

Heath Charnock and Edgworth Youth Hostels

Heath Charnock Youth Hostel 1933 to 1935

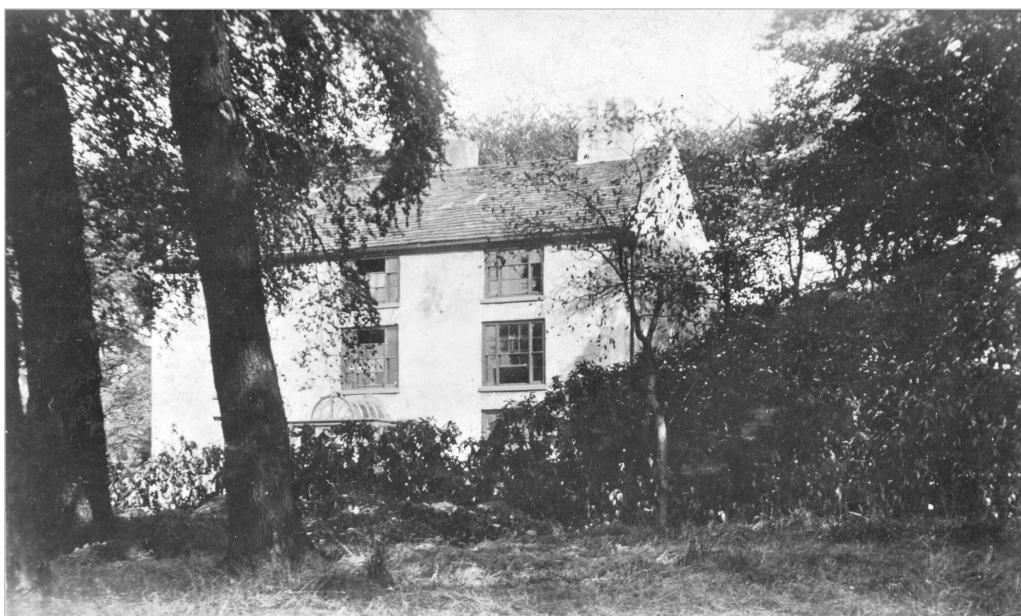
Nightingales, Rawlinson Lane, Heath Charnock, Chorley, Lancashire

Historic County: Lancashire (Main)

YHA Region: Manchester

GR: SD 595141

YHA is indebted to Mr MD Smith for permission to include additional information from his book 'About Adlington' (1991)



Heath Charnock youth hostel – from a postcard (YHA Archive)

Nightingales (or Nightingale House) was a large three-storey dwelling with heavy squat chimneys, pronounced square windows and an elaborate glazed porch. The house was positioned immediately to the west of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, on the south side of Rawlinson Lane, Heath Charnock, near Adlington. It was on the fringe of the Ellerbeck Hall estate, close to a Lodge House and Nightingales Farm, which remain in modern form.

The YHA Manchester Region annual report for 1933 described how Heath Charnock youth hostel had been opened here in September of that year. An official opening ceremony was held on 14 October 1933. The wardens, Mr and Mrs J Hodge, ran a store for the convenience of hostellers. There were 24 beds for men and 16 for women.

Berta Gough, secretary to Merseyside Region, kept an invaluable diary of early YHA impressions and observed:
 I spent the weekend (17th-18th February 1934) at Heath Charnock hostel with Connie. It was quite a nice place but the meals were poor. It was packed so Bert and Charles slept in the drying cupboard; with the result that they were so hot and cramped that they never slept. The boys were so hungry after their meal on the Saturday, that we went into Chorley and had bread and cheese and stuff at a pub, and on the Sunday we did not have the evening meal, but left early and called at the 'X.L.' near Preston instead ...

... 12th-13th May 1934, Northern Advisory Board meeting at Heath Charnock. After the meeting, we went to look at the hostels at Longridge and Gisburn. These hostels were quite interesting to see, but I do not think any of them are as well fitted up and looked after as our own. We could not sleep at Heath Charnock because the beds had paper under the mattresses, and every time anyone turned over, it rustled. I am unfortunately a very light sleeper and all these little things wake me up with the result that I very seldom have a good night's sleep in a hostel. This hostel was eventually given up because it never got used much and did not pay.

Heath Charnock was conceived as a model hostel, though references to such an exalted status were few and soon forgotten. After just three years' operation the Manchester Region was facing a financial loss, according to the Annual Report for 1935. It was decided to sacrifice Heath Charnock and it duly closed on 30th September 1935. Nevertheless, it had been found possible to open an alternative accommodation hostel with just 12 beds at a small farmstead at Edgworth, 16 miles to the east, shortly before its demise.

Heath Charnock hostel recorded about 3,000 overnights during its short life. Its position almost adjacent to the main A6 road from Manchester to the Lake District and Carlisle no doubt attracted more cyclists than walkers.

MD Smith, in his book *About Adlington* (1991), describes how Nightingales was used to house Liverpool evacuees during the Second World War. It was demolished at some point after that, along with neighbouring Ellerbeck Hall, which was subsumed by an opencast mining site.

Edgworth Youth Hostel 1935 to 1940

Pasture Gate Farm, Broadhead, Edgworth, Bolton, Lancashire

Historic County: Lancashire

YHA Region: Manchester

GR: SD 749194

Edgworth youth hostel opened on 8th June 1935, effectively replacing Heath Charnock. The warden was Miss M Gerrard. The hostel, a lonely moorland farmhouse and stone outbuilding almost two miles north of Edgworth, could accommodate six men and six women. Hostellers would have been glad of the hostel store at this isolated outpost.

Usage was always small, despite the hostel being kept open through the winter. Finally, in 1940 there were 399 bednights before closure (by 20th June). This was nominally only for the duration of the war, but the hostel never re-opened. As at Heath Charnock, wartime evacuees from Liverpool used the premises after closure.

The farmhouse was extended at either end in the 1970s, and a newer structure replaced the original stone hut.



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1: official YHA photograph of Edgworth youth hostel. The way in which space at Pasture Gate farmhouse and the stone outbuilding was apportioned is not known; 2: sketch, exuding rustic charm, from an unnamed newspaper cutting (YHA Archive)

Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows

1933-1940: previous Oct to Sept

¶: Heath Charnock Hostel; Δ: Edgworth Hostel

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	open ¶	1280 ¶	1367 ¶
...	109 Δ	590 Δ	605 Δ	944 Δ	741 Δ
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
399 Δ

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