



## YHA (England and Wales) Youth Hostel Profile

compiled by the Association's volunteer archivist, John Martin, 2020-01-01

### Birmingham Youth Hostels

#### Overview

YHA's first intention for a hostel in Birmingham was recorded in 1973. Midland Region saw the redundant Moseley Road Fire Station, Birmingham 12 (SP 080851) as a good prospect. The Association allocated £43,000 to this project in that year. The property was leased to YHA Trust for 20 years from Christmas Day 1975 from the City of Birmingham District Council.

The 1975 handbook advised that the hostel was not expected to open before October of that year, and the 1976 issue continued to advertise it, but rising costs of £79,600 by 1975 escalated still further and forced the region to abandon the plans by 1977. The tenancy was surrendered by 1978.

In 2013 the Old Fire Station was the headquarters of a Theatre School.

Then at last, starting in 1988 and lasting for about 8 seasons, YHA did operate a temporary hostel in the city, at Cambrian Halls, though Heathfield Hall deputised for one of those seasons.

At least three other prospects have been considered more recently by YHA, but none came to fruition.

The Spring 1999 edition of *Hostelling News* announced that a new hostel was being pursued in St Paul's Square, Birmingham (grid reference SP 065875) in association with the Bournville Village Trust.

A feasibility study for a hostel in St Peter's Urban Village, two miles east of the City at SP101874, was described in a YHA internal memo in the same year.

In August 2005, *YHA News* suggested a new operation that might be completed by 2008. This was at the former Roundhouse and Wharf site on Sheepcote Street, Birmingham B16 8AE, an attractive canalside industrial property built in 1873 and offered by British Waterways. The 'Roundhouse' horseshoe-shaped former stabling and stores is Grade II listed as are the two houses flanking the entrance. The optional former Fiddle and Bone public house and ancillary buildings adjacent are not listed but might have been considered as part of the development.

The site occupies the corner of Sheepcote Street and Vincent Street, grid reference SP 056868, and lies close to the Cambrian Halls hostel of 1988.

#### Birmingham (Cambrian Halls) Youth Hostel 1988 to 1989, 1991 to 1995 or 1996

Cambrian Halls, Brindley Drive, off Cambridge Street, Birmingham B1 2NB

Historic County:  
Warwickshire

YHA Region:  
Central

GR: SP 062870

Some ten years after the aborted Fire Station plan YHA took on a temporary summer hostel arrangement near to the city centre in the student hall of residence at Cambrian Halls, a modern unit-built block in an attractive canal-side location north-west of New Street station.

The facility was offered repeatedly up to the mid-1990s, except that it was unavailable in summer 1990 and Heathfield Hall was its replacement. Cambrian Halls hostel was available in 1995, and possibly in 1996, though it was advertised as unlikely to open in the latter year due to refurbishment.



*Cambrian Hall (sic) now belongs to University College, Birmingham (author's photographs, January 2013)*

## Birmingham (Heathfield Hall) Youth Hostel 1990 only

Heathfield Hall, Birmingham Polytechnic, Westbourne Road, Birmingham

Historic County:  
Warwickshire

YHA Region:  
Central

GR: SP 052855

In 1990 Heathfield Hall, another student hall of residence, was a seasonal hostel substitute for the unavailable Cambrian Halls. It opened on 9th July, closing after 11 weeks on 21st September of that year.

<i>Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows</i>									
<i>1988-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-1996: Mar to following Feb</i>									
<i>Δ: Cambrian Halls; ♣: Heathfield Hall</i>									
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	openΔ	1815Δ
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
1665♣	1568Δ	1924Δ	1920Δ	1924Δ	openΔ	?Δ	...	...	...

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