

Y'S RETIRED OF THE UK

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



WINTER – 2025 | WWW.YSRETIRED.UK



**President's
Ponderings**

SEEKING CHRISTMAS IN A RESTLESS WORLD

Has it seemed to you that the Christmas Season is beginning earlier and earlier? We were shocked and a bit disconcerted to see a banner put up outside a local pub emblazoned with the message 'Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year from us all at The Coach and Horses' ...in October!

Forward planning and preparation time is of course to be encouraged, but Merry Christmas in October did seem to be extreme!

This banner has been quickly followed with other Christmas paraphernalia appearing in and around shops and pubs and restaurants in the area as soon as The Halloween stuff had had its day. Some of the TV channels have already been showing 'Christmas films' and we have spotted Christmas lights starting to appear!

I am not being 'Bah! Humbug!' about Christmas because, indeed it is one of the most important Christian Festivals of the year and I look forward to leading the Christmas Day Service in our church and sharing time with our wider family. But this advancing of Christmas has made me reflect on why this is happening.

There is an obvious commercial reason. Businesses want to maximise sales and bookings for events as much as ever but is there something deeper happening?

In this increasingly fractured world is there a desire to find comfort in the security of the Christmasy glow of the stockings hanging by a log fire? Life as we would like it to be.

In this world where people feel alienated from each is comfort being sought in the pictures of the family Christmas spent around a table groaning with food and decorated with tinsel where everyone has more than enough?

Are these basic needs of comfort and sense of belonging being met by the extending of the Christmas Period? I suspect so. PTO

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SEEKING CHRISTMAS IN A RESTLESS WORLD, CONT.

Therefor we must not lose sight of the overarching message of Christmas that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son' (John 3:16), a gift which, embodies God, in human form reaching out to us bringing Love, Joy, Hope, and Peace. And there is the challenge to us all, recognising, making known and living out this truth not just for one month or even three months of the year but the whole year round.

On behalf of everyone In Ys Retired may I wish you a Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year whenever you decide to begin celebrating it!

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

Dates for your diary 2026

21st World Council of YMCA's Toronto Canada – 19th – 26th July 2026

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.

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A Memory Re-Visited

In the last two years of my schooling in Kent our “new” Deputy Head initiated a two-week holiday at The YMCA National Centre at South Camp Lakeside. My introduction to the YMCA. We camped under large canvas Ridge Tents. As an aside – the same ones from the early 60's were still in use in the 90's at the Eurocross Festival. My name was still visible on the side wall of one of them!! Vandal.

One of the exercises was to row the Gigs across Lake Windemere to the opposite shore and walk up Gammers Howe - the hill above. Having not hiked up it since 1961, Mary and I set out under a rain threatening sky on our last day in the Lakes in mid-September to do it. Maybe to enjoy the scenic views from the top. These days the path is opposite a NT Car Park possibly halfway up from the Lake shore. As we set out the heavens decided to jettison the cargo, gently at first. There were few other walkers, progressing more quickly than us. A short stop and conversation with two sets coming down, with rain dripping down our noses, encouraged us to continue on up.

There was no scenic view! Just cloud and maybe 50 yards visibility.

A lot more vegetation than I had remembered from 64 years ago. We'd made it. The car park was empty as we peeled off our under layers and donned dryer gear. Maybe another visit in the future – on a fine day for the scenic view Mary missed.

Photo's show:- Mary holding the Trig Point. Us without our spectacles on the way down – the rain drops and steam from our breath on the inside of the lenses “blinded us”. At the bottom.



What Are You Doing Now?

Retirement brings many opportunities to do things we love or have always wanted to do! It would be great to hear from members what they are up to (or have been up to). Have you been travelling? Moved House? Volunteering? Enjoying grandchildren and Great Grandchildren? Please let us know so that we can share your experiences with each other. Further to this, we include some of the apologies received for the Taunton meeting, experiences which I'm sure will be shared by more of us.

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YMCA E&W Annual Youth Awards (A First for Me!)

Wow, what an inspiring celebration of YMCA work in England & Wales. I was honoured to be invited as Y's Retired of the UK Secretary to the YMCA Youth Matters Awards 2025 on November 14th.

Accompanied by Mary my wife, we made the short walk from Moorgate tube station to HAC City Central, to join over 450 guests and sponsors in the stunning venue.

Commencing with a Mocktail reception as YMCA participants from Northumberland to Cardiff and Maidstone, a triangle of the most Northerly, West, South Easterly Associations with many in between. We joined our table of 10 for a sumptuous artistically presented and tasty meal.

England & Wales National Secretary and CEO Denise Hatton set the scene, purpose and acknowledged the generosity of the event sponsors. With Ritchie Anderson (BBC TV & Radio, Channel 4, presenter, among many other roles) hosting and comparing we were treated to video summaries from each YMCA Association or individual nominated for each of the 12 Awards presented. There was an awe-inspiring range of YMCA work, staff and volunteers providing opportunities to assist and support children, young people and adults towards achieving and realising what they are capable of. Winners joyously received and shared their trophy with colleagues to loud applause, accompanied by many photographs.

