

From John Martin
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Goyt Valley youth hostel

The hostel was at Errwood Hall Farm a mile or so to the north of Errwood Hall. It is now demolished. It is a fairly common misconception that the youth hostel was at Errwood Hall itself.

YHA called it Goyt Valley hostel. It was one of the very first youth hostels in this country, amongst a little knot of more than a dozen hostels that opened in time for Easter, 1931. I went for a ramble over the site of the hostel several years ago, but all I could find were a pile of stones and a bit of evidence of a farm entrance. The road sites have changed considerably in this area.

There is a complete file, listing details of every YHA youth hostel, at the YHA Archive, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham. The file, a large pdf, can be accessed and downloaded simply by Googling **Y900003**. Here is the slightly reworded relevant extract from that file:

GOYT VALLEY 1931 to 1935

Errwood Hall Farm, Goyt Valley, Buxton, Derbyshire.

Historic County: Cheshire YHA Region: Manchester
Positional note: the farm was over a mile north of Errwood Hall.

Grid reference: SK 013759

Opened Easter 1931, at first for men only [Hiker and Camper 10/1932]. There were 364 bednights in 1931 [YHA Manchester region annual report 1931].

Closed 30/9/1935, for the construction of Goyt Reservoir. The warden, Mrs J Hannam, moved to Bennetston Hall youth hostel, though there was a brief overlap of hostels.

Property profile: the land here is not submerged, but the farm has been reduced to a few scattered stones.

Reports, recollections and observations:

Up, and yet up, for the hostel stands at 1,200 feet. We were greeted by a lean woman, a thorough North Country type. Personally, I liked her; she was abrupt and definite.
Errwood Farm was, after the splendid [YHA] halls, rather primitive, an old place – how the wind moaned around the top of my bed. The warden was certainly not in sympathy with the really large hostels. I think we did more [duty] work here than at any of the mansions [Lilian 'Jane' Ash, holiday log, July 1934].

The colourised image on the Errwood Hall website is from a postcard that may have originated from the B&B days of the late 1920s, with the Dugdales, but Hannam family were the final residents; Mrs Hannam ran the youth hostel. Mr Hannam is not mentioned, but may have been part of the set-up and perhaps farmed here. In 1935 Miss Hannam helped with the running of the place. It certainly closed in 1935 for demolition, not 1934: these are the numbers of hostellers who stayed each year, according to YHA Manchester region annual reports: 1931: 364 (men only); 1932: 818; 1933: not known; 1934: 1,306; 1935: 1,454.

I have the postcard in my own collection; it was clearly sold from the youth hostel, according to comments recorded on the reverse and the date stamp.

The Hannam family moved in 1935 to the larger Bennetston Hall youth hostel, on the A623 just below Sparrowpit, Chapel-en-le-Frith, and Miss Hannam, as Mrs Hamilton, ran that place from 1945, probably up to its closure the following year. It was a much busier youth hostel than Goyt Valley, but apparently quite primitive. Details of Bennetston Hall are on the complete hostel file, and I have written an illustrated historical profile of this hostel, which may be viewed on Duncan Simpson's *Simply Hostels* website (duncanmsimpsonwriting.com).

Errwood Hall itself might conceivably have made it to youth hostel status: the Peak District had a reputation for taking old weary country houses in the 1930s and giving them a new injection of life – so many similar properties were demolished in that era. Hartington Hall, Ilam Hall, Overton Hall, Ravenstor, Leam Hall, Cliffe Park Hall (Rudyard Lake) and others were quite possibly saved from the fate of so many other properties in that decade by becoming flourishing youth hostels, though the demolition of Derwent Hall for Ladybower reservoir was already foreseen when YHA took it over, and kept it for a decade before that valley was finally flooded.



Images of Goyt Valley youth hostel from the YHA Archive

I would welcome any further historical information about any of the properties named, especially references to their use as youth hostels.