



Y's RETIRED OF THE UK
Affiliated to the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees

MAY 2022

www.yretired.co.uk



President's ponderings

As I write this edition of 'Ponderings', the war in Ukraine continues to worry and shock us.

We are seeing pictures of devastated cities and lives and hear of threats of more destruction which seem to belong to another time and place and not in 21st century Europe.

Yet we have seen such scenes in the recent past. These same things have also recently happened in Syria and Yemen but they have seemed so much more distant. It is only when things happen to us or near us that many people really begin to take notice and that we really begin to empathise with those who are suffering.

As a movement we have a long history of providing help and succour to those in times of need due to wars. It has been heart rending yet also inspiring to hear of the resilience and work of the YMCA in Ukraine, where local YMCAs have reached out to serve their local communities.

For example, National Secretary in exile Viktor Serbulov reports on how YMCA Zaporizhzhia in the East of Ukraine, *in the area of hostilities, actively collects and provides various humanitarian aid to those suffering from the war, such as food, medicine, toys for children and food kits for animals. 'Each volunteer of the YMCA of Zaporizhzhia region undertook to take care of homeless and abandoned animals in order to further find their owners or put them in "good hands".'*

Within the darkness of war, there are chinks of hope and light which activities such as these bring, demonstrating the power of human love and determination to help to those in greatest need despite the cost and obstructions.

As Christians we are now entering into the period of Holy Week and Easter, when remember the physical and spiritual suffering of Jesus, during his arrest and crucifixion.

On Good Friday we are reminded of how darkness overcame the earth as He died and was later buried.

At that moment it seemed that all was lost and that darkness had won. But on Easter Sunday, that sense of loss and hopelessness was transformed when the tomb in which he had been laid was empty and he appeared again to the disciples - victorious over death and suffering, bringing light, hope and forgiveness to us all.

Those events in Jerusalem tell us that amidst the darkness and suffering in Ukraine, there is hope. There is light within the darkness and goodness which will ultimately break through against evil as peace is restored.

We pray that this will be sooner rather than later. We pray that this will come without further suffering, not just in Ukraine but in other parts of the world, and that then the YMCA will be able to continue to reach out, encouraging the building of peace, making real the words of John 17:21 '*that they all may be one*'

With best wishes for a blessed Easter,
Graham Clarke

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Ukraine YMCA response to current situation as conveyed through Johan Wilhelm Eltwik from General Secretary Ukraine YMCA In exile 17/03/22

During the 3 weeks of the war, Ukrainian troops, according to preliminary estimations, destroyed:

- about 14,000 personnel,
- more than 400 tanks,
- 86 aircraft,
- 108 helicopters.

Due to heavy losses, the Russian army has no power to capture Kyiv, but continues to shell it with heavy weapons. The defence forces of Kyiv and the region are actively identifying sabotage and reconnaissance groups of Russian invaders. During the last 3 days 105 people who were involved in such activities were detained.

In the Kiev region in some villages and cities - a real humanitarian catastrophe. The city of Slavutych (located near the Chernobyl nuclear power plant) is completely blocked by Russian troops. In the occupied villages of Ivankov, Dymer, Polesskoe, there is no means of communication, electricity, water supply, food is running out, there are no medicines. The situation is the same in many areas of **Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Luhansk, Donetsk regions**, where there are active battles between the Russian and Ukrainian armies.

In the South the attacks of Russian military are going on. Russian invaders continue to terrorize Mariupol, which has been under siege for more than two weeks. Enemy troops bombed the building of the Regional Intensive Care Hospital and took doctors hostage, as well as 400 patients with varying degrees of illness.

On the evening of March 16, the bombardment was carried out at the Drama Theatre in Mariupol, which was the largest city bomb shelter for civilians. Hundreds of people were there at the time of the bombardment, when the building was destroyed. The wreckage of the building blocked the entrance to the bomb shelter, which, fortunately, withstood the bombing. Now they are clearing the rubble and freeing people. Russian propaganda claims that it was Ukrainian troops who mined and blew up the theatre...!!! There is no limit to cynicism and brazen lies of Russians...!!!

