



YHA (England and Wales)  
Youth Hostel Profile

compiled by the Association's volunteer archivist, John Martin, rev2020-01-01

## Kirbymoorside [Kirkbymoorside] Youth Hostel 1933 only

The Old Workhouse, Gillamoor Road, Kir(k)bymoorside, North Yorkshire, YO62

Historic County:  
Yorkshire (North Riding)

YHA Region:  
York Central (Constituent of the later  
York, Scarborough and Hull)

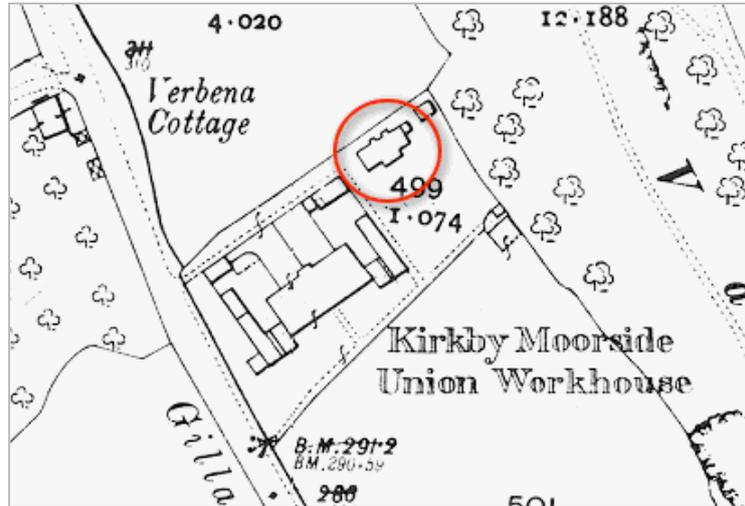
GR: SE 692870

*Note: Kirbymoorside was spelled thus in YHA references, and generally so in the pre-war years; nowadays it is Kirkbymoorside.*

The hostel was on the east side of Gillamoor Road, ½ mile north-west of the market place. Castlegate was the name of the Old Workhouse and the warden's address. It is also confusingly the name of a street near the centre of the town.

Kirkbymoorside workhouse, or institute, was built in 1850 to the design of John and William Atkinson, at a cost of £1,350. It was later enlarged at the north-east corner of the site by the addition of a red-brick isolated fever ward or infirmary to accommodate eight persons, at a cost of £200, and this is the outbuilding that became the youth hostel. It opened on 30th June or 1st July 1933. The occasion was too late for inclusion in the 1933 YHA Handbook; members had to be eagle-eyed to spot it in the printed supplement or the contemporary *Rucksack* magazine.

The opportunity arose because of a change in the responsibility for workhouses within local government at this time. It almost immediately evaporated, however, when the need for public housing over local enterprise was hurriedly promoted.



*Large scale map showing the Union Workhouse on Gillamoor Road. The infirmary outbuilding was demolished about 1984. It was the small elongated building, shown ringed. No photograph of the infirmary building has been found*

A week later the *Malton Messenger* announced:

The new Kirby Hostel was officially opened on Saturday (1st July), and was favoured by glorious weather. A party of cyclists had ridden over from Middlesboro, Scarborough sent its quota, many Kirby citizens were present, and Cambridge and Hull Universities were represented. Mr RW Stanners of Hartoft End and Cambridge University took the chair, and called upon Mr Harold Rowntree, the Regional Sec, who reviewed the history of the hostel movement in this part of the country. Mr HW Marsden, Headmaster of Scarborough Boys' High School, then formally declared the hostel open....

Another editorial from an unnamed source described the hostel as:

A very fine, solid-built place, kept scrupulously clean by the rigorous supervision of the Master and Matron... clean, well-ventilated and roomy. The chairman of Kirby RDC was Tom Bowes...

The Central York Region annual report for 1933 added:

This very excellent hostel was secured, furnished by appeal for under £30. There were 20 beds and a total of 152 bednights.

The report finished with the bad news that the hostel had closed within its first year, with great regret that the County Council had to withdraw it because of the urgent need of the Public Assistance Committee.

Further information can be found on P Higginbotham's website <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/KirkbyMoorside/>

<i>Overnights</i>									
...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	...	...	152	...	...	...	...	...	...

The infirmary outbuilding last saw use about 1984, when it was used to house dispossessed Vietnamese. An unnamed newspaper ran the following account:

An early Victorian workhouse in Kirkbymoorside had been converted by the Save the Children organisation into a reception centre for sixty Vietnamese boat people, ranging from babies to grandparents who would be arriving in North Yorkshire shortly. It would be their home for the next three months, while they took a crash course in English, learning enough to get by initially in places such as shops. They would also be found permanent homes and encouraged to find jobs in this country. Most of the refugees had spent anything up to nine months in a transit camp in Hong Kong, before coming to Britain as part of the quota of 10,000 refugees that had been agreed. Kirkbymoorside was the last of 14 homes opened by Save the Children in this country.

Some time after that, the infirmary was demolished and the workhouse converted to private residences. No illustration of the infirmary has been found. The workhouse itself is shown here in its modern guise.



1: Kirkbymoorside Union Workhouse, and behind it, 2: the cleared space once occupied by the infirmary outbuilding (author's photographs, July 2014)