

Y'S RETIRED OF THE UK



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

SPRING - 2024 | WWW.YSRETIRED.UK



President's Ponderings

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With the coming of spring and the arrival of Easter, our thoughts inevitably turn to new life and resurrection. From my office window I can see the flower bed that was once a tangle of bamboo now blooming with spring flowers and the trees which have been so skeleton like all during winter are becoming green again. This is the joy, luxury and benefit of where we live. Spring has sprung as we have expected it to.

By contrast, as we look at Gaza or any number of Ukrainian cities the views are of demolition, destruction and suffering. Rather than being filled with optimism and joy, our feelings can easily turn to despair as we see such sights and feel for those for whom this is their daily reality. We ask 'where is the hope of new life to be found here?'

The answer has to be in our faith in Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection constantly reminds us that all things are possible in Him and through Him. The empty tomb on Easter morning is a real demonstration of transformation, of how darkness is overcome by light, death is overcome by life and suffering overcome by love.

As an organisation committed to the support and development of young people in body mind and spirit for 180 years, the YMCA sees the potential and encourages hope and change for the world through the lives of the next generation through their ability to rebuild what has been destroyed. They are not just the voice of the future but practical agents of change when given the opportunity and recognition that they require. Young People are the green shoots of spring. They may be struggling to sprout and blossom in some places, but when they do, we will see again the transformation and new life that we see in the resurrection.

So perhaps more than ever we need not be overcome by despair to share and support the optimism and vigour of young people as God works in and through them to bring transformation.

AGM News

Ten members were able to gather on Zoom on 21st March for this year's AGM. The meeting remembered those who had died in the last year: Bob Brunswick, Jim Thompson, Elaine Hunt and Walter Crosby (Former YMCA Scotland Treasurer) who had died during the previous week.

Reports from The President, Secretary, Treasurer and WFYS and Secours Speciaux Representative previously circulated were received. Grateful note was made of the revamped website and e mail address organised by Andy Winter.

The budget was agreed including provision being made over the next two years for UK representation at the World Council and WFYS meetings in Toronto in 2026 and support for a fund to assist members from needy countries to attend. It was agreed that £1000 be also provided from the Trust fund for Secours Speciaux which has been renamed the staff assistance fund.

Discussions were had concerning attracting new members. Everyone was encouraged to use their personal contacts to invite new people to join. It was also agreed to explore a renaming of Y's Retired to more fully express our broad-based membership of former staff and volunteers across the British Isles. Lifelong service is not a requirement!

Stephen Milner shared news of the YMCA Tea Car now at the Yorkshire Air Museum and forthcoming reunion of British Boys for British Farms.

There being no further nominations the following offices were filled

President - Rev. Graham Clarke

Secretary - Vic Hills

Treasurer - Andrew Jenkins

Assistant Treasurer - Mary McGinty.

Newsletter Editor - Phil Willerton

WFYS and Staff Assistance Fund Rep - John Naylor

Consultants - Prof David Miller and Ray Allen

Latest News

Congratulations to Eric Moore former Treasurer of West Bromwich YMCA (now Black Country Group) on the presentation of the George Williams Award marking 70 years membership of the YMCA. He told our zoom coffee morning 'I only went into the YMCA for a game of snooker!' Eric's wife Brenda is catching him up - she has been a member for 50 years. Both have fond memories of working with Sam Johnston, Bert Caswell and Lenny Allen to mention but a few!

Beryl Goodall, widow of Alex Goodall has moved into a care home in Leeds.

A spare copy of the biography of George Williams by Clyde Binfield is available to a good home from Graham Clarke.

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What's in a name?

The YMCA was very nearly called the YCMA – which doesn't quite have the same ring to it and implies that it was an Association for Christian Young Men.

At our AGM we agreed to canvas thoughts about the name Y's Retired as it was felt that it might be a barrier to potential new members by implying the possibility of being open only to those with a long professional career in the movement.

The fact that we are open to all who have served the YMCA both as staff and as volunteers is not clear.

Any suggestions as to a more fitting name should be sent to Graham Clarke (julia-graham@talk21.com) as soon as inspiration hits!

Following on from Celia Wojcik's contribution to the last Newsletter, she has sent us another thought provoking (but unattributed) anecdotal piece.

IT'S ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVE

A father passing by his son's bedroom was astonished to see that his bed was nicely made and everything was picked up. Then he saw an envelope, propped up prominently on the pillow that was addressed to 'Dad.' With the worst premonition he opened the envelope with trembling hands and read the letter.

Dear Dad:

It is with great regret and sorrow that I'm writing you. I had to elope with my new girlfriend because I wanted to avoid a scene with Mum and you. I have been finding real passion with Trixie and she is so nice.

But I knew you would not approve of her because of all her piercing, tattoos, tight motorcycle clothes and the fact that she is much older than I am. But it's not only the passion....Dad she's pregnant.

Trixie said that we will be very happy. She owns a caravan in the woods and has a stack of firewood for the whole winter. We share a dream of having many more children. Trixie has opened my eyes to the fact that marijuana doesn't really hurt anyone. We'll be growing it for ourselves and trading it with the other people that live nearby for cocaine and ecstasy.

Don't worry Dad. I'm 15 and I know how to take care of myself. Someday I'm sure that we will be back to visit so that you can get to know your grandchildren.

Love, Your son John

PS. Dad, none of the above is true. I'm over at Tommy's house.

I just wanted to remind you that there are worse things in life than the end of term school report. That's in my center desk drawer.

I love you.

Call me when it's safe to come home

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Continuing Val Wallis' "skip" through her 50 years plus YMCA Experience shared with those of us at the Cambridge lunch in 2023.

