

Y'S RETIRED OF THE UK

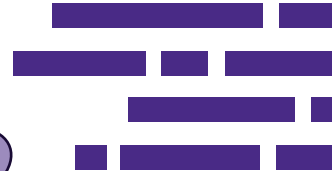


**AFFILIATED TO THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP
OF YMCA RETIREES**

AUTUMN - 2024 | WWW.YSRETIRED.UK



President's Ponderings



PRESIDENT

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SEASONAL GREETINGS!

We have just returned from a visit to the Westonbirt Arboretum near Tetbury in Gloucestershire. It is a wonderful place to visit at any time of year with its collection of 1200 trees spread over 600 acres, but it is especially worth a visit in the autumn when the autumnal colours are at their best. Particularly spectacular are the Japanese Maples which become bright red before their leaves fall. Whilst New England in the USA is noted for its 'Fall Colors', Westonbirt and places like it are good alternatives!

The Autumn Colours, wherever they are, remind us of the ever-changing seasons of life. The changing of seasons is both a time of a sense of loss for what has been and anticipation for what will be! The reds and golds of autumn make us nostalgic for the warmth of the now past summer sun whilst, at the same time, they are perhaps preparing us for the cosiness a winter in front of the fire that is yet to come!

Retirement is a similar season of beauty! On the one hand we have the gift of relaxation from the pressures of working life which gives us space and opportunity to look back and remember over 'the good old days' whilst we are also able to look ahead to times to be shared with family and friends in new ways.

Retirement is not the end of things but a new stage along the journey of life and it is a journey during which we can enrich each other with a friendly message or (where possible) meet up among friends and colleagues who make up Y's Retired.

It would be great to have more of us to share our journeys with, so do please encourage those whom you know to join us. Enjoy the season!

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FROM THE YMCA ARCHIVES

The YMCA Archives at Birmingham University's Cadbury Library have recently completed the digitisation of 388 items relating to the YMCA and World War 2 which we hope will be of use during the 80th anniversary celebrations of the end of the war in 2025.

We have also received a digital copy of a booklet about the Mobile Canteens featuring a number of pictures of the tea cars and their staff and users. If you would like an e mail copy, please contact Graham Clarke at julia-graham@talk21.com.

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NOTICE FROM YMCA PENSION AND ASSURANCE PLAN (DB SCHEME)

On 1st July 2024 the Plan changed its Actuary and Administrator to Broadstone Corporate Benefits Ltd. Pension Plan members should now contact Broadstone for any queries in connection with their pension. Broadstone's contact details can be found below.

Broadstone has launched its online portal, Engage, to pensioner members, and has written to them all with access details. Please let Broadstone know if you have not received this communication.

Richard Lock has been re-elected as a Member Nominated Trustee Director. We are always on the look-out for new Trustee Directors. Please contact Gwynne Jarvis if you are interested in becoming a Trustee Director.

Information on the YMCA Pension Plan can be found on the website at www.pensionsymca.org.uk which does not require any password to access it.

To help with the ongoing administration, it is important to let the YMCA Pension Plan Administrator know of any changes to your circumstances, such as change of address. You can do this by contacting YMCA Pension and Assurance Plan, c/o Broadstone Corporate Benefits Limited, 23 -25 St George's Road, Bristol, BS1 5UU."

Email address: YMCA@broadstone.co.uk

Telephone number: 0117 937 8700

A reminder of a date for the diary in 2025

Thursday October 16th is the date set for the next Taunton lunch which will be again at the Great Western Hotel.

A date for the next Cambridge meeting is currently being worked on and details should be available in the next edition.

A reminder of the new Y's Retired updated website - www.ysretired.uk

If you are happy to share your own e-mail address with fellow members, please send an e-mail to Vic giving permission to share it in a future newsletter.

Houses I Have Built with the Bricks I've Dropped

Mary McGinty has provided us with a copy of Ewart Chorley's little book, subtitled 'A collection of odd odes, random rhymes, song lyrics and poems, written while serving with the YMCA in B.L.A (France), B.A.O.R. (Germany) and B.T.A. (Austria). Whilst some of the contents will appear in future newsletters, this comes as a timely reminder of not only the contribution the YMCA made in two World Wars, but also the diverse services offered to government departments and other organisations over the years which many YMCA retirees will remember. Ewart's Preface gives a flavour of the context of what it was like to work for the YMCA during and after the Second World War, something I suspect that none of our current membership will have experienced.

