

North and Mid Buckinghamshire Youth Hostels at Milton Keynes and at former youth hostels – the Briary, Stony Stratford and Ivinghoe

The Briary Youth Hostel 1932 only, perhaps briefly extending into 1933

The Briary, Lillingstone Lovell, Buckinghamshire.

Historic County: Buckinghamshire

YHA Region: Warwick & Northants

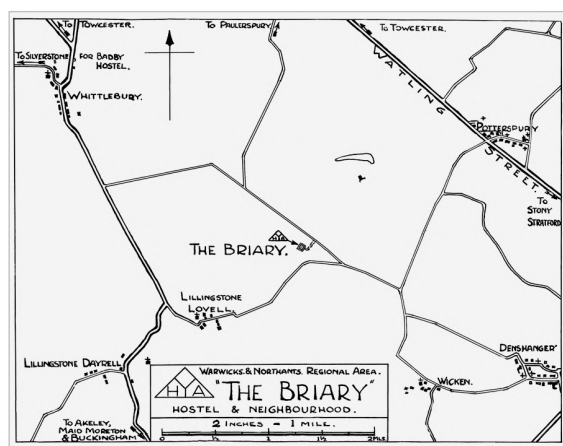
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Little is known about Warwick and Northants Region's early hostel that operated briefly at the Briary, Livingstone Lovell, in 1932 and perhaps even more briefly at the beginning of 1933. The inclusion of a Buckinghamshire hostel within a region further north betrays the piecemeal arrangement for properties off the beaten track in YHA's first year or two, before the country was entirely covered by systematic regional boundaries. The property's location is not definitive, but help has been provided in the regional sketch map shown below, now in the YHA Archive.

An entry in the somewhat rogue *Hiker and Camper Magazine* of October 1932 described the hostel as in an old Carolinian Dower house barn, part of a small farm on the borders of old Whittlewood forest and quite three miles from any village, a really rural spot.

The Briary gained a rather delayed entry only in the second, October, issue of the 1932 handbook, the hostel having opened probably around 23rd March. There were beds for 8 men and 8 women, camping was possible and meals were available. This area of the South Midlands had a little flurry of early youth hostels, for instance the first hostel at Badby (1932-36), Cassington near Oxford (1932 only) and Stoneleigh (1932-37). They were simple pragmatic affairs, mostly opened in a hurry and closed after short runs and were probably all adopted, franchise-type affairs.

Only 98 bednights were recorded up to the end of the 1932 statistical year on 30th September. Hostel receipts of just £5.4s.8d were taken. There was an agreement with Miss (or Mrs) Holland, warden, to store equipment and operate as a single-sex hostel in part of the house over the winter of 1932-33, but the Rugby Council, an early subdivision of Warwick and Northants Region, elected to close the hostel in February 1933 and transfer equipment to Stoneleigh hostel near Coventry. Last use may well have been late 1932.



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1: Warwick and Northants Region's helpful sketch map gave rare information about the Briary hostel. The October 1932 handbook's and *Hiker and Camper's* description of '3 miles north of Livingstone Lovell' seem at variance with the sketchmap, but directions and even maps were often wrong in the early days and our final surmise about the Briary's location is just that;
2: a property known as Briary Lodge Farm, Lillingstone Lovell, appeared on a sales brochure in 2007, and is illustrated here by kind permission of Fisher German, Chartered Surveyors, Banbury. This farmhouse was small and even in the 21st century the layout simple and old-fashioned. If this was the early youth hostel, it probably altered very little over those 75 years.

Stony Stratford Youth Hostel 1939 to 1946

92 High Street, Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire

Historic County: Buckinghamshire

YHA Region: Oxford

GR: SP 785405

STONY STRATFORD, Y.H.A.

Not much more is known about the adopted wartime youth hostel at Stony Stratford than about the Briary, and no contemporary illustration has come to light. It opened in April 1939, in time for Easter. By now this northern outpost of Buckinghamshire had switched alignment from YHA's Warwick and Northants Region to Oxford. A youth hostel on the old Watling Street coaching route linking London and the Midlands was a useful proposition, especially for cyclists.

Oxford Region's annual report of 1939 described the premises as several rooms in the upper storey of an early to mid 18th-century posting hotel (often known as *the Vine*), to which was attached a confectionary and catering business. The women's dorm was in the café; the rest of the hostel was in the outhouses.

Mrs Elson was warden throughout the hostel's span and annual overnights generally amounted to 1,000 or so.