The Ukrainian authorities finally managed to take out 20 thousand people through the "green corridors" from the besieged Mariupol, where all the supplies of water and food were depleted.

YMCA response

The YMCA Poltava is currently providing different activities for refugees and local population, conducting courses in home care, tactical medicine in cooperation with other NGOs and local authorities. Classes are being held twice a day for 2 hours on the basis of secondary school and the hall of the NGO "Warrior" in Poltava.

The classes are divided into subgroups of 20 people, each subgroup works for 30 minutes at each station (in total there are 9 stations). In addition, YMCA volunteers help to find and purchase the first aid kits, clothing, medicine, food for the refugees from other regions of Ukraine. Number of participants - 200-250 people in each class.

YMCA-kids (Kropivnitskiy)

YMCA-Kids provide different kinds of assistance for refugees and local families in the city of Kropivnitsky who are in difficult economic and psychological situations.

YMCA is also dealing with the organization of children's leisure time during the day, delivering psychological assistance, psychological relief for them, involving families in joint activities.

Kropyvnytskyi is a relatively safe city, where refugees come constantly. Some travel only to spend the night, some stay longer. The city authorities allocate premises for refugees: dormitories of educational institutions, hotels, schools and kindergartens, hostels free of charge for accommodation / accommodation. More than 100,000 people passed through the region in transit, escaping from bombing and shelling. YMCA Ukraine is very grateful to the International Family YMCA for great support! Together we will overcome!

Viktor Serbulov - YMCA Ukraine - General Secretary



MARGERY NAYLOR

Peacefully, at home, on 14th February 2022, Margery, beloved wife of John, much loved mother to Andrew and Robert and an adored grandmother to Elizabeth, Ciara, Rory, Thea, Pepper, and Ivo, passed away.

A Thanksgiving Service for Margery's life was held on Monday 21st February at 1pm at her local Cramond Kirk, Edinburgh. All were warmly invited. The Kirk Minister spoke of a vast number of disciplines Margery had been involved with in her life, including various senior positions in Social Work.

In her later years she was Regional Commissioner South East Scotland of Scouting, their adult training advisor, and encourager. She was very enthusiastic about the future of scouting especially in Scotland. Her two guiding words were Humanity and Humility.

Donations if desired to St Columba's Hospice. For those of you who wish to send their condolences, John's email address is: cjohn.naylor@outlook.com

Family home address is:-
25B CRAMOND GLEBE ROAD
EDINBURGH
EH4 6NT

All our thoughts and prayers continue to be with John and all his family members at this time of great sadness.

David (Ed)

Dear David

From where I am in Lagos, Nigeria I can only send to John at this time my heartfelt condolences. May Margery's soul rest in peace.

Cornelius Taiwo Olaomo

More sad news David. Although I didn't know Margery, I greatly appreciate all your efforts in ensuring that so many of us are kept in touch with such happenings.

Just for your information, Elaine and I are currently on the receiving end of a covid hit! Hey ho.

Best wishes. **Roger Hunt**



Sadly, opportunities of Y's Retired of UK gatherings are reducing – as numbers recede and the impact of covid halts continuity.

However, in the Central Area of UK the opportunity of sharing and updating with colleagues continues. Vic Hills writes the following:-

"I am pleased to confirm that I have agreed a provisional booking at:-

Girton Golf Club Cambridge
for Lunch on
Wednesday July 13th
convening at 12 noon
with lunch commencing at 12.30pm.

Last year 15 of us were able to meet with some new participants - and some of the stalwarts of the event not able to attend in previous years.

Can we grow the numbers in 2022?

Could you be a new attender - or a stalwart - or a regular? Whatever category you would consider yourself, you (and your partner or guest) would be most welcome.

I would be delighted to hear from you if you are at all interested at vic_hills@yahoo.co.uk (underscore between vic and hills)

Replies to me please by **Friday 22nd April** so that I can then gauge interest, confirm the booking and provide you with the menu choices with costs.

My experience and that of my wife Mary, during the time that I've been Secretary, is that it is an enjoyable time with folk who have interesting stories to tell, a great deal of humour and anecdotes in pleasant surroundings with easy free parking.

