

Y'S RETIRED OF THE UK



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

SUMMER - 2024 | WWW.YSRETIRED.UK



President's Ponderings

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Out of the mouths of babes... we all smile at the innocent comments of children! A letter in 'The Guardian' reported on an eight-year grandchild informing the family that the Labour Party had won the recent General Election by 'a landscape'!

There was some truth in that! Whenever we have a general election, the political landscape changes! We have to get used to new faces and new voices speaking on behalf of the government and opposition. We have to get used to new policies and priorities and we hope that the new political landscape will be to our personal liking and advantage.

Having said that, the wider landscape doesn't seem to change that much! There is a disconcerting familiarity about things in the present which were also in the past.

Look back 180 years! As George Williams and friends crossed Blackfriars Bridge they were concerned about the welfare and working conditions of young people. They were concerned about the spiritual well-being of those working at what we would consider as below the minimum wage.

That was their landscape which they set about trying to change as they formulated their plans for what would become the YMCA. The impact of their work was not so much changing the overall landscape but changing the personal landscape for thousands of young men's lives who became more educated through the Exeter Hall Lectures and Reading Rooms, found answers to life's deep questions through Bible Study Groups, grew fitter through YMCA Gyms and were given a firm safe start through YMCA accommodation. This was not just in London but across Britain and the rest of the world.

The overall landscape today has many different aspects, but the basic human need to grow and develop in body mind and spirit has not changed. There are still thousands of young people who need the opportunities similar to those provided by the YMCA 180 years ago. They need to be encouraged to grow in body mind and spirit no matter what the generation.

Looking back over life in the YMCA, it soon becomes apparent that we too as staff and volunteers have also had our landscapes changed through our work and contacts. Who among us as "Y's retired" cannot say that we have not been challenged and have not grown in body, mind and spirit because of our opportunities, experiences and involvement in the movement? This may still be continuing for some of us! If you have particular stories to tell, please let us have them to share with others and the wider movement.

So, as we celebrate the YMCA's 180th Anniversary this year, may we celebrate the landscape changes it has made in the lives of so many and continues so to do.

YMCA England and Wales 180 Campaign

I guess most newsletter readers will be aware that this year marks the 180th year since the YMCA was founded. YMCAs around the world have been celebrating this and YMCA England and Wales (known by most of us I guess as 'The National Council of YMCA's) is also marking the occasion.

As part of this Y's Retired has been asked to appeal to its members to provide contributions from its members in the form of information, photographs and memories of their time as a YMCA employee. The summary of what is required is as follows:

We're looking for stories to showcase the impact of YMCA since it was founded in 1844. We'd love to hear from anyone who has been involved with the organisation in any capacity, about their experience and what YMCA means to them. Below are some questions to help you:

- What brought you to the YMCA? When did you first get involved?
- How has the YMCA impacted your life?
- Have you seen YMCA change over the years? How?
- What does YMCA mean to you?
- What do you wish for the future of YMCA?'

We are asked to send our responses to Sarah Lewis – Sarah.Lewis@ymca.org.uk, with a copy to Graham Clarke at Julia-graham@talk21.com.

I am sure that virtually all of us could contribute something, no matter how small. The editing team for the newsletter have also asked for this type of contribution recently. I know there will be many like myself, who have read Val Wallace's memoir with great interest. It is easy to think that our experience is common knowledge and similar to everyone else. Clearly this is not true and we have much to share – the history of the development of the YMCA is different in each location as is the history of each individual who contributed, it would be a great shame if this was lost. The obituary of Paul Harper tells of almost 70 years of contact with the YMCA, maybe our individual experiences could be shared at a point where questions can still be answered and lessons learned?

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Bertha has a Sister!

We have recently become aware of a second YMCA Tea Car! The Austen 'Tilly' is owned by Tim and Linda De Bues who live on the Isle of Wight and are members of Vectis 40s Vintage, a re-enactment group and have been fitting it out with china mugs, catering tea pot, wooden baker's trays for currant buns, wash stand and basin and reproduction cigarettes, matches and war time chocolate bars. Tim and Linda would like to know about the uniforms Tea Car Staff and Volunteers wore. Let us know if you can help!

Here are pictures of Tilly in action at Amberley Museum Home Front Weekend.



Caring Ethos powered Norwegian YMCA team all the way to the top flight.

The Guardian newspaper Sports section of 29th March carried a whole page article describing the rise of KFUM Kamerate Oslo team into the top tier of professional Norwegian football. With a ground that only holds 3000 people, this is a local community club that is expanding but retaining its YMCA values.