STONY STRATFORD. 92 High Street, Stony Stratford, Bucks. This new hostel, which will be opened a week before Easter, 1939, consists of the outhouses of a café, providing a dormitory for men, self-cookers' kitchen and a common-room. The women's dormitory is in the café itself. Stony Stratford is about half-way between Oxford and Cambridge, and also mid-way on the run from London to Birmingham; it will, therefore, be of great use to cyclists travelling between these places. It is only twenty-three miles from Ivinghoe and ten from Astwell Castle, and so it provides a link between the hostels of the Chilterns and those of Northants and Warwickshire. Paul Beard writes in his "English Byways" of two towns within easy reach of Stony Stratford. "It is difficult," he says,

"to imagine two towns in which the twin rural types of the agricultural and the decayed genteel are better expressed respectively than Buckingham and Olney. . . . In Buckingham topical farming gossip seems the essence of the world's news; and Cowper still dominates Olney's consciousness, or rather unconsciousness. A motor bus seems anachronistic in its square." Cyclists riding northwards to Stony Stratford should make a diversion to visit the wooded country near Woburn Sands, which are charming and unfrequented.

M12, W6 : PROVISIONS Hostel ***: STATION Wolverton 2½m : BUS Oxford, Bicester, Buckingham: DISTANCES Ivinghoe 23m, Astwell Castle 10m, Oxford 35m, North Newington 27m.

The hostel operated during each year of the war, though probably like most it would have been subject to numerous uncertainties. It was intended to close up for the winter of 1942-43, because Mrs Elson was ill, but YHA hoped to reopen here in spring 1943. Only 53 bednights were recorded after 30th September 1946, suggesting that the hostel closed by the end of that calendar year.

Left: regional handbook entry, 1939

92 and 94 High Street were Grade II listed in 1953. In 2015 much-travelled Mary Jephcott recalled with her characteristic comic outrage a night in June 1946 at Stony Stratford hostel, a few months before closure:

More like a pub with the hostel tacked on, noisy and horrid, and the slice of bacon which I had brought from my ration in Birmingham had (not very surprisingly after nearly a week in my saddlebag) developed a creepy crawl.



Stony Stratford youth hostel premises, more recently Drummers Restaurant, seen here almost 60 years after closure. The café and women's dorm were in the hotel premises to the right of the coaching entrance, while the other parts of the hostel were in the stone cottages on the lane or in other old buildings still in use behind the hotel (author's photograph, October 2004)

Ivinghoe Youth Hostel 1937 to 2007

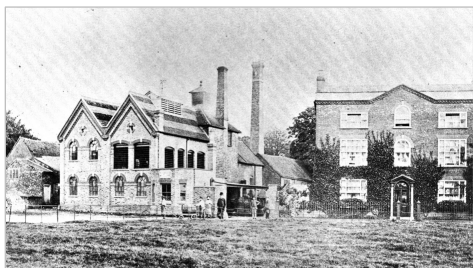
The Old Brewery House, Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire LU7 9EP

Historic County: Buckinghamshire

YHA Regions:
London; Eastern; Central

GR: SP 944161

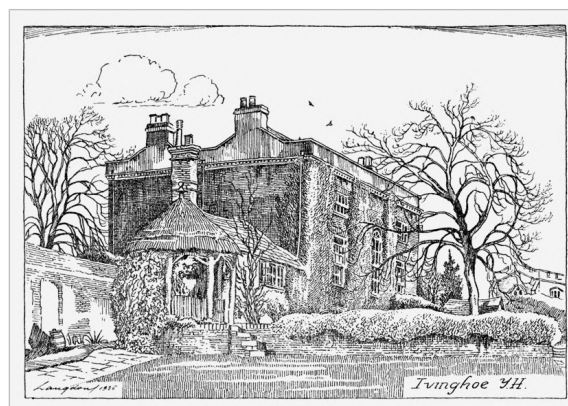
Ivinghoe youth hostel was one of the jewels in YHA London Region's crown (that territory would have been happy to nail down the acquisition after previous boundary uncertainties in North Buckinghamshire). It operated for 70 years, from pre-war times well into the new millennium, and might have claimed that its firm success was like a three-legged stool: a most attractive large building, longstanding highly respected wardens, and a location in one of the most picturesque and historic former market townships in Buckinghamshire.



Most sources state that the Old Brewery House was built in 1812, though Pevsner gave it a late 18th-century date and an article in *Youth Hosteller*, July 1959, claimed that it was built in 1808. It is a three-storey valley-roofed brick-built mansion of typical Georgian style, a former brewer's house originally with spacious grounds. It gained Grade II status, granted on 15th October 1984 during YHA's ownership.

Left: old Brewery and Brewery House photograph of uncertain source

The hostel was discovered by the Harrow and Wembley Group, one of the pioneer YHA local groups, with a long history. Empty and unused, it was leased to YHA for five shillings by the brewers, Benskins, and opened in March 1937 in time for the Easter rush.