We've enjoyed the occasion - do come and join in.



The 3rd Baron Remnant, CVO 1930-2022
Past President of National Council of YMCAs
later to become YMCA England

Melissa Bradley, daughter writes:-

I regret to inform you that Lord Remnant died on 4/3/22. His memorial service will be held at St Pauls Knightsbridge on 30 May at 12 noon (RSVP stpaulsthanks@gmail.com)

The Lord Remnant, CVO, 3rd Baron, died 4 March, 2022. He was 91.

James Wogan Remnant was born 23 October 1930, son of the 2nd Baron Remnant (1895-1967) and his wife the former Norah Susan Wogan-Browne (died 1990); and succeeded to the peerage created in 1928 and the family baronetcy created in 1917 on his father's death, 4 June, 1967.

Lord Remnant, who lived near Reading, in Berkshire, was appointed CVO in 1979.

He married 24 June 1953, Serena Jane Loehnis (born 23 May, 1932) daughter of Commander Sir Clive Loehnis, KCMG, RN (1902-92) sometime Director of GCHQ, and his wife the former Rosemary Beryl Ryder (1909-2006) scion of the Earls of Harrowby, by whom he had three sons, Philip, Robert and Hugo, and a daughter, Melissa. The eldest son, the Hon Philip John Remnant (born 20 December 1954) now succeeds to the peerage and baronetcy.

Nick Nightingale writes:-

Jimmy Remnant was a warm and supportive friend and coach when I became National Secretary in 1974. He was a distinguished Chartered Accountant, at one stage responsible for the Queen's finances.

Soon after I joined, we were both involved in the 150th YMCA anniversary celebrations in Westminster Abbey and afterwards at Lambeth Palace; the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh attended both events.

I well remember Jimmy turning to me at the tea party at Lambeth, saying how extraordinarily lucky we each were to have been in office that year. How right he was about that! And on many other issues.

MEMBERS CORRESPONDENCE

Dear David, (from Jim Lamb)
following the March 2022 newsletter article about Rose, the Australian YMCA Women's Auxiliary worker and her involvement during the WW1, I pulled from my archives a poster sent to me years ago by Erica, the wife of Gordon Wickens which members might be interested in. It read as follows:-

ATHLETIC SPORTS and GYMKHANA
Saturday June the 15th 1918
arranged by convalescent officers in
Brighton and Hove
in aid of YMCA huts destroyed in France.
The programme

100 yds Boy Scouts
100 yds Open, Officers.
50 yds ladies (on war service)
3 legged race
50 yds egg and spoon race
50 yds match and cigarette race
50 yds blind men - accompanied by nurse
Tug of War - 10 men on each side
Tilting the Bucket
Blindfold boxing
Band Race
100 yds Open Men's Race
50 yds Team Race
50 yds Thread and Needle Race
50 yds Sack Race
Spar Boxing with Pillows
Obstacle Race
Blindfold Squad Drill
Polo Match on Donkeys

all to be held at Preston Park
from 2:00pm to 9:00 pm
Tickets 6d each
soldiers in hospital blues - free
Military Band will Perform

A chance to catch up with old friends and
colleagues for our ZOOM Y's Retired
Coffee break!



Grab a Coffee, add a piece of cake of your choice and join us on Zoom for our first virtual Coffee Break!

28th April 10.30am
Zoom ID 867 3603 0633
Passcode Coffee

or

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86736030633?pwd=ZTB6TFdTM1dFcy9tc0pHR2ZXS3BTQT09>

Email Graham Clarke if you hope to come
Julia-graham@talk21.com
or phone 0747 004 1436 if you need help connecting!

NOTICE FROM YMCA PENSION PLAN

Several members of Y's Retired of UK will be in receipt of a YMCA pension, either paid via the Plan's administrators, XPS, or via an annuity provider such as Legal & General or Aviva.

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

To help with the ongoing administration, it is important to let the YMCA Pensions Administrator know of any changes to your circumstances, such as change of address. You can do so by contacting XPS Administration by email: YMCA@xpsgroup.com or telephoning 0118 918 5750 and ask for Balbir Sandhu.

