

St David's Youth Hostels

St David's Head [Ffynnon Faiddog] Youth Hostel 1950 to 1972

Ffynnon Faiddog, St David's, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire

Historic County: Pembrokeshire

YHA Region: South Wales

GR: SM 739271

In the 1930s and 1940s there had been almost no development of youth hostels in South West Wales, though there were a few false starts in the late 1940s. In 1950 all that changed. It was an exceptionally busy year for YHA's South Wales region, especially in coastal areas, with new hostels springing up at Port Eynon and Cilibion (Gower) and Hodgston Hill and Poppit Sands (Pembrokeshire). Between the latter pair was a third, St David's Head youth hostel.

Ffynnon Faiddog, a small dormer-windowed cottage with useful outbuildings, opened on 1st April, 1950, a full week before Easter. It lay just over two miles northwest of the tiny city of St David's and half a mile from the Atlantic coast at Whitesands Bay. YHA's tenancy was presumably short term, as the first on record was for 10 years from 29th September 1951, £104pa payable in six-monthly instalments to *Miss Elizabeth Evans and others*. The hostel was vested in the YHA Trust on 4th January 1952. There were 30 beds and the warden provided meals.



The little cottage at Ffynnon Faiddog in its early YHA days. The character at the road gate may well have been the warden. Carn Llidi stands proud behind, a sentinel over each St David's hostel in turn (photograph R Day, YHA Archive)

YHA members got a taste for out-of-the-way youth hostels through a running series, *Hostel Close-Up*, in *Rucksack Magazine* (later *Youth Hosteller*). Series number 23, *St David's*, appeared in *Rucksack* for January/February 1954:

St David's had been searched for many years for a suitable hostel property. In 1950 a cottage was discovered at Ffynnon Ffaeddog [sic], 600 yards from Whitesands Bay and two miles from the village 'city'. The accommodation was not ideal – one small cottage with outbuildings – but it had a roof and four walls.

The cottage was made to house the common room, members' kitchen and warden's quarters, whilst the stables and pigsty were turned into quite comfortable, if rather unusual, dormitories. Various alterations have been made since and this winter it is hoped, amongst other things, to improve the members' kitchen facilities.

St David's is in the centre of the recently designated Pembrokeshire National Park and is in the midst of some of the finest seascape country in Britain, a paradise for the botanist and bird-watcher. On a clear day the view from Carn Llidi, the hill behind the hostel, extends from Snowdonia to the Irish Coast and the Brecon Beacons.

The village of St David's has been a place of pilgrimage for over eight hundred years. Here St David, the Patron Saint of Wales, was born in 460 AD and the casket containing his remains may still be seen in the cathedral, founded in 1180 to commemorate his life.



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ST. DAVIDS HEAD YOUTH HOSTEL, PEMBROKESHIRE



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The hostel's outbuildings are seen in a variety of configurations and conditions in a number of images by Pat Packham.

1: the hostel in the early days before the triangle sign was moved from above the door. A substantial timber hut with ornamental bargeboards lies to the west of the cottage; 2: the triangle has been moved to the roadside for better visibility. Its shadow can still be seen above the front door. The hut has been removed, revealing a flat-roofed stone building on the left; 3: other huts, apparently newer, are now visible in the grounds. These may be the 1959 improvements referred to below; 4: postcard of the hostel from the east, with a view to Whitesands Bay. The lean-to and huts at the rear are clearly visible; 5: a delightful period piece: Hostellers are welcome after (enlarged for emphasis) 5.00pm (YHA Archive)

Throughout the life of the hostel the warden's quarters were offered few comforts: the living room and bedroom were upstairs in the cottage, under a sloping attic roof. There was no mains drainage so an Elsan closet was provided outside. Brian Green resigned the wardenship in 1953, after which Mr R Hawkins and Miss EM Payne stood in temporarily for a season or so. A new history began with the appointment of Miss Wynn Roberts in 1954 or 1955. Former South Wales regional secretary Dave Matthews recently described her *as once met never forgotten*.

Pat Packham's logs of her Welsh visits are invaluable to the YHA Archive. In August 1953 she visited the relatively new hostel during a holiday in West Wales by bicycle and rail runabout ticket, and observed:

I cycled from Mathry Road Station to St David's Youth Hostel. The warden, who had a beard, was a Cambridge University student [probably Mr Green or Mr Hawkins] and at first I mistook him for one of the hostellers.

