

Ingleton Youth Hostels

Ingleton (Storrs Hall) Youth Hostel 1935 to 1937 or 1938

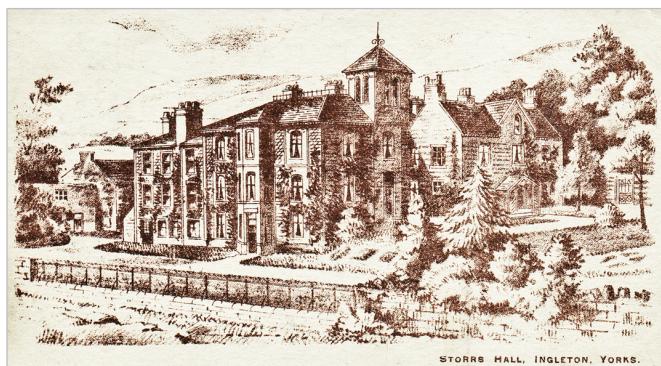
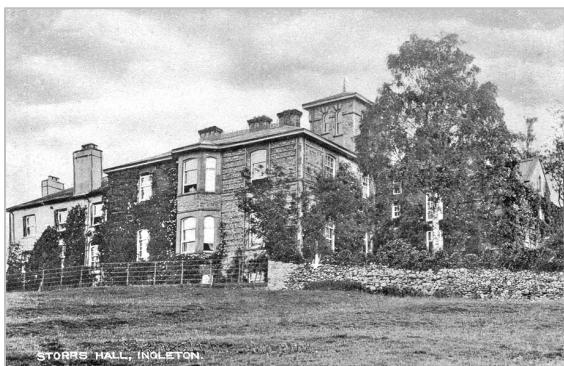
Storrs Hall, Ingleton, Yorkshire

Historic County:
Yorkshire, West Riding

YHA Region: West Riding

GR: SD 701732

Storrs Hall is a stone-built medium-sized country mansion on the northeast edge of the village of Ingleton in the Yorkshire Dales. In the early twentieth century it ran as a school for 60 girls and 20 teachers. It then became vacant, until it was offered to the YHA for lease or purchase, according to minutes of the West Riding Region's council of 1st June 1933. YHA contemplated its purchase in that year, but it was eventually leased and opened, in April 1935, the details not passing to the YHA Trust until 17th July 1936.



Two postcards of Storrs Hall before its brief life as a youth hostel

The Hall featured a lookout tower, and a separate laundry cottage at the road edge. It was subject to expansion and remodelling at different periods.

It is not clear which part was used as the hostel, though the warden, Mr Sodo, lived in one of the adjoining houses. A party of boys prepared the decoration of the 40-bed hostel. The 1936 Durham and Yorkshire Regional Guide summarised the facilities here:

Ingleton

The Warden, Storrs Hall, Ingleton, via Carnforth (men 30, women 16).
Station, Bus, Store at Ingleton, 1/4 mile. Bathing, open-air pool.
Ingleborough (2,373 feet), Caverns, waterfalls.
Nearest hostels: Horton 12 m, Sedbergh 17 m.

Bertha Gough kept an invaluable diary of her voluntary secretarial work for the pioneer Merseyside region of YHA and associated activities :

25th-26th May 1935: [YHA] Northern Advisory Board meeting at Ilkley hostel. At Ingleton, we had a job to get the warden to show us round and he was not at all civil..... 14th-15th August 1937: the place was very dirty and untidy.

The hostel saw substantial use in its span of three years, or perhaps a little more. Nevertheless West Riding region was soon looking elsewhere and found a replacement near the centre of the village, at Greta Tower. The leasehold of Storrs Hall was terminated in March 1938.

In November 2013 the author visited Storrs Hall, to find that it was divided into a number of different residences and holiday cottages. It was largely unchanged externally.



