



YHA (England and Wales)  
Youth Hostel Profile

compiled by the Association's volunteer archivist, John Martin, rev2020-01-01

Malham Youth Hostel 1938 to present

The John Dower Memorial Hostel, Malham, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 4DE

Historic County:  
Yorkshire (West Riding)

YHA Regions: West Riding,  
Yorkshire, North

GR: SD 901629

In 1937 YHA West Riding Region drew up plans and appeals for a model hostel at Malham, to cost about £3,500. The facility opened in July 1938 and was the first purpose-built hostel in Yorkshire, later examples following in Helmsley and Hawes. It was constructed on the site of the old Malham Sheep Fair. The hostel was designed and



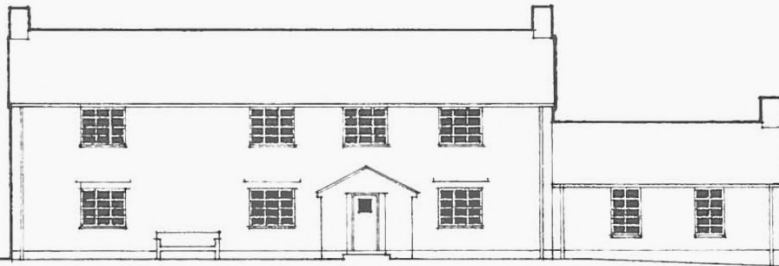
built by a local architect, John Dower, who lived nearby in Kirkby Malham. A style was adopted to resemble the local farmsteads though subsequent extensions and alterations relaxed those criteria. The hostel was assigned freehold to the YHA Trust in 1937; funding of £1,000 came from the King George's Jubilee Trust.

Left: a charming stylised postcard of the then new Malham youth hostel (author's collection)



Dignitaries and supporters at the opening of Malham hostel in 1938 – the following have been identified as – 1: GM Trevelyan; 2: John Dower (to Trevelyan's right); 3: Gilbert Bottomly; 4: Hesselgreaves; 5: Bernard Walker; 6: Kathleen Orange; 7: Anne Head; 8: David Howard (warden); 9: Hilda Blakely; 10: Arthur H Dower; 11: RS Dower; 12: Enid Howard (warden's wife) (YHA Archive)

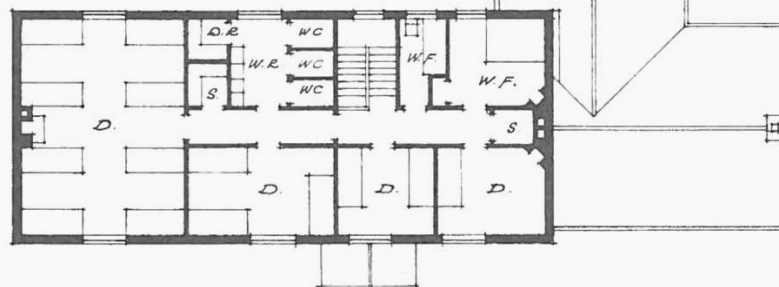
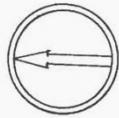
SEE FIGURE 1. FOR KEY.



WEST ELEVATION.



GROUND FLOOR.



FIRST FLOOR.

MALHAM, YORKSHIRE.  
RESIDENT WARDEN.

FIG. 5.  
SCALE 16 FEET TO 1 INCH.

Plan of the original John Dower design for Malham. The coding is thought to represent (Ground Floor) – D: Dormitory (22 beds, probably the allocation for women); DR / S / WR / WC: Drying Room / Shower / Washroom / WC; EH: Entrance Hall; S: Stairs; O: Office; WK: Wardens' kitchen; CR: Common Room; Wa: Wash-up; MK: Members' kitchen; S: Store; BS: Bike Store. (First Floor) – similar dormitory and washroom facilities (apparently 28 beds, though 30 seems to have been the number offered – presumably for men – while the right hand dorm may have been for an assistant); WF: Wardens' flat (YHA Archive)

The hostel was immediately popular. On the outbreak of war it was one of many YHA properties to house a party of Sudetenland refugees, and throughout the war years usage by ordinary hostellers continued to grow.

David and Enid Howard were the first wardens. David, at least, stayed until 1944, when he went on to become the long-standing and popular warden of the new Port Eynon hostel on Gower in South Wales.



