



YHA (England and Wales)

Youth Hostel Profile

compiled by the Association's volunteer archivist, John Martin, 2021-03-01

Youth Hostels at Gidleigh and Steps Bridge

Introduction

This profile covers two long-lived youth hostels in the northern reaches of Dartmoor. Gidleigh was located in a quiet valley within the central part, in the upper reaches of the River Teign regime at over 800 feet above sea level, while on the northeastern fringes, 12 miles to the east and down river, lay Steps Bridge, at 340 feet. Both were basic affairs but full of character. Between them, they served YHA for almost 130 years.

Gidleigh Youth Hostel 1932 to 1987

Castle Farm, Gidleigh, Chagford, Newton Abbott, Devon

Historic County: Devon

YHA Region: Devon & Cornwall

GR: SX 670883

Gidleigh hostel was a simple adopted hostel with a convoluted beginning. The Plymouth Regional Group, soon to be the Devon and Cornwall Group, had hardly been formed when in November 1931 it produced its first annual report. Here, it advised that a hostel at Gidleigh was being prepared and would open by Easter 1932.

The next year's report commented on a notably successful first season for Gidleigh hostel. It had 382 overnights, though YHA had been unable to secure in the village the premises hoped for, and those obtained nearby were *somewhat meagre*. The exact layout and location of this first tiny hostel are not yet clear, as reminiscences provide much ambivalence. Charles Allen, Regional Secretary at the time, shed a few glimmers of light almost 50 years later:

Gidleigh hamlet comprised of two small cottages, Gidleigh Castle ruins, Castle Farm, one bungalow and the rectory. The hostel opened in 1932 in an old army tent in a field adjacent to one of the cottages. The tent was used as the female dormitory (6 beds) whilst the males slept in a cowshed on the farm. The village pump, which had a lean-to shed with a built in bench seat, served as the outside dining room. There is a story from the early days, before the present hostel was built, of a horse walking in through the open door of the cartshed dormitory,

The April edition of the 1932 national handbook cited *Castle House, bring knife, fork, spoon, meals provided*. Later in that year and in 1933 it was *Gidleigh Cottage*. Mrs Osborne of Castle Farm was warden, and we'll hear much more of her and her family. Writing in YHA's *the Rucksack* in autumn 1943, Marie Bright remembered these *somewhat meagre* premises with clear affection:

The Building of Gidleigh

The three men looked at each other – after all, it was no worse than some of the places they had seen, and there were distinct possibilities for expansion in almost any direction, including upwards.

'Let's do it,' said one. The others nodded their agreement and the three men, all founders of the YHA in the West, left what was the beginning of one of the nicest hostels in Devon and Cornwall.

To be sure, it wasn't a great deal to begin with, comprising as it did, a lean-to roof with wooden uprights and no walls, a disused coalshed, a ramshackle logstore and a certain amount of the surrounding countryside, but like all truly great things, the humble start paved the way for improvement and expansion.

Working-parties, as much a part of hostelling as the visitors themselves, went into the field armed with brushes, whitewash, an enormous amount of enthusiasm and little cash (you must remember that the cost of opening the first five hostels down here was only £125 for the lot!). The result was that early visitors slept, according to his or her sex, in the coal-shed (cleaned and redecorated in a beautiful shade of whitewash) or in a tent pitched in the aforesaid countryside.

The common-room didn't need a great deal of redecorating; the walls remained non-existent, which made it very much easier if one needed water since all one had to do was to lean out of one's chair at the table and pump away at the village pump situated alongside. If one wished to cook, one merely crawled into the logshed, now known as *the kitchen*.

Any little difficulties were soothed away by the warden, Mrs Osborne, who is a pioneer in the true sense of the word. I don't know anyone else who would have even contemplated accommodating hostellers in that primitive way and have survived all the ordeals, but she did. Not only that, but she continued to look after the ever-increasing numbers of visitors in improved but still inadequate accommodation, and the whole success of the hostel is due to her kindness and ingenuity, to say nothing of her adaptability.

This success prompted the then Regional Council to make a special effort to build a real hostel around Mrs Osborne, purpose-built in timber, with extensions. Today, when you visit Gidleigh, you will sleep in the new dormitories, cook in a proper kitchen, and draw hot and cold water from modern taps which have long since replaced the village pump. The only things which haven't changed are Mrs Osborne's welcome and her wit.

Ken Tyler, Devon and Cornwall's former long-serving Regional Secretary, gave further insight into this most whimsical of early YHA premises and the Osborne family in a *Hostelling News* article of spring 1972:

1932 saw the opening of hostels at Boswinger, Gidleigh and Lownard. True, Gidleigh was a primitive little building in a different part of the village with beds for five men, three women, but I include it because of the possibly unique record of wardenship; it has been managed throughout by the Osborne family, first by Mrs Osborne and from 1946 by the present warden, her daughter Margaret, who grew up there. What a magnificent record of service.