The author's images of Storrs Hall in November 2013

Ingleton (Greta Tower) Youth Hostel 1938 to present

Greta Tower, Sammy Lane, Ingleton, Carnforth, Lancashire LA6 3EG

Historic County:

Yorkshire, West Riding

YHA Regions:

West Riding, Yorkshire, North

GR: SD 695733

The new hostel was a valley-roofed Victorian house, built in stone, just north of the church. It had a distinctive verandah, open to the elements at first, but progressively filled in. Though the house was recorded as built by John Kidd of Ingleton in 1885, it seems likely that the dual roof indicates that this may have been a rebuilding at the time. The section of the house on the east side, adjoining Sammy Lane, appears to be of older construction, especially as viewed from internal corridors. An old datestone at the south end of the house reads *Greta Tower, 1885*. It was rescued during extensions in the 1970s by hostel warden Grace McGonnigal and duly relocated to the new outer wall. The house name refers to a castellated wall at the north end that gave the impression of an ancient tower. It seems to have been a folly behind which was a quite ordinary little cottage with sloping roof.

For many years before YHA, Greta Tower was a private residence. Then it became a guest house for visitors.



This detail of an early postcard shows the tower folly left of the house. The sloping roof of the end cottage can just be made out, extreme left. The grounds and vegetable gardens were clearly carefully managed (image courtesy Lisa Howson)

The hostel opened on 1st April 1938, with Mr P Wilmore as the first warden. This was a little later than the expected transfer from Storrs Hall in time for Christmas 1937, according the region's annual report of that year. Under the threat of war, the next report stated that 1938 had been a very difficult year for Ingleton hostel, in that a hoped-for grant from the Physical Fitness organisation was consistently delayed and nothing was ready. Necessary sanitary works were not ready until March 1939, but by the outbreak of war in September the essential improvements were almost finished.



1: an early postcard of Greta Tower that may predate the youth hostel. It represents the house much as built or rebuilt in 1885. Of interest is the apparently castellated tower joined to the north side of the hostel. It seems that it was a folly wall of single thickness, hiding a more workaday two-storey side cottage. YHA soon removed the mock battlement to reveal the sloping roof behind, as seen in later illustrations. Later still, YHA built up the cottage to full height (author's collection);

2: this is the commonest view of the hostel, from the southwest corner. Here is J Maden's photograph of the pre-war hostel. The castellated wall was still there, and cyclists were propping up their bikes, a common occurrence suggesting that bicycle storage was in short supply. The building plaque can be seen on the south wall. An extensive market garden stood to the left, and a small hostel outbuilding extreme right (donated to the YHA Archive by Steve Maden);

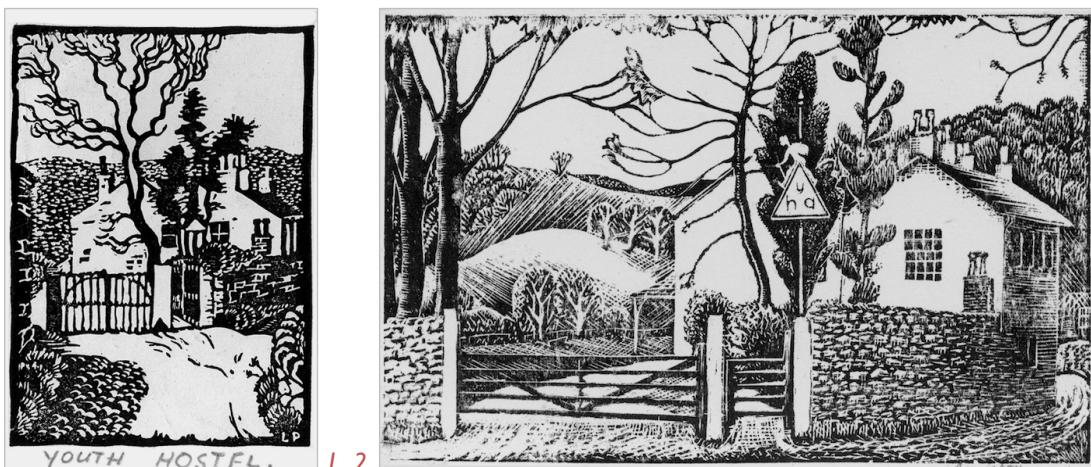
3: a privately-produced photo on a postcard captioned: 'August tour 1939, taken from bike shed' (author's collection)

