



YHA (England and Wales)

Youth Hostel Profile

compiled by the Association's volunteer archivist, John Martin, 2020-01-01

Buntingford area Youth Hostels

Hare Street (Buntingford) Youth Hostel 1931-35

Wayside, Hare Street, Hormead, Buntingford, Hertfordshire

Historic County: Hertfordshire

YHA Region: London/Cambridge

GR:TL 390296

This was one of YHA's pioneer hostels, opened in the spring-summer period of 1931; it featured in the first edition of the first handbook. For 1931-32 it was called simply 'Wayside', from 1933-35 'Buntingford'. The double-fronted house lay on the east side of the road south of the Buntingford Road junction. For the first four years the owner/warden was Mrs C Thomas, but in the final year Mrs A Robertson was in charge.

At first the hostel lay within the YHA London Region's boundaries, but from 1934 the new Cambridge Region had jurisdiction.

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| 47.
IV | SISSERVERNESS.
Address—CODICOTE, HERTS.
Hostess—Miss HARRISON BELL.
P.O.—Codicote.
Meals not provided.
*10, †10. Opening July and then open all the year. | Route—CHILTERN.
Nearest Town—WELWYN.
Station—WELWYN.
Tel : Codicote 30.
Bus route—passes farm. |
| 48.
IV | WAYSIDE.
Address—HARE STREET,
BUNTINGFORD, HERTS.
Warden—C. THOMAS, Hare Street, Buntingford.
Meals provided. *6, †6. | Route—ERMINE STREET.
Tel : Buntingford 71Y.
P.O.—Adjoining hostel.
Open all the year. |
| 49.
IV | CLIFF COTTAGE.
Address—WINDHILL FIELDS,
BISHOPS STORTFORD, HERTS.
Hostess—Mrs. R. J. ASHPOLE, Windhill Fields, Bishops Stortford.
Meals provided.
*10, †8. Open all the year. | Route—CAMBRIDGE.
Nearest T.—BISHOPS STORTFORD
Station—BISHOPS STORTFORD
Tel : Bishops Stortford 386. |
| 50.
IV | THE MILL HOUSE.
Address—WADESMILL, WARE.
Hostess—Mrs. JONES.
P.O.—Ware.
Meals provided. *8, †8. | Route—ERMINE STREET.
Nearest Town—WARE.
Station—WARE.
Bus route—passes door.
Open all the year. |
| 51. | ARCHWAY HOUSE.
Address—PLAYFORD,
IPSWICH.
Warden—Mrs. ARTHUR BIDDELL, Archway House, Playford,
P.O.—Bealings.
Meals provided.
*10, †10. Open all the year. | Route—IPSWICH TO YARMOUTH
Nearest Town—IPSWICH.
Station—BEALINGS.
Bus route—Ipswich. |
| 52.
IV | HOLLY BUSH HOUSE.
Address—FOUR MARKS, HANTS.
Warden—Mr. SOPER, Holly Bush House, Four Marks, Hants.
Meals provided. *6, †6. | Route—PILGRIM'S WAY.
Nearest Town—ALTON.
Open all the year. |
| 53.
IV | RIDGEWAY FARM.
Address—THURSLEY, SURREY.
Hostess—Mrs. BARNARD, Ridgeway Farm, Thursley, Surrey.
Tel : Hindhead 162.
*12, †12. Open all the year. | Route—PILGRIM'S WAY.
Nearest Town—FARNHAM.
Meals provided. |

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Extract from the very first YHA Handbook, spring 1931, showing youth hostels on the periphery of London, including Wayside. Sisserverness hostel was never opened

Towards the end of 1935 Mrs Robertson closed the hostel. She was moving to premises in the middle of High Street, Buntingford, at the end of that year, and would take the youth hostel trade with her.

Hare Street hostel featured in the 1935 Regional Guide, with map, as shown below.

BUNTINGFORD. *Wayside, Hare Street, nr. Buntingford, Herts. Mrs. A. Robertson. TEL. Buntingford 77.* Buntingford Hostel is the second on the London-Cambridge route, and is situated on the north-eastern end of the Chiltern Hills, amidst open downlands that seem a little foreign to Hertfordshire. This is a country of thatched cottages, soft downs and village greens, where poultry wander. It is the country of the Pelhams, one of the most powerful families of that political oligarchy which virtually ruled England during the XVIIIth century, and their former immense power and prestige is reflected in the names of the charming villages of the district—Brent Pelham, Stocking Pelham and Furneaux Pelham. Even to-day, in some of these villages, the squire still retains considerable prestige.



*M10, W10 : PROVISIONS, Hostel *** : MEALS 1/-, 1/3 : STATION, L.N.E.R. Brangling, 3m, Buntingford 2m : BUS, to Hertford and Royston, infrequent : BATHING, River : DISTANCES, Wadesmill 9m, Bishops Stortford 11m, Saffron Walden 14m. Haslingfield 20m.*

Extract from Youth Hostels in South-East England, 1935

Buntingford (High Street) Youth Hostel late 1935 or early 1936 to a little later in 1936

High Street, Buntingford, Hertfordshire.

Historic County: Hertfordshire

YHA Region: Cambridge

GR: TL 361295

Positional note: there is uncertainty about this location.

The Cambridge Region annual report for 1936 stated that the hostel had moved from Hare Street to the town early in the year, replacing Buntingford (Hare Street). The exact date is ambiguous, as the annual report year ran from October 1935 to September 1936.