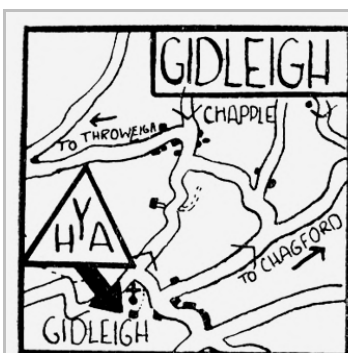
This unique hostel was clearly inadequate for the numbers who wanted to stay. In 1933, its second season, YHA planned the replacement premises that Marie Bright referred to, *built around Mrs Osborne* at Castle Farm itself. Perhaps something similar had been the original 1931 annual report intention. The 1933 regional annual report showed that £62, considerable for an adopted hostel, was spent on fixtures and fittings here. The new construction, with beds for ten men and ten women, was listed in the 1934 national handbook. There were further necessary extensions in 1935, with a grant from the (YHA?) Regional Development Fund; the capacity now stretched to 16 men, 14 women. Ken Tyler added that it was 1937 before the hostel's new facilities were finally complete.

Farm produce was on sale at the hostel, and provided meals remained available until just after World War II. Mrs Osborne's giant roasts and cream tarts were the order of the day. Home-produced clotted cream, which appeared in huge bowls at every meal, may have contributed to the hostel's success and Ken Tyler advanced the rumour that during the war, when such luxuries were forbidden, it was stirred into the porridge.



One of a series of three postcards of Gidleigh produced by the Dawlish firm of Chapman, probably pre-war. It shows the 1934 hostel development at the rear of Castle Farm. Cheek by jowl to the right is the cowshed, no doubt a source of joy, amusement, comforting warmth and challenging aromas for generations of hostellers (YHA Archive)

The hostel kept going throughout the war. A YHA circular of March 1941 successfully argued to keep it from requisition, for the use of young people from Plymouth, Devonport, etc. In 1942 considerable improvements were made in preparation for peacetime. After a lull in bednights in 1940, numbers rose considerably through the war years, reaching a new record of 2,500 in 1945, though in 1947 bed numbers were permanently reduced to 14-10.



GIDLEIGH. This commodious hostel is in Gidleigh village, 3 miles west of Chagford, and stands near the church and in the shadow of a fine old 14th century castle, one of the four border castles of Dartmoor. Nearby is the wooded valley of the North Teign river, and the moors to the west, besides being renowned for their wild and picturesque scenery, are rich in prehistoric remains. Gidleigh should appeal to all hostellers, from the student of antiquities to the sturdy tramp.

Mrs. Osborne, Castle Farm, Gidleigh, nr. Chagford. (Tel.: Chagford 121). (16 men, 14 women). Sta.: Okehampton. Bus: Okehampton—Chagford. All year. O.S. 138.

1 & 2: two further Chapman postcards. From different viewpoints they show the Osborne's neat farmhouse and, a little way distant at the end of a vegetable patch, the in-line youth hostel and cow byre timber buildings. The second postcard also reveals another construction, the lean-to structure nearest the camera, that probably had a YHA purpose; 3: useful sketch map as found in the regional handbook of 1937 (YHA Archive)

Mr Osborne died at the end of the war and Mrs Osborne in 1951, though since 1946 their daughter Miss Margaret Osborne had taken on the mantle of warden. She had previously helped her mother with the hostel. As Margaret also was to manage the farm and the village Post Office she gave up hostel meals, but continued to provide the famed warm welcome.



A YHA enthusiast over many decades, BA Smetham recorded these valuable and unusual views of Gidleigh during a cycling trip in September 1969. By this time the hostel cabin was already 35 years old.

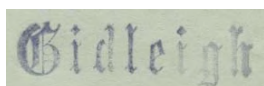
1: the Osborne's farmhouse, Castle Farm. The entrance extension doubled as village Post Office and hostel reception.

2: the spacious, well-equipped members' kitchen. Though the Belfast sink and suspended dishcloths lend an old-fashioned impression, the inclusion of hot water supply and contemporary gas hobs shows a good standard for a small 1960s hostel;

3: the layout of angles and windows suggests that this washroom may have been located in the lean-to referred to in the second image on page 3. Again, there is a hot water supply. The stand on the right was possibly for small wash bowls (YHA Archive)

Pat Packham recorded in her notes for a cycling tour in Southern England, April 1965:

A large hut behind the village post office. We had been expecting a primitive place and were pleasantly surprised at the accommodation. The warden asked us to sign in at the Post Office and returned our cards immediately.



Later, in 1972, Ken Tyler noted that the hostel accommodation was still kept so spick and span by Miss Osborne that it was easy to overlook the modern YHA classification *Simple*.

Ken added that the Osborne family had welcomed hostellers over such a long period and had assisted, in a very practical way, *to help all... to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside*.



