tench, roach, perch, bream, carp and pike. The pond was filled in during the 1950s and as a result the ground here is more uneven than the rest of the Moor, with fewer plant varieties.
- 6 The number of different species in a hedgerow gives a rough indication of its age, and the boundary hedge here could be in the region of six hundred years old.
- 7 North Lane Pasture has very pronounced medieval ridge and furrow (see 3). There were originally two fields here, and the remnants of an ancient boundary hedge in the middle were reinforced with new hawthorn in 2007.
- 8 There are becks on three sides of Hob Moor, where kingfishers can occasionally be seen. Beyond the beck to the east is a small copse of silver birch and sycamore, one of the varied habitats which support wildlife round the edge of the Moor.
- 9 From 1920 to 1946, there was a golf course on the Moor. Remnants of a green can clearly be seen here.
- 10 Different plants grow on the sandier soils of the north-eastern part of the Moor, for example common bent, cat's ear, harebell and gorse.
- 11 The area known as the Triangle is bounded by two becks and is believed to be the location of Folly Mill, a watermill first mentioned in a record of 1563. An archaeological dig in 2008, funded by the Friends, found medieval roof tiles here. During the great plague of 1604, plague victims were housed in the mill and in wooden huts nearby, to separate them from the healthy population (see 12). Many died here.

At the east side of the Triangle is a species-rich hedge which includes English elm and hazel. In the centre is a raised area of heathy grassland where plants include tormentil, sheep's sorrel and heath bedstraw. Birds such as sedge warbler, reed bunting, bullfinch and lesser whitethroat can be seen in the nearby woodland.



12 Linked to the ancient common by the railway underpass is Little Hob Moor. At the top of the slope, there are two stones, the lower of which is the Plague Stone. During times of plague in the 16th and 17th centuries, victims were brought from the city and housed in wooden lodges on Hob Moor. They would pay for food brought to them by placing money in water or vinegar in the central hollow in the Plague Stone.

Next to the Plague Stone stands the Hob Stone, the effigy of a knight. Although it is badly eroded, the knight's head and the shield protecting his left arm can be made out, as can traces of the inscription on the back of the stone, which read:

*"This Image Long Hob's name has bore,
who was a Knight in time of yore
and gave this Common to ye Poor"*

The Roman road that linked York and Tadcaster runs under Little Hob Moor, about 40 metres from the present Tadcaster Road and parallel to it. The path leading from the road down to the railway underpass is a very ancient access to Hob Moor. It is referred to as Hoblaine in a document dated 1602, when it led down to a bridge and water mill.



The Hob Stone and Plague Stone

FRIENDS OF HOB MOOR

Since 1999, our group has been actively involved in:

- *the conservation and improvement of Hob Moor*
- *researching the history and ecology of the Moor*
 - *promoting the Moor as an open space to be enjoyed by the people of York.*

Visit our website at www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk
for information about Hob Moor and its history and wildlife, up-coming events,
news and developments, photos and maps.

HOW TO JOIN FRIENDS OF HOB MOOR

Download a membership form from the website or phone 01904 553423.

A WALK ROUND HOB MOOR

