



YHA (England and Wales)
Youth Hostel Profile

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

Lee Valley Youth Hostel 2003 to present

Windmill Lane, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire EN8 9AJ

Historic County: Hertfordshire

GR: TL 367024

Note: the Regional Park has adopted the spelling Lee, though the river is generally spelled Lea.



A youth hostel close to Cheshunt station in the Lee (or Lea) Valley was planned in a joint enterprise with the 10,000 acre Lee Valley Regional Park, to open as early as spring 1994. It did not get beyond the planning stage at that time. Later, development proceeded, but was persistently delayed. The YHA Handbook of 2000 announced an expected opening in the spring; the 2002 issue hoped for the autumn of that year.

It was to be 2003 before the hostel saw its first use. The first group booking was for 18th September; full opening followed on 1st December, while an official opening ceremony was held on 3rd June 2004.

Lee Valley hostel cost £4 million, in partnership with the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, the East of England Development Agency and Broxbourne Borough Council. A 125-year lease for the hostel was taken out in 1999.

The design was innovative and to a degree controversial: five Scandinavian-style wooden lodges and a larger services lodge (reception, dining room, kitchen and utilities) constructed on the site of the derelict Cheshunt open-air swimming pool, the poolkeeper's cottage being retained as hostel staff accommodation. The hostel restaurant was named the Tub Race in reference to the former pool. The whole site is heated by a geothermal system.

Each lodge has smaller en-suite rooms plus a lounge, kitchenette and services downstairs and two larger rooms suited to groups upstairs. Two of the lodges offer extra disabled facilities. At the opening the accommodation stood at 112; this total had expanded a little by 2019.



YHA postcard of Lee Valley hostel (YHA Archive)

One of the hostel's central rooms was set up as a library and small youth hostel archive, dedicated to the memory of Arthur Meaby. He was long-standing chair for the London Youth Hostels Executive, and later the City Hostels Executive. He helped steer the Lee Valley project to its conclusion.

Karen Edmundson was the hostel manager at the opening. Thereafter, details are not recorded until Natalie Reed took up the appointment from 2011 until 2013. Rachel Cass took on the role from 2014 to 2018, when Demi Demetriades was appointed.



1



2



3



4



5

1: the reception lodge is much larger than the other buildings and also holds the dining room, kitchen, conference rooms, library, lounge and utilities. This is the hostel's main entrance on the west side; 2: the reverse east side of the main reception, dining and circulating areas; 3: lodge 2 in its setting. The River Lea, not far behind the camera, forms the Hertfordshire-Essex boundary; 4: lodges 1-5, number 1 being the furthest from reception; 5: road entrance. The poolkeeper's cottage is on the right. The watersports and activity centre is off camera to the right (authors' photographs, January 2013)

The hostel benefits from many different types of customer: conferences, educational groups, families and individuals, water sports and country park users, as well as those wanting a good base for easy access to the capital.



In recent years the hostel has been reclassified as one of London's own: YHA London (Lee Valley), though it lies outside the M25 and within the historical county of Hertfordshire. In fact, it is barely 25 minutes by train to London's Liverpool Street from the adjacent Cheshunt station. The hostel has recently been renovated, as these YHA publicity images show.

- 1: the modern all-purpose reception, bistro and bar;
- 2: quiet lounge area;
- 3: picnic area by the main entrance;
- 4: the hostel's large dining area;
- 5: lodge updated self-catering kitchen and dining area;
- 6: lodge bedroom

<i>Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows</i>									
<i>2003-present: Mar to following Feb</i>									
+: notional figure included for exclusive hire and/or camping									
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
...	2638	21389	26656	25093	24059	24765	25420
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
23903	25644	26685	25818	26971	31978+	30427+	28214+	26366+	27835+

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