Long-distance cyclist Ron Sant recorded these cheerful views of the Gidleigh accommodation in July 1979 (author's collection)

In 1982 the hostel celebrated the unique distinction of having been wardened by the same family, the Osbornes mother and daughter, for 50 years. It became 55 years. Margaret Osborne died at the beginning of 1988. As she was both warden and owner, the hostel had to close. There were no bednights registered after 30th September 1987.



1



2



3

1 & 2: two undated anonymous photographs.

1: Miss Margaret Osborne, warden for over 40 years, stands at the Castle Farm entrance (author's collection);

2: Gidleigh hostel from the farmyard, with Miss Osborne's prized South Devon cows as regular hostellers' companions.

In 1977 Charles Allen reminisced that one feature of the cowshed standing next to the hostel dormitory was that the cows were tethered by chains which create quite a rattle during the night.

This led to the fear that the Gidleigh Ghost was on the prowl again (YHA Archive);

3: the author was invited to view the former hostel in April 2014 and was pleased to see the original YHA building and cowshed still in remarkably fine condition (author's photograph)

Steps Bridge (Dunsford) Youth Hostel 1935 to 2006

Blytheswood (or more usually Blytheswood), Steps Bridge, Dunsford, Exeter, Devon EX6 7EQ

Historic County: Devon

YHA Regions: Devon & Cornwall,
South West, South

GR: SX 802882

Between the First and Second World Wars, and especially in the 1920s, there was a craze in Britain for good townspeople to relish new or second homes away from it all in remote countryside. The intentions were often to get back to nature, living simple lives in the woods, sometimes employing a form of full-time or part-time crofting, and using for their homes redundant caravans, old railway carriages or surplus huts left over in their thousands from army camps, agriculture or industrial use. This was largely before the age of required planning permission or countryside preservation legislation. Development was often piecemeal, chaotic, ugly and short-lived.

Nevertheless, there was a silver lining. Many of these old huts were redundant by the 1930s and made ideal inexpensive pioneer youth hostels in attractive countryside. Acquired hostel properties such as the Picquets (Charing), Flackwell Heath, the Bungalow (Gara Mill), the Folk House (Godshill), Surrey Crest, Thorndon Cross, Wrotham Heath and Woodland Camp (Kemsing) conformed to this early pattern, especially in the south of England. The YHA was the beneficiary, but so too was the countryside, as the new guardian was committed to a care and understanding of the environment. All the while protective legislation was stiffening.

In 1935 Devon and Cornwall Region became the new owners of a former summerhouse rebuilt from a 1914 army ambulance hut. It was built into a deeply-wooded hillside at Blytheswood, Steps Bridge on the River Teign, just inside the modern eastern boundary of Dartmoor National Park. An unknown newspaper ran with this article:

Blytheswood Youth Hostel

Grand Rally for the Opening Ceremony

Saturday, 31st August 1935

Innovation at Steps Bridge, Dunsford – ‘Tramping Holidays’

The value of the Youth Hostel movement in preserving the beauty of the English countryside was emphasised by Mr R Graves Saunders on Saturday when Blytheswood youth hostel was opened by Mrs Ransom Pickard.

The new hostel, situated at Steps Bridge, Dunsford, is a converted bungalow which has been extended, and has been given to the Association at a very nominal rent by Col. Ransom Pickard (Chairman of the Devon and Cornwall Regional Group). Perched up on the side of a hill, the premises are sheltered by thick woods and command a wide panorama of the beautiful Teign Valley. At present accommodation is available for eight men and four women, but as the increasing needs demand there is plenty of room for extension.

Healthy Holiday at Nominal Cost

Introducing Mrs Ransom Pickard, Mr Glave Saunders said the movement enabled members to enjoy a healthy holiday at a very cheap cost. Their object was to complete the chain of hostels roughly 15 miles apart in every highway, not only in England, but in other parts of the world.

It was possible for foreign peoples to come together. He felt that with the urbanisation of the country, people at the present time were living away from the realities of life and were getting a false sense of its values. A week or a fortnight's walking tour such as the movement could provide enabled them to throw off the cobwebs of unreality. The time was coming, he thought, when everyone, no matter what their wages, would have a regular annual holiday... The provision of youth hostels supplied an opportunity to have a thoroughly enjoyable holiday at an average cost of about 3/6d a day.