In September 1939 Ingleton hostel was practically empty and YHA's West Riding region felt that the premises should be offered for the war effort. Nevertheless, this site continued to operate during each year of the war. Full records for the year 1940 are missing, but a national notice of 8th October 1940 advised that hostellers were staying there. Despite the privations of war, the Association was seeing very heavy use of its hostels, especially within reach of industrial cities, where war-weary young people, factory workers especially, could take advantage of fresh air, exercise and even decent food away from strife and bombs.



Another photograph from the early years, by or of J Maden and supplied by his son Steve. Mr Maden was a regular in YHA circles in the north, whether wardening at Black Sail or giving up his time for voluntary activities. Here is a close-up of the building crest. Standing precariously on a first floor ledge a worker, perhaps Mr Maden, is repairing the glazing or paintwork. It is not clear whether the cable is a gas hose or perhaps an attached lifeline

YHA's *West Riding Newsletter* of July 1942 described how emergency overspill accommodation was necessary; it was provided in the local Parish Hall. Back in 1937, on opening, 58 beds had been sufficient at Ingleton hostel – 34 for men, 24 for women – but by 1943, 74 were made available. Perhaps these included the village overspill. Mr and Mrs Philipson were in charge between 1941 and 1944.



At the end of the war West Riding region produced a series of artistic postcards with stylised, fanciful designs. This pair was prepared for Ingleton. 1: the sender of the first, posted in 1945, wrote: 'We are on the verandah, overlooking the lawn with the river in the background. It is a lovely up-to-date hostel and we are now awaiting supper'; 2: the writer of the second card, posted in August 1946, was just setting off for Dentdale hostel (author's collection)

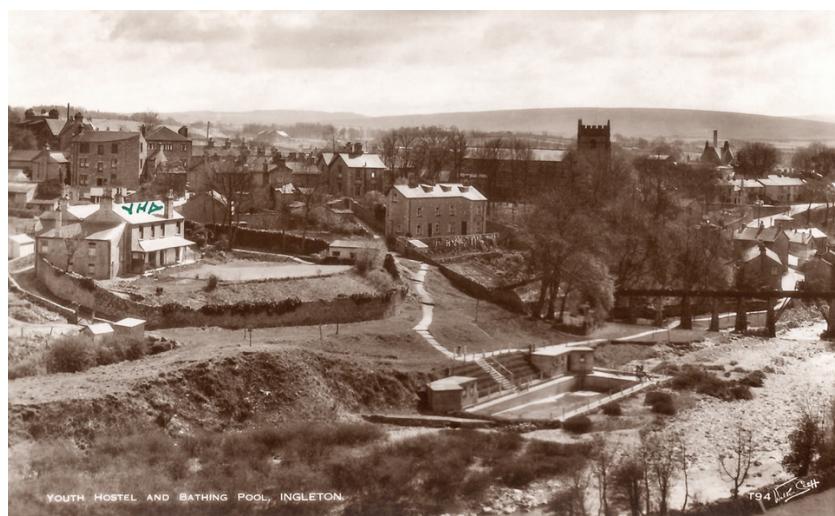
The region's 1948 annual report mentioned the pressing difficulties endemic in YHA in the immediate post-war years in finding the spare expertise and assistance to maintain and improve its 16 hostels:

The need for maintenance and also the improvement by adaptations of our hostels has been prominently before us, and repairs to our buildings have been both planned and placed in the hands of contractors. The chief difficulty lies in obtaining the services of both contractors and volunteers for our working parties. It is the first difficulty which has prevented work being carried out at Ingleton, where roof repairs have long been delayed.