GRANTS FROM THE BENEVOLENT FUND

Grants of assistance are available for Y's Retired Members, through the Officers of Y's Retired of the UK.

Are you in a situation where you are about to make a significant expenditure on something that will help or improve your condition of life, i.e., stair-lift, mobility scooter, electric chairs, adjustable bed, or similar?

Do you personally know of a Y's Retired member who would benefit from a gift (of up to £500) towards such costs? If so, please make contact (by email or in writing) with brief details to our secretary, Vic Hills. Vic Hills Email: vic_hills@yahoo.co.uk (underscore between Vic & Hills) or 5 Kernham Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6GB

All applications will be quickly assessed by two independent panel members who may contact the applicant for any additional information required to assist consideration of the request.

Dear friends,
I write to inform you that my father, Ronald Abner Lane, born 2nd Feb 1920, died peacefully in a Nursing Home near Milford on Sea, Hampshire at 5.15am on 28th February 2022. He had just belatedly celebrated his 102 with family the previous Friday.

Dad spent many years working with the YM during the late 1960's and 70's. He was at Wisley Gardens, Ashwell House, Torquay, Sheffield and Croydon. The latter being where he helped accommodate a number of Polish folk during the troubles of that time.

Following the death of his wife Phyl, his stalwart and soulmate in 1991, he lost interest in many things, but has been, until the past couple of years, very supportive of the family.

For his 100th birthday 8 members of the YMCA, some Polish attended a memorable party for him. But he missed Phyl and has wanted to be with her, now he is. Rest in Peace.
Ken Lane.

(Please send your condolences to Ronald's family via Ken Lane's email address:- kral47@lane69.co.uk)



Final part of the extracts of Australian Sandra Van Brown book, entitled "Red Cross Rose" in which she describes her grandmother's involvement of YMCA Women's Auxiliary and their assistance with soldiers on the front line work during the 1st World War

The continuation of Rose's work in support of Australian soldiers during the First World War Rose states that, the simple YMCA rest huts, provided a safe place for the men to read, engage in games, write letters home and meet other troops from far away countries. Yet despite the appreciation from the troops, Rose commented that a lot of British officers had no time for the YMCA workers. She supposed the army officers thought the YMCA workers and volunteers should have been fighting rather than undertaking soft welfare work. She remarked, "This is not really fair, for they are either men over military age, or men who cannot get into the army for medical reasons, but unfortunately, some of the military do not realise this."

Regardless of the sentiment from the hierarchy, the YMCA workers were well regarded by the soldiers and as YMCA volunteers they never appeared to complain about their circumstances, always willing to help the Diggers and Tommies. The one way the YMCA tried to help make their presence more acceptable to the officers was to provide a uniform. The male YMCA workers were compelled to wear a khaki uniform, which Rose thought very unsightly. The women wore a trim grey suit with blue facings and a blue velour hat in winter. The uniforms help give them all legitimacy and help them fit in.

By early January 1917 Rose was transferred into YMCA headquarters as personal support for Arthur Reade, the new General Secretary for the base who was an educationalist and journalist, always concerned about the intellectual well-being of the troops. Reade was impressed by her capabilities and asked Rose to take over from him all the military duties for the YMCA - pass and permit duties - which gave him more time to look after the educational and policy management of the YMCA.

The British YMCA started bringing entertainers to the front from as early as February 1915 at the request of the YMCA women's auxiliary and its patron, Princess Helena Victoria, granddaughter to Queen Victoria and a strong advocate for social justice. She never married, but instead devoted her time to the YMCA and YWCA women's auxiliaries during the war visiting the troops on several occasions.

Lena Ashwell, a well-regarded actress and entertainer, with qualifications and years of experience on stage was given responsibility via the YMCA WA to establish concert party groups, giving over 50,000 concerts in the UK, on the western and eastern fronts, and on troop ships in the Mediterranean.

As an aside:- Lena Ashwell married actor Arthur Playfair in 1896, however after a troubled married, Playfair and Lena finally divorced in 1908.

Lena then married the royal obstetrician Sir Henry John Forbes in 1908, who had the claim to fame of delivering both the future [Queen Elizabeth II](#) and her sister [Princess Margaret](#).