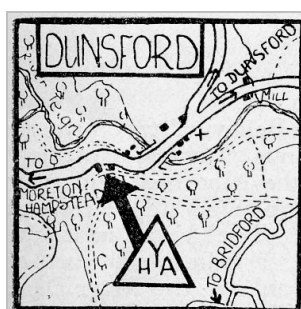
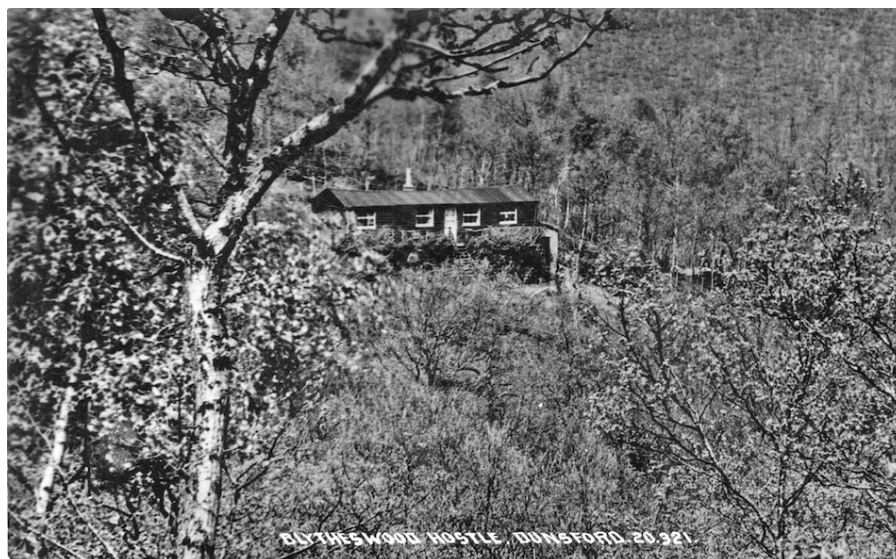
Robbing the Countryside

Stressing another side of the movement's value, Mr Glave Saunders said that now that the countryside was being thrown open the urban population were at last beginning to realise its beauty. What a thousand pities it would be to lose any single part of it! 'The jerry-builder, the speculator, the speed-crazy motorist and those numerous councils without any sense of beauty are all trying to rob us of our countryside, but one of the bulwarks against this sort of thing will be the chain of youth hostels throughout England.'

The Joys of Tramping

Declaring open the hostel, Mrs Ransom Pickard said from the very start she had been extremely interested in the movement. The gathering was afterwards entertained to tea at the invitation of Col and Mrs Ransom Pickard.

Dr R Pickard provided not only the premises but also a great deal of included equipment. After the opening ceremony, however, there was little left of the 1935 season. The new hostel missed a mention in that year's national handbook and a mere 95 overnights were recorded. The first handbook entry, in 1936, named the hostel as Dunsford, after the nearest village. The title Steps Bridge emerged only in 1964.



DUNSFORD (BLYTHESWOOD). Set on a steep, wooded hillside near Steps Bridge, this bungalow-hostel is an excellent centre from which to explore the picturesque Teign Valley. It is a mile S.W. of Dunsford Village, and within easy walking distance of the moors.

Mrs. Ellis, County A. Cottage, Dunsford, nr. Exeter. (8 men, 4 women). *Sta.:* Dunsford Halt $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. *Bus:* Exeter—Moretonhampstead. All year. (Meals provided if ordered). O.S. 138, C.6.

1: postcard by Chapman of Dawlish. It probably dates from the mid-1930s – there appears to be no extension to the rear (author's collection); 2: sketch map and hostel details from the 1937 regional handbook (YHA Archive)

Mrs Ellis was the first warden. She followed in the long-serving tradition of the Osbornes at neighbouring Gidleigh, staying for 24 years. Bristolian FJ Catley, who produced intriguing diaries of his experiences as YHA committee member and regular hosteller in those early years, wrote of Dunsford hostel in 1938:

The YH was a wooden hut among the woods. The warden and her husband lived in one of the new but unobtrusive council houses down below. Mrs Ellis, the warden, was out. Her husband, who was working the garden, took me indoors for the milk. He was employed as a roadman.

I did my bit at the pump outside, that supplies water for everybody. I found Mrs Ellis a very decent person, and she keeps the place in good order.

In 2007 Len Clark reminisced about an early stay here:

There was Steps Bridge in the woods high above the River Teign, where the warden roused you in the morning with a challenging recording of Monteverdi's Beatus Vir.

The 1939 national handbook advised that there was a possibility of closure whilst an extension was built. This almost certainly referred to the provision on the steep slope at the back of the hostel, at a much higher level, of a smaller timber hut to provide separate dormitory and washroom for women. They previously would have been accommodated in the main hut, on one side of the common room, with the men at the other side. The work was probably completed early in the season. The new arrangement boasted an increase from men eight beds, women four to men 12 beds, women ten. This layout of dormitories persisted for 20 years, until the next major reorganisation.