Amenities gradually improved from rustic to basic in the first decade. In 1954 the hostel benefited from the provision of a new members' kitchen (thought to be the lean-to on the right side of the cottage) and the full realisation of the plan, expressed in the previous year's annual report, to replace primus stoves with calor gas at all the region's hostels.

In 1955 serious gales required extensive repairs. They were a constant source of damage at hostels on the Welsh and Cornish Atlantic seaboard. New men's lavatories were built and the warden's quarters improved by the provision of dormer windows. Further modernisation came with the installation of electricity at *Ffynnon Faiddog* in 1958. More new washrooms and women's latrines followed in 1959. Two years later improvements included the completion of dormitory porches (attached to outbuildings) and the provision of new drying rooms.



Left: a 1960s one-inch pin badge. This hostel was sometimes called St David's Head (author's collection)

FOR SALE St. David 1959

Shop is open between 5.0 p.m. and 7.0 p.m. and
9.15 p.m. and 10.0 p.m.

Please make all your purchases at the same time.
GOODS CANNOT BE SOLD IN THE MORNING.

<u>SOUPS</u>	TOMATO OKTAIL MUSHROOM	11d. & 1/3
<u>MEATS</u>	MINCE BEEF LOAF	2/-
	LUNCHEON MEAT	1/1
	STEAK & KIDNEY PUDDING	2/2
	ROAST BEEF & 2 VEG.	2/4
	STEWED STEAK	1/8 & 2/10
	SAUSAGE & BEANS	1/3
	HAMBURGERS & BEANS	1/2
<u>FISH</u>	PINK SALMON	2/4
	SARDINES	1/3
	PILCHARDS	1/2
	FISH PASTE	1/3
<u>VEG.</u>	BAKED BEANS	8d. & 1/-
	SAUSAGE & BEANS	1/3
	HAMBURGERS & BEANS	1/2
	SPAGHETTI & TOMATO	8d
	BUTTER BEANS	1/-
	BROAD BEANS	1/6
	GARDEN PEAS	1/2
	TINNED TOMATOES	8d. & 1/-
<u>FRUIT</u>	MANDARIN ORANGES	1/5
	PINEAPPLE	1/3 & 1/9
	PEACHES	2/-
	PEARS	2/-
	APRICOTS	2/-
	EVAP. MILK	8d
	JAM	1/-
	MARMALADE, 8 oz.	11d
	RIVITA	1/1
	CORNFLAKES	4d
	MARGARINE	
	TEA BAGS	1½d each
	CHEESE	(2½d per portion 1/3 per box
	DIGESTIVE BISCUITS	11½ per packet

Milk can be bought at Mr. Evans's farm. Go down hill
towards sea, take first turn right then keep left
till you arrive at the farm. Not before milking at 6.30pm

A delightful snapshot in time is this St David's Head hostel shop price list of 1959. Many a meal of exploding steak and kidney pudding tin or burnt beans and sausages would have been sourced in this way. You couldn't go wrong with a tin of mandarin oranges, that is, if you could find a working tin opener. Note the shop time restrictions and the availability of milk from the local farm, but not before milking at 6.30pm (YHA Archive)

St David's Head hostel continued to develop through the 1960 and was an increasingly popular destination despite, or maybe because of, its simplicity and cramped site. The tenancy would be up for renewal in 1971, but Winnie Roberts' illness in 1968 was supported by the appointment of a locum warden. A short-term consequence of the illness was that YHA took on responsibility for repairs. Longer term, however, YHA began to rethink the future, a process that would take until 1972 to resolve. Nevertheless, the regional council agreed in July of 1968 that their intention was to renew the lease. A request of £200 for flush toilets and hot water supply was held over until 1969-70. In March 1969 an enigmatic note explained that the warden wished to sell the assistant's hut for £60 including fittings, and a fridge for £15-20 (both presumably to YHA). Later that year a regional memo described how every effort was being made to improve standards here, hence the relatively high expenditure on equipment renewals. An impending financial problem however was the greatly increased rental.

