

Patterdale Youth Hostels

Patterdale [original Goldrill House] Youth Hostel 1932 to 1967

Goldrill House, Patterdale, Penrith, Westmorland

Historic County: Westmorland

YHA Regions: Lakeland, Lakes

GR: NY 398156

YHA's acquisition of Goldrill House, an old Lakes country house, was due to the generosity of one of the association's founding fathers, TA Leonard (1864-1948). In his thesis on twentieth-century pioneers of outdoor accommodation, Douglas G Hope wrote of him:

His desire to keep accommodation as simple as possible led him to play a prominent part in the establishment of the Youth Hostels Association. It was at the headquarters of the Liverpool Holiday Fellowship Club that the Liverpool and District Branch of the British YHA was set up in December 1929 by Leonard, Harry H Symonds, Tom Fairclough and others. When the YHA was formally founded in April 1930, Leonard became one of its four Vice-Presidents. When he was gifted Goldrill House in Patterdale by Holiday Fellowship on his retirement in 1932, he promptly let it to the YHA as one of its first youth hostels.



Front and rear views of Goldrill House, probably before YHA's acquisition in 1932 (author's collection)

Goldrill House hostel opened at Whitsun 1932. In that initial year it was called Ullswater. At first Leonard loaned the property to YHA for the high season. Camping facilities at special charges were provided from 1933.

Miss Blenkinship was the first warden, and in charge until at least 1937. The initial 30 beds (15 men, 15 women) expanded to 17-plus-16 in 1934 and 27-plus-14 in 1937.

PATTERDALE. Miss Blenkinship, Goldrill, Patterdale, via Penrith. (15, 15).
Store: In hostel and village ½ mile. Bathing: River. Bus: Passes door. Station: None.
OS Map: 12.

Distances to hostels: Newbiggin 14 miles, Mardale (walkers) 8, Milnthorpe 18,
Grasmere (walkers) 8, Keswick (walkers) 12, Crosthwaite 17.

Details from the 1933 Lakeland and the North-East Regional Guide

The hostel was able to stay open during the war and returned reasonable overnight figures in most years, though the real picture was more complex and studded with examples of short-term opening and closure. The 1940 regional annual report advised that it had been in use for the evacuation of schoolgirls from the North-East, and a national notice of 5th November 1940 stated that it was closed until further notice. The 1942 Handbook could say only that it might open, but a later notice advised that it would reopen on 21st July that year.

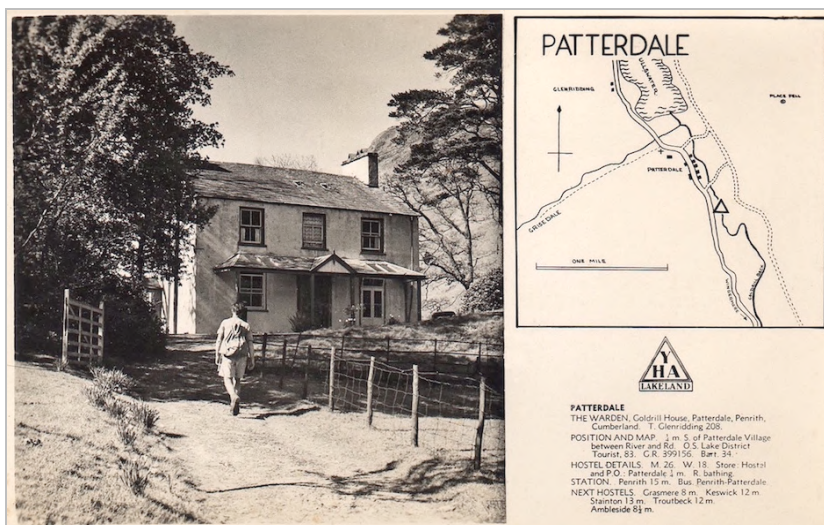
Mr and Mrs Ken and Marie Tyler are known to have been wardens here in 1943, at least; according to family members their responsibility was to evacuated schoolchildren for part of the year and to hostellers at other times. Lifelong YHA servants, the Tylers belonged to that considerable band of keen pioneer hostellers in the 1930s. They turned their hand to wardening in the Lakes in the war years before a career as adopted-hostel wardens at Cheddar hostel (their own home) in the 1950s. Then Ken became General Secretary of YHA's South-West Region for many years, where he served with distinction. Marie told her story of their time in the North West:

It was through the YHA that I met Ken in or about 1937. Although camping was his first love, his sisters had been hostelling since 1933 and he was persuaded to try it.