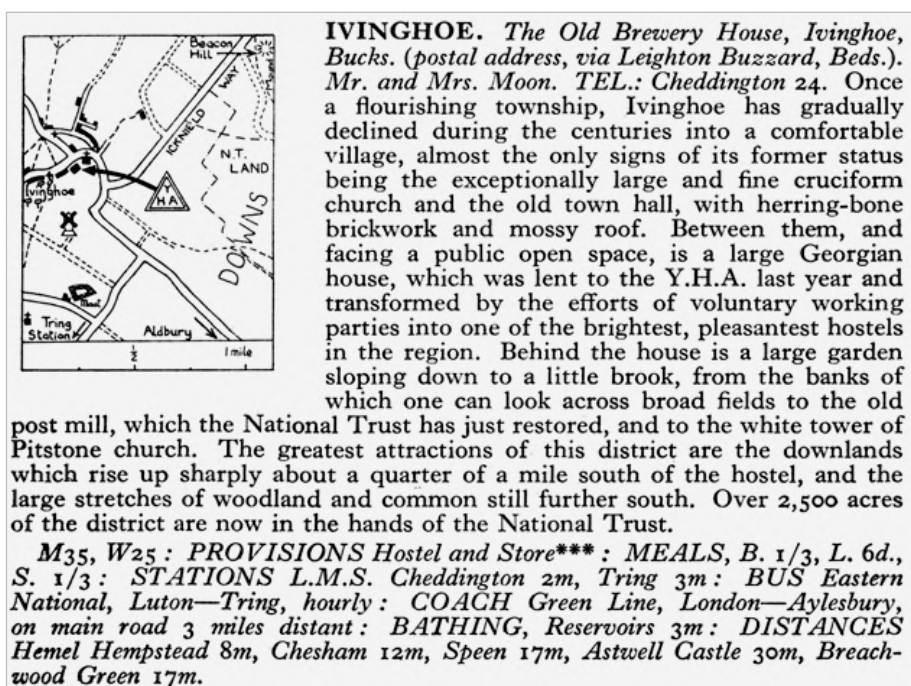
1: an early postcard of the Old Brewery House youth hostel, Ivinghoe, opened in March 1937. The Ivinghoe Brewery to its left, between the house and the church, had already been sold to Benskins Watford Brewery, who demolished the extensive factory buildings after closure in 1927 and later leased the house to YHA London Region. The postcard was probably produced to mark the hostel's opening and shows the proud Georgian building before the addition of YHA's own 1947 extension to the right;
2: a rare postcard view of the rear of the building, as sketched by Langdon in 1938 (YHA Archive)

The London Regional News Sheet for May 1937 announced:

London [Region] has two new hostels of which it can be proud [Ivinghoe and Speen]. Proud not only because the hostels are so well equipped and so well controlled, but also because their success so far is due in no small measure to our local enthusiasts.

Almost all the work at Ivinghoe was carried out by voluntary labour. Over thirty members were found at the hostel one week-end before Easter, all busy scrubbing, painting, scraping, digging, sawing, and otherwise putting their shoulders to the proverbial wheel. In the short space of less than two months the place was transformed from a dirty, neglected house into a beautifully clean and comfortable hostel. Thanks are due to the Harrow and Central London Groups and to members from Luton and elsewhere for such splendid work.

The wardens at Ivinghoe are Mr and Mrs Moon. He is a genial character who has knocked about the world quite a lot, while she is a native of Yorkshire, and possesses all the good qualities which are inherent in Yorkshire folk. They are already 'Tom and Alice' to the Ivinghoe workers and habitués.



A 1938 YHA regional guide gave this helpful summary for intending hostellers (YHA Archive)

An anonymous holiday log of November 1938 noticed a typical shortcoming of such a venerable building:

The hostel was a converted Georgian house, with high ceilings and wide window seats, but the bath and washing-up places were also Georgian, I think.

In 1938 Charles and Deborah Warwick replaced Ivinghoe's first wardens, the Moons. So many of YHA's late 1930s acquisitions were opened in a whirl of extensive enthusiastic volunteer work, and almost as many were to suffer debilitating reverses with the outbreak of war in 1939, either permanent or temporary. At Ivinghoe there was good hostel use before enforced closure in September 1940, when the building was requisitioned by Wing RDC, Linslade, to take on the role of evacuation centre for children from London. The youth hostel then remained closed for the duration of the war. London Region went as far as to seek a replacement hostel, *Dunstable Downs*, at Downs House, Isle of Wight Lane, Kensworth; *Rucksack Magazine* of Easter 1943 confidently advised that it would be opening shortly, but like so many wartime plans it soon evaporated.