There were presentations for Mrs Roberts when she retired in 1970. Dick Murrell took up the post. There were still only chemical toilets for members, however, and the region agreed that toilet and washroom improvements were a high priority, hoping that YHA's National Finance committee would chip in with an enhancement scheme. Though such help was refused almost immediately, the region determined to seek advice from a local builder. By April washbasins had been installed in washrooms but hot water was not yet connected, nor had planned improvements to the warden's quarters and kitchen been completed. Things took a historic turn when the landlord's request for rent renewal, now more than tripled to £364pa, was weighed against an alternative local farm property, *Llaethdy*, owned by the National Trust and newly available for lease. The regional committee agreed that negotiations towards acquiring this option be vigorously pursued. It was not to be so simple.

In October 1971 National Finance expressed disapproval of a full repairing lease for the new hostel and requested that the regional secretary renegotiate. If more than £400pa were required, it would recommend that the *Llaethdy* scheme be dropped, but by November the owners had agreed to modify the lease's full-repairing clause. A local farmer would be responsible for making good any abnormal wear and tear of the long drive. A cautionary note was that possession of the new property was not guaranteed until 25 March 1972.

St. David's - Non Ministry Standards,
Simple Grade.

Improvements at this Hostel are very urgently required for 3 main reasons:-

A.1. improvements will raise the grade from simple to standard increasing income by at least £160 per year.
A.2. the toilet facilities are unacceptable, particularly for the warden.
A.3. the common room, dining room and members' kitchen are all inadequate.
A.4. the usage rate is high - 108.
A.5. the Warden's quarters are small and in need of improvement. It would also be worthwhile to:-

B.1. increase the number of beds to 36.
B.2. construct a separate dining room that could be used by school parties for evening work.
B.3. establish family accommodation - 2 units.

With the following in mind, it is suggested that the following be considered:-

1970/71. C.1. Retain the garage, toilet and washroom block. Improve washrooms and instal flush toilets and septic tank. Cost say £480. Urgent.

1970/71. C.2. Open up present dining room and Common Room into one room. This will eventually make a satisfactory Common Room. Cost £5.

1970/71. C.3. Instal toilet for Warden in main building. Cost say £5-Urgent.

1971/72. C.4. Build block at back of cottage, to provide new dining room, a sitting room for the Warden and members' kitchen, retaining existing M.K. as passageway and Warden's store. Cost £3,000.

1972/73. C.5. Establish Family Accommodation Units. Cost £600.

1972/73. C.6. Replace small dormitory huts with modern unit housing an extra 6 beds. Cost £2,000.

This property is held on lease until 29.9.81.

Just before the move from Ffynnon Faiddog was fixed, YHA had been assessing the need for major improvements there, as outlined above, but they were not to be. Note however that on this regional memo of late 1970 the tenancy had just been renewed for ten years. Presumably this was later cancelled (YHA Archive)



This cheerful postcard of Ffynnon Faiddog hostel looks towards Whitesands Bay and was probably produced towards the end of operations here (author's collection)

By the beginning of 1972 National YHA accepted the conditions of lease for *Llaethdy*; notification of termination of tenancy had been given to the landlords at *Ffynnon Faiddog*, who required that the premises there had to be vacated by 15th April 1972, the warden relinquishing the post on handover. That was still not the end of the story.

Early in 1972 it became evident that, with an impending expiry date at YHA's first St David's hostel, possession of the second could not be taken until later in the year, with the loss of a busy summer season of trade. In a hurried reversal, with the agreement of YHA's National Treasurer and Accountant, an offer of up to £5,000 to purchase the original hostel was to be made, and was being negotiated late in June.

In April 1972 Hedley Alcock visited and prepared a regional hostel standards report on *Ffynnon Faiddog*; his assessment shows that the future was even yet far from clear:

St David's has long flourished as a pleasant simple hostel under the wardenship of Miss Roberts, who retired recently. The new warden clearly has the hostel well under control, and everywhere is neat, clean and tidy. *Ffynnon Faiddog* is a compact hostel, with a long narrow member's kitchen but with good facilities for the size of the hostel. There is a small but adequate dining room and a very compact cosy common room.

The dormitories, wash place and toilets are all outside, simple but adequate. Odd beds etc could do with replacement. Improvements are in hand to the washing facilities; the toilets are of the Elsan type. It is noted that many members 'pop down the road' (about 200 yards) to the modern flush toilets situated just off Whitesands Bay. At the time of writing the future of *Ffynnon Faiddog* is not certain.