We married in 1939 with the threat of war hanging over us. After a period of relief work involving evacuees we then knew that Lakeland Region of the YHA was looking for wardens so applied to them. Our first appointment was as assistants – Ken at Troutbeck and me at Keswick. We then opened a short-term hostel at Patterdale in a house used as a school for most of the year but returned to the YHA for the six weeks summer holiday.

The committee then decided to open Longthwaite hostel in Borrowdale for the winter for the first time and we went there. During that winter the school using Patterdale decided not to renew their lease so the house reverted to the YHA and was reopened full-time as a hostel. When a hostel was opened in Kendal we went there.

It is possible that the healthy overnight figures at this time reflected official government-sponsored accommodation as well as that of true YHA members. An anonymous hosteller noted in 1944 that Goldrill House was fairly good for food, fair for washing, and excellent for position, and gave the hostel two stars out of three.



1: YHA Lakeland Region published these useful illustrated map postcards of most of their hostels after the war.

One reservation was that printed information on them such as next hostels could soon be out of date.

The map does not stretch to Helvellyn hostel, opened in 1947, so may have been produced before then;

2: 1950s photograph by George O'Dwyer, member of Irish sister hostel association, An Óige (author's collection)

After the war the regional group was in the mood for expansion, and was able to purchase the freehold of the hostel, which passed to the YHA Trust on 12th October 1945. In the crowded hostelling world of the mid-to-late 1940s, numbers staying grew very rapidly, from 3,000 or 4,000 pre-war, to almost 8,000 by 1949. 48 beds were squeezed in, though a slight downturn in the 1950s meant that 44 were deemed sufficient after that.

Mr and Mrs E Kelly and Mr and Mrs J Mitchell were wardens here in the 1950s, and Mr and Mrs McCreddie by the mid-1960s. Goldrill House continued to serve YHA members into the 1960s, but it must have been very crowded to accommodate 7,000 on a regular annual basis, and the fabric of the building was giving cause for concern. YHA took the bold step of planning for its complete removal and the building of a new hostel of striking modern design on the same site. The old hostel closed on 30th September 1967 for demolition; it was four years before hostellers could return to the new premises. The final wardens were Mr and Mrs Elliott.



Goldrill House,
Patterdale

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1, the rear of Goldrill House in full YHA swing. Of note are the house's heavy stone construction, the tall arched window, probably on a stair well, and the ground sloping down to the river;

2 & 3: the timber hut is of interest – it held the self-catering kitchen, and when this Patterdale hostel closed, the hut was put to further service by YHA as an improved external self-catering facility at Coppermines hostel, where it lasted a good many years;

4: hostel stamp, 1960s (all YHA Archive)



A rare colour view of the original Goldrill House, published as a postcard by J Arthur Dixon and Son. The house and the mound of earth to its right formed the location of the dormitory outbuildings to the right of the current hostel (YHA Archive)

Patterdale [new Goldrill House] Youth Hostel 1971 to present

Goldrill House, Patterdale, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 ONW

Historic County: Westmorland

YHA Regions: Lakes, North

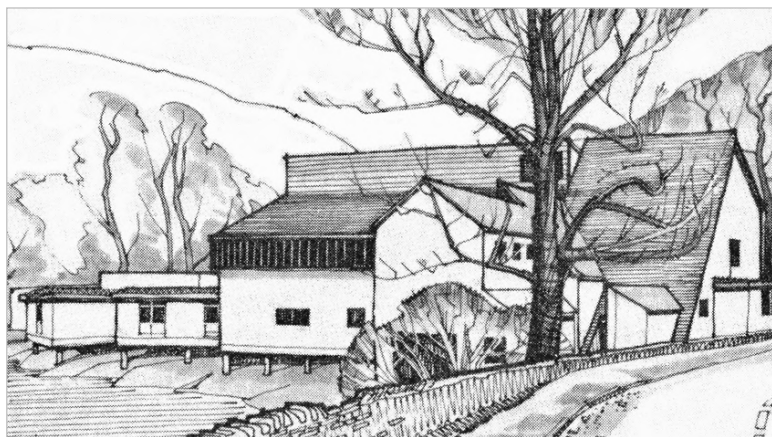
GR: NY 398156

YHA's 1968 Handbook looked forward to the time when the new Patterdale hostel would be open, but such was the delay in preparations that the 1969 and 1970 issues made no mention of it. The April 1971 edition of Youth Hosteller magazine was at last hopeful:

Lakeland Region hoped to open Patterdale at Easter for limited numbers, but this now appears to have been over-optimistic. The new building, on the site of the former Goldrill House near the south end of Ullswater, will probably be ready about Whitsuntide.

When finally complete, it will have 86 beds in small dormitories, plus all the modern amenities and facilities which are a necessary feature in a hostel graded 'Special'.