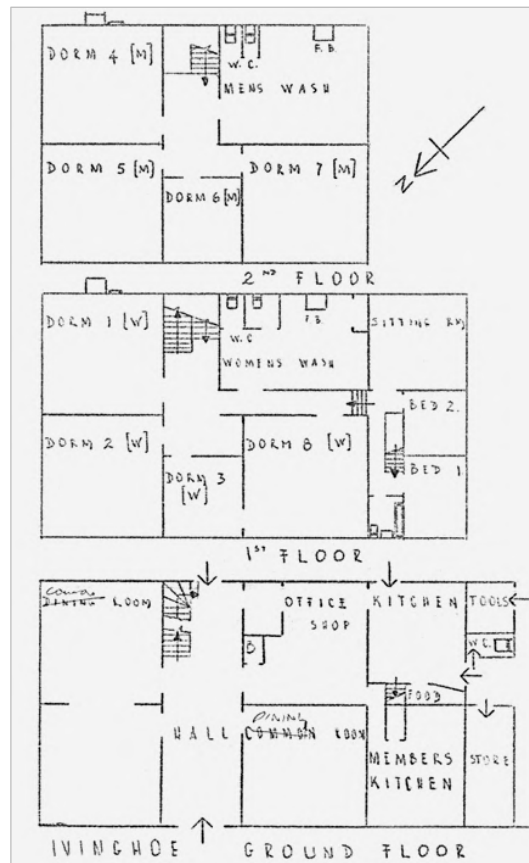
Instead, Ivinghoe hostel was handed back to YHA in February 1946. The original lease was converted to a freehold purchase and the hostel reopened, probably at Easter of that year. The acquisition was quite a coup. Duncan Simpson remembers that the property came with extensive land that the Association was able to trade off at various times when money was tight.



A variety of hostel stamps. The middle two of these were specially created for the social side of hostelling, represented by the folk dance weekends and working parties so popular in YHA's early and middle years, and so often supported by local groups such as the indefatigable Harrow and Wembley (author's collection)

Shortly after reopening, the hostel was expanded with a new flat-roofed extension to the right of the house. Bernard Selwyn, a local regional officer for many years with a penchant for history and statistics, recalled:

The two-storey wing, which is the wardens' quarters, was added in 1947 and is not of first class materials because of the conditions at that time. Major structural repairs were done to the main building in the early part of 1952.



The 1947 extension is shown on this sketched plan of the hostel's layout, which changed relatively little between the post-war period and eventual closure in 2007 (YHA Archive)

Mabel Pratt left a valuable legacy of her hostelling exploits just after the war to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, with a series of visit descriptions, useful day-to-day observations and beautiful pencil sketches. She found it easy to enthuse about Ivinghoe:

[1948] Large and beautifully kept, with adequate arrangements in all departments...

[1950] Ivinghoe's solid comforts were well worth the bother of a few extra miles. Warden and wife, with welcoming smiles, said there was plenty of room, and while I was in the dorm, they lit me a Primus, so that when I descended the kettle was on the boil...

...I retired to the common room, where easy chairs were drawn up in front of a fire nearly as big as last night [at Puckeridge hostel, Essex]. All expenses for [a hostel tour of] ten days, £2.4s.9d, or 4s.6d a day.



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Two photographs of Old Brewery House in the post war years.

1: the 1947 YHA-built two-storey extension is in view on the right-hand side of the building. YHA sold land behind the hostel for housing in stages; the gated yard at the near end was given up for an access road, Windmill Close (photograph C Day);

2: The hostel cycle shed at the rear of the house was the former dray horse stabling for the brewery. It can be seen on the left of the first photograph, and is today a separate private residence (YHA Archive)



A delightful postcard of Ivinghoe High Street, with its ancient overhung Town Hall building, youth hostel and the large parish church. The saloon car sets it off nicely (author's collection)

A regular monthly feature in the *Youth Hosteller Magazine*, which spanned the years from 1957 to 1972, was *Hostel Close-Up*. Issue 68 of July 1959 was a one-page article on Ivinghoe, and included these observations:

Ivinghoe is a charming old-world market town set at the foot of the Chilterns and boasting one of London Region's finest youth hostels. Built in 1808 by a wealthy Midlands brewer, the hostel was acquired by YHA in 1937 and has since served it well. Ivinghoe provides to the touring Midlands cyclist the gateway of the south and brings within his reach the beautiful Chiltern Country stretching down as far as the Thames at Goring Gap.

On arrival at the *Old Brewery House* the member will be greeted by a typical example of the dignified Georgian style of building, set in spacious grounds and adjoining a fine 13th-century mediaeval church. The hostel has an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness with excellent meals provided and, for self-cookers, a well-equipped kitchen. Campers have ample accommodation in the spacious hostel grounds. In the immediate vicinity of the hostel is the 17th-century windmill, situated in the field in which Boudicca fought her last battle, and visible from the rear window of the hostel. To the east lies Ivinghoe Beacon.



These photographs from the valued archive of Harrow and Wembley Local Group show high jinks to the side of the hostel in November 1952 and to the rear in March 1961. The young woman on the extreme left of the second photograph was Kath Key. As so often happened with Local Group members, she met her husband Trevor through YHA and went on to be a much respected warden for many years at Jordans hostel, also in Buckinghamshire (YHA Archive)

Wardens in the early post-war period included Mr and Mrs Riley (1950-53), Jack and Marjorie Whitehead (1953-57), who had started at Colchester hostel and moved on afterwards to Dover, Mr and Mrs Hunt (1958-62) and Sheila McDonald (1962-63). The hostel capacity had stood at 60 either side of the war, was reduced to 55 in 1949 but raised (remarkably for a single building) to 70 in 1952, with major structural repairs. This was the era of very high capacity dormitories. Ivinghoe remained unchanged in this respect over 30 years.