With National approval for the purchase of the original hostel received, it was essential that obtaining planning permission for future development here be obtained before acquisition of the property could be finalised. None of this came to fruition. The outcome from these deliberations was that YHA was able to extend the lease at *Ffynnon Faiddog* (it had terminated on 29th September 1971), but pressed on with the *Llaethdy* project. The last use of the little cottage hostel was in early October 1972. Allan and Jean Turton took over from Dick Murrell for the last few months at the original site and moved to the new. The property was finally completely vacated in November 1972. The YHA South Wales annual report published in mid-1972 expressed an opinion that with no great modification *Llaethdy* would, in turn, provide improvements, but it had been a close-run thing.

St David's [Llaethdy] Youth Hostel 1972 or 1973 to present

Llaethdy, St David's, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA62 6PR

Historic County: Pembrokeshire

YHA Regions: South Wales, Wales

GR: SM 739277



While one St David's operation was finishing in 1972, another was already well under way with planning, though it would have been complicated by the changes of direction outlined above. *Llaethdy*, a good-sized farmhouse, consists of two conjoined cottages. The place was described as a potato farm, but among its substantial outbuildings were a dairy and a granary, both suggesting a more diverse agriculture. Indeed, the farm name translates from Welsh as 'Milk House'. These outbuildings offered extra accommodation potential.

YHA was due to hold a meeting at both St David's sites in February 1972 and to take possession of *Llaethdy* on 25th March. The lease's delay referred to previously was due to a sitting tenant whose new home would not be ready immediately; the region cancelled a working party booked for Easter in consequence. In August YHA sought to use a spare storeroom here for equipment from the outgoing hostel; this would save taking it all the way to Llanddeusant hostel. Until the new lease was signed, a greater inconvenience still would be for any incoming manager to be quartered temporarily in the family room at Corris hostel, almost 100 miles away, as was initially suggested. The outcome for the warden during this interim period is not known.



Photographs of the early years at Llaethdy by well-travelled hostellers.

1: George Miller recorded the hostel in 1975; 2: in John Watts' view of 1977, the granary stands to the left and hardly suggests its present-day usefulness. Hidden from view on the right is the dairy dormitory (author's collection)

The property was leased for 21 years from 29th September 1972 from the National Trust. Allan Turton, the transferred manager, opened up the hostel on 15th October 1972, according to a regional memo. It is not clear from the wording if this opening was one of initial possession by YHA or the first stay by hostellers, though members with time on their hands could always be found a job or two in preparing hostels at this time. The move was of less than a mile, several left turns along back roads and a straggly, stony lane. The two properties overlapped by a week or so.

Allan Turton and Bob Powell, a Pembrokeshire-based volunteer responsible for so much of YHA's development in the area, started work on establishing *Llaethdy*. The farmhouse was not yet vacant but the outbuildings were available and some equipment had been moved into them including the wooden huts from *Ffynnon Faiddog*. In November Powell helped draw up plans for the new hostel to be increased to its full 40 beds with some limited facilities for off-season use by Field Study groups. The ambitious though thwarted plans for *Ffynnon Faiddog* were effectively transferred to *Llaethdy*; they too would require time and considerable modification. The initial works were paid for from regional funds. A priority was soon agreed: a better path should be laid without delay.

The farm stands under Carn Llidi, two miles northwest of the tiny cathedral city of St David's, at the end of minor roads and a stone track. The hostel consists of a quartet or more of stone farm buildings, principally the south-facing former farmhouse and attached cottage. As approached from St David's, a two-storey granary lies to the left and a low dairy building to the right, before the farmhouse is reached. There are two other substantial outbuildings, a smaller one on the right before the dairy building is reached (this may have been the 6-bed number 3 dormitory referred to below) and another, larger, behind the farmhouse. This too may have been used in a basic way in the early years and was possibly the subject of an expensive, if unrealised, expansion scheme later on.

A regional hostel report by roving YHA inspector CA Parrott gave a fascinating description not only of the new hostel's layout but also the rather basic minimum-cost nature of hostel conversions that many came to see as the real attraction of YHA at the time, not least in the widespread little hostels of Wales:

Presently Simple Grade – Recommended Simple. Previous hostel's bednights: 3,500.