"The whole thing began in 1944 when serving with the British Liberation Army as the YMCA Area Secretary, Normandy. When the YMCA moved into Germany in 1945, I was posted to 1st Corp. District H.Q. Iserlohn, as Area Secretary Westphalia and the Ruhr. During my 2 years in this post, I started and edited the monthly 1st Corp District News Sheet. If I was short of material for a particular month, I would recall some incident or remark I had seen or heard during my travels round the district, get the 'muse' to work and so fill up an empty column in the paper. This continued in subsequent postings, augmented by joining the Klagenfurt Garrisons Amateur Dramatic and Opera Society and collaborating with the producer Major Bill Tarks in writing a number of sketches and also 2 Pantomimes."

From quite a large body of work what is in this book is what survived in my archives. Most were written in a hurry to catch a deadline, all written with a sense of fun and gentle leg-pulling with 'my tongue in my cheek' humour.

Ewart will be known to some of us as he worked for the YMCA in various positions into the 1970's before retiring. I am sure he would have been pleased and amused that his work will continue to serve its purpose in the newsletters of a different generation of former YMCA employees.

Skegness Memories

The National Council of YMCAs ran a series of holiday centres around the country. In the 1970s these were: Lowestoft, Rhyl, Eastbourne, Torquay, Skegness and Shanklin on the Isle of Wight.

As a student in the late 1970s, I worked as the programme manager at Skegness during my summer vacations in 1978 and 1979. The centre at Skegness, called Woodside, primarily catered for families and couples, mainly from the Midlands area of England, but also further afar.

I remember that the Manager was a George Hart and his father Walter was the first Manager. George had also worked at the holiday centre in Lowestoft. Most people stayed for either one or two weeks and accommodation was in either twin/double rooms or family rooms. Meals were full board for the whole week.

Every morning started with morning prayers which the staff led. We always asked if anybody had a birthday, and we would then sing happy birthday to them. On one occasion I was leading the prayers and asked the question. There were a group of children staying with Nuns from Nazareth House, and one young girl stuck her hand up. I invited her onto the stage, and we sang happy birthday. The Nuns looked puzzled and afterwards came up to me to explain that the little girl had thought I had asked if anyone was named Murphy. I guess it was my Glaswegian accent.

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There tended to be a set programme of activities each evening, including: Ballroom dancing, Bingo, Fancy Dress and a Games evening. The centre had an activity room where guests could play pool, table tennis, darts, and various table games. There was also an outdoor putting green, and a lawn where bowls, cricket, five a side football and other games could be played. I remember persuading George Hart to buy an old RAF parachute and used this for a variety of "New Games". I also managed to buy an "earthball", this was an inflated ball, over 10 feet tall and again used this for various games. To get the ball inflated, we had to take it to the local garage and then had to stop the traffic in Skegness to roll it back to the centre. This made headlines in the local paper. On Sunday mornings there was a group photo for anyone who wished to participate, and the local photographer also attended the evening activities where guests were then able to purchase individual photos.

The police would sometimes come to the centre and ask for volunteers for an identity parade, anyone volunteering would be given £5 for doing so. There wasn't a bar selling alcohol and most evening some guests would head into town for a drink. The centre was also used for the annual UK and Ireland Staff conference, The staff Association was initially called the British Secretaries Association (BSA) and then the Association of Staff (AOS). During that week, various activities took place, including lectures, workshops, bible studies and an evening of entertainment planned and run by YMCA Staff. In addition, there was an annual cricket competition between the "North" and the "South", and a bowls competition. Strangely the bowls competition was played for a trophy that was a kettle, which was engraved with the winners each year.

The conference also provided the opportunity to be considered for other jobs in the YMCA and folklore stated that if you were walked around the lawn with the personnel secretary clockwise, you were being offered a job, anticlockwise meant you were being encouraged to move on.

I believe the centre was the last to close in the 1980s, the other centres had closed earlier, and George Hart then moved to Cumbernauld, Scotland to manage the National YMCAs apprentice centre, Seafar House.



October Scripture of the Month: -

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

~ **Romans 8:38-39**

Seasons Change

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted"

~ **Ecclesiastes 3:1-2**

In Memoria

Ray Allen - 1942 - 2024

I'm pretty certain that everyone who knew Ray would agree that he was a small man with a large heart, genial, generous and with a deep Christian Commitment. His humour and sense of fun was enjoyed by everyone he worked with during a long YMCA career, this was particularly evinced by his contributions to the entertainment provided by a small team of 'willing' volunteers who put together the entertainment for the annual YMCA Staff Conference at Skegness. On one memorable occasion Ray played the part of a ventriloquist's dummy whilst sitting on the knees of his colleague Norman Owen – he literally threw himself into the part becoming floppy like a rag doll, much to Norman's consternation and much hilarity from the audience.

