

The Knavesmire is part of the ancient Micklegate Stray, a large area of common land.

In 1624, it was called "Knares Myre" (which may have the same derivation as Knaresborough and mean Cenward's marshy place) and people in Middlethorpe, Dringhouses and parts of York could graze their animals on it. Its outline today is very little changed from 1624 and it was grazed until recent times. Cattle used to be driven to nearby Hob Moor for the period of the races.

In the Second World War, part of the area was ploughed up for crops, posts were erected to prevent aircraft landing, there was an anti-aircraft battery, and a prisoner of war transit camp near the grandstand.

Knavesmire Beck, now culverted, flows into the River Ouse half a mile away. This proximity to the river means that the Knavesmire is subject to flooding after heavy rain, sometimes over a large area, when it has been known to attract windsurfers and, given a subsequent cold snap, ice skaters!



Come and visit the Knavesmire! It is one of York's largest green spaces and, except for small areas on race days, is always open to the public, with access points at frequent intervals. It can be muddy in wet weather.

The length from north to south is about 1 ¼ miles. The area of the Knavesmire and Little Knavesmire together is 254 acres (103 hectares). It is the ideal place for a stroll, a brisk walk or for jogging. On hot days, Knavesmire Wood and the trees near Tadcaster Road offer a cool haven. There are some picnic tables at the south end near Green Lane and the facilities at Dringhouses include hotels and public houses.

First and Coastliner buses run along Tadcaster Road, with stops near Knavesmire Gates, the Tyburn (Pulleyn Drive) and Cherry Lane.

This leaflet has been prepared and distributed by the Dringhouses Local History Group with initial funding from Dringhouses and Woodthorpe Ward Committee.

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Our website is: <http://dlhg.weebly.com>



Exploring The KNAVESMIRE York

The Knavesmire is internationally known for its racecourse (Royal Ascot was held here in 2005) and as a venue for many large-scale events, including the Pope's visit in 1982. Yet there is much more, for the Knavesmire also has interesting historical features spanning over 600 years.

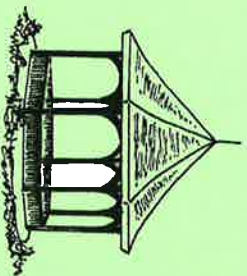


We hope our leaflet will help you to enjoy the history, as well as the space and the views, as you stroll on the Knavesmire.

Dringhouses Local History Group

14 Herdsman's Cottage, c.1840, at Knavesmire Gates, the principal access to the pasture. Formerly occupied by the herdsman appointed by the Micklegate Stray Pasture Masters to look after the animals grazing on the Knavesmire.

13 Site of bandstand. In 1913 a splendid new bandstand was built here; the opening ceremony included speeches by the Lord Mayor and Mr Arnold Rowntree, MP, and much music.



The 1913 Bandstand

12 Tyburn. Site of public hangings 1379-1801. Many criminals were executed here, including Dick Turpin in 1739, and also many religious martyrs. Detailed information board.

11 Area of trees. This area, narrowing to the north, has a variety of mature trees, mostly planted in the 20th century. There is a fine central avenue almost half a mile long.

10 Ridge & furrow. In medieval times, this slope was cultivated. Particularly when the grass is short, the broad ridges created by ox-ploughing can be seen here, running down the slope.

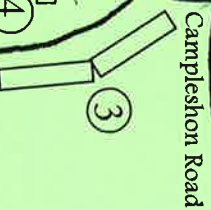
9 Boundary stone. An ancient boundary stone marking a change in direction of the former boundary between the Knavesmire (in the City of York) and Dringhouses.

8 Cherry Lane. Already in existence in 1624, this is still the principal access to the Knavesmire from Dringhouses. Partly a sunken lane, in the mid-19th century it divided into two, one path going straight across to Bishopthorpe Road and the other to Middlethorpe.

1 Second World War building. Former Royal Observer Corps Centre where during the Second World War ROC members played a vital part in the defence of the realm, receiving and processing information about aircraft movements.

2 Knavesmire Road. Built in 1921-2, this road follows the line of the track which ran from Knavesmire Gates to the racecourse grandstand. From here, the clock tower of the former Terry's chocolate factory is a prominent feature.

3 The Grandstand. Horse-races were first held here in 1731. The original grandstand, of which part still survives, was built in 1755 by John Carr. Further stands were erected c1840 & 1890. In the early 1900s the Bustardthorpe Stand was built at the south end and in 1989 the Melrose Stand, with its clock, at the north end. The most recent are the Ebor and Knavesmire Stands.