St David's opened in April 1973 [perhaps its official opening, in the light of a previous comment]. It is not the previous St David's but an entirely new building, or rather old farmhouse, on lease from the National Trust. The 3,500 bednights of the hostel's predecessor, a Simple hostel of a fairly basic type, indicates the potential.

A building in the process of establishment. There is the main house which at present houses the warden, the Members' Kitchen, Common Room, Dining Room and round the back, the women's wash and WC. Presently, there are three outhouses (and these really are outhouses) being used for dormitories and the men's wash.

It is difficult to make any constructive remarks on a hostel so much in embryo. No. 1 Dorm is a converted cow barn with the minimum of conversion. Here are still the animal stalls (one for each double bunk), the feeding trough, excellent for rucksacks, and the sump ways. Only the smell has gone. There are innumerable holes in the door and between the walls and roof. The place would be arctic in winter with a gale in the bay. But it seems to delight many as it is.

Dorm 2, called the Granary, is above the cycle shed. A little overcrowded – 22sq ft per bedspace. No. 3 Dorm down the yard holds 6 beds at present and could take another double bunk. The three WC s, one for women and two for men, are contained in two ablutions. One of the WCs in the men's hasn't a door. The women's wash has a hot tap and a bench for plastic bowls. The men's, slightly larger, is similarly furnished except for the hot tap. The members' kitchen is far too small for the 20 or 30 hostellers who are using St David's most days of the week in summer. No food storage space. No hand towel.

The CommonRoom has poor lighting, no curtains, lino covered floor and a small carpet, all of a sadly dilapidated appearance. The Dining Room barely seats 24 and is also the dining room for self-cookers, there being no other. All in all a very basic Simple hostel but there are plans for a much more organised and well-furnished future. It remains Simple and we must see what the future will bring.

The hostel recorded a loss early in 1974, attributed to the high rent. The region requested significant improvements via YHA's National Finance funds, a process started in 1974 and developed later that year with proposals submitted by R Powell costing at £14,330. The warden was to be asked if he would undertake some of the work; he certainly helped to finish the self-caterers' facilities. The region always monitored finances very strictly, especially with their distinctive policy of many small hostels on its patch. In 1974 St David's, like the majority of local hostels, entered the 'non-VAT' scheme, painstakingly and ingeniously set up to minimise cost rises to hostellers.

By late 1975 the region put a detailed scheme, now estimated at £16,100, to the national YHA to upgrade the facilities from Simple to Standard. Fire precaution requirements would be a priority. A regional memo stated that the 4,968 overnights there in that year had placed too much strain on the facilities and that beds would be reduced to 30 until the completion of adaptations, a proposal carried out from 1975 to 1977. Among the plans were improved warden's accommodation, an assistant's room, a larger dining room and new wash up, a newly adapted common room and members' kitchen and dining room, a new cycle shed and drying room, a new dormitory with adjoining washroom, shower and WCs all by creative use of available buildings. The plan required new beds and bedding. A family unit of four beds and a cot would be on its own, away from the hostel buildings. This suggested a modern cedar building such as at Poppit Sands or St Athan. These ambitions seemed a far cry from the experience of cyclist Chris Downes, who stayed here in 1975 and wrote in his holiday log:

...classed as a simple YH which I think was a bit of an overstatement. We slept in a stable and girls in a cowshed. Peter had begun to get worried about standards of the hostels – Superior, Standard, Simple and now what he classed Basic or Primitive. That evening we played cards with some girls from a convent and every now and then a teacher would pop in and out with a different excuse every time.



Though this photograph of the 'converted cow barn' dormitory dates from as late as 2004, it shows well the ingenious layout of bunk beds positioned between the cow stalls as existed at the hostel from its opening. All was modernised within a year or two (YHA Archive)

Over the winter of 1976-77 the region's executive committee was still seeking a grant from the national body for the members' kitchen overhaul; there were many such frustrations. It was outlined in another regional memo that the warden's accommodation and fire precaution work might be divided up: £1,500 from the national body, £150 from the region, general adaptations in the ratio of £2,400 and £1,600 and equipment £2,064 and £686. Warden Allan Turton helped to finish the self-caterers' facilities. There are few details yet found that pinpoint which early improvements to St David's new hostel were realised and which frustrated.