By contrast in terms of plenty, two young lads visited Ingleton hostel in 1949. They mentioned in their logbook:
 To Ingleton YH once more. Too much sago pudding I recall. With a second helping I found it difficult to get to sleep, too full.



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- 1: a view of one of the large dormitories, simply furnished but apparently clean and shipshape;
 2: early postcards such as this show that originally there was no men's dormitory hut. This interesting panoramic image by Walter Scott dates from the first ten years of YHA use, by which time the battlemented false wall at the north end had been removed, revealing the inhabited cottage with sloping roof behind. The grounds drop steeply to the bathing pool and the river.
 More recently, much of this area was thickly wooded. The postcard was posted in 1948 (author's collection);
 3: Mary Jephcott stayed at the freshly painted hostel in 1957. By now, there was a new window on the south gable wall (YHA Archive)

INGLETON

Further hostel improvements followed. In 1954 a new fuel store was to be erected and the old stores would be adapted for cycle storage. A new coat of paint at Ingleton in 1957 made this ever-popular hostel *as smart on the outside as it always is indoors*.

Meanwhile, in 1955, West Riding region was one of the pioneer regions in a national trend to supply the new craze for collecting one-inch hostel pin badges with which enthusiastic youngsters adorned their bobble hats. Ingleton, Aysgarth Falls, Mankinholes and Pateley Bridge were the first examples. They sold in their thousands.



'They sold in their thousands': perhaps there was a new colour for each order (author's collection)

Mr and Mrs Hillary were the new wardens in the late 1950s, having previously been at Filey; extra accommodation was reportedly provided at Ingleton during their time here, though handbooks continued to show 60 beds. They would have been in charge when Alice Palmer recalled her hostelling in the 1950s and 1960s:

Ingleton was another hostel for social events, and there was the 'sixpenny hop' in the village, for which you needed a late pass.



1



1: postcard showing the first men's dormitory hut on the left. The fresh paintwork suggests it might have been 1957 or 1962; 2: in 1963 the old hut was demolished. This postcard shows the 10-bed replacement that was to last until **some time after 1980**, as well as the newly enclosed common room / dining room, and probably dates from then. Hostellers' dormitories were generally on this side of the house. The hostel entrance was still unenclosed, however (author's collection)

Further improvements continued steadily. In 1960 Ingleton and Stainforth hostels benefited jointly from completely new bedding thanks to a grant of £1,000 from the National YHA. In the same year Bradford District Group made the dining room brighter by covering the tables in plastic, and two years later they painted the exterior; as this followed on from similar treatment in 1957, the hostel was well cared for. The region's 1962 annual report mentioned the installation of an Aga cooker. There were plans to extend the common room / dining room space.

HOSTELS	BEDS	OVERNIGHT STATISTICS			
		1967/8	1968/9	1969/70	1970/71
Aysgarth Falls	80	6045	6362	5867	6011
Boggle Hole	50	9898	8779	7085	2600
Dacre Banks	28	1207	958	1630	1944
Dentdale	40	3056	2649	2391	2701
Earby	26	1801	1456	1514	1620
Ellingstring	16	581	449	537	555
Garsdale Head	30	1173	1276	1286	1240
Helmsley	40	2770	3644	3879	4123
Ingleton	60	5898	6684	7025	7645
Kirkby Lonsdale	60	4507	4471	4144	6222
Linton	40	493	4445	4639	5026
Malham	70	8467	10308	11250	11702
Malton	74	4473	4038	4589	4662
Mankinholes Hall	40	1892	1840	2069	3195
Marsden	24	—	437	916	1301
Ramsgill	40	1884	2442	2883	3659
Scarborough	70	7421	7608	9077	8045
Selby	22	1158	1149	1245	1172
Stainforth	50	5404	6055	6224	6184
Thixendale	16	—	—	—	288
Wheeldale	36	2343	2594	3059	3255
York	140	18015	19030	20217	22169
	1052	99828	101807	106186	105313

Statistics for the period either side of the year 1970, as indicated in the 1971 annual report table above, show that it was one of perpetual growth for Ingleton hostel, which was graded 'Standard' under the new system that YHA adopted in 1971

The Hillarys stayed until 1965. In their place came Charlie and Grace McGonnigal, who stayed for a remarkable 26 years until Grace retired early in 1991 after the death of her husband. In the period 1976-77 both ends of the hostel was transformed through extensions. At the north end, the cottage under the sloping roof originally had two habitable floors. Now, the walls were extended upwards to create a third floor, enabled further by the ground dipping noticeably at this end. The roof line was extended over this new arrangement, though the wall facing the garden had no fenestration until later.