The Whiteheads wrote in *Youth Hosteller*, April 1957, of the support of the YHA community:

Through the generosity of members we have been able to completely redecorate the dining room at Ivinghoe hostel in a contemporary style and suggest that it is unique in England and Wales.



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Pat Packham, another dedicated volunteer worker for YHA, captured these images of Ivinghoe hostel about 1958. 1: signing in. On the wall behind the warden – it may be safe to assume that this is Mr Hunt – is a 1958 YHA handbook; 2: hostel dormitory; 3: the members' kitchen; 4: the Ivinghoe Rallies were a regular feature of social meetings here. They were held on a large field behind the hostel and continued until the 1990s at least. Pat wrote of a stay here in 1962: I slept in Harrow and Wembley dormitory and others were named Ealing and Watford [all the names of local groups] (YHA Archive)

In 1967, Bernard Selwyn ran the rule over the hostel's performance:

Ivinghoe. Memorandum by Bernard Selwyn, Eastern Region Youth Hostels Ltd

Last year, also, there was sold some of the grounds for four building plots and this region inherited half the proceeds. The hostel's use has fluctuated, but since 1952 has not dropped below 4,900. Its peaks were, until recently, about 5,700, but in 1965-66 it was 5,887 and in 1966-67 it was 6,267, the highest ever. Since 1937, it has clocked up 121,557 overnights and should pass 125,000 next spring or early summer. Perhaps there should be a sweepstake, in aid of hostel funds, on the date and time this may occur!

The most significant change came with the arrival of highly-respected wardens Jim and Jean Chaplin from Tanners Hatch hostel in 1964. They put in a remarkable 32 years' continuous service at Ivinghoe until their retirement in 1995. Typical of many of YHA's married warden couples in this era, they were prodigious workers. Jim was heavily involved with the wardens' union, while Jean recalled, in the Region's *WightWash* Magazine of August 1977, how she responded to a comment about her cooking capabilities:

To the person heard muttering 'those two ought to go on a catering course' when waiting for chips to be cooked Sunday lunchtime at the Ivinghoe Rally – you don't know how much hilarity you caused among the large, hard-working crowd I had in the kitchen. After non-stop catering since Friday evening they all felt like experienced hands and I, having presented about 100,000 meals since coming here, coped with 13 rallies, 7 Folk Festivals, parties, open days, etc, and I feel it's a bit late for a catering course!

During the Chaplin's tenure, annual overnights rose to a record 10,000+ in 1977; they even found a way to squeeze in two more beds in 1975-76. *Hostelling News* of Winter 1974-75 described how the opening of the Ridgeway Path was bringing more guests to the hostel.

In 1984 central heating was to be installed. In the same year the Region was planning to sell the barn (the cycle shed) and land for residential development and planning permission was applied for, apparently for a second phase of house building. The plans for improvements were largely dependent on being able to provide extended opening and daytime



access arrangements, with separate wardens' accommodation in the hostel grounds. Planning permission for this, and for a project which would lead to the profitable disposal of another part of the grounds, was being sought. It took until Spring 1996 for *YHA News* to report that the sale of spare land was completed, though the new wardens' quarters were never built.

Left: Ivinghoe youth hostel's 40th anniversary celebratory badge

In the 1980s YHA was recognising that the time-served pattern of hostelling, based on the relatively basic provision of large dormitories, gender separation even for families, minimal privacy and cycling usage (much diminished) was being challenged by the increased expectations of a far more mobile clientele. Its own regional structure was hindering progress and modernisation and many radical changes were about to be instigated. Dormitory sizes were to be reduced, often at the expense of overnight totals and even, sometimes, hostel sustainability, family hostelling would be encouraged and greater use made of private bedrooms. It took time and scarce resources, and the hardest properties to modernise were often the most attractive and long-serving historic buildings. Even when the Chaplins retired in 1995, there were seven dormitories, two of them bedrooms of medium size, but five holding ten or more members. Richard Allen had visited in 1994 for a professional assessment on behalf of YHA. He found:

An attractive hostel in the heart of a village. The building is well presented, offering a good standard of decor and comfort.

Generally factors such as the proper airing of the rooms, a fine, fresh breakfast, the cleanliness of toilets and the common room indicated the care and authoritative experience of the warden. He proved a mine of information, and clearly felt that something of an older spirit of youth hostelling needed to be retained. Well-furnished self-catering arrangements. Other guests included a walker in mid-thirties, a motorcyclist in his fifties, a shy young man in early 20s and a Canadian couple in late-20s.