Over many years of service Ray covered many roles, starting at his hometown YMCA in Lincoln and finishing at Ealing via spells at Croydon and Stockwell. In retirement he remained deeply attached to the YMCA, becoming Treasurer of Y's Retired for many years.

We will cherish his memory and give thanks to God for his service.

Arkle Bell

Whilst not a YMCA staff member, Arkle will have been well known to many of us, both in his work with The Frontier Youth Trust and as a Board Member of Cardiff YMCA.

What Say You?

My church in Roydon has only 8 regular attenders. Other churches in our area have already closed and buildings have been sold. Fortunately, we have a manse which is let out so keeps an income and the church is used by many worthy community groups through the week.

In our area many churches are meeting together to discuss the future and why so few attend. I have very strong views on this. I feel our visiting ministers feel they are the centre of the church, and we must put up with an hour or more of them performing in front of us however poorly. There seems far more meaningful fellowship in the coffee and chat session afterwards. Try though we may the visiting speakers do their hour. We have good turn outs for the festivals and for christenings but at those times when people could perhaps realise how uplifting and refreshing it can be to attend church the ministers always seem oblivious to the restless bored shuffles of the families there and deliver the whole cartload regardless of its relevance.

At last, we have a chance to change. When the churches in the area meet to discuss the future, I am afraid to speak the truth for fear of hurting the feelings of all the visiting ministers who mean so well (or do they?) We have asked for shorter services where we can join in, and some have responded well... I'm sure I /we cannot be alone in this. I'd really like to hear from YMCA colleagues how they are dealing with low church attendance, so I have some more ideas to take to the upcoming planning meetings

Wanted – Your News: -

Please send your news, observations, stories, personal experiences and memories to Vic Hills, Graham Clarke or Phil Willerton to the e-mail addresses listed on pages 1 & 2.

News for the website should be sent to Andy Winter
(andywinterworld@gmail.com)

DISTANCE RECORD SMASHED...



The GW Hotel (GWH) Taunton on 24th October was the scene of the longest journey by a Y's Retiree for lunch. It was a delight to have Paul Davis join us all the way from his home in Samoa. Others who were "first timers" at Taunton were David & Margaret Libby, Stephen & Hanna Milner, Robert Loveless. David Pendle contact with GWH and our host welcomed them and those of us who had been to the first event in 2023. President Graham led us in reflections for those recently departed and their loved ones – especially Paul Harper (who had been with us last year) his wife Liz' and Ray Allen and his sister and family. With thanks for our food and those involved in its preparation and blessings for our event.

There wasn't time for all the introductions before starters were served, however introductions continued with a lot of interjections and reminiscences between courses. It appeared that doing reception duties at Maidstone YMCA was a prerequisite experience for many attending.

The young enthusiastic waiters again carefully checked (as they had for the starters) that the main course for those with dietary request were correct. Thank goodness no miscommunications between email requests to Vic via David onward to GWH.

Desserts served and plates cleared it was time for coffees etc and the opportunity for Paul to share his YMCA journey from the College course in 72-74 around England YMCA's on to Papua New Guinea (PNG) for 2 years and through the Australian movement on to Samoa YMCA. Sharing some of the highlights and difficulties of his experiences. Leaving the YMCA but staying in Samoa with his wife running their hardware and water pump businesses.

Stephen and Hanna Milner updated with the renovation of the YMCA Tea Car at York Air Museum. With a brief resume and history of BBBF; the 2024 re-union and the event planed in 2025 (no date yet) – see the newsletters for details. We learned that Stephen and Hanna had stayed at GWH (very good) and were on to the Dulverton YMCA Group Hotel at Minehead for 3 nights.

Places at table vacated it was time to explore the mysteries of Graham's Archive photos and catch up with each other, before those catching trains, literally just across the road, and those making longer journeys needed to depart.

What a pleasant afternoon, in super company with good food at an accessible venue run by a YMCA literally serving and helping young people to serve. What's not to like?

Next Years lunch is on Thursday October 16th 2025 – it's in my Calander ...

YMCA Dulverton Group GWH Taunton

Y's Retired Lunch October 15th, 2024.