*Hostellers enjoying the outdoors at Malham in the early days (YHA Archive)*



*Hostellers enjoying a meal at Malham in the early days (YHA Archive)*

John Dower had already designed new hostels for YHA at Bellingham and Eskdale. He was a key figure in the National Park and Youth Hostel movements and at the time of his tragically early death aged 47 was President of the Ramblers Association. The Dower Report that he wrote for the government and presented in 1945 was

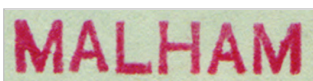


instrumental in the setting up of the National Parks of England and Wales. Importantly he also believed passionately that National Parks should be there for all to enjoy whatever their background. Youth Hostelling was one of the ways that young working class people at that time could access these beautiful places. His wife, Pauline and father-in-law, James [Sir Charles] Trevelyan (both key figures in the National Park and Youth Hostel movements) dedicated the hostel to his memory in 1948.

*Left: this dedicatory plaque to the hostel's designer is an attractive feature in the lounge area (author's photograph, May 2008)*



*Friends and family on the occasion of the dedication of the panel to the memory of John Dower in 1948 were (l to r) Arthur Raistrick, Professor GM Trevelyan, Arthur Dower, Michael Dower, Mrs John Dower and H Warwick. There was a strong Quaker representation here (YHA Archive)*



Mr and Mrs Edgar Barwick were the new wardens in the early post-war years. They stayed at Malham until 1953. In the 1950s the members' kitchen was extended and a new cycle store provided. A new water supply in 1957 fixed a recurring problem of reliability. The Barwicks were succeeded by the Ashworths then, in the late 1950s, Mr and Mrs Derek Sutcliffe.

Overnights were generally recorded at 6,000 to 7,000 per annum in that 20-year post-war period, though many members and school parties had to be refused. By 1960 the demand for accommodation at Malham was very heavy and serious thought was given to increasing the number of beds. Financial and planning snags held up progress for several years; a perpetual problem was the difficulty in obtaining planning permission to allow the intended extension's exterior on design grounds suitable for the locality. In 1964, with the growth of educational visits, it was decided to include Field Study facilities in the new design. Mr and Mrs Joe Bedford were wardens in the earlier 1960s, and led many of these developments.



Finally, in 1967, the extension of facilities was provided with the new Fold annexe, opened by Arthur Dower, John's brother and YHA National Chairman. The 52 beds of the original building could now be expanded to 70.

The Bedfords were followed in 1968 by Harry and Pam Smith who, typically for the period, stayed for over twenty years and established an era of sustained growth and professionalism. Overnights were boosted by 50% from previous highs, especially through much greater use of the hostel by organised groups. They reached a peak of 15,738 in 1975, supplemented by the phenomenal craze for walking the Pennine Way that was now well established. A three-phase improvement plan was started in 1984.



Paul Hobson and Peta Saunders were the new managers in 1990; they came from Whitby Abbey Stables hostel, before moving on to Boggle Hole in 1993. Further redevelopment under the PDMP scheme in 1993 included new toilets, showers and washbasins throughout, the division of large dormitories into friendlier bedrooms, improved heating and more comfortable furniture.

Another extended period of established managers came with Martin and Christine Peryer in 1994. They were to take the hostel forward through to 2014, when they retired, though this period also witnessed the foot and mouth epidemic of 2001. It had a serious effect on rural hostels, but usage at Malham rapidly rose again in its aftermath.



*Malham hostel, 2008, before refurbishment. 1: aerial view (YHA Archive); 2: view of the Fold annexe (author's photograph)*

A decade later YHA announced that Malham would be closed for a considerable refurbishment, between 28th October 2012 and 15th February 2013. When the hostel reopened there was a new educational extension between the main buildings and the Fold, a licensed café bar serving fresh coffee and snacks, and a new restaurant, serving a freshly cooked menu. All bedrooms were refurbished, with four en suite, and wash facilities updated.

In 2015 Laura Watson (Wood) came to manage Malham from Once Brewed hostel. Overnights have expanded remarkably, topping 20,000 in 2016, and there are now 81 beds. Two camping pods have been made available.

*Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows*

**1938-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-present: Mar to following Feb**

**\*: 17 month period; +: notional figure included for exclusive hire and/or camping**

...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1457	3585
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
open	5903	6895	7501	7687	6309	6573	6538	6910	6462
1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
6500	5742	6035	5518	5533	6196	6606	6635	6731	7626
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
7143	7351	7671	6887	6741	7038	8183	7953	8467	10308
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
11250	11702	12384	12571	13304	15738	15662	15519	14059	14644
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
14468	12200	11130	10853	11896	open	open	12575	12138	12725
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
11308	12277	13667*	9441	11050	10768	12020	11894	10892	11949
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
10263	3092	9886	9941	9174	10537	11246	11440	11162	10350
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
10113	11003	9122	12407	15030+	18590+	20565+	17542+	17659+	15060+



2013 refurbishment. 1&2: the new education block; 3: dining room; 4: lounge (YHA Archive)