Allan and Jean Turton stayed until the end of the 1970s, helping to establish a substantial increase in annual overnights over the previous hostel. A record to date of almost 4,700 was set in 1975, though results could fluctuate rather wildly. Their hostel expanded again to 40 beds in 1978.

Allan Turton was to be asked if he would undertake some of the work; he certainly helped to finish the self-caterers' facilities. The region always monitored finances very strictly, especially with their distinctive policy of many small hostels on its patch. In 1974 St David's, like the majority of local hostels, entered the 'non-VAT' scheme, painstakingly and ingeniously set up to minimise cost rises to hostellers.

Glenda Fisher stood in briefly in 1980 before the arrival of Mr and Mrs Davies, who stayed for over 20 years, bringing the hostel right through to the new century. For the first few years, one or other of Anne and Peter Davies was the sole appointed warden, though probably with a degree of unpaid support from each partner, a common situation in YHA at the time. They were soon being congratulated on results. A hostel revenue account up to the end of September 1981 put St David's profit at £1,548 after stoppages. It ranked as 5th of the region's 33 youth hostels for profitability.



A far-reaching change came in 1982. South Wales region was an enthusiastic advocate of specialised family hostel units in the last quarter of the twentieth century. They were established at Poppit Sands, Corris, St Athan, Bryn Poeth Uchaf and elsewhere and turned a part of the accommodation into a dedicated suite of rooms, where a family, free to come and go, could enjoy a segregated holiday for a week or more, so long as an under-5 was part of the group. Almost ten years after *Llaethdy* opened, it was included in the scheme. The smaller cottage attached to the right-hand side of the farmhouse was configured to provide one self-contained unit of lounge, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom sufficient to house a family of five plus cot for a baby. The maximum weekly charge in 1982 was £65. The arrangement lasted until 1995, when strictures governing who could use the suite were relaxed.

In the summer of 1982 the Buildings Maintenance committee described how the hostel was in excellent condition, improving all the time. Though the dining room and members' kitchen were still awaiting improvements, the Executive Committee minutes for January 1984 confidently outlined £550 for them and a huge £30,000 for the planned conversion of the back building. Whether this meant the farmstead or the large barn to the rear of it is not clear. About this time, Peter Davies was appointed as the regional maintenance man, ensuring a sustainable wage for the couple, but leaving Anne as the single appointment warden.

From its beginning, *Llaethdy* hostel had provided a meals service, but towards the end of 1993, a time when YHA was reviewing its catering provision at many of its smaller hostels, a decision was made to change the operation at St David's to self-catering only.

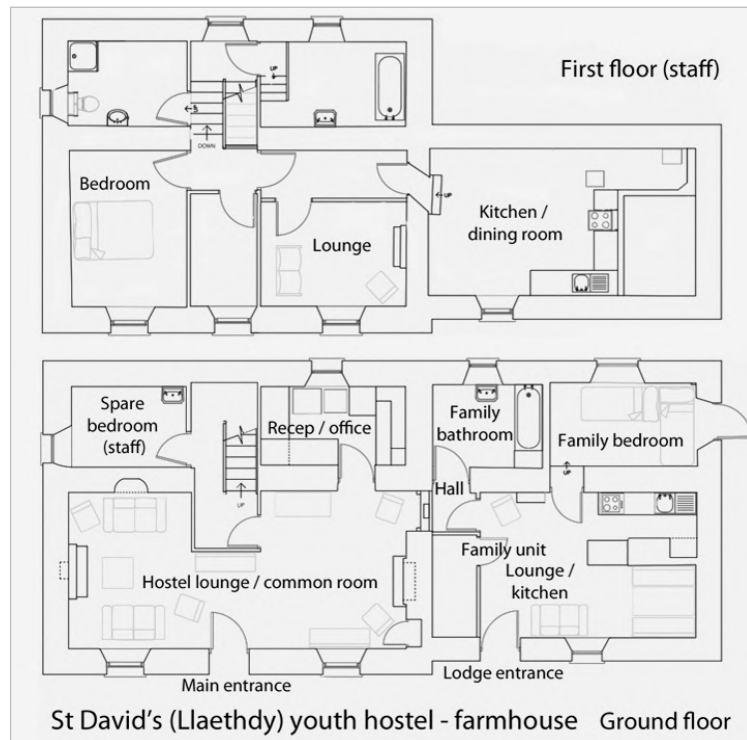
In the late 1990s St David's hostel was providing traditional simple accommodation in two 12-bed dormitories and one 16-bed. Additionally, the former family unit was now a 4-person self-contained unit, allowing flexibility with logistics. It could be used as a family bunk room, or for Rent-a-Hostel purposes, out-of-season stays and so on.



