



YHA (England and Wales) Youth Hostel Profile

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

Scarborough Youth Hostels

Patterdale School [Scarborough] Youth Hostel 1931 to 1932

Patterdale School, 3 Belgrave Crescent, Scarborough, North Yorkshire

Historic County:

Yorkshire (North Riding)

YHA Region:

embryonic York, Scarborough and Hull

GR: TA 037880

The YHA was in its infancy, and the Yorkshire coast barely conceived as one of its regions, when Patterdale School, one of the large pale brick villas in leafy Belgrave Crescent, Scarborough, was offered as an adopted summer youth hostel. The Head of this girls' school was an early supporter of the Association, and helped also to establish in 1931 the nearby hostel at Cober Hill, Cloughton.

In 1931 Patterdale School hostel operated from 25th July to 22nd August, with beds for six men and six women; Miss J Purvis was warden. No usage figures are available for that year, but it is recorded that in the summer of 1932 168 YHA overnights were spent there. The hostel finally closed on 20th August 1932.

The old school is now Ravensworth Lodge, a care home for the elderly run under Quaker auspices.



No. 3 Belgrave Crescent as recorded in 2005, more than 70 years after its brief youth hostel spell (author's photograph)

Scarborough Youth Hostel 1935 to present

The White House, Burniston Road, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO13 0DA

Historic County:

Yorkshire (North Riding)

YHA Regions: York, Scarborough &

Hull, Yorkshire, North

GR: TA 037880



The White House is a converted 17th-century corn mill, one of three or four mills once operating on the Sea Cut, an outflow channel built in 1804 to upgrade Scalby Beck. The mills came into their own with the coming of the railway at Scalby, but this property, in a cluster of mixed stone and brick pantile-roofed buildings, later became derelict, then a farm and later still a guest house.

Mr and Mrs Atkinson opened their accommodation hostel at the White House for Easter, 1935, with Mrs Atkinson acting as warden. The following February, YHA Rucksack Magazine described the great success of the new hostel and the plans for expansion there and at other local hostels:

Scarborough Regional Group

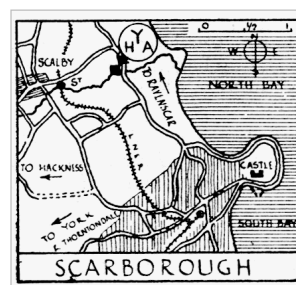
The great, and not unexpected, popularity of the hostel at Scarborough, opened last Easter, has made it necessary to increase the accommodation there. Last year, although originally intended for 20, it was catering for 40 by the end of the summer, and this year it will start at 50, with possibilities of extension at rush periods. We are not restricting the number of nights to less than three at any period, but in view of the great crowds to be expected during the summer we urge upon members that they keep moving. Both the Hackness and Ravenscar hostels are within 10 miles of Scarborough, but we are confident that the delights of the sea and the moors are sufficient to fill all three hostels. For the country-lover a holiday near Scarborough is not complete without getting right into the heart of the moors.

As further developments we have abolished the cooking charges at all our hostels, and have increased the accommodation at Hackness to 24 (16M 8W). We also hope to extend the accommodation at Ravenscar by the addition of a wooden dormitory. The possibilities of a hostel in the Filey or Speeton district (on the way from Scarborough to Flamborough) are being explored.

The 1936 Durham and Yorkshire YHA Regional Guide included this useful information and map:

Mrs Atkinson, The White House, Burniston Rd, Scarborough. (25-25). Mill and farm. Station 2 miles. Bus nearby. Store at Hostel. Sea bathing. OS 23, C6 (Newby Mill).

To find Scarborough Hostel: From Scarborough Station down Westborough. Turn left into St Thomas Street and straight through to North Marine Road. Then take Burniston road, one mile, till it crosses stream at a hairpin bend. Hostel is on the left.



The expansion allowed 25 men and 25 women to stay. Numbers quickly grew, to almost 4,000 annually by 1938.