General Manager Tor -Erik Stenberg is quoted as saying "We are a YMCA Club, we have a Christian based foundation with Christian values: forgiveness, love, caring, that doesn't mean that we don't fight-on the field, football is football. It doesn't mean that we don't get angry but it has to do with how we behave before and afterwards."

The club manager Johs Moesgaard is also quoted, saying "We are looking for people who understand human beings first, who understand that results are a product of how you treat people."

The article goes on to say that new club signings are made aware that they will never become rich but will make friends and so attracts players for whom this is important. Johs Moesgaard says his responsibility is to create the right environment with KFUM Christian values that are also universal values. Daniel Harris of the Guardian writes: "Whatever happens from here though, where they are, means KFUM have already won. Their story is enshrined in the annals of the game."

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Available to a Good Home!

150th Anniversary Tea Car Model in box.

Copy of George Williams and the YMCA by Clyde Binfield.

Contact Graham Clarke if you are interested! Julia-graham@talk21.com



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 ~ ***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 came to an end (as Vice Chair of the National Council), it left a gap in my life, so I decided to address the educational disappointment and at the age of 45 sat my first GCSE. To be followed by a second and then I started a part time degree at the University of Kent. It was only when writing my dissertation, I learnt that I was dyslexic. That certainly explained my spelling and numeracy problems.

It was as I was due to graduate, I hit my biggest personal challenge when diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer. That's when the YMCA came into their own and held me in the palm of their hand.

Maidstone had always been my YMCA home and when we hit difficult times some of my experience as Vice Chair came into great use. It was a great privilege when in 2016 they asked me to become their President.

I had not parted with National YMCA remaining on some committee's and did another short spell as joint Vice Chair, it was in 2003 that I was asked to become a Vice President.

Being a VP is an incredible honour and it is a privilege to still be able to represent the YMCA at events and to continue to serve this movement I have been part of for 56 years.

I once described myself as a lump of sea side rock with YMCA lettering going right through the middle but the YMCA has been my rock. The YMCA has been part of my life and my life has been enriched by it.

I have also said that I am a YMCA success story. We talk about helping young people reach their full potential. Whether I have reached what God had planned for me I don't know. What I do know is that, although I might be a bit shorter, hair more silver than blonde and skirts a lot longer, the scales still read much the same but perhaps that's my inability to convert ILBs (pounds) to KGs (Kilograms), my spelling is still atrocious and never ask me to be treasurer! The YMCA took this very quiet shy teenager and enabled me to reach achievements I could never have thought possible. A President of a local YMCA, Vice President of YMCA England and Wales, MBE, a degree, overcome shyness of public speaking enabled me to have skills from my YMCA experience to use in other fields and being recognized for my work in the Canterbury Diocese with an Honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral.

I will close with some words I wrote many years ago for the belonging report.

"It's been like stepping on to a non-stop, sometimes magical roundabout ever since I joined and I am still hanging on very tight."

That was after 21 years, after 56 the grip is still very tight.

Thank you

June Scripture of the Month: -

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

~ **Isaiah 41:10**

Thought for the times

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality"

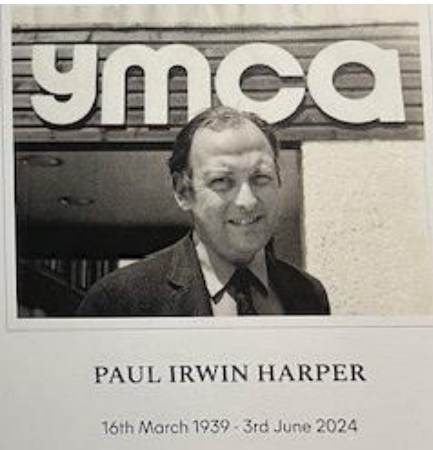
~ **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

Paul Harper 1939-2024

Paul was born in Manchester and spent his early life there, until moving with his parents to Cheltenham at the age of 7. As an engineer, his father made subsequent moves taking his family with him to Chelmsford, Harlow and back to Chelmsford. Having a somewhat disrupted education, Paul left school at the age of 15, taking a job as a shipping clerk in London before being called up for National Service – joining the Royal Army Pay Corps and serving in Devizes and Reading.