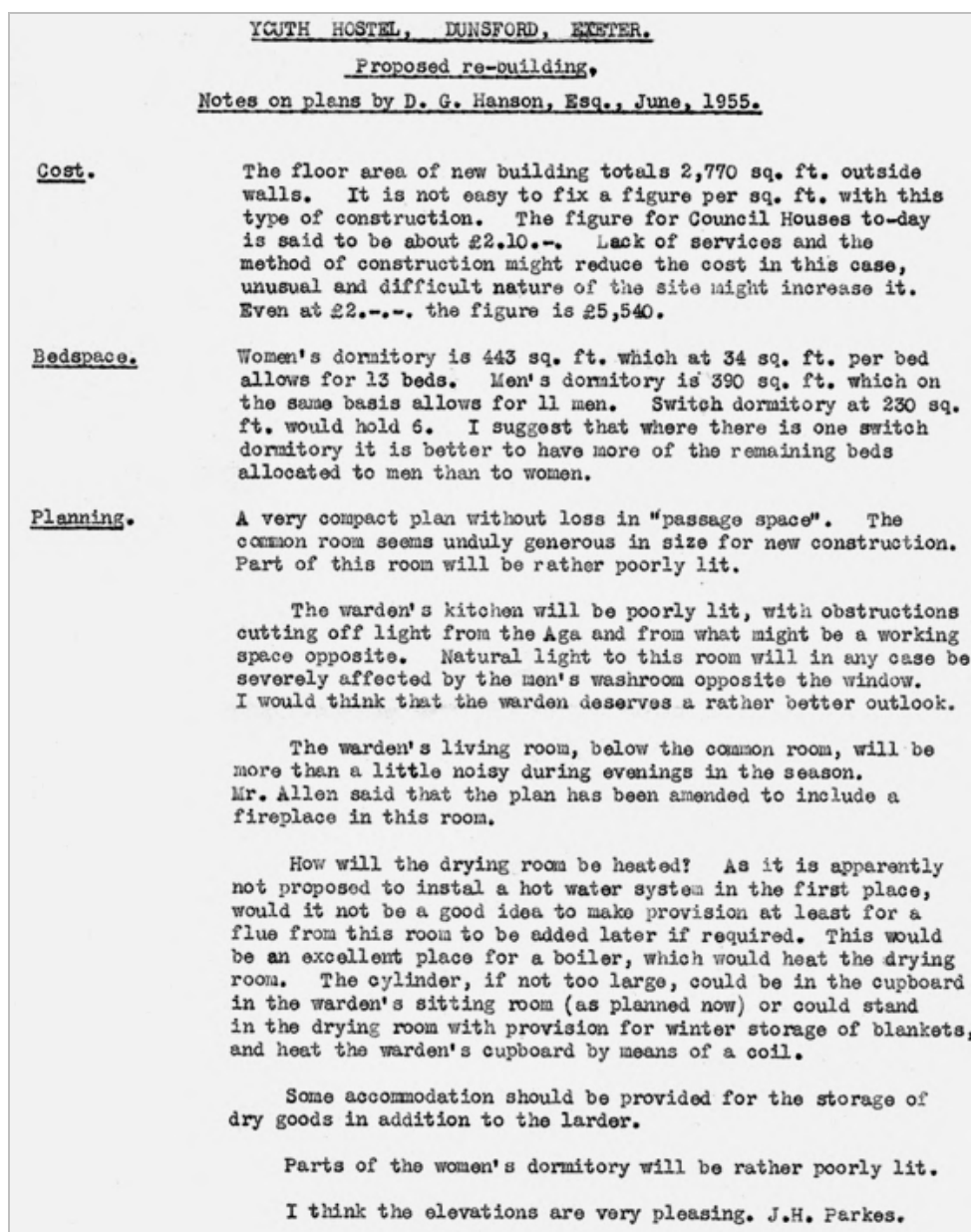
As at Gidleigh, Dunsford hostel operated in each year of the War, despite upheavals. One came late in 1940, when a national notice in November advised that it was closed until further notice. Nevertheless, an internal circular of

March 1941 stressed the need to keep it from requisition, for the use of young people from the Devon dockyard towns. In 1942 considerable improvements were made in preparation for peacetime. Apart from reduced use in 1939 with building work and in 1940 for the war effort, the little hostel usually generated well over 1,000 overnights per year during Mrs Ellis's reign.

In 1945 a fault with the water supply meant that opening was delayed until 10th September; high summer bookings had been transferred to Exeter. Nevertheless, Mary Jephcott stayed in that year, and commented with some resignation:

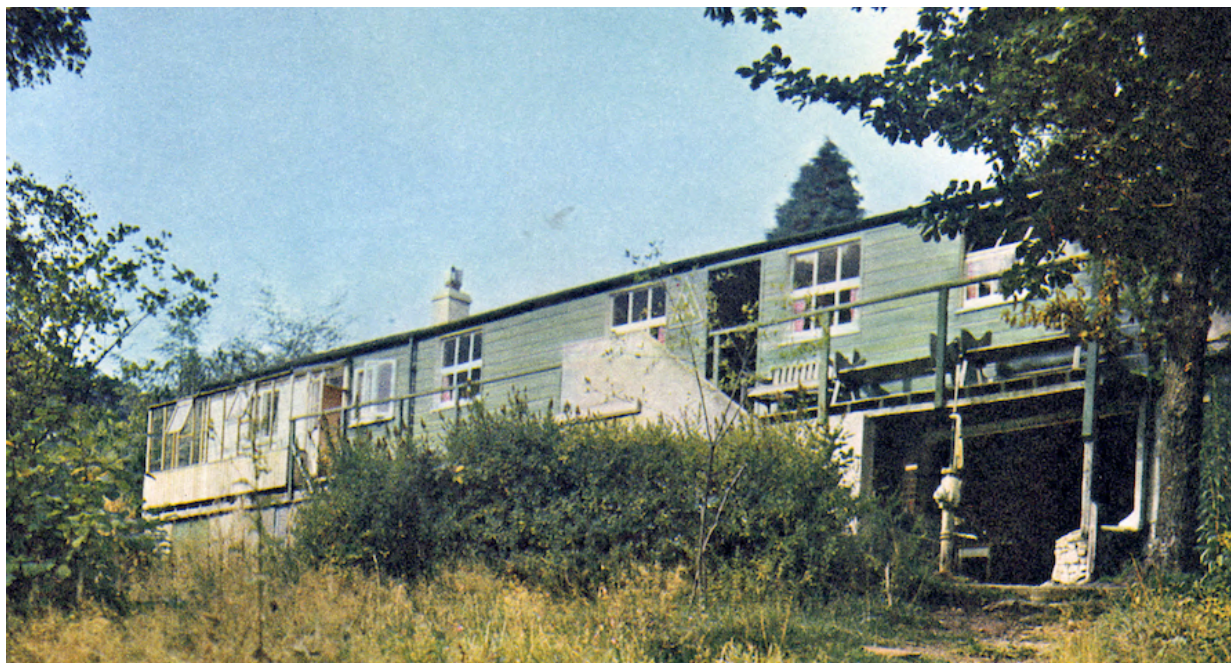
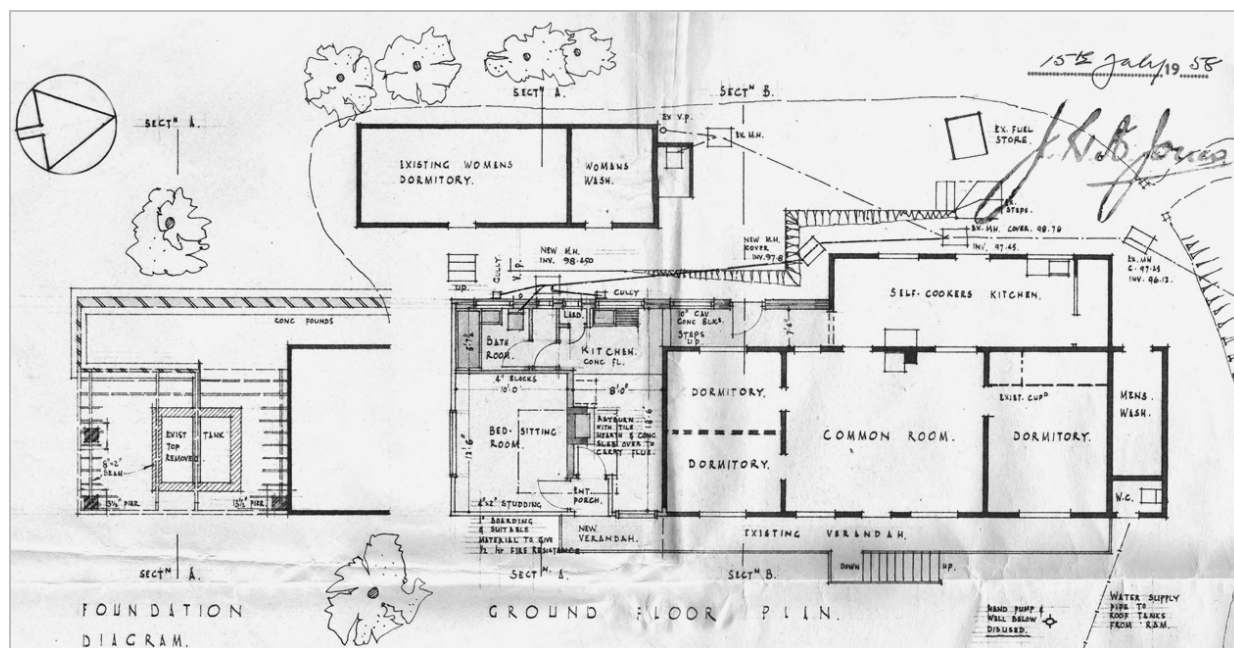
Warned that the warden made people sweep under beds. So moved them all and went for cards – only to be sent back to move the bunks.

Plans for hostel improvement, including new provision for a warden, were already under way when the somewhat critical review shown below and conserved in the YHA Archive was prepared by YHA's National Surveyor, John Parkes, in 1955. It is not known how the plans may have changed in the light of this. Mrs Ellis, who lived off-site, was perhaps persuaded to stay on until the rebuild was under way some three years later.