Apart from concerts, and comfort parcels, newspapers and letters to and from home, YMCA cinemas also showed films to an average of 35,000 men per night across France. The YMCA ran twenty of these specially constructed cinemas in the principle basecamps, supplemented by portable cinemas for units in isolated areas.

It is evident the YMCA was an integral part of the war effort in providing support for men under rather horrible circumstances. British poet, writer and soldier, Siegfried Sassoon once described a show put on near the frontline writing:-

it wasn't much;
a canvas awning; a few footlights
(the performers) were unconscious it seemed to me,
of the intense impact on their audience - that dim brown
moonlit mass of men.
Row beyond row,
I watched those soldiers,
listening so quietly,
chins propped on hands,
to the songs which epitomized there longing for the gaiety
and sentiment of life.

During a time of recuperation in a London hospital, Rose was visited by Colonel Murdoch of the British Red Cross. Colonel Murdoch told her that he wanted her to give all her time to the Red Cross and give up her work with the YMCA. Murdoch particularly told Rose he believed the work she was doing with the Australians was invaluable to the war effort.

However, despite this request, Rose continued her work with the YMCA and in fact spent less time with the Red Cross over the coming years. Rose recalls;

"There were many coming down in great numbers, the result of the offensive on the Somme. The ambulance trains are waiting to get into the station at the Quay des Escale where the wounded are being sent to other hospitals or back to Blihty. There are so many that the stretchers with the wounded are packed in every available space, even sheds and many are lying on the ground. It is terrible to see."

"There are so many it is impossible to get the hospital ships in fast enough. The YMCA have tried to help in the emergency by distributing tea and food amongst the walking wounded and where possible the stretcher cases. All available staff have volunteered for the work. Most of us are busy with our own particular jobs during the day, but this emergency is so large it has to go on, so it means that we are doing these train duties during the night and our other jobs by day. We would not do it for long, but we must keep going while the injured men are pouring through as they are."

At the end of the war, early March 1919, Rose took a trip to the frontline. It had been only three months since the end of hostilities and very few people were moving about the war areas. But Rose was curious and as part of her duties with number 3 Australian Hospital, which was stationed at Abbeville until April 1919, she had the opportunity to take a car ride around the more affluent areas.

Many of the Australian soldiers were grateful to Rose for staying on after the war to lay wreathes, plant flowers, take photographs of the graves and lovingly caring for the remains of their loved ones. Many historians have chronicled the aftermath of the war, describing it as one long funeral, a continuation of a country in mourning.

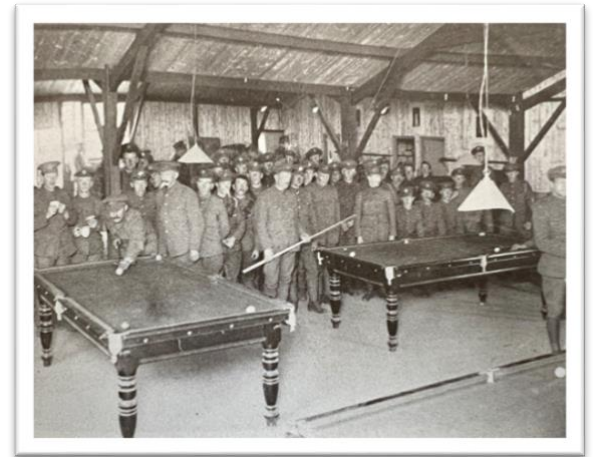
The war graves detachment arrived at Villers-Bretonneux in April 1919 while Rose was in Abbeville, and almost immediately problems of indiscipline of the soldiers arose. They were not coping well with vast numbers of burials. **The Commanding Officer was a young Lieutenant Colonel John R Mott (could this really be the same John R Mott – later to become President of World Alliance of YMCAs?)** who was confronted with men who did not want to be there, who refused to work until improved measures were adopted to handle the dead.