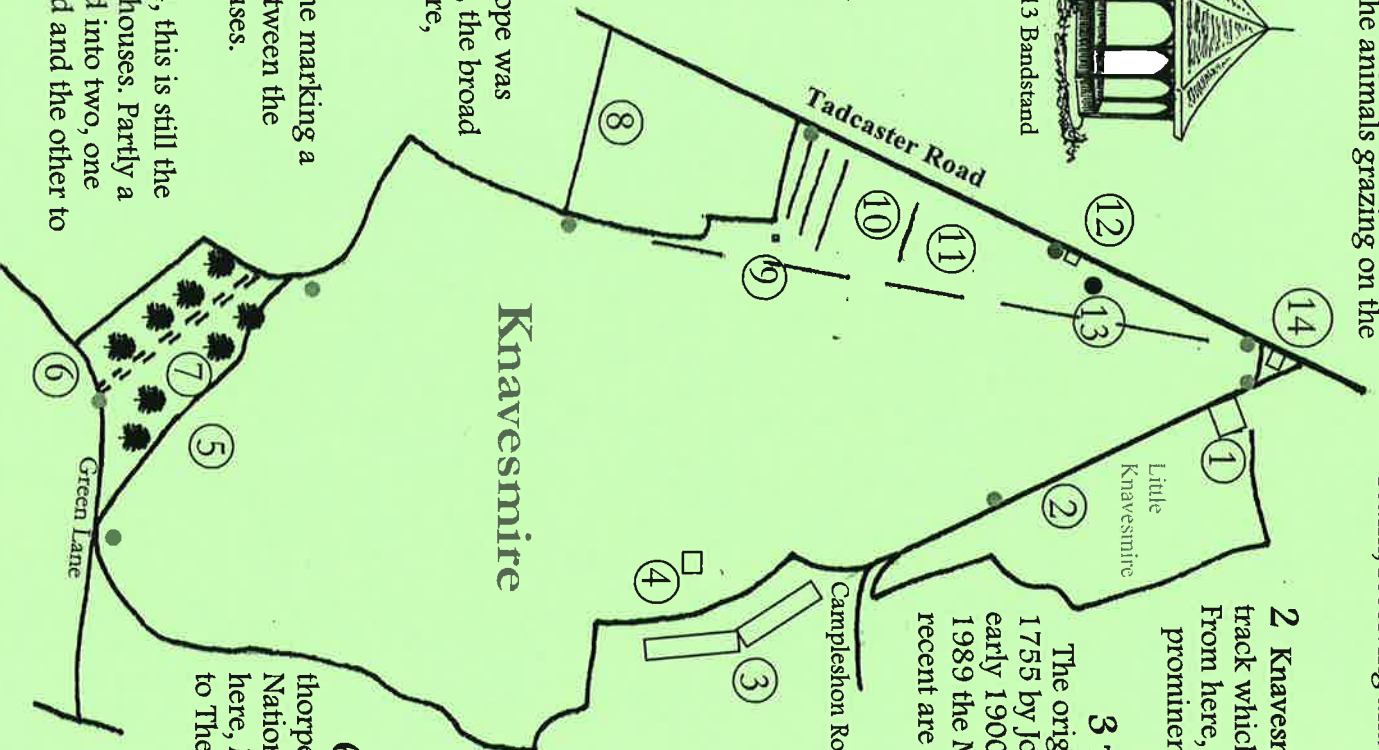
Indicator board

4 Indicator board and clock tower, 1922. Designed by Walter Brierley, the noted York architect. A listed building, it retains all its original structure and fittings but is no longer in use.

5 Former golf course. This area was used by York Golf Club from 1890 until they moved to Stremsall in 1904 and by Knavesmire Golf Club from 1904 to 1915. By this date the Royal Flying Corps had begun using the Knavesmire as an airfield.

6 Green Lane. A track linking Sim Balk Lane to Middlethorpe already existed in 1785. It is now a footpath and part of National Cycle Network Route 65 (York to Selby section). From here, Middlethorpe Hall (built 1702), now a hotel and belonging to The National Trust, can be seen.

7 Knavesmire Wood. Dates from before 1772. Mixed woodland, now owned and managed by The Woodland Trust. Very tall old oak and beech at south end. Medieval ridge and furrow can be seen, the central lime avenue following one of the ridges.



● Main access points