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1&2: two images from transparencies of Ingleton hostel by much travelled member George Miller from Lincoln.

1: this image is dated 1984. It shows the full-height extension of 1976-77 north into what was the original side cottage.

A new fire escape was in evidence. The hostel's east side bordering Sammy Lane had been extended at the far end;

2: this earlier view of Greta Tower from before 1976 predates the extension at the south end. The original south wall was still intact. The photograph bears an interesting pre-war black and white enamel YHA sign, contrasting with the rectangular cast metal plaque on the gate, first introduced in 1957. This stated YHA's aims and values (1&2: author's collection);

3: a view from about 1977, after the extension work at either end had just been completed. The image shows clearly the new wardens' flat on the ground floor, to the right of the verandah, though there was as yet no fire escape at this end, nor door to serve it. The north end extension had now gained a single window on this side, part of the new top floor assistant staff's quarters. Below this were the first floor women's washroom and the ground floor men's, nowadays the TV room (YHA Archive)

The significant extension at the south end reduced the length of the small outbuilding seen in picture 2 on page 3 in favour of a substantially increased interior space over two floors. After the expansion work of 1976-77, the hostel's capacity was raised from 60 to 80.

At the same time, there was the opportunity to alter the interior layout considerably. To the left of the hostel entrance had been the wardens' sitting room, with fireplace. This became a new members' lounge, relieving pressure on the combined common and dining room on the other side. At the south end, two new bedrooms were created on the first floor, behind the new curiously stepped end wall, while at the north end it took an elaborate system of short internal staircases on the first floor to serve both the short intermediate floor and an extended top floor. Here, a small suite for assistant staff was created. It included a bedroom, washroom and small kitchen under the newly extended roof. Eventually, assistant staff were to move into the managers' quarters, freeing up their rooms for guests.

YHA added fire escapes at either end in turn and improved fire detection and alarm systems. This was part of a general safety improvement programme that took in Malton, Helmsley, Ramsgill and Scarborough hostels at the same time.

Under the guidance of the McGonnigals, the newly expanded facilities helped the hostel to reach record figures in the late 1970s, when almost 10,000 overnights were being recorded annually.

A 1990 YHA's schools brochure described the accommodation here as 74 beds in relatively large bedrooms; there were two dormitories of 14 beds and a number of 8-bedded rooms. In late 2013, at the end of YHA's ownership, accommodation consisted of 13 bedrooms, mainly 4-bedded but with one 2-bedded and four 6-bedded. In 2021, under Enterprise operation, there are 64 beds across 14 bedrooms: 1 x 2 bed, 7 x 4 bed, 2 x 5 bed en suite rooms and 4 x 6 bed rooms. All staff are accommodated in the self-contained 3 bed staff flat on the ground floor.

Peter and Anne Haworth followed on from the McGonnigals. They were managers here from 1991 to 1994, before moving to Buttermere, then Keswick, hostels. They were followed for a short time in 1994 and 1995 by Chris and Bonnie Back, before they too moved on, to Matlock hostel. In 1995, Mike Tracey took up the vacancy at Ingleton. He had been at Dentdale hostel from 1991 and became well established at Ingleton over a long stint from 1995 to 2012.