Changes were being implemented to allow for new working practices when Mrs Ellis was ready to retire. A YHA Bulletin of June 1956 announced the deletion of the meals service (though later reinstated). The 1958 Devon and Cornwall region annual report announced at the end of 1958 that hostel rebuilding was now under way.

The 1958 plan is shown below, a copy surviving in the YHA Archive. The original hut, with its large common room framed by men's dormitories, is marked in bold, bottom right. The women's extension of 1939 is top centre. Bottom centre is the new extension to provide a warden's living space of bed-sitting room, private kitchen and bathroom. The extension would be provided with a small glazed conservatory. Hostellers climbed to the main level protected by a new, safer, concrete staircase instead of flimsy wooden steps. There was an extensive basement. Small extra plots of land were purchased freehold by YHA in 1959 and 1965.



Detail of a postcard by J Arthur Dixon that shows well the new arrangements and the warden's extension of 1958.

Pat Packham included Dunsford in her August 1958 tour of South-West England, and described the experience: About three miles from Exeter we met two boys who informed us that Dunsford was an awful place...

We saw a small YHA sign on the gate of a house. We went in there to sign the housebook and were told that the hostel was on the left a bit further along the road. It consisted of a common room with a kitchen behind and small dormitories on either side. Usually men occupied these rooms and the girls had a dormitory outside. We christened our room 'the dark hole of Calcutta'.

There were single-year wardening spells between 1959 and 1962, perhaps voluntary, when Mr G Milnes, Mrs F Ryalls, Miss J Dunnage and Mrs H Phillips Halpin looked after the little hostel. In 1961 Roy Frost stayed while touring by bike. He remembered the arrangement for men's ablutions:

Cycled to Steps Bridge YH, a small wooden hut with washing bowls outside.

YHA found a long-term successor in Eric Andrewes in 1963. He stayed until retirement in 1978 and was affectionately described in the article below.

Hostel Reminiscence

Chris Grey

During the long winter nights one often tends to "reminisce" about the hostel week-ends during the year and the various hostels that have become stamped on the well-travelled membership card. One hostel stamp that seems to appear regularly on my card is Steps Bridge which is a small hostel some eight miles west of Exeter on the Moretonhampstead road.

This hostel is a real gem and is one of the oldest in Devon having been adapted in 1935 to serve the needs of hostellers. Its position is superb with tremendous views of the surrounding woods and River Teign which rushes by on its way from Dartmoor to the coast some 15 miles away.

The mood of Steps Bridge varies from the strong westerly winds of springtime to the charm and peacefulness of autumn with the leaves of the trees disintegrated on the ground in a multitude of colours. All moods have an appeal of their own which one becomes conscious of on each return visit.

Perhaps the lure of Steps Bridge lies partially in the fact that it is ideally suited to both walker and cyclist. From the hostel, the walker can reach Bel-lever Hostel in a day if he so desires or he can take his time and walk up through the woods following the Teign to Gidleigh Hostel. On the latter walk, one passes through a nature reserve and a careful eye can see trout jumping in the river as well as many species of birds. The cyclist can enjoy ample tracks for rough-stuff if he desires or he can head out for Dartmoor and enjoy the maze of narrow lanes which are far from the madding crowd.

One cannot forget to mention the warden, Eric Andrewes, when talking about Steps Bridge. A hosteller himself for many years, Eric goes out of his way to make everyone welcome and is always pleased to advise members on their routes and of places to visit.

Possibly, after reading this, you may decide to visit Steps Bridge yourself. Whatever time of the year you make your visit you will not be disappointed.

In December 1971 Youth Hosteller Magazine published this short article on Steps Bridge (YHA Archive)

Duncan Simpson wrote passionately and in detail about his experiences of running Steps Bridge, his own first hostel, in *Open to All* ['Open to All : how youth hostels changed the world', independently published, 2016]. A few lines are quoted here, with permission:

YHA classed the hostel as 'simple,' the most elemental type of youth hostel. It had three toilets for 24 people, and two misnamed 'washrooms,' for men and women, which were, in fact, two plain rooms with bare concrete floors, no baths and no showers. Everyone carried hot water from a tap in the kitchen and washed in plastic basins.

People from round the world visited. Travelling on their own or with a friend or two, they climbed the path to the youth hostel perched on the side of the hill. They loved being 'away from it all' and 'out of the rat race.' They hitchhiked, caught trains or buses, walked, cycled or drove miles to be there.

They loved being so close to nature that, from bed in the morning, they could watch squirrels in the trees and hear bird song. They loved the friendliness of a place so small that, by the end of a night, everyone who stayed knew everyone else.

In summer the woods swarmed with ants. They streamed through the hostel in long lines. They bit ferociously. At times grass snakes and slow worms found their way inside too. They horrified people who had never seen a snake and knew no difference between the harmless and the deadly.

Duncan was at Steps Bridge from 1979 to 1981, before marrying Caroline and moving on to a bigger hostel at Colchester. He was followed by Leah Zerkowitz, Robin Hutchinson, Rick Lilford and Jeff Sleeman in the 1980s and 1990s.