Scarborough hostel was able to continue through the first months of the war. A national notice of 8th October 1940 advised that it was still operating, but as in other coastal areas in the east and south of England, only to members resident in the restricted area. Other notices of April 1941 and July 1942 advised that it was open; numbers were barely more than 1,000 in those years, and capacity was temporarily reduced to 36 beds.

Mrs Atkinson, now widowed, sold up to YHA in 1943, moving to York. The property was vested in the YHA Trust on 19th February 1943, the first hostel to be owned by the York, Scarborough and Hull Region. The Board of Education gave a grant of £600 towards the purchase cost of £1,000.

The story of the next decade or so was summed up retrospectively by the *Youth Hosteller* Magazine in June 1960:

There is a welcoming spirit about this place. Hostellers still speak of the first wardens, Mr and Mrs Atkinson, who had opened their doors to these new travellers. What an entrancing place it was, especially on a winter evening. The kitchen was dark and badly lighted, and three doors let in the cold, salty airs, but a tremendous fire burned in the queer old grate, and giant, home-chopped logs roared up the chimney, and conversation flourished.

Then Mrs Atkinson sold the house and land to the YHA, and those ardent hostellers, Mr and Mrs Colin Beech, became wardens. Their good work attracted more and more hostellers, and the York, Scarborough and Hull Region committee did great things in putting their new house in order. Through the bitter days of the war the hostel continued its excellent work, but in 1946 the tragic death of Mrs Beech caused changes. Miss Olive Beech came to work with her brother, but he decided in 1947 to go to different work, and Mr and Mrs GA Balmer became wardens.

In 1949 Mr and Mrs EH Ramskir left the York hostel to take over the White House. As things were easier in the building world, extensive alterations were now made to the hostel. A new dining-room was created to lead out of the old family kitchen, and from the first it skilfully blended with the old parts of the house. New lighting and new plumbing were installed, new dormitories made, and the once-cramped hostel spread itself out, and attracted more and more visitors.

During this period the bednights figure was maintained at around the 5,000 mark annually.



SCARBOROUGH YOUTH HOSTEL

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SCARBOROUGH YOUTH HOSTEL

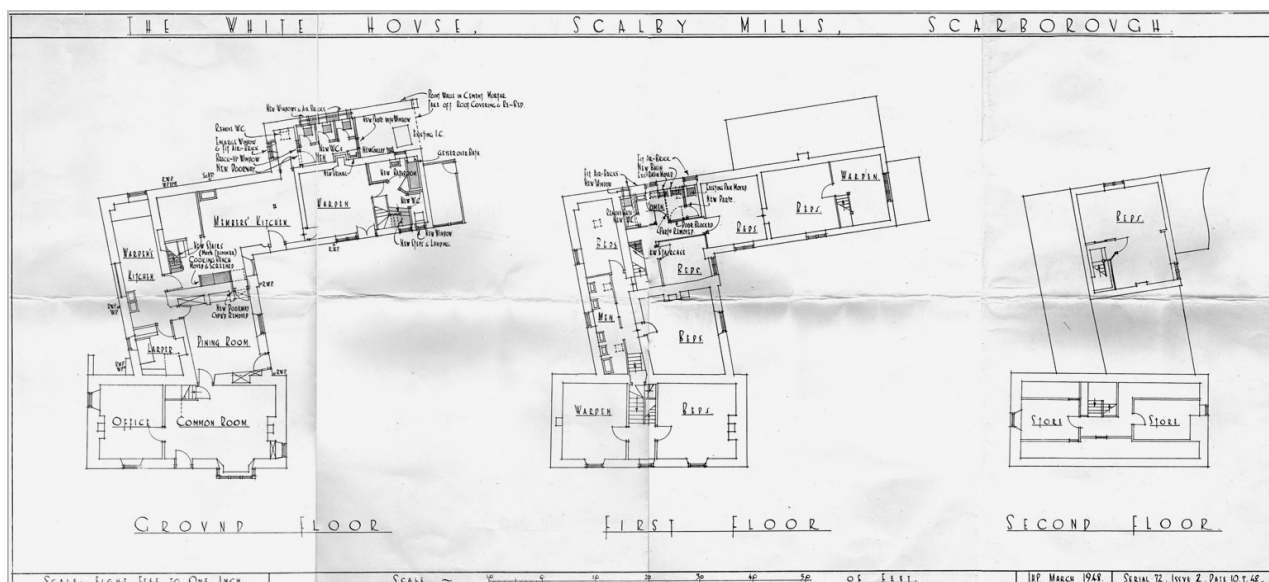
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Three stages of building developments at Scarborough hostel.