Llaethdy youth hostel, St David's, under the impressive Carn Llidi or Lidau (author's photographs, 2007)

A frank YHA internal memo of June 2001 noted that St David's hostel was currently under review as to how it would be operated in future; it described the situation then as unsustainable and the quality very poor. Overnights that had risen to a remarkable 6,200 in 1987 had slipped to under 4,000. St David's hostel was in need of major investment, a blessing it has received it twice in the 21st century. A small start on modernising the facilities came in 2000, with the reduction of one 12-bed dormitory to 8-bed. Anne Davies remained in charge of the hostel up to at least 2003.

The first of the major refurbishments came in 2005-06 and concentrated on the dairy building. An entirely new layout of modern small bedrooms was created here: five 2-bedded rooms and two 4-bedded, along with modern toilet, wash and shower facilities. The dairy was fitted with a new self-catering kitchen to replace the cramped facility in the granary. Other more minor changes were applied at this time to the granary building, which retained its old-fashioned 8-bed dormitory, and to the farmhouse and cottage, where the warden's quarters were tidied up across the top floor. The manager about this time was Paul Tipple. Jeff Evans was in post from about 2010 to 2014.



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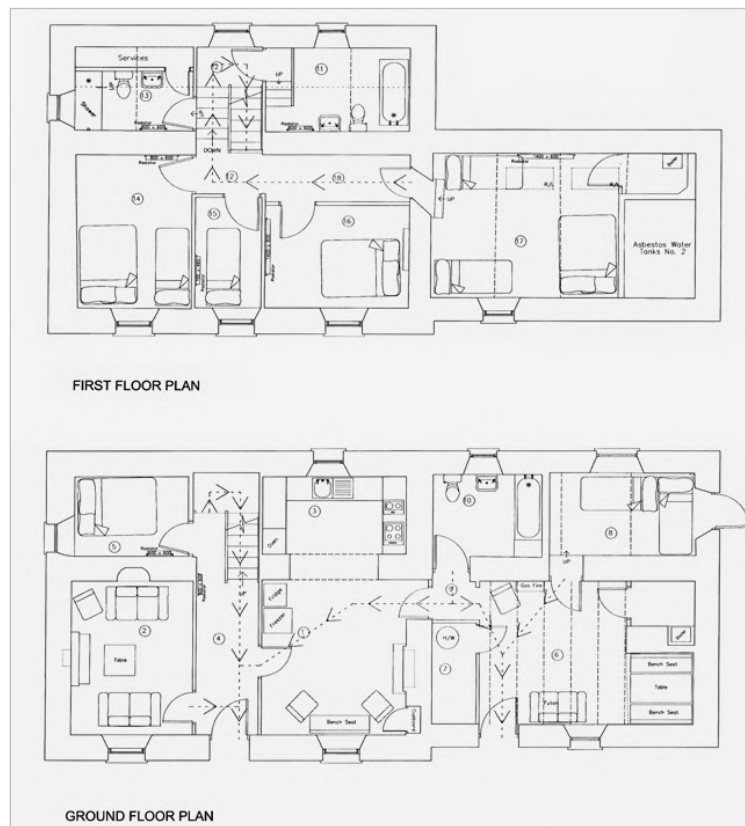


1: plan of the arrangements at the farmhouse and adjoining cottage before the major changes of 2016. Note the two unconnected parts on the ground floor, with guest lounge, common room and reception front left and private area of reception and small assistant's bedroom behind. On the right was the family unit, 'the Lodge'. On the upper floor were the manager's quarters. The interconnection is stepped between the two areas, as the cottage is much smaller and lower in scale;

2-5: more photographs by the author. 2: the dairy outbuilding in 2007, newly renovated and fitted out;