DUNSFORD



Stamps from Dunsford / Steps Bridge hostel. The first is Miss MJ Miles' hostel stamp of 1964, the second part of a YHA advertising campaign style from about 1980 that used displays of multiple stamps to great effect (YHA Archive)

More alterations and improvements came gradually to the hostel. In 1974 it had already been connected to mains drainage and an extra toilet was provided. Showers arrived in 1985. The spring 1987 issue of *Triangle Magazine* announced what must have been one of the first solar heating installations by YHA:

Steps Bridge goes Solar

A solar water heating system has been installed at Steps Bridge hostel in South Devon to provide piped hot water for the washrooms. Previously only cold water was on tap and hot water for washing had to be carried by jug from the members' kitchen.

The budget-priced system was constructed by warden Jeff Sleeman and financed by members' donations and income from the hostel cycle hire scheme. It is estimated that the 'free' solar heated water will save around £60 per year in fuel bills, and during the summer will provide enough hot water for most washing requirements. A small electric immersion heater is fitted to the storage tank to assist on days when there is insufficient sunshine.

The washrooms have also been refurbished and improved during the winter to give visitors greater comfort while still retaining much of the 'small, simple hostel charm' which is an essential part of Steps Bridge.

For anyone interested in examining the hostel solar heating system and learning more about alternative energy, an Alternative Technology Weekend is being planned for the spring.



A 1990s Rent-a-Hostel publicity photograph showing the entrance and substantial basement at Steps Bridge (YHA Archive)

By 1995 Alison Tooby was looking after volunteer wardens here, as at several other small local hostels. One of the final acts of refurbishment, in 1997, was to divide the annexe dormitory above and behind the main building into three small rooms, each with heating and a wash basin, to encourage greater use by families and Rent-a Hostel. Record attendances of over 3,000 stayed at Steps Bridge in 1996, 1997, 2003 and 2004.

Gillian Strange was the supervisor when closure came. Steps Bridge was one of YHA's long list of withdrawals intended to mitigate its significant financial losses after Foot and Mouth in 2001. Though a closure date of 30th September 2006 was agreed, and the premises sold by auction in that month, the intention and hope was that Steps Bridge would continue to trade as normal with the new owners joining YHA's Enterprise scheme. Hostels such as Wooler, Alston, Kings and more locally Elmscott were transferring successfully. However, YHA Enterprise status was never realised here. The new owners re-sold and an independent hostel, *Blytheswood*, emerged. This too changed hands in 2015, and the latest owners are promoting Blytheswood Hostel as ready to resume post-Covid in 2021.



These two photographs of the independent Blytheswood hostel were taken by the author in April 2014, by permission of the owner, Patrick. They show the greatly elevated position of the rear accommodation in relation to the main part of the hostel, much as it was in YHA days

<i>Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows</i>									
<i>1932-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-present: Mar to following Feb</i>									
<i>♣: Gidleigh Youth Hostel YH; Δ: Steps Bridge Youth Hostel; *: 17 month period</i>									
...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	...	382♣	647♣	739♣	1040♣	1135♣	1069♣	1082♣	949♣
...	...	...	...	...	95Δ	1064Δ	1265Δ	1131Δ	803Δ
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
535♣	1105♣	1474♣	1800♣	1440♣	2505♣	2238♣	1401♣	1330♣	1369♣
471Δ	1110Δ	1526Δ	1462Δ	1001Δ	1770Δ	1688Δ	1714Δ	1800Δ	1760Δ
1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1345♣	1130♣	1067♣	937♣	950♣	1036♣	1004♣	990♣	969♣	891♣
1782Δ	1778Δ	1742Δ	167Δ	1471Δ	1568Δ	1571Δ	1436Δ	1385Δ	967Δ
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
775♣	765♣	918♣	1026♣	1052♣	971♣	1002♣	1119♣	1047♣	1277♣
1154Δ	1098Δ	1460Δ	1497Δ	1593Δ	1637Δ	1708Δ	1382Δ	1625Δ	1850Δ
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
1733♣	1525♣	1978♣	1921♣	2378♣	2816♣	open♣	2766♣	2463♣	2474♣
2951Δ	2000Δ	1961Δ	2229Δ	2145Δ	2492Δ	openΔ	2506Δ	2261Δ	2374Δ
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
2247♣	2004♣	2108♣	2112♣	2190♣	2040♣	1966♣	1850♣	...	...
2334Δ	2153Δ	1974Δ	1739Δ	1865Δ	1837Δ	2080Δ	2493Δ	2858Δ	2887Δ
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
2633Δ	2397Δ	2356*Δ	2028Δ	2083Δ	2776Δ	3245Δ	3048Δ	2998Δ	2706Δ
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1962Δ	1448Δ	2729Δ	3238Δ	3239Δ	2458Δ	2029Δ	...	...	...