- 1: this early postcard matches the property outline of 1948 shown on the next page, before the provision of extra single-storey buildings allowed for expansion. The low two-storey white building projecting to the right was the warden's quarters, originally the cow barn and hayloft, hence the lower roofline. Various huts made up the usual selection of hostel outbuildings. The postcard sender marked his or her bedroom, now Room 3;
- 2: the warden's kitchen was added forward of bedroom 3, probably in the 1949 improvements mentioned above, though members would still have had to use the front door straight into the common room-cum-dining room;
- 3: this Dixon postcard dates from the major expansion of the early 1960s, with new reception entrance to the right of the main house and new lounge peeping out to the left. Hidden from view is the new timber extension (YHA Archive)



An intriguing improvement plan drawn up in 1948 in YHA's own attractive draughtsman's office style of the period. Though some of the ideas were almost certainly never acted upon (the dividing of the main house ground floor into office and common room, for instance), it does define the shape and extent of the property in that year, and lends support to the idea that the warden's kitchen would have been where the current self-catering kitchen is located, and the dining room where the servery is now. The new stairs shown to the right of the warden's kitchen were built, and were later used to connect with the annexe. The members' kitchen shown at the rear of the property has generally been a problematic space, with limited headroom (plan by courtesy of Elise and Rob Fletcher)

Pat Packham was enjoying a cycle tour of the Yorkshire Moors in July 1956 when she noted:

During breakfast the warden gave us a speech of welcome...

After supper 'M' went to tell the warden that the electric light would not work. He laughed, said that there was no electricity and gave her a tiny oil lamp.



A hostel wardens' get together at Scarborough in the 1950s (YHA Archive)

An article in the June 1960 *Youth Hosteller* Magazine continued the story of Scarborough wardens:

After the departure of Mr and Mrs Ramskir to private life the new wardens, Mr and Mrs CB Warwick, came in 1953. They had seen service in the hostels of Lancashire and Derbyshire, and they quickly settled down with their little son, 'Charlie Peter' who in his short life has come to know hundreds of hostellers of varying ages and differing nationalities. The same warm-hearted spirit prevails in that old White House, sheltering in the lee of that tall grassy bank with the cut from the Derwent murmuring past on its short path to the sea. It looks so friendly and it is so friendly. It stands waiting for you to come over the curving line of the hills, or follow the tracks by the streams, or scramble through the moorland heather, or walk leisurely through the woods to give you today a warm Yorkshire welcome.

The greatest expansion came in the early 1960s. The hostel was out of action from 27th October 1961 to 31st March 1962 for extensive alterations, and capacity increased from 50 to 70 through a number of improvements. Most important was the provision of a large timber annexe at the rear left of the building, to provide a very large men's dormitory with a startling capacity of 40 beds. It was constructed on raised ground, so that the right hand end of it was level with the rear of the main house first floor, and access was gained from there as well as from outside. Timber annexes were a very common solution to YHA's capacity problems in the 1960s; other examples were constructed or used at Bath, Boggle Hole, Poppit Sands, Swanage, York and a host of other places. They were almost always used to house men.

Also at this time, a new single-storey enclosed hostel entrance was built in matching whitewashed brick and pantile roof, no doubt gaining general approval for the reduction of drafts from the old riverside front door. The entrance was matched at the far end of the hostel by a new common room extension.

Mr and Mrs Warwick left the hostel about the time of the 1961 expansion, to be replaced by Mr and Mrs Sach. Mr and Mrs A Bennett took over from them in 1964. Betty and Albert Devitt took the reigns between 1966 and 1971, while in 1970 an all-time record of 9,000 plus overnights was reached. Arthur and Olive Ashworth were wardens for a long spell through the 1970s and 1980s.

