

# Y'S RETIRED OF THE UK

AFFILIATED TO THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP  
OF YMCA RETIREES



AUTUMN – 2025 | [WWW.YSRETIRED.UK](http://WWW.YSRETIRED.UK)



President's  
Ponderings

## GOD, SPACE & OUR FRAGILE EARTH

I have just had my interest reawakened in space flight! No, I have not booked a place on one of Elon Musk's Space X or Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic's flights, but I have been fascinated to read the account of the race between Russia and America to get the first man in space in 1961 in the book 'Beyond' by Stephen Walker. The accolade of being the first man in space of course went to Yuri Gagarin a Russian air force pilot, who made a single orbit of Earth in his Vostok 1 spacecraft on April 12, 1961. This historic flight lasted 108 minutes, traveling at speeds of over 17,000 miles per hour, and marked the start of human endeavour in outer space. Although the Russian authorities claimed that Gagarin landed back on earth inside his space craft, in fact he ejected from it and landed in a potato field some 2km away, giving two women picking potatoes quite a surprise! The Americans quickly followed suit by sending up Alan Shepard in May 1961 with a 15-minute sub orbital flight and who went on to be the first man to hit a golf ball on the moon as part of Apollo 14.

At present 680 people from 47 countries have reached the altitude of space (100km above sea level) and there has been a continuous human presence in orbit for over 20 years, thanks to the International Space Station.

Humanity has long been fascinated with the mystery of space and the universe. To go into space would be another step towards understanding God.

*This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb:  
I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who  
spreads out the earth by myself, (Isaiah 44 v24 NIV)*

We continue to strive to get a human to Mars and we send probes out into the farthest reaches of space, (Voyager 1 is now 24 billion Kms from earth). But I cannot help but wonder if this fascination with space is a diversion to stop us from really looking at ourselves.? PTO

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## GOD, SPACE & OUR FRAGILE EARTH, CONT.

Alan Shepard said: -

*'I realized up there that our planet is not infinite. It's fragile. That may not be obvious to a lot of folks, and it's tough that people are fighting each other here on Earth instead of trying to get together and live on this planet.'*

So perhaps we should be diverting our gaze from the heavens and looking and focussing our activity on the world on which God has placed us in and given us responsibility for?

### NOTICE FROM YMCA PENSION AND ASSURANCE PLAN (DB SCHEME)

On 1<sup>st</sup> 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](http://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](mailto:YMCA@broadstone.co.uk)

Telephone number: 0117