3: the same building in 2015. Outside seating and picnic tables make for a pleasant spot in the sun; 4&5: the granary in 2007. Its ground floor, shown here, had functioned for decades as the hostel's cramped self-catering kitchen and dining space. On the top floor it still housed the reputedly uncomfortable dormitory for eight men, served by outside stone steps

YHA undertook a second, much more far-reaching, renovation in 2016-17. This was prompted in part by a new agreement with National Trust that necessitated YHA's surrender of one of its Pembrokeshire hostels, Marloes Sands, to maintain more securely the other, St David's. From 2015 YHA St David's had been run as a subsidiary location to Broad Haven with Claire Daniels as site manager, but after the very successful renovation of the hostel it was thought essential to have it fully managed once more, with Claire in post. This refurbishment concentrated on putting the farmhouse at the disposal of guests. The house and cottage lost the manager's flat on the upper floor and the reception facilities on the lower. In their place are a variety of new bedrooms ranging from one with a single bed to rooms with double beds and a family room. Off the stair well there are new guest toilets and a shower. On the ground floor is a brand-new extra guests' kitchen, modern dining facilities and a small lounge area. There is a further en suite bedroom with sitting area, the location of the original family accommodation. The provision of the second modern kitchen at St David's is one of the most generous in YHA and makes the layout here particularly flexible for guests. It is backed up by the major reconfiguration of the dairy from ten years beforehand, but with the original large kitchen area modernised. Picnic tables outside offer more flexibility. The hostel has been redecorated throughout. 31 beds (34 including the double beds) are now provided in the farmhouse and the dairy.



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1: plan of the arrangements at the farmhouse and adjoining cottage after the major changes of 2017. Note the new guests' kitchen in the ground floor central position (the 'empty space' below it is the dining area), and the newly-pierced access to this area from the en suite Lodge, right. The stairs, for so long private territory, now provide guest access to bedrooms;
 2: the stylish modern kitchen in the farmhouse; 3: comfortable eating and relaxing space
 (YHA Archive)



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6

1-3: the Granary, gutted and much improved during the 2018 refurbishment. The manager now lives out, and the old 8-bed men's dorm upstairs has given way to two staff bedrooms, one for visiting volunteer managers and one for team members. The lean-to area below has been refitted as the hostel reception. The small kitchen downstairs is now for staff (1-3: YHA Archive); 4-6: Memories. The cluster of buildings under Carn Llidi sparkled in the sunshine during a pleasant stay in July, 2019, a year in which St David's hostel broke all records; 4: The farmhouse, Lodge cottage and Dairy, all typically Welsh but offering much variety; 5&6: the two outermost barn outbuildings, now used as stores that may have had a part in early plans – 5, behind the Lodge and to the north, is a very substantial barn, while 6 lies to the south and may have been 'Dorm no 3'. To the right of the rear barn a footpath leads to the top of Carn Llidi and spectacular coastal views (4-6: author's photographs)



St David's welcome (author's photograph, July 2019)

Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows
1950-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-present: Mar to following Feb
 ♣: Ffynon Faiddog Hostel; Δ: Llaethdy Hostel
 *: 17 month period; +: notional figure included for exclusive hire and/or camping

1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1738♣	1858♣	1913♣	1747♣	1588♣	2035♣	2369♣	1589♣	2007♣	2370♣
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
2223♣	2621♣	2396♣	2337♣	2520♣	2688♣	2348♣	2974♣	2469♣	2923♣
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
3263♣	3512♣	3526♣	3177Δ	4396Δ	4698Δ	3342Δ	3998Δ	4061Δ	3867Δ
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
4478Δ	4624Δ	4328Δ	4612Δ	5182Δ	5539Δ	5683Δ	6273Δ	5695Δ	5519Δ
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
5885Δ	5709Δ	5340*Δ	4830Δ	3709Δ	4705Δ	3785Δ	3650Δ	3933Δ	3556Δ
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
3199Δ	2533Δ	3201Δ	3441Δ	3328Δ	2614Δ	3691Δ	4250Δ	3535Δ	2925Δ
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
3380Δ	4119+Δ	4460+Δ	3985+Δ	3927+Δ	4929+Δ	4325+Δ	4977+Δ	5832+Δ	6727+Δ

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