The improvement of fire precautionary measures was an increasing concern to YHA in the 1970s. Such work was carried out at Scarborough hostel in 1978, with an exterior metal stair provided at the rear the top floor. In 1984, after Kingsley's sweeping recommendations in the 1970s for reforms, dormitory improvements at Scarborough hostel provided more comfort for male hostellers, plus special facilities for families. The 40-bed timber extension was divided into three separate rooms, all carpeted, and three of the original female dormitories were now available as family rooms, leaving five dormitories for use by either sex as required. For the first time since 1961, the hostel capacity was reduced to 64 in line with these improvements.

In 1990 plans were drawn up to further enhance the annexe by creating five smaller bedrooms. The scheme was soon modified to four bedrooms, that furthest from the hostel becoming a disabled en suite room with adjacent disabled lounge and kitchen, all served by an outside ramp.

After a spell of wardenship by Christine Elsam in the early 1990s, Andrew and Penny Houston became hostel managers in 1995 and stayed until the end of YHA ownership 18 years later.

Hostel capacity was further reduced, to 50 in 2000 and 48 in 2002. Improved toilet, shower and washing arrangements were introduced at that time on the first floor long corridor and also adjacent to rooms 1 and 2 at the front of the hostel. From about 2003 the annexe was made available separately for group rental purposes.



*1: the 1961 timber annexe, approached from the outside by a ramp. The disabled accommodation is at the near end of the building. The substantial dimensions of the annexe can be seen;
2: the picture right barely hints at the complex floor levels of the original mill building ahead. The shallow windows of the ground floor are of the self-catering kitchen, while those above belong to toilets and showers on the long corridor. Behind these rooms is another corridor at a lower level, which feeds into Room 4 and the annexe. The tallest roof belongs to the sole second floor bedroom, room 5. To the right is the 1961 common room extension (author's photographs, July 2010)*



A cheerful photograph from after the turn of the millennium, framed by two one-inch pin badges (author's collection)

After 65 years as a busy hostel, Scarborough hostel was presented for closure in 2010, a long-running withdrawal process that led to contracts finally being exchanged early in 2013 with Rob and Elise Fletcher, who wished to continue to run the hostel on a YHA Enterprise basis. The new arrangement started on 3rd June 2013, running seamlessly from the previous YHA ownership.

Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows									
1931-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-present: Mar to following Feb									
♣: Patterdale School hostel; Δ: Scarborough Hostel									
*: 17 month period; +: notional figure included for exclusive hire; ●: up to June 2013									
...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	open♣	168♣	1337Δ	3133Δ	c3700Δ	3835Δ	openΔ
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
1045Δ	1007Δ	1173Δ	2882Δ	3898Δ	5639Δ	5367Δ	5345Δ	5457Δ	4562Δ
1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
4489Δ	4831Δ	5048Δ	4493Δ	4774Δ	4910Δ	4492Δ	5088Δ	4362Δ	5465Δ
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
5045Δ	4933Δ	5509Δ	6526Δ	6228Δ	7804Δ	6837Δ	7498Δ	7421Δ	7608Δ
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
9077Δ	8045Δ	7343Δ	7717Δ	7562Δ	8698Δ	8570Δ	8296Δ	7739Δ	7258Δ
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
8075Δ	6363Δ	5779Δ	5400Δ	5218Δ	openΔ	openΔ	5923Δ	5153Δ	5884Δ
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
5682Δ	5193Δ	7891*Δ	6425Δ	6005Δ	6609Δ	7106Δ	6667Δ	6383Δ	6127Δ
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
6173Δ	6253Δ	7106Δ	7258Δ	7890Δ	7486Δ	7348Δ	6884Δ	5879Δ	5629Δ
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
5753Δ	3283+Δ	3818+Δ	952+●Δ	openΔ	openΔ	openΔ	openΔ	openΔ	openΔ