Attending

Andrew Jenkins
Ann Heath
Stephen Milner
Hanna Milner
Stan Wojcik
Celia Wojcik
David Libby
Margaret Libby
Robert Loveless
Mary McGinty
Graham Clarke
David Pendle
Vic Hills
Mary Hills
Phil Willerton
Paul Davis

Apologies

Mike Wilkinson
Maggie Wilkinson
Martyn Handley
Paul Kerridge
Thelma Kerridge
John Naylor
David Tipping
Peter Posner
Paul Smillie
David Bedford
Mark Harrod
Val Wallis
Norman Wallis
Hilary Robbins
Geoff Havers
Gill Seeley
Tony Seeley

As Promised, the remainder of Ron Ingamell's Girton Speech

Euromet in '88 was also special, with over 1000 young people I was on the organizing group and had to fly to Austria before the coaches brought our representatives. Some colleagues thought I flew out simply to avoid a horrendous coach journey! It was there I had a life changing experience. A lovely group of Palestinians sang and danced with great enthusiasm but late at night I listened to their stories of life for their parents and the Palestinian people since the creation of the state of Israel. I had been blind to the pain and suffering they endured being forced out of their homes, living in Refugee Camps, village totally wiped off the map and more. Since that experience I have done as much as possible to make people aware of this history without denying the need for the Jews to have a homeland – also take a number of groups to help them understand this bit of history. Today I especially support MAP (Medical Aid to the Palestinians).

A group of Palestinian young people came to England and took part in an ITV Service. It was at Ealing YMCA, and I recall the director making a last-minute decision to hold it outside as the weather seemed reasonable. I led the service, and this then resulted in an invitation to do the Christmas Day Service on ITV. I thought he meant in a year's time but no... in 6 weeks' time. However, the Congregation and choir at St. John's Lemsford all worked hard to deliver a live service and received many letters of thanks from all over the country. It was decided that I should start the service outside introducing the village... this was fine except the very minute I was signalled to start the local farmer on his tractor went past and shouted 'Morning Vic'!

The church of England is a very broad church, and I have learnt to appreciate all types of worship. I did find it hard to conduct very High Church services. I was doing well once with censuring the altar and people then the MC said, 'Three times round' I started to turn round, and he whispered 'Not you – the censer'! Also, I persuaded the small middle class all white church in Lemsford to link up with a poor area church near the Arsenal Football ground. They came out for a day in the country and a game of cricket after worship. When we went to their church once again, I discovered the wonderful hospitality of poorer people (I had also experienced this meeting Palestinians in Gaza). Worship there was full of incense and when I asked the server why so much – filling the church- he said, 'Father likes a lot, so I give him a lot'!

St Julian's Church in Norwich with the cell of Mother Julian is also high church but I love worshipping there – where Julian had her Revelations 650 years ago. Her writings have had a profound influence on my theology!

I have met and worked with some wonderful people and been to wonderful places. I always liked to plan meetings at Dunford (such a loss when it was sold) and Launde Abbey where I had another experience which made an impact... I happened to pick up a book of paintings accompanied with poetry by John Clare. I was captivated by his poetry, later becoming the Vice-chair of the John Clare Society and organizing the Annual Festival at Helpston (Peterborough) where he was born. Amazing powerful nature and political poetry. One of the great observers of nature and in spite of his sad life with years in the Northampton Asylum wrote beautiful poetry. It also meant that I met and became friends with Ronald Blythe the author of Akenfield who was President of the Society.

Just a few of my experiences and learning points... and even more to learn now. I am grateful to have had so many different experiences!

Do you remember The Venturer Scheme?

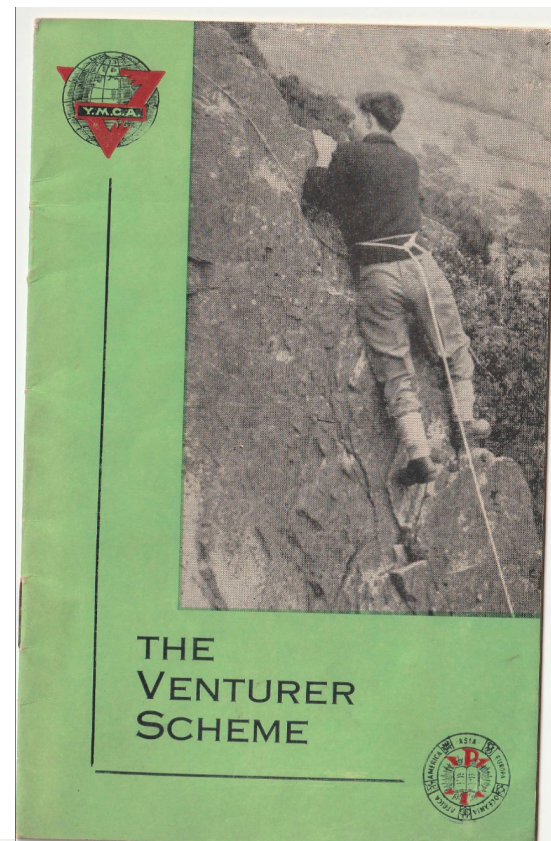
Whilst listing documents from the late Jim Lamb I came across a small booklet entitled 'The Venturer Scheme' published by the National Council probably in the mid 1950s.