We finished last time with ~ **Roy Holgate was to become a huge influence in my life always encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone and not to do an auto reject on opportunities - however scary they may look.**

Roy encouraged me to stand for National Board and so another experience began. It was a board of 70 members I seem to remember a couple of women representing the Woman's auxiliary, although there were a couple of young men. Then I reached the highest point any woman had ever travelled in the YMCA, the National Executive. I have a letter from Ronnie Howe to say they were sure I had made history. They could not remember anyone giving apologies for a National Board meeting because they were elsewhere giving birth.

I also have a letter from Stan Charlesworth National Secretary at the time congratulating me on the safe arrival of Amanda Jane and when my parenting duties had eased, they would look forward to welcoming me back.

When I arrived with Amanda on my lap a couple of meetings later, I was greeted with "I know we want to lower the age of the National Executive, but this is ridiculous."

We took Amanda to two National Assemblies sharing sessions with childcare. This raised the issue of young Mum's attending events and for some years crèche facilities were provided at Assemblies.

It was again Roy that encouraged me to become chair of Maidstone YMCA, the first female to hold that position.

That was a brilliant 6 years stepping very much into a new role and gaining knowledge all the way, handling big issues, big decisions, hiring and firing, meeting and greeting. A wonderful experience. I often found as one piece of a work came to an end a new opportunity opened and as my time at Maidstone finished a new task was offered. Tunbridge Wells YMCA were in difficulties and the board was at a point of collapse. The Regional Council put in a holding committee which I joined. That was back to the grey suited brigade, a group of businessmen more interested in playing Cricket than running a YMCA. It was at one of these meeting when they were talking about buying a Hoover and it was suggested that as the only woman perhaps, I could advise them. I said I had never bought a Hoover and was still using the one I had as a wedding present. I eventually became Chair of Tunbridge Wells establishing a new board and a new Chief Executive which gave a strong foundation for Tunbridge Wells to flourish, now West Kent YMCA

Even by now I was still apprehensive about speaking in public and when asked to do a vote of thanks at a National YMCA Assembly, I think it was 1989 it was a very nervous walk to the podium. On my return with a lump in my throat I said, silently to my long-suffering speech therapist of my childhood years Mrs. Zee, "you would have been proud of what we achieved".

Unbeknown to me at the time an officer said to John Naylor, National Secretary, "there goes our next vice chair."

April Scripture of the Month: -

As for you, O LORD,
you will not restrain
your mercy from me;
your steadfast love
and your faithfulness
will ever preserve me!
~ **Psalms 40:11**

Easter & Re-Birth

"As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

~ **Mark 16:5-7**

Roy had asked me twice to stand as Vice Chair of the National Council and my answer both times had been "don't be silly, they're male, businessmen, have money and connections I'm just a mum and a housewife". He had given me a quote from Lech Walensa the Polish dock worker who had become Polish President. This man had spoken of his total sense of being overwhelmed and the realization that what is needed sometimes is a bit of ordinary.

When approached by Roy a third time and John Naylor I felt a bit like Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane denying our Lord three time and feeling perhaps I ought to just listen to what I was being asked to do.

I was duly elected, the first female officer of the YMCA and that began the most challenging, demanding, frustrating, dealing with things I would never have thought possible time. I met some fabulous people, I travelled the length and breadth of the country, I visited Greece and Germany. There were many posh events and Royal occasions, I wore ball gowns I wore wellies. I opened new buildings, new housing projects and attended quite a few dedication services. I chaired National Assemblies, I attended European Assemblies, I chaired Inter Council Committees. The icing on the cake, an absolute joy and a privilege to be Vice Chair throughout 1994 our 150th celebrations year.

When my 5 years game to an end it left a gap in my life.

The 4th installment of Val's 50 plus years of her YMCA Journey is for next time.

A reminder of some dates for the diary in 2024

Tuesday 14th May – Afternoon Tea Zoom Meeting (2 pm)

Wednesday 3rd July – Cambridge Lunch (Girton Golf Club)

Tuesday 15th October – Taunton Lunch (Great Western Hotel)

World federation of Y's Retired zoom gatherings May29th (Africa) and October 16th (Asia)

Some links to other YMCA websites which may be of interest.

World YMCA – ymcainfo@ymca.int

Brazilian Association of YMCA's Retired Secretaries –
lc.gonzaga@tera.com.br

(I guess that that one makes 'Y's Retired' sound quite succinct!)

A reminder of the new Y's Retired updated website - www.yretired.co.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.



YMCA Tea Wagon being Restored at Yorkshire Air Museum

Photos of the interior of the YMCA Tea Van at the National Trust Croome Park, where it had been kept outside, before being moved undercover at the Yorkshire Air Museum where it is now being restored. The engine works, the Brakes and Clutch have been repaired, the bodywork requires restoration as well as the woodwork in the back of the van which has woodworm.

The van will be kept on loan at the Yorkshire Air Museum, and it could well be used for serving refreshments again depending on Health & Safety requirements.

Contributions towards the restoration would be much appreciated either through Y's Retired or direct to the Yorkshire Air Museum with reference to "Repairs to YMCA Tea Van".

Account Name: Yorkshire Air Museum.
Sort Code: 56 – 00 - 70. Account No: 39056708.
Reference: Repairs to YMCA Tea Van.





What a fine-looking group of staff and guests at one of the annual YMCA Staff conferences.

Can you name any of the people in the photograph, the venue and the year? If so, please send the information to Graham who will update the Archive collection and possibly contact any of those who are still around with a view to inviting them to join the rest of us.

My own guess is that it is Edgbaston, Birmingham in the late 80's – I thought I was there but can't see myself on the photograph.

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 page 1.

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