

YHA Archive News, May 2017 from the volunteer archivist, John Martin

The Langdale Treasure Trove

May 2017 has been particularly productive and exciting, with gifts of a number of items for our bulging YHA Archive, and culminated with one of the most important acquisitions in the last few years.

First, we've had plenty of interest from the public. Customer Services have been busy emailing me once or twice a week with offers of items from members and former members. For instance, Hilary Collins sent in a package of programmes of YHA Annual Reunions in the London area, around 1948-52, that had been enjoyed by her parents. The booklets are packed with details of line-ups, singing, folk dancing, etc, and no doubt a good time was had by all. These items are new to the Archive.

Patricia Bullen has sent a good number of the delightful little one-inch pin badges that she collected in the 1960s, no doubt to go on a bobble hat. Almost every one of the 280 or so YHA hostels at that time had its own badge, often very well designed with an illustration of local interest. We have about 100 of these in the Archive. There is a long way to go before there is a full set, but Patricia has set us further on our way.

I spent 12 days in May touring Lake District Hostels with a view to completing Historical Profiles or starting research for new ones. From Aaron at Helvellyn we've acquired old plans that clear up the existence of old prisoner of war huts that once stood at the back of the hostel, and even provided a spare dormitory and cooking space for YHA. What a fascinating tale is developing there. From Ian at Butharlp How, there's another pile of old plans that make the story of the expanding hostel so much clearer, and there were plan views too of the old Thorney How hostel. Hawkshead, the two Conistons and Hawes also chipped in with interesting information and new materials.

The biggest and most significant acquisition was the transfer of boxes and boxes of Lakeland YHA items, generally dating from the 1930s to the 1980s, that Miranda at Langdale has been curating so carefully and enthusiastically over many years. These materials will now be added to our catalogue and sent on to Birmingham. The importance of joining together disparate collections into one whole is perhaps summed up by the discovery of official Lakes Region minutes from 1973 to 1986, beautifully bound in three volumes, and till now the missing gap in an otherwise complete run of the history of YHA in this region from the pioneer days onwards.

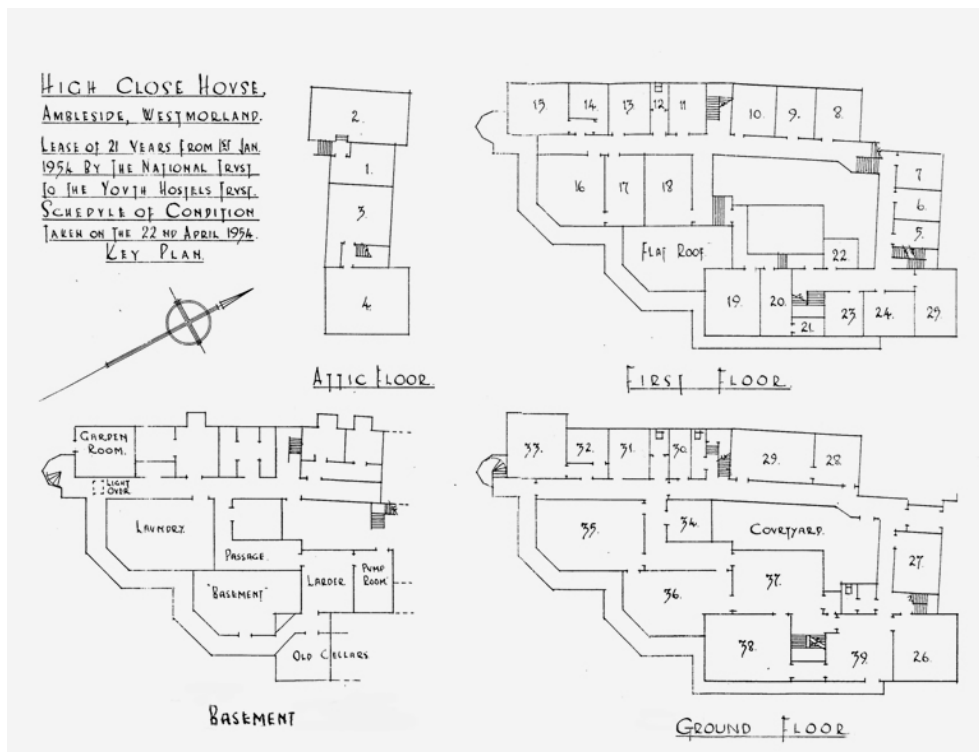
Here are a few samples from the Langdale collection to whet your appetite:



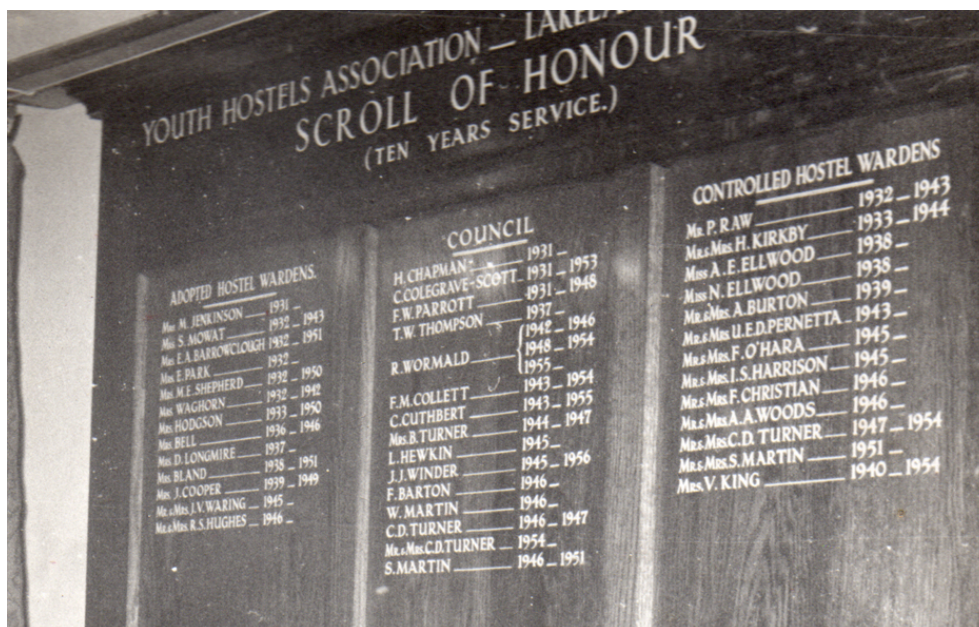
*The great and the good: Lakeland Youth Hostels Committee, 1930s. Jacques in Centre, (with cigarette), on his left is Mrs Ivy Wakefield (wife of Dr W Wakefield who was on the 2nd Everest expedition). The location might well be Windermere hostel, opened 1935.
YHA Archive catalogue number Y610111-1*



*In the early 1930s YHA cast around for any vaguely suitable building to open at almost a moment's notice, and there were plenty going spare. One unlikely acquisition was Gretna hostel, not in the Scottish village but just over the border into YHA's Lakeland territory. The building had been the offices and focal centre of the huge first world war armaments depot at Mossband, north of Carlisle (and just to the east of the M6), but redundant and acquired as a youth hostel in 1932. It ran till 1936, when replaced by a hostel in Carlisle. Langdale has provided YHA with its first photograph of this hostel.
YHA Archive catalogue number Y050001-Gretna 01*



Key plan of High Close (Langdale) hostel as at opening in 1954, drawn by YHA's draughtsman in an attractive and distinctive style. Details of its lease are given.
YHA Archive catalogue number Y050001-High Close 741



Lakeland Youth Hostels Scroll of Honour (10 Years' Service) as displayed at the old Ambleside Queen's Hotel YH. Photographed ca 1956. The columns give names and years of the region's adopted (ie Enterprise-type) hostel wardens, council members and controlled hostel wardens. The Scroll seems to have disappeared without trace.

YHA Archive catalogue number Y610111-2



*The interior of the new Field Studies building at Hawkshead hostel at its official opening in 1966, when it was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh. Guests, officials and probably a few innocent hostellers attend. Today a plaque at Hawkshead still marks the occasion. Field Studies have subsequently expanded to another site, and the original building has been adopted as the manager's home.
YHA Archive catalogue number Y050001-Hawkshead 17*



*Patterdale's new youth hostel was here under construction early in 1971; the premises opened later that year. The Langdale collection has provided the Archive with its first view of the building in its unfinished state; the construction on stilts is clearly seen.
The YHA Archive catalogue number Y050001-Patterdale B 13*