At the end of the stay, all guests were asked to perform a chore, which was handled with consideration and purpose. My own role was vacuum cleaning the common room. Guests here had chosen the hostel because of its proximity to country pursuits. The older motorcyclist was clearly working from a tight budget but other guests were more open in activity, including a walk to the local pub. The social aspects of YHA providing a cheap touring holiday to an older customer profile is becoming clearer.

Following the Chaplins were Andy and Gill Fortune, Andrew and Rachel Clarkson and Tim Martin – all now with the new title hostel manager. By 1999 bed numbers were reduced to 50. Some bedrooms were redesigned with a little more elbow room. By the new century, numbers staying were cut to just over half of the 1977 record, a situation greatly exacerbated by the long lasting ramifications for YHA of the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001. At the beginning of 2006 YHA announced a raft of 32 closures across England and Wales, among which was Ivinghoe. The



Buckinghamshire hostel's closure proposal received probably more letters of protest than any other on the list, but there was no reversal and the premises closed at the end of October 2007. It is interesting to speculate whether YHA's improvement in performance since those closures might have allowed one or two of its more cherished hostels to survive, or whether recent successes could only have been achieved with such determined policy.

Left: detail of a 1960s postcard (YHA Archive)

After the hostel's closure, the property returned to use as a private residence. The original Georgian appearance has been restored through the removal of YHA's 1947 extension and many other carefully planned projects.

Milton Keynes Youth Hostel 1981 to present

Manor Farm, Vicarage Road, Bradwell, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK13 9AG

Historic County: Buckinghamshire

YHA Regions: Eastern, Central

GR: SP 831395

On 28th June 1979 a YHA Eastern Region memo outlined the possibility of a new hostel occupying a traditional 18th-century large yellow stone farmhouse in an old quarter of the new town of Milton Keynes:

Eastern Region Youth Hostels Limited

The Milton Keynes Development Corporation have again contacted YHA Eastern Region with a view to the establishment of a youth hostel in the new town complex. Under active consideration by the Activities and Recreation Unit is the possible provision of a youth hostel in existing buildings, part of a well-established village at Manor Farm, Bradwell.

MKDVC are prepared to provide a property along similar lines to that which Forest Heath District Council adopted with Brandon (Thetford Forest), ie

1 To establish the market value (eg £900) and to charge a nominal or peppercorn rental eg £250 or £300 pa being at all times 1/3rd of the 'going rate'.

2 The property to be leasehold for 99 years.

3 MKDC to put the fabric of the property into good order externally and internally and to provide suitable trees and shrubs for a boundary immediately to provide sound insulation (and double glazing) to the south west of the property to shield from noise of the semi-adjacent high speed rail which runs at high level nearby.

4 MKDC additionally in consultation with YHA to carry out such adaptations as are practicable within their own financial limitations which will ensure the provision of a small youth hostel by 1961-62.

5 YHA to complete conversion work and equipping, it being accepted by both parties that YHA initially may only be able to afford a simple self-cookers hostel of some 20 beds whilst in the long-term (this would be planned and allowed for at commencement) the long-term aim is for 60 beds, fully controlled and meals provided, with perhaps Field Study facilities (at the adjacent) Bradwell Centre which is owned and operated by MKDC.

Midland Region YHA should be kept informed of any developments, as it is fairly certain that planning permission will not be permitted to renew the present lease for the buildings at Greens Norton in 1984.

There is no youth hostel in the county of Bedfordshire as the education authorities are constantly reminding us and [it is] an area which featured in the priority list for hostel development from those few members who know the area well.

Milton Keynes has Greens Norton hostel 11 miles to the northwest, Ivinghoe 15m southeast, Oxford 24m southwest and Houghton Mill 34m northeast and could help towards the salvation of that latter problem hostel by providing a vital link with the west.

It would seem hostel development in the future for YHA Eastern Region must be by spontaneous approach or opportunities as they present themselves by organisations external to YHA, and with funds in short supply both nationally and regionally development by YHA in the short term may only be practicable by such means.

It is hoped that sufficient interest will be shown by the Council to approve future talks with MKDC towards the establishment of a youth hostel



Postcard of Milton Keynes youth hostel dating from about the time of its opening in 1981 (YHA Archive)

YHA handbooks described Manor Farm as a charming Grade II listed 18th-century farmhouse in the historic village of Bradwell or Old Bradwell on the northern outskirts of Milton Keynes. Norman earthworks of a small motte and bailey castle are adjacent to the hostel and the site of the Benedictine Bradwell Priory is nearby. Above the hostel main door's pediment is a datestone of 1790, though parts of the house are probably older. At the beginning of the twentieth century the property had a nag house, gig house, pig house, hen house, carthorse stable and chaff house with granary, though most were later swept away, some in a violent storm.

For a few years from 1973, before the youth hostel was established, the farmhouse was fitted out as lodgings for agricultural workers. The stables were converted to hostel warden's accommodation in readiness for YHA's opening.