Here is the link to the event – take a look – I challenge you not to be impressed – by the diversity & awe-inspiring range of those nominated.
<https://ymca.org.uk/awards/>

My very grateful appreciation to Denise & Claire (her Ex' Sec') for our invitation, Jo' our lovely and delightful table companion who is responsible for finding sponsors and raising funds for YM E & W and Val' Wallis for looking after us.



A message from Eric & Brenda Moore

In response to your e-mail, Brenda and I thought that colleagues would be interested in an event to which we were invited at the end of September.

We found that it was a Black Country Heroes Award evening and we were chosen for the Special Recognition Award for our 72 years of voluntary service to the YMCA in West Bromwich, which is now YMCA Black Country Group, having taken over Wolverhampton, Walsall and Dudley. We are now, in our old age, Directors Emeritus of the Group.

December Scripture of the Month: -

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!".
~ **2 Corinthians 9:15**

Paul captures the heart of Christmas in one sentence. Jesus — God's greatest gift — brings salvation, hope, and life. December invites us to pause, give thanks, and reflect on the generosity of God who gives beyond measure.

Lunch at the Indian Student Hostel – Nov 13th 2025

It was intriguing to watch as people who had not seen each other (sometimes for many years) greeted and recognised each other. Neil had to stop the buzzes of conversations to encourage us to move to the lift or climb the stairs to the Chapel where we were joined by members of staff from ISH.

The YM/YWCA World Week of Prayer theme of Jubilee – Celebrating 150 years since the inception of the Annual event, was Graham's focus as he led us in a short participatory service using the material encompassed in this year's Booklet, which Claire (YMCA E & W Exec' Secretary) had printed for each of us to take away as a resource.

We were invited to choose our own dishes for lunch with accompanying Chapatis, Poppadom's, Bhajis etc at the restaurant counter, taking them to our places set aside in a separate room.

Following lunch, Denise Hatton E & W CEO & National Secretary addressed the group explaining the state of the Federation (while encouraging the sense of movement once more). Exploring the recent past of YMCA, the impact of incorporation, amalgamation, other changes, highlights, successes, potential pitfalls and the opportunities to be grasped. Highlighting the role of young people i.e Ambassadors to influence and represent. Using and accessing YHUB to keep abreast of Y News as it is posted. An opportunity for Y's Retired members, which Andy and Denise will explore.

Summing up Denise' presentation colleagues commented "how much I enjoyed ... lunch and how impressed and encouraged I was by what Denise had to say. I realise that I have known every CEO/Nat. Sec. since ... but Denise gave the best summation of aims and objectives, of opportunities and possible elephant traps, that I have heard from any of them. It was a class act and a joy to hear". Another - "it is good to hear that the YM is in a good place and in safe hands".

Our grateful appreciation to Neil for organising our time at ISH, Graham for our YM/YW prayer time and for Denise' hospitality and finding time in what is clearly a very hectic schedule to address us. It was an enjoyable time. Requests have been made to do it again and move it earlier in the year.



Clyde Binfield, Jackie Walker, Vic Hills, Mary McGinty, Norman Owen, David Pendle. Andy Winter, Denise Hatton, Val Wallis, Graham Clarke, Mary Hills, Anne Heath, Neil Sherringham, Satya Ratan – Assistant General Secretary, Rosemilly Nallengara. In the front - Sandeep George – General Manager.

Christmas: -

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord".
~ Luke 2:11

The angel's message brings hope straight into an ordinary night: a Savior *born to you*. Christmas reminds us that God's gift is personal and life-changing. In the quiet of Bethlehem, the Messiah arrives — not with fanfare, but in humility — bringing salvation and hope for all people.

Together Again at Taunton GWH

After lunch Paul Smillie gave us a brief overview and update of lows, highs, perseverance and successes of the YMCA's in Europe and how they are using opportunities all over Europe and overcoming desperate situations like Ukraine, Gaza and the West Bank to support staff, maintain a YMCA presence to support and help those impacted by the wars, famine, political alienation of in particular the YMCA in Belarus. While the European Alliance had collaborated with the University of Lisbon to produce a Master's Degree course where a range of YMCA staff from Ukraine, Jerusalem, Scotland, Belarus, England, Spain and others were able to meet, learn together and enhance their qualifications. Graham & Stephen had dug into their archives and produced "old" YMCA Directories and Publications, which entertained and stirred memories of past events and colleagues.

Although our numbers were smaller than previous events at GWH, there were 25 apologies for a whole range of reasons, many mentioned in the Autumn Newsletter.

As usual David's organisation with the GWH team was smooth and appreciated. We intend to hold next year's lunch at the same time - so keep the week free in your diary!



The Y's Retired in the photo' are Mary & Vic Hills, Ann Heath, Paul Smillie, David Pendle, Graham Clarke, Andrew Jenkins, Hanna Milner, Angela Hall, Maray McGinty, Stephen Milner & Robert Loveless. With the 5 GWH staff between David & behind Hanna.

A call to all bowlers in our ranks.