The Cambridge Region secretary reported on 20th November 1935 that he had inspected Mrs Robertson's new premises and found them commodious and well suited for a hostel. He had proposed that she should allow them to re-equip the hostel and to provide cooking facilities. She agreed on condition that the Group purchased her single beds. On 5th December 1935 it was agreed by the YHA Region's Council to offer Mrs Robertson 4/- *ea. for 4 of the beds at present in the men's dormitory and to replace them with two-tier beds.* It was agreed to provide cooking facilities. By March 1936 she had agreed the changes, but they had not yet taken place.

The 1936 handbook described the new location as midway along the village street on the east side, almost opposite the Westminster Bank. The hostel catered for 8 men and 6 women.

CAMBRIDGE GROUP		
BUNTINGFORD	CAMBS.	LONDON—CAMBRIDGE
HIGH STREET,	Midway village St., almost	B 1/-, L 6d., S 1/-
BUNTINGFORD,	opposite Westminster Bank.	S.B.H. 4d.
HERTS.		
MRS. A. ROBERTSON.	Maps: O.S.96, C.4.	
	Station: Buntingford ½ m.	
	Bus: Cambridge—Royston—	
	London, Hertf'd—Ware—	
	Royston pass door.	Saffron
	Store: On premises.	Walden 14½ m.
All Year.	P.O.: Nearby.	B. Stortford 11 „
M. 8 ; W. 6.	E.C.D.: Wednesday.	Cambridge 20 „

Extract from the YHA Handbook, 1936

The Buntingford Railway & Local History Society has offered this advice about the location, with recent thumbnail pictures:

The first High Street hostel could only have been one of FIVE buildings, as follows.

- The White House, no. 46. TL 361295.
- High Street east: the cream building is no. 48, and was probably a retail unit in the thirties. The door to the right is no. 48A, no doubt is an upstairs flat of some sort. TL 361295
- 50 High Street, a double fronted brick-built house. TL 361296
- 52 & 54 High Street: 52 is on the right with three bays and handsome door frame/pediment. 54 is the smaller two bay to left. TL 361296



No.46 No.48/48A



No.50 No.52&54



Within a very short space of time during 1936 however Mrs Robertson and the hostel had moved again, to a different location at the north end of High Street. Both High Street addresses were very short-lived as youth hostels. Cambridge Region minutes, normally meticulous, are unusually silent about developments here and the move along the High Street is not mentioned, so it is difficult to pin down a removal date. The only suggestion of upheaval is a teasing comment from a Hostel Visitor's Report, received 17 May 1936, that *Buntingford still remains somewhat of a problem; a slight increase has been made in bed-nights but the general appearance and amenities need improvement.*

Buntingford (Town House, High Street) Youth Hostel 1936-37

The Town House, High Street, Buntingford, Hertfordshire.

Historic County: Hertfordshire

YHA Region: Cambridge

GR: TL 360298

The Town House hostel thus opened on some unspecified date in 1936 (probably early), replacing the previous entry in the middle of the High Street. This was the last house at the north end of the High Street on its eastern side, at No.100 High Street. Its full name is actually 'Top of Town House', according to the Buntingford Railway and Local History Society.

There were beds for 10 men and 4 women. It was to be open *throughout the year*. Yet by March 1937 it had been permanently closed; a letter had been received from Mrs Robertson that she would have to close the hostel. Cambridge Region minutes for 21st May 1937 noted this and the arrangements made to remove YHA equipment to Houghton Mill youth hostel.

CAMBRIDGE GROUP		
BUNTINGFORD	CAMBS.	LONDON—CAMBRIDGE
"TOWN HOUSE,"	Village street, last house, N.	B 1/-, L 6d., S 1/-.
HIGH STREET,	end, E. side.	S.B.H. 4d.
BUNTINGFORD,	Maps : O.S.96, C.4, Barth.25.	I.P. free.
HERTS.	Station : Buntingford $\frac{3}{4}$ m.	
MRS. A. ROBERTSON.	Bus : Cambridge—Royston—	Saffron
	London, Hertford—Ware—	Walden 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ m.
	Royston pass door.	B. Stortford 11 "
	Store : On premises.	Cambridge 20 "
All Year.	P.O. : In village.	Castle
M. 10 ; W. 4.	E.C.D. : Wednesday.	Heddingham 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Extract from the YHA Handbook, 1937

BUNTINGFORD. *The Town House, High St., Buntingford, Herts. Mrs. A. Robertson.* The most northerly house on the east side of the High Street. This is a country of thatched cottages, soft downs and village greens, where poultry wander. It is the country of the Pelhams, one of the most powerful families of that political oligarchy which virtually ruled England during the XVIIIth century, and their former immense power and prestige is reflected in the names of the charming villages of the district—Brent Pelham, Stocking Pelham and Furneaux Pelham. Suggested route to Saffron Walden is via Hare Street, Hormead, Brent Pelham (stocks), bridle path to Deer's Green, Clavering (church), Wicken Bonhunt, Wendens Ambo (Saxon doorway), Abbey Farm (Tudor almshouses) and so to Saffron Walden.

M10, W4: PROVISIONS Hostel **: MEALS 1/-: STATION L.N.E.R. Buntingford : BUS London—Royston, Hertford—Royston, infrequent : DISTANCES Bishops Stortford 11m, Saffron Walden 15m, High Roding 21m.

Extract from Youth Hostels in South-East England, 1937 – the closure was clearly a last minute decision

The three YHA premises in Buntingford were almost certainly accommodation hostels, facilities run under the banner of YHA but privately owned.

Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows									
1932-1937: previous Oct to Sept									
Δ: Wayside, Hare Street ¶: High Street, Buntingford and Town House, High Street, Buntingford (figures for the latter two youth hostels are of uncertain distribution)									
...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	openΔ	openΔ	openΔ	openΔ	195Δ	245¶	50¶



The Town House (or Top of Town House), the last of the Buntingford hostels (author's photographs, January 2013)

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