These images of Ingleton's smart interior were taken in 2006, during Mike Tracey's time. They include the reconfigured servery and dining room, the lounge and two of the bedrooms. The recessed serving hatch in the first image shows where the original transverse corridor had run. The lounge in the second image was located in the former sitting room. Bedding was of the latest type for that era, with well-designed bunk beds, extra storage and cheerful covers. Sheet sleeping bags were still required for a year or two more before being replaced by complete sheet packs, including fresh pillow and duvet covers (YHA Archive)



Further stages in improvements to the west side of the hostel to compare with the third image on page 7.

1: this image shows changes probably dating from the 1997-98 modernisation programme, including a now fully enlarged and enclosed verandah and entrance area and new large windows on the ground and first floors at the north end;

2: almost 20 years later, the verandah area has been completely rebuilt to integrate fully with internal improvements

(1: YHA Archive image, June 2006; 2: September 2016 image, courtesy Lisa Howson)

In 1997-98 Mike Tracey oversaw further improvements. The original downstairs central corridor had run the length of the house and served a staircase in line with entrance hall at mid-point. The staircase rose towards Sammy Lane. Now, the staircase was turned by 90 degrees to face south, with the vacated space becoming the reception. *YHA News* editions of Spring 1997 and Spring 1998 and the Northern region annual report of 1998 elaborated:

New unisex showers have been installed at Ingleton, part of a plan to improve the whole building...

...Ingleton hostel is undergoing a major refurbishment to give less of the dated traditional look...

...here, the layout has been much improved by moving the staircase, generating small rooms suitable for families, and moving WCs, washing facilities and showers closer to the rooms; parking facilities had been created earlier.



These photographs of the premises in smart external order were taken by the author in November 2013, a few weeks before the transfer of the hostel to the new owners

Sharon Collier took over the managership in 2013 and oversaw a major refurbishment of the building's exterior. In that year YHA announced that the hostel was for sale, however, and Sharon moved on to Lulworth hostel in Dorset.



The 2013 Ingleton hostel stamp depicting Ingleborough, the nearest of the famed local trio of peaks

On 5th January 2014 an Ingleton family firm, Howsons Ltd, purchased the property, maintaining its status as a YHA Enterprise hostel without a break. Lisa and Andrew Howson manage the overall running of the hostel with a small dedicated team living on-site running the day-to-day operations.



These two photographs from just before 2014 show how the tidy and functional dining room was nevertheless quite cramped and required meals to be served in sittings, before the provision of the new dining room and sun lounge (images, Lisa Howson)

In September 2021 Lisa kindly supplied this diary of all the improvements and achievements since their acquisition:

We bought the hostel after hearing it was to be turned into flats. Our intention was, and still is, to preserve it and to continue to support the area where our family had grown up. Although not all changes are cosmetic or visible to guests, everything we do is to help enhance our customers stay.

2014: We refurbished all the showers and decorated throughout, with new carpets and curtains to all bedrooms and the lounges.

We formed two en suite bedrooms (on the intermediate floor) and removed the staff kitchen by room 14 (a very small 2 bed room) to create a larger 4 bed room.

We removed all wooden bunks, replacing them with new modern metal ones, and replaced all mattresses. Bunk lights were upgraded in about half of the rooms.

We renovated the staff flat with a new bathroom and kitchen and installed wifi and CCTV in main communal areas.



New work in April 2014 included removing the trees from the garden. Natural light now floods the building (Lisa Howson)

2015: We renovated the front of the building and created a sunroom, extended the dining room so it can now accommodate as many guests as we have beds for (previously meals had to be done in two sittings). A downstairs WC was added and we reroofed the cycle store.

2016: We reroofed the property and installed 42 Solar Panels.

2017: New hard wearing flooring was fitted downstairs.

2018: Central heating and hot water system were upgraded with new energy efficient boilers and water cylinders and a water booster system.



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3 4



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1&2: work progressed in 2014-15 to demolish the original shallow verandah, replacing it with a new fully glazed frontage of deeper dimensions; 3&4: the work allowed for a more spacious dining room, unencumbered by the original house wall;

5: the newly-designed hostel logo (images, Lisa Howson)

2019: We installed addressable fire alarm system.