Paul's first contact with the YMCA was at the age of 16 when he joined Chelmsford YMCA to play football, which led to him becoming a volunteer and eventually a trainee youth worker and qualified YMCA Secretary. This was the start of a career which took him to Romford (twice), Nottingham, Hoylake, Chelmsford, Taunton (twice) and Bath. The YMCA custom at the time was to provide a variety of experiences and environment's, the personnel department at the YMCA National Council monitoring progress and suggesting possible moves – or recommending perusal of the 'Green Sheet', a monthly list of YMCA job vacancies.



In 1969 whilst General Secretary of Chelmsford YMCA, Paul met and married Elizabeth and they have two children, Alison and Richard. His long career with the YMCA saw him elected as President of the Association of YMCA Professional Staff 1997-98 and have the opportunity to participate in the staff exchange programme with the U.S. Staff Association, visiting St Louis in 1987 and North Carolina in 1997.

Amongst Paul's non-YMCA interests his faith led him to become a Churchwarden and Licensed Reader in the parish of Ruishton with Thornfalcon, he was an active member of Taunton Christians Together and the CVS. In addition, he was a keen Rotarian holding various posts. Always having a keen interest in sport, he supported Chelmsford City F.C. and was a regular attendee at the County Ground to watch Somerset County Cricket Club.

A reminder of some dates for the diary in 2024

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

World federation of Y's Retired zoom gatherings October 16th (Asia).

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)

Taunton Lunch

Dulverton YMCA's Great Western Hotel. Tuesday October 15th. The hotel is opposite platform 2 of the railway station.

Coming from afar?
Don't bring the car,
Let the train,
Take the strain!
Even better,
Book a room,
Stay the night before,
Maybe the night after too!

Let Vic know if you're interested



It's a Small World

My wife and I recently visited Singapore to stay with our son who is living out there and took the opportunity to visit the Singapore YMCA out of interest (as you do!). We were invited to walk round, which we did, but when we asked if there was any printed information, we were referred to the website, I guess British YMCA's have gone the same paperless way.

As a result, we found ourselves chatting to the receptionist and asking a few questions – and discovered that he was a fairly frequent visitor to the U.K. in order to visit his niece. It then transpired that his niece lived in High Wycombe a hundred yards or so from where we had lived for over 20 years and about the same distance away from the Wycombe YMCA (now part of the 'One YMCA' empire). He confessed that he had often walked past the building and wondered how it compared to where he worked, but had never plucked up courage to pop in and see for himself. We encouraged him to ring the bell and introduce himself next time he was over here and that we were sure he would be welcomed in.

Singapore itself was a revelation – voted as having the best public transport of any city in the world (London came second but doesn't even come close on cost). Truly a city in a park, clean, well planned, cosmopolitan, safe, with vibrant shopping malls, many restaurants to suit all budgets and with English as the primary language. The Singapore YMCA was founded in 1902 and its current (1984) building is situated in the heart of the 'Raffles' era city close to well preserved historic buildings (The Raffles Hotel, Museum, Library, etc.) – but surrounded by modern high-rise blocks clearly designed by the world's leading architects.



The YMCA itself has been tastefully modernised and provides reasonably priced accommodation in 130 bedrooms (available to tourists but not for long term residents), plus a range of activities on a par with many of its British equivalents. It also provides educational programmes, family support and work experience – and has community support in terms of donations which would be the envy of many. It was good to see just round the corner a brand new large and attractive YWCA.



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

World YMCA – www.ymca.int

Singapore YMCA – www.ymca.org.sg

England & Wales YMCA – www.ymca.org.uk

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

Ron Ingamells Y's Retired Girton Lunch Talk July 2024

A few snippets from my life!

Recently I met a few friends and they started to compare how many tablets each took. I had to stop the conversation because being slightly competitive, I did not know if the winner was the one who took the least or the most!

Coming here to Girton inevitably reminds me of Sam. We had some good games here but also; I remember him coaching me with my putting in the corridor at Waltham Forest – not sure that Stan Charlesworth approved.

One of the outstanding people in the Y in my view was Dolf Weder as European Secretary. He knew that I had had a lot of experience with Eastern Europe – taking groups to the Soviet Union and Hungary – so he asked me to help with the re-establishment of the YMCA in Romania following the '89 Revolution. The challenge was enormous... especially as I discovered there were two YMCA's – Hungarian speaking and linked to the reformed Church and the Romanian linked to the Orthodox. I think I partially succeeded in bringing them together. Two experiences; as a non-meat eater it was difficult in the restaurants being offered a small piece of cheese for a starter and then a large piece for mains!! Also, I used to run each day and then suffered with cellulitis – Andrie the National Secretary with whom I stayed offered to get a doctor... Well not actually a doctor but a vet!! I rejected his offer and flew home the next day.