It is a three-stage award with the object of 'encouraging YMCA members and others where possible to participate in and enjoy the fellowship of camping and allied activities, to raise the standards of camping and to take a greater interest in country life with the ultimate aim of achieving the central purpose of the Young Men's Christian Association'

Content of the three levels included Christian Knowledge Practice and Leadership, Campcraft, Service and Programme. Testing was to be carried out at 'National, Divisional and local association camps by arrangement with the National Council'

Among other things the range of knowledge ranged from Knowing and Understanding the Ten Commandments, recognising four hardwoods and three soft woods by leaves or bark and knowing where the Union Jack is flown in camp and the correct way to fly it at level 1 to organising 3 camp games and swimming 100 yards from a standing or running dive for level 2. Level 3 required carrying out an expedition of three days duration to the satisfaction of the examiner and answering questions 'Fellow workmen for God published by the World Alliance.

If anyone knows any more about this scheme, we would love to hear from you!



Betty Stevenson
Y.M.C.A.
croix de guerre avec palme



BETTY

*To them that knew her, there is living flame
In these the simple letters of her name.
To them that knew her not, be it but said:
So strong a spirit is not of the dead.
G. Meredith.*

1896-1918

Betty Stevenson
Y.M.C.A.
Croix de guerre avec palme

Betty was born on the third of September 1896, she died at the age of twenty one in France working for the YMCA as a driver during the First World War. She was killed on May 30th 1918 by an enemy bomb.

...the world needs this message of hers: a message of youth,

of sympathy, of duty happily and cheerfully done,

of joy in everything she did.

(preface vi Betty Stevenson Y.M.C.A)

WFY's Retired World Zoom Meeting 23rd October

Over 36 members of Ys retired from across the world from as far apart as Japan, Uruguay, Taiwan, Germany, USA and Canada joined in the recent Zoom meeting including John Naylor in Edinburgh, Graham Clarke in Hertfordshire and Peter Posner attending World Alliance meetings in Mombasa Kenya.

The meeting was chaired by Guenter **Ozdyk** in Germany with the technology masterminded from Canada.

Following opening greetings from **Kohei Yamada**, current WFYRs in Japan, there was a main presentation on the work of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs by it's Secretary **Nay Boo Won** who also joined from Mombasa.

APAY covers 27 Movements an area that includes Australia, New Zealand as well as Hong Kong, Thailand, South Korea and the Pacific Islands. That means 4.2milliin participants, in 1060 branches, with 45,000 staff and volunteers. China has observer status and 10 active associations. Contact has been lost with some of the Pacific Islands like Samoa, but work is underway to try and establish a movement in Laos where there have been difficulties establishing an organisation with a Christian Basis.

Among its activities APAY is encouraging the themes of encouraging Youth Empowerment and Meaningful Work, Sustainability, Developing a Just world, Community well-being and movement strengthening, all underpinned by the Christian Basis of the YMCA.

APAY is facing huge disparities of wealth between its member movements and is encouraging the stronger to support the weaker.

Phil Dwyer from the USA spoke about the World YMCA Emergency Assistance Fund set up to support staff without pensions and the Global Retirement Initiative encouraging the establishment of pension schemes where none have existed before. He also outlined the support given to colleagues in need by Secours Specieux through its grants system.

Len Wilson editor of 'Bridges' the WFYRs Newsletter and its importance. He is always ready to receive items from around the world.

Len also reminded us of the Ambassador's programme. This had been established to make links between WYFRs members as they travelled to each other's country. An Ambassador would be willing to welcome and if necessary advise/help visiting members. Sady Covid had reduced the roll out of this programme, but it would be great to reestablish it.

Alicia of Uruguay promoted the next physical gathering of WFYRs to coincide with the World Council in Toronto in 2026

Finally, before an 'Open Mic' session, the date of the next World Zoom meeting was confirmed as May 21st 2025 when the focus will be on the YMCA in the Middle East which will be worth joining.