Over the past few years we have also replaced all the old single glazed wooden windows with uPVC ones.

We rebuilt and repaired the boundary wall with the support and assistance of a grant from Stories in Stone.

Covid-19 has impacted us massively and so far has taken away almost two years of Groups and School trading. We closed in March 2020, reopening on a reduced capacity of eight rooms for families only from August to October 2020, no self-catering kitchen or social spaces were open and each room was allocated its own WC and shower. Shared dorm rooms were removed from sale. We closed from October 2020, reopening on 17th May 2021 and welcoming back our first school group at the end of June 2021. We are currently still operating on reduced occupancy and allocating each room their own shower and WC. The self-catering kitchen and social spaces finally reopened towards the end of July 2021.



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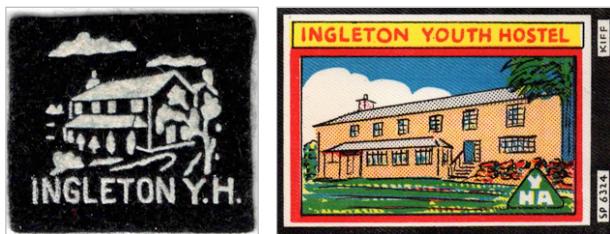
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1: 4-bedded room; 2: the roof undergoing preparation for the 42 solar panels; 3: 6-bedded room;

4: one of the 5-bedded family rooms on the intermediate floor, complete with en suite shower room and wc;

5: the newly enlarged sunny lounge. Originally, French windows led through the panelled doorway, the attractive frame of which has been retained, to the verandah. The near part of the photograph was the hostel wardens' sitting room until the 1970s;

6: the spacious hallway, with lounge left and dining room right. Stairs to all bedrooms originally rose straight ahead, where the reception is now located. After the 1990s reorganisation, the staircase was turned to rise from the corridor back right. The warden's office was originally on the right; 7: this image shows how the west side of the hostel has become brighter for the recent changes; 8: roomy self-catering kitchen; 9: the TV lounge, once the men's washroom and toilets that provided a good night-time hide from a top floor dormitory or the 10-bed hut (images, September 2016, by kind permission of Lisa Howson)



Two fabric badges of different eras (author's collection)

Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows

1935-1991: previous Oct to Sept; **1992:** Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; **1993-present:** Mar to following Feb

¶: Storrs Hall Hostel; Δ: Greta Tower Hostel; &: possibly includes some Storrs Hall overnights

*: 17 month period; E: Enterprise Hostel

...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	...	...	...	...	1286¶	2221¶	2276¶	3052Δ&	1355Δ
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
openΔ	5566Δ	6612Δ	8076Δ	7961Δ	8100Δ	7386Δ	7311Δ	7915Δ	7455Δ
1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
8195Δ	7175Δ	7612Δ	7649Δ	7650Δ	7530Δ	7969Δ	7717Δ	6984Δ	7057Δ
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
6813Δ	7227Δ	6967Δ	6730Δ	6691Δ	6701Δ	6401Δ	6279Δ	5898Δ	6684Δ
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
7025Δ	7645Δ	7936Δ	7738Δ	8956Δ	8709Δ	9093Δ	9632Δ	9772Δ	9398Δ
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
8598Δ	7918Δ	5921Δ	6575Δ	6376Δ	openΔ	openΔ	7149Δ	7363Δ	7955Δ
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
8248Δ	7006Δ	8135*Δ	7967Δ	6681Δ	7283Δ	6538Δ	6732Δ	6089Δ	7958Δ
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
7608Δ	3908Δ	6359Δ	6720Δ	6458Δ	6951Δ	6745Δ	7512Δ	6980Δ	6615Δ
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
5959Δ	6138Δ	6658Δ	6070Δ	openEΔ	openEΔ	openEΔ	openEΔ	openEΔ	openEΔ
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
openEΔ	openEΔ	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...



The hostel now has clear views of Ingleton Viaduct, the outdoor swimming pool, river and park (Lisa Howson)

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