I had a wonderful interpreter during my work in Romania – Susanna and we have stayed in contact all these years. She now lives in Paris and we have had a few visits to stay with her. I also met a pastor in the Hungarian YMCA and we became friends and my church raised a lot of money for various projects in the village where he served... Again, still in touch!

I also had taken a few groups to Germany and there met a wonderful woman who was Director of a residential centre and did wonderful work helping young people to come to terms with all that had happened in the Nazi time. She organized many inter faith meetings with Christian, Jewish and Moslem participants and also introduced me to Rabbi Blue and it was a privilege to have a meal with him in London. When I organized a visit to Berlin, she also suggested I meet Richard Neverman – a pastor who had been a prisoner in Russia while in the German army; escaped and was cared for by 2 Russian peasants (dangerous for them), then became a minister. I invited him, with other Berliners, to Norwich and Richard preached in English for the first time at St Peter Mancroft and after the service a member of the congregation came to him and gave him a hug and said 'Since the war I have hated the Germans but that has changed today'. A wonderful moment of reconciliation!

I think one of my best pieces of work was Eurocross with a wonderful team including Vic and Andy and our dear friend Phil Heath and their wives. Interesting to recall some of the people who responded to my invitation to take part... The London Community Gospel Choir (LCGC); Springs Dace; Paul Boateng MP; J. John and (not sure why I invited her) Ann Widdecombe as I knew she would never win 'Strictly'! I forgot to mention Rev' John Bell!

To be continued in the next edition...

Deepest Sympathy.

It is with great sadness that Derek Sheppard has informed us of his wife Marjorie's sudden and unexpected passing on 24th June. Derek can be reached at :-

Dsheppard2021@outlook.com

Address

2, Solent Mews
Mount Avenue
New Milton BH25
6NT

Funeral

26th July 2pm

New Forest
Crematorium New
Milton

Attendees at Y's Retired Girton Lunch Talk July 2024.



Left to Right Front Row— Sue Winter; Mary Hills; Norman Wallis.

Middle Row—Thelma Kerridge; Ann Ingamells; Celia Wojcik; Val Wallis.

Back Row—Vic Hills; Paul Kerridge; Ron Ingamells; Andy Winter; Stan Wojcik; Graham Clarke.

As always, 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.

It was a grey drizzly day as the first Lunch group of the year assembled in the club house at Girton.

Most had uneventful journeys, some arriving the night before and staying nearby. The throng were encircled enjoying each other's company as Mary and I arrived over an hour later than planned, courtesy of "Gladys" (on a bad day) the Satnav with no common sense! Trying to avoid holdups and accidents!!! It was great to see those who had been to Girton before, plus Sue Winter for her first visit.

On this occasion the apologies list was longer than those attending, which was more like those of 2010 onwards, than the twenty plus of the last two years. Several folk commented they enjoyed the smaller numbers as it was more intimate. Sadly Tony & Jenny Miles had to "drop out" the day before through Tony's incapacity however, late "bookers" Stan & Celia filled the gaps.

As we supped teas and coffee – Ron enthralled and entertained us with a ramble around his memory of events and people that had clearly left an "indelible impression". [Ron spoke with minimal notes, but kindly agreed to commit to paper what he'd shared with us. Thanks Ron, now included in the newsletter].

Graham provided some afternoon entertainment, with 4 AOS/APS conference photo's – called **WHO CAN YOU RECOGNISE?** The photos have been forwarded to Phil' to include in the next Newsletter. The last "lunchers" departed just before 6.0pm to make their two hour plus journeys home.

Hope to see you in Taunton in October.

APOLOGIES: Aly Robertson; Derek Shepherd; David Bedford; Martyn Hadley; Roger Hunt; Mary McGinty; David Pendle; Mike & Maggie Wilkinson; Phil' Willerton; The Drakes; John Naylor; Andrew Jenkins; Stephen & Hanna Milner; Tony & Jenny Miles.

TAUNTON LUNCH

Dulverton YMCA's

Great Western Hotel.

Tuesday October 15th.

The hotel is opposite platform 2
of the Railway Station.

Coming from afar?

Don't bring the car,

Let the train

take the strain!

Even better,

book a room

stay the night before

maybe the night after too!

**Let Vic know if you are
interested?**

