

the story of wooler hostel

# Wooler A Youth Hostel Town 1932-2007

Wooler first became a Youth Hostel Town in 1932 when parts of the railway station were used for accommodation. The women were housed in the veranda on the down platform whilst the men used the waiting shed on the up platform. The former passenger toilets served as wash rooms. This was possible because the line was no longer used for passenger transport – though regular goods trains ran on the lines between the men’s and women’s accommodation!

How long this rather basic hostel would have lasted is unknown as it was forced to close in 1939 with the outbreak of war.

The town remained without a Youth Hostel until 1954 when the current building was pressed into service. Much work was done on the building before it opened as a hostel but it was still

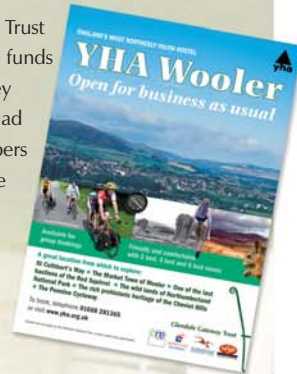
unmistakably a barrack design. The first wardens were the Cloughs who were well known for the welcome they gave to disadvantaged groups of children from Newcastle – often giving them a first introduction to country life.



Over the following 30 years the hostel continued to operate with a series of wardens coming and going and many improvements being made to the aging building. In the mid 1980s the hostel was due to close for good – but a good season and enthusiastic new wardens granted it a stay of execution. At the same time the old voluntary committee of YHA in the North of England handed control of the region to professional managers. This meant money became available for hostel upgrades. Wooler was greatly improved, with small rooms rather than large draughty dorms, and new washrooms. Over the next 20 years business was good and other improvements were made including new roofs, improved heating and draught proofing of windows. Despite Wooler being a popular and profitable hostel, by the early 21st Century it did not fit with the vision YHA had for the future of hostelling. In an effort to raise funds for the cash-strapped association, some 32 hostels were earmarked for closure in 2006.



The Glendale Gateway Trust reacted quickly to raise funds to buy the hostel as they could see the value it had for bringing large numbers of people into Glendale every year.



Left:  
The Sitting Room, 1950s.  
Background:  
The Members' Kitchen.