Hostelling News offered an expected starting date for the hostel of 1st July 1981. An official opening followed on 26th September. As outlined in the original discussions, most costs for the new hostel were met by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. Earlier intentions were modified to provide 40 beds, but 38 was the capacity at the outset, and such is the tight arrangement of bedrooms at the hostel that that this has barely altered in almost 40 years. In 1993-94 the bed numbers rose to 42, soon reverted to 38 but by 2002, 37 was more or less determined.

Less fixed has been the provision of meals. A catering kitchen had been provided from the outset and a full meals service was in place until 1991. Take-up may not have been consistent, as from then there were various experiments: in 1992 – self-catering only, 1993 – meals on offer again, 1994 – self-catering only, 1995 – the same, but catering for groups of ten if booked in advance, in 2000 – self-catering only, 2001 – the same, but breakfast and group catering available, and several other combinations to the present day.

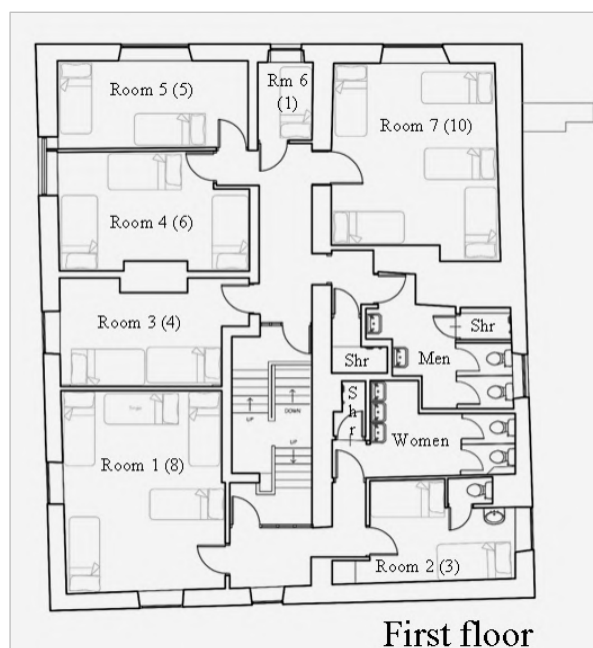
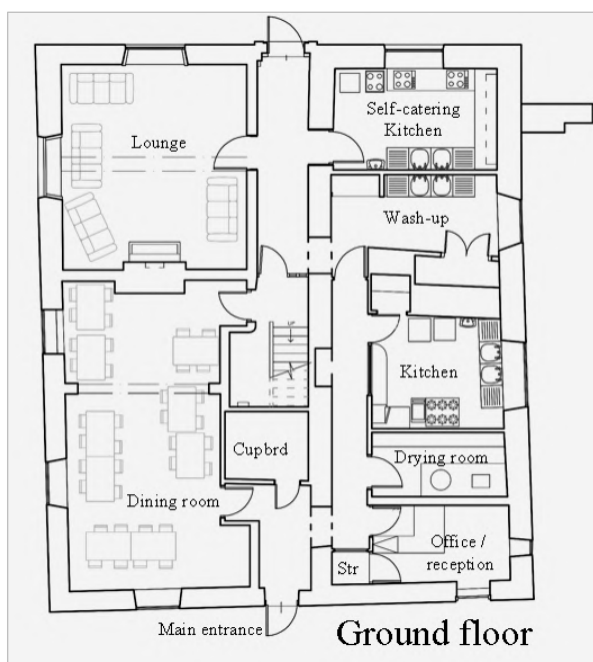


A lovely image of Milton Keynes youth hostel from about 1990. It comes from a transparency by George Miller, a much-travelled hosteller, YHA volunteer warden and inveterate recorder of images of YHA such as this. The manager's cottage is the isolated building beyond the house (author's collection)

YHA frequently wavered in how it named the hostel, between emphasising the rustic and historic nature of Bradwell Village, a calm oasis, and the bright modern new-town image of Milton Keynes. For the facility's first 25 years or thereabouts YHA vacillated between *Milton Keynes* and *Bradwell Village (Milton Keynes)* before it put a determined foot forward and named the hostel after the new town.



1: in 1991 the hostel stamp proclaimed 'Bradwell Milton Keynes'; 2: large pin badge (author's collection)



These YHA plans were drawn up in 2007, since when the bedroom capacities on the first floor have been slightly modified to the current numbers shown in brackets; in 2007 Room 1, the female dorm, had nine beds, Room 2 four beds, en suite and Room 5 four beds. Room 7, the largest, is the male dorm. The once separate washrooms have been redesigned into a combined unisex space, while Room 2 has taken advantage of the closing off of its adjacent washroom door to give extra room for an en suite shower. Ground floor arrangements have barely changed except for décor and lounge furniture (YHA Archive)