The men demanded better food and refused to be bound by the military discipline that had hounded them during wartime. Instead of implementing punitive disciplinary sanctions, Mott progressively granted what the men were asking for. More stock was drawn from army stores. They were given increased time away from the exhumation and burials. Rose negotiated directly with Colonel Mott who knew she was ideally suited for the task for delivering comforts and pleasurable activities which were essential to the men's morale.



Rose's primary focus was to make a little home centre for the men when they were off duty. Aside from the simple afternoon teas, through the YMCA, Rose was able to arrange concert parties and a cinema and entertainment for the many soldiers receiving a half days holiday once a week away from the horrors of the graveyards.



By June 1919 the allied forces readied themselves for the signing of the Peace Treaty of Versailles, as it was known. Rose travelled to Paris with Colonel Mott arriving at the gates of Paris on the 28th of June 1919 as the guns fired signalling that the peace treaty had been signed. Rose reported that people went crazy from that moment.

Two days before the unit ceased its functions, Lieutenant Colonel Mott wrote to Rose to express his deepest thanks for the kind and unselfish way she had worked for the detachment (see John R Mott article).

"We are finishing up the unit here today. I feel my obligations would not be fulfilled until I have thanked you for the kind and unselfish way you have worked for the benefit of the officers and the men of this battalion. I can confidently say for each and everyone of us, that your efforts have been most keenly appreciated. And to me personally as CO of this unit you have been a help in more ways than appears on the surface."



Rose ends by stating, *"I said goodbye to France with very mixed feelings. I felt as if I was deserting the comrades who would never return."*

While waiting to return to Australia, Rose found herself back in London, helping the YMCA with a scheme whereby WA ladies would patrol certain parts of London 8pm to 4am every night with the object of helping ex-soldiers, who might be destitute, or spending time in bars. Taking men back to the YMCA to sober up with a cup of tea or coffee, and many a man thus helped who would otherwise have found himself in the arms of the police. (an early form of Street Pastors!!).

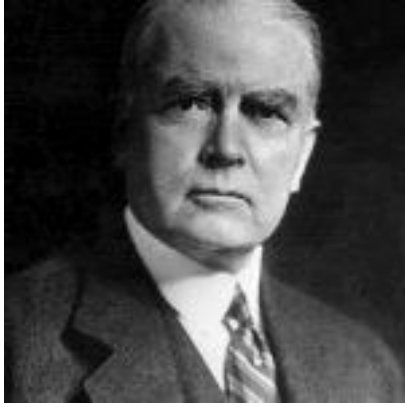
"Supper at the coffee stalls amongst the outcasts of London. In the recesses of Waterloo bridge - poor devils, some homeless, some drunk. We knew all the night haunts of London's crooks - but everywhere we were safe for we were YMCA and known and respected by good and bad. We were in uniform and I had my war ribbons which meant a lot to the men for they always said I was one of them."

Upon her return home to Australia, Rose had interviews with Prime Minister Billy Hughes and other federal authorities, military and civil, as well as with the state premiers and other state representatives.



What a truly remarkable story of a determined Australian woman (pictured in the tent) and her 'journey' with the YMCA.

Leader of the World YMCA Movement



John R. Mott was born in New York on 25 May 1865. In 1885 he became a student at Cornell University, where as President of the student YMCA, he increased membership threefold, and raised money for a University YMCA building. He graduated in 1888 with a bachelor's degree in philosophy and history, and immediately began a service of 27 years as Secretary of the Intercollegiate YMCA of the USA and Canada.

Pioneer of the Student Christian Movement

As a student, Mott also participated in the first ever international interdenominational student Christian conference. After graduating, Mott organised the World's Student Christian Federation in 1895 and as its General Secretary went on to organise national student movements in India, China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, parts of Europe and the North East.

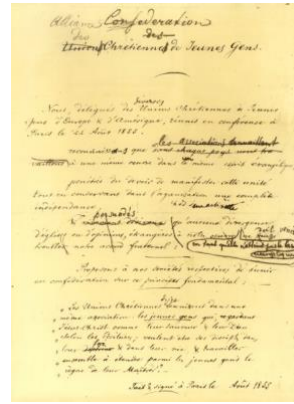
During World War I, when the YMCA offered its services to free world leaders, Mott became General Secretary of the National War Graves Council, receiving the Distinguished Service Medal for his work.