If you'd be up for a bowls match next summer against a club in Banbury, then do drop me (Andy Winter) an email and we'll make the arrangements for the next outdoor season!



Members News

Ron Ingamells sent us a 'lovely picture' of himself and David Bedford enjoying (at least in David's case) a Championship football match at Carrow Road, home ground of Norwich City on the occasion of their game in October against Hull City, the team supported by David. In the end Hull triumphed continuing the surprisingly poor start to the season of one of the early favourites for promotion. (I can sympathise with Ron, being a Sheffield United supporter, as we find ourselves in a very similar situation – Ed).



Sharing their various experiences Ron could at least beat David in terms of their years of preaching, Ron's 68 years comfortably eclipsing David's 55 years. We are left to ask can anyone beat this?

Ron also shared his recent Cruising experience, his first since he was Chaplain to the Norfolk School Cruise in the 1970's when they visited the Mediterranean. This year he set sail from Bergen in Norway, where he met up with his old friend Gunnar Wick. They enjoyed touring the Fjords so much that they have already booked for next year – this time to Madeira – with the same operator Saga who offer a much-appreciated door-to-door service.

Another person willing to share a recent experience is Neil Sjoberg who took part in 'The Longest Day' golf challenge in aid of Prostate Cancer charities on 20th June. This entailed a 4.15am start and using only a 5 iron, playing as many rounds as possible in the next 24 hours. The first 3 rounds each took me about 1 hour 20 mins, however as the course got busier, I had to take drastic ways to get round the slower players – via a ditch, the rough and some other deviations – all of which went unnoticed by the various groups of players. I was also finding that putting with a 5 iron was very difficult! Nonetheless the four rounds I completed were all done in 88 shots or less. My granddaughter (Robin aged 7) had decided to also do the challenge with her dad caddying for her (I passed them twice) and there were 4 other young men also competing – who used all the clubs and who took a meal break. Whilst I completed my rounds at 10.15 am (blisters on the soles of my preventing me from going further), they finished at 7pm. In the end we raised around £5,000 and I hope to try again next year – starting earlier!

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)

John Drake's Gaza Experience

Having returned from Israel just before Trump arrived and nearly closed Ben Gurion airport, I am happy to report that our YMCA colleagues over there are thankful that the hostages are home and those detained without trial are released. All want to see the end of Hamas, but don't have a lot of faith in Tony Blair's ability to make much impact.

In terms of work on the ground John reports that his Land Agent has set about refurbishing the Legacy Hotel/East Jerusalem YMCA building which will be a great help to Peter Nasir and his team there. Currently five YMCA programmes are in the pipeline to start in 2026.

John is funding scholarships for kids in the West Bank and would welcome invitations from interested churches to visit and speak to them about discrete involvement. He can guarantee that any money raised to help, will go through bona fide YMCA channels.

Apologies

In the recent communications for the London and Taunton gatherings, we heard from John Berry who has been suffering with dental issues which are restricting his diet considerably.

We also heard from David Tipping who is also currently in poor health. David joined British Boys for British Farms in 1961 and 5 years later undertook the YMCA Training Course in London before working at Bolton and Neath YMCAs until 1971, when he left, working in a number of jobs with the elderly until retiring at the age of 70. He notes that Neath YMCA is 150 years old this year and feels that the YMCA is still doing a good job in Neath and further afield. If anyone remembers David who is now 85, he would love to hear from you which can be done via Vic.

Norman The Explorer

Norman Owen has sent us some photographs from a recent trip to South America. They feature Norman and a 200 year old Giant Tortoise, a sea lion which flopped down on Norman's shoes - both from the Galapagos Islands; Norman astride the equator in Ecuador and Norman 'enjoying the company of his lovely tour guide' I'm sure you will be able to work out which is which!

Norman notes that the photos show that when animals, birds and fish are not under threat from man, we can live together in close harmony.



A Visit to South Camp Lakeside

In an earlier piece in the Newsletter reference was made to the YMCA National Centre South Camp Lakeside and the Old Green Ridge Tents. This one doesn't harp back as far as 1961. It was the only one erected when we visited in June and enjoyed a tour of South Camp under the guidance of Martin.



Last One Still Standing!!

Gone were the various iterations of the Kitchen and canteen and winter bunkhouse of the 60's – 80's, to the hugely improved facilities enjoyed (including Eurocross events) in the 90's and into the 2020's. To be replaced by these superb extensive facilities accommodating and catering for 3 large groups simultaneously. Covid was a disaster for the project, no customers – no income. Loans etc not serviced, which we understood almost jeopardised the whole of YMCA Lakeside.



The solution, sadly (for those of us with fond memories of North Camp), the sale of that part of the centre, apparently acquired after South Camp. Wandering around the Northern site, in use by a sailing club & sail board organisation and other groups it looked sad and unloved. Following the shoreline path back revealed watercraft of all shapes and sizes on the banks of every cove ready to be used. Impressive range of "kit".



Interested in what South Camp has to offer now? Here is the link:-

<https://lakesideymca.co.uk/>