This too was premature. The new hostel finally opened in mid-July 1971; an official opening followed three months



later on 16th October. This was a purpose-built hostel in a striking Scandinavian-style design, with sweeping roofline to the main two-storey block, where there were spacious public rooms, a modern reception, large dining room and sleek well-fitted warden's and members' kitchens. The architects were John Clarke and Sons, a well-established Lancashire firm who had done much work for the YHA, especially in North Wales.

The new Patterdale hostel, artist's impression – from Youth Hosteller magazine, April 1971.



- 1: construction was well under way when progress was recorded in this YHA Archive photograph of the rear of the property. The solution to building on such an undulating hard rocky outcrop was to construct the hostel mainly on plinths;
 2: the second hostel at Patterdale was looking spick and span and quite new when regular YHA member and volunteer George Miller photographed the scene. The little Mountain Rescue plaque had not yet been fixed (author's collection);

Other notable features were the extensive use of glass and steel in the dormitory annexe, on which was placed the sedum roof seen above. Members' beds were built-in, of timber construction, well designed with a space for luggage.

From the outset, Joe and Margaret Boothroyd managed the hostel. They moved from the recently closed Penrith hostel, a beautiful rambling sandstone mansion whose closure helped finance the new construction at Patterdale.

After a dozen years at Patterdale, Joe became the subject of an article in *Hostelling News*, Autumn 1983:

Chatting one evening with warden Joe Boothroyd and his wife Margaret, I learned that Joe has been either an assistant warden or a warden at hostels in the Lake District for 25 years. Margaret has a similar length of service to the YHA.

Early in his YHA career, Joe was assistant warden at Patterdale and returned to become warden when the new hostel opened. He and Margaret met through their keen interest in cycling. Now they have a son, Mike, 21, and a daughter, Morag, 19.

A Liverpoolian, Joe has blended well into Lake District life, enjoying interests in geology, leading the Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team – the hostel is a Mountain Rescue Centre – and doing a bit of non-competitive fell running.

He told me with evident pride that his senior assistant warden, John Broxap and assistant warden Derek Hewitt are both first class competitive fell runners, and assistant warden Wendy Aitcheson is a keen cyclist.

Joe has a nice blend of firmness and friendliness that brings parties of youngsters and older hostellers, too, back to Patterdale year after year. He's not above wearing a chef's hat occasionally with the words 'Big Boss' on it to give the kids a chuckle and he has a nice line in quiet humour.

Joe has one claim to fame that must be unique – he is surely the only warden in Britain who has to mow the roof! The flat-roofed dormitory wings at Patterdale are turfed so they don't look ugly when viewed from the fell above. It was thought that sheep would cross sheep walks on to the roof area to keep the grass cropped, but sheep are perverse creatures – they go everywhere they shouldn't, but not on the grass roofs! So Joe regularly has to go on to the roofs with his mower, much to the amazement of passers-by who glance up to see where the noise of the mower is coming from. Over the past three years, Patterdale has attracted around 15,500 to 16,000 visitors a year and served 26,000 meals.

The proximity of Helvellyn hostel meant that partnerships developed. For instance, *Hostelling News*, Summer 1985 described how Helvellyn warden Peter Hamilton was planning to do the Bob Graham Round of 72 miles, 42 peaks and 27,000ft of ascent in 24 hours, to raise funds for the Patterdale Mountain Rescue based at Patterdale hostel.



This new one-inch badge was designed for the 1971 hostel (author's collection)

The property was refurbished during 1988-89, when considerable alterations and additions were made to the structure. An educational brochure of 1990 described a hostel of 84 beds, arranged in two rooms of ten beds, seven of eight beds and four of two beds. The hostel capacity has stayed at about the same level ever since.

YHA News of January 1993 carried a report of the sudden death of Joe Boothroyd:

Everyone who knew him will be saddened to learn of the untimely death of Joe Boothroyd on 18th December, 1992.

Joe's ambition to be a Youth Hostel warden went back to the days when he and Margaret opted out of Liverpool to visit the hostels in North Wales. They became assistant wardens at High Close in 1958 and in 1960 they married and became assistants at Ambleside, moving to Penrith as joint wardens the following year. Ten years later Penrith closed and Joe and Margaret took charge of the new purpose-built hostel in Patterdale.

Joe was very popular with all who met him. Above all he was a member's warden, in his view every decision taken by the YHA had to be in the best interests of the customer. He also made sure that his hostel became very much a part of the local community, and will be greatly missed in Patterdale itself, and by the thousands of people from all over Britain to whom Patterdale and Joe Boothroyd were synonymous.