From 1919 to 1928 he served as General Secretary of the International YMCA Committee (that would later become the World Alliance of YMCAs) and as President of the World Alliance from 1926 to 1937.

Nobel Peace Prize

He received the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1946** for his work in establishing and strengthening international Protestant Christian student organisations that worked to promote peace.

The Paris Basis remains core to the global YMCA



Paris Basis

The Paris Basis consisted of just two sentences:

'The YMCAs seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and saviour, according to the holy scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his kingdom amongst young men.'

'Any differences of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, shall not interfere with the harmonious relations of the constituent members and associates of the World Alliance.'

The second sentence was added to reflect the fact that differences of opinion – for instance on the issue of slavery in the US at the time – should not detract from the unity and purpose of the Movement. The global YMCA Movement is still founded on Christian principles, but it supports young women as well as young men, and people of any faith and no faith.

Look back with us to 1955, when the global YMCA celebrated its 100th birthday in Paris, France – the city where, 100 years earlier, 99 delegates from 9 countries had first met, and issued the Paris Declaration.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7124hyYxTO>

This film was produced after the Centennial Anniversary Celebration of the YMCAs in Paris in 1955. There were more than 8'000 delegates attending this celebration.

The YMCA owes a lot to Margery Naylor who died in February 2022

Margery was a huge support to John during his tenure as National Secretary (1982-92) using her keen mind and sensitivity to be a sounding board for the great ideas and initiatives which emerged during John's leadership.

The years were years of great change and innovation. Many new initiatives:- for example – Y Training Services, Y Care International, the development of the National Council as a Housing Association (which led to many local YMCAs being established), benefitted from Margery's input and wise counsel. Even before John became National Secretary Margery was part of the work at Lakeside which transformed that National Centre.

Margery contributed to youth work in her own right, particularly through the Scouts, and had a distinguished professional career in Social Services but, we in the YMCA, can be particularly grateful to her for the support she gave to our leadership during significant times.

David (Bedford)



Dear friends,

Visiting Ethiopia in February, I saw yet again some of the pressures and constraints that are part and parcel of the existence of so many of our National Movements.

YMCA Ethiopia finds itself in almost every sense in the crossfire of a civil war.

The global YMCA Movement rejoices in the great news that - in the first days of 2022 – our brother Dagmawi Selamssa, the National General Secretary of the Ethiopian YMCA, and our sister Ethiopia Tilahun, the current YMCA Ethiopia Chairperson, were released from custody by the Ethiopian authorities after 55 and 44 days respectively.

We send them our collective best wishes for rest and restoration as they are reunited with families and colleagues and continue to thank YMCA for its service to the vulnerable people of Tigray region.

It was my pleasure, too, to visit Nirina Rakotomalala and all the team at the African Alliance of YMCAs in Nairobi and sit and discuss with them as they chart their course for 2022.

It is so heartening to see how they – and so many of us across our global Movement - are building strategies and plans around YMCA Vision 2030.

And one World Council, 3-9 July, experienced at least two ways: in Aarhus, and online. Please do REGISTER NOW, for both the physical and the virtual events.

Carlos Sanvee, Secretary General, World YMCA

TO ALL Ys RETIRED OF UK MEMBERS

I'm sure, like me, you've been watching the recent events unfolding in Ukraine with shock, disbelief and great sadness for all those affected.

Right now, YMCAs in Europe* are giving safe passage to Ukrainian refugees at the border, and providing them with essential resources like food, warm blankets, clothing, and emergency housing.

That's why we've launched this emergency appeal to support more Ukrainian refugees in this time of crisis.

Can you send an emergency donation now? £30 - £52 - £75 or any other amount

The situation in Ukraine is intensifying every day. More resources are urgently needed to address critical needs.

With four million people expected to flee Ukraine, we need your help now to keep more families safe.

Your donation could help YMCA Europe provide emergency support to Ukrainian refugees and address the lack of essential resources.

100% of your donation will be sent to YMCA Europe and be used where the need is greatest, to support young people and their families.

Please be as generous as you can. Thank you for your continued support.