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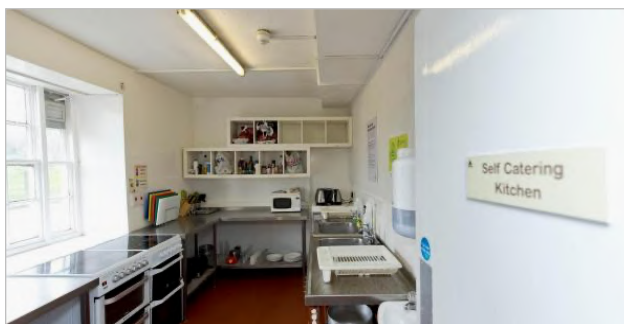
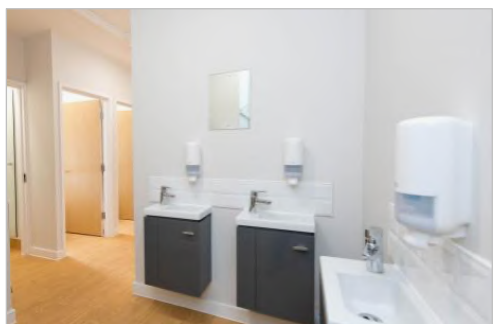
5 6



Rent-a-hostel, YHA's original name for exclusive hire of facilities at selected times, came early to Milton Keynes hostel. The photographs on the left above date from about that time, 1994; those on the right are equivalents from recent publicity images.

1&2: the dining room that can seat a full complement of hostellers; 3&4: the lounge;
5&6: bedroom styling – room 3 on the left and en suite room 2 on the right (YHA Archive)

YHA's website pages describe a Grade II listed farm house with large garden, six picnic tables and grass area backing onto a residential area, where once stood the extensive farm outbuildings. They emphasise that because of the hostel's historical nature it is not suitable for all disabled access.



The public areas, toilets and washrooms were modernised under the Springboard improvement programme of late 2017. 1: the unisex washroom block upstairs serves all bedrooms apart from Room 2; 2: the self-catering kitchen (YHA Archive)

David and Margaret Johnson were the first wardens, and stayed for six years. Dates for the intervening period are not fully recorded in the Archive, but Roger Fickling was in post, at least in 1990, then Ken Scott, Angela Pears Brown, David Midwinter and Lynda Caston. In 2006 Rachel Oliver passed the managerial reigns to Dolores Crowe, who ran the hostel for six years. Lucy Harrison arrived in 2012. Ben Pinches has been in post since 2016, having previously managed Kington and Leominster hostels jointly.

The front and rear aspects of the hostel are exceptionally attractive. There is a gated car park for eight to ten cars; public transport both within Milton Keynes and from further afield by fast mainline train is excellent, while planned cycling facilities were at the forefront of the new town development.



Aspects of Manor Farm, Milton Keynes' youth hostel in historic Bradwell Village (YHA Archive)

Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows									
1932-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-present: Mar to following Feb									
†: The Briary hostel; ¶: Ivinghoe hostel; \$: Stony Stratford hostel; Δ: Milton Keynes hostel									
W: wartime closure; •: 53 overnights at the tail-end of 1946;									
*: 17 month period; +: notional figure included for exclusive hire and/or camping									
...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	...	98†	in use?†	...	...	...	...	...	...
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1724¶	3167¶	3141¶
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	603\$
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
2877¶	W¶	W¶	W¶	W¶	W¶	2437¶	4071¶	5087¶	4735¶
731\$	1113\$	1349\$	968\$	1350\$	1272\$	1068\$	<53•	...	...
1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
4480¶	4949¶	4488¶	5088¶	5690¶	4904¶	5490¶	5736¶	5201¶	5701¶
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
5367¶	5125¶	5078¶	4908¶	4985¶	4974¶	5887¶	6267¶	6975¶	7518¶
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
8320¶	8630¶	9037¶	8839¶	8417¶	9377¶	9753¶	10042¶	8570¶	8888¶
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
8808¶	8245¶	7608¶	7721¶	7511¶	7618¶	7091¶	7737¶	7700¶	7681¶
...	231Δ	2138Δ	2944Δ	3376Δ	3714Δ	3400Δ	3254Δ	3226Δ	3065Δ
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
8061¶	7082¶	8950*¶	7479¶	7495¶	6923¶	6138¶	6272¶	5766¶	5867¶
3008Δ	2907Δ	2900*Δ	3898Δ	5091Δ	4916Δ	4500Δ	4693Δ	4874Δ	4654Δ
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
4979¶	4392¶	4385¶	5886¶	5849¶	5838¶	5822¶	2854¶	...	...
4714Δ	4019Δ	4248Δ	4416Δ	5432Δ	5545Δ	6369Δ	5052Δ	4635Δ	4428Δ
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
3617Δ	5637Δ+	6604Δ+	7767Δ+	8684Δ+	8241Δ+	8511Δ+	6957Δ+	7788Δ+	7620Δ+
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
openΔ	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...



YHA Milton Keynes on a cold, crisp morning, March 2020 (author's photograph)