Donations in his memory are being shared by the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association and Ward 5, The Cumbria Infirmary, Newtown Road, Carlisle.

Duncan Simpson remembers that the Boothroyds built a reputation for running a real hostellers' hostel; they were revered by serious climbers and walkers. He tells the story of how Joe helped with local weather recording:

He was called every morning by the local radio to tell them what the weather was like in Patterdale. Not quite a weather station but it always made me laugh when the phone rang and Joe leaped up to talk on the radio!

Margaret continued to manage the hostel up to 1997. Dave and Diane McGuinness then took the hostel into the new millennium. 2001, the year of the Foot and Mouth Epidemic, was a bad year for the YHA in the Lake District, and

it had a debilitating effect on the performance of Patterdale hostel for some time, but one positive development was that the hostel was used as a site for YHA's Do It 4 Real programme, from 2006 to 2010 inclusive.

Nevertheless, the first dozen years of the new century were testing times for both Patterdale hostel and its near neighbour Helvellyn as they became overdue for refurbishment, and for a period from 2012 one or both hostels were considered for closure. A YHA bulletin of December 2011 described minor 'Sparkle' projects of improvements at YHA Patterdale and Helvellyn: in both, the washrooms had been looking very tired and not unlike old school or club shower rooms. Customer feedback and scores were low and the decision was taken to invest a small sum of money on a makeover to help in the short term. The work included five washrooms and the reception area at Patterdale.

Various arrangements were tried for two or three years from 2011 to implement a joint managerial arrangement between Patterdale and Helvellyn hostels, with Mark Burns-Cassell, Robin Whitwham, Jim Eardley and Glen Duclos variously holding the fort. The passing of 40 years had not been kind on the infrastructure of such a daring design as Patterdale under the Lake District's famous damp skies. In 2014 this hostel was placed on YHA's closure list and its future seemed bleak.

It did not take long for a reversal of fortunes, however. With the enthusiastic managership of Ellie Parkinson since 2015, the emergence of the National Citizenship Scheme requiring enhanced group accommodation, and a considerable commitment to improving the appearance, comfort and welcome of the hostel through a Springboard programme, the popularity of Goldrill House has returned with a flourish. Not least among the improvements was the extensive fitting of new double glazing.



1 2



3 4



1&2: the 'new' Patterdale hostel was already 37 years old when these shots were taken in June 2008.

1: view of the northern elevation; 2: view from the road (author's photographs);

3&4: two scenes from the 2008 Christmas Dinner, a popular package – photographs by participant G Hardwick (both YHA Archive)



1: The main entrance to cheerful and attractive youth hostel accommodation at Goldrill House, Patterdale. The accommodation annexe stands on the right and is where the original Goldrill House stood; 2: entrance corridor with attractive public open space; 3: reception; 4: upstairs lounge; 5: ground floor bedroom corridor (author's photographs, June 2016)



1 2

Two more images from June 2016.

These show 1) the rear facing self-caterers' dining room and quiet lounge and 2) the balconied family room.
Both rooms overlook the attractive Goldrill Beck and lush valley scenery at the south end of Ullswater

<i>Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows</i>									
1932-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-present: Mar to following Feb									
¶: original Goldrill House hostel; Δ: new Goldrill House hostel;									
*: 17 month period; +: notional figure included for exclusive hire and/or camping									
...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	...	2303¶	3523¶	3985¶	4538¶	4625¶	4767¶	5265¶	4706¶
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
2023¶	2161¶	1767¶	4319¶	6355¶	6678¶	7323¶	6940¶	7818¶	7530¶
1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
6971¶	6606¶	6640¶	6053¶	5630¶	5537¶	5713¶	6632¶	6065¶	7128¶
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
7262¶	7414¶	7598¶	7209¶	6952¶	7166¶	6926¶	6138¶
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
...	3478Δ	13248Δ	12771Δ	14477Δ	14683Δ	15116Δ	15349Δ	14628Δ	15365Δ
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
15688Δ	14540Δ	13886Δ	13986Δ	13977Δ	15127Δ	15367Δ	15971Δ	16354Δ	16716Δ
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
16623Δ	15433Δ	18833*Δ	13729Δ	13511Δ	13789Δ	13521Δ	12575Δ	11588Δ	11662Δ
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
11293Δ	6000Δ	10404Δ	10129Δ	9776Δ	8568Δ	9498Δ	9556Δ	10361Δ	9625Δ
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
9152Δ	9719Δ	10584Δ	10263Δ	11703Δ	13734Δ	14427Δ	15286Δ	15439Δ	15948Δ

John Martin, 2020. YHA Profiles are intended to be adaptable in the light of new materials gained by YHA Archive