Best wishes, **Denise Hatton** National Secretary & CEO, YMCA England & Wales

Please send your donation with gift aid attached via the link below

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***YMCA England & Wales is part of a global federation of YMCAs, including YMCA Europe who is supporting YMCAs in countries bordering Ukraine.**



March 8, 2022 — On the International Women's Day, Euclid Network (EN) revealed the anticipated Top 100 Women in Social Enterprise 2022 List which featured women leaders in social entrepreneurship and innovation. Out of 100 women in Europe, 20 were from UK, one of which, as proud parents we are pleased to announce, was our daughter Michelle. (Editor)



Michelle Smith

Country: UK

Occupation: CEO at Mpower People CIC

Michelle Smith has been working and leading in the volunteer sector since she was 13 years old. Her passion for helping others find their way, was discovered at an even earlier age, through her experiences in childhood and it wasn't long before she dedicated herself to giving something back to the world.

Michelle is Vietnamese and was adopted from a refugee camp in Hong Kong by British parents who brought her first to Sri Lanka, Switzerland and then to the UK where she was raised.

Her aptitude for entrepreneurship was discovered shortly after her career began, when Michelle set up her first business in 1995: CentralNet. A digital solutions company, CentralNet assisted Third Sector organisations in creating an online presence in the very early days of the internet. With many successes, including helping to develop communications for clients as high-profile as YMCA England,

Michelle stepped back from the company, promoting from within, in-line with her belief that people are the greatest asset to a business. Following this, she moved on to a successful career supporting people into work or to start their own businesses. She had also been the Strategic and Operations Director of the Basement, a Homeless support charity in Merseyside.

In 2009, Michelle left this career to start a Third Sector business of her own, MPower People CIC, to address the education inequality that she noticed from within her community. Initially a youth support organisation supporting young people in Toxteth and Kensington with safe activities and training, MPower People grew into a CIC that addressed the broader needs of the community, while still championing those individuals making our cities and towns into kinder, more equitable and sustainable places to live.

Mpower People continues its growth and is proud to play a part in the stories of so many lives within the Merseyside area. Michelle's own story and own personal growth is something that has driven her forward into finding a balance between personal success and responsibility towards others, and to this day she is a well-respected member of her community in both business and social work.

"My only wish for the future is a kinder, more compassionate society, where choosing to help and empower others- wherever we can – is the norm. Empowered people raise each other up without looking down on anyone and there is nothing more empowering than kindness. We are stronger together."

MEMBERS CORRESPONDENCE

The Thanksgiving Service for **Desmond Reuben Willcox MBE** was held at Methodist Central Hall in Plymouth on Monday 14th February, was very well attended by folk from near and far. The service was led by Reverend Gareth Higgs with two organist friends of Des', playing so loudly, maybe even Des could hear.

The hymns were so meaningful and fitting with "Love Divine", "In Christ Alone" ending with the YMCA's own hymn, "Thine be the Glory."

Johnnie Libby, David and Margaret Libby's son, shared with those present both the early years and the many highlights which included Cheltenham YMCA, Plymouth YMCA, President of AOS, founder Trustee of South West Region Trust Fund and connections with YMCA Norway through Triactive.

Two very good friends of Des and Pearl, Svein and Unni Harsten of Ten Sing fame, flew over from Oslo, Norway especially to tender their condolences and represent all those friends of YMCA Norway. And a large number of retired YMCA members from other parts of England were also present:- Mary McGinty, Ann Heath, Beryl Moorehead, Angela Gilbert, Hillary Robins, Miriam and Bill Sargison, David Pendle, Margaret and David Libby, Ernie Edgecombe, Sue and David Smith.

The poem on Des' service sheet was as follows:-

MISS ME - BUT LET ME GO

When I come to the end of the road,
And the sun has set for me,
I want no rites in a gloom filled room
Why cry for a soul set free.

Miss me a little - but not too long:
And not with your head bowed low.
Remember the love that we have shared
Miss me - but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take,
And each must go alone.
It's all part of the master plan,
A step on the road to home.

And when you are lonely, and sick of heart,
Go to the friends we know.
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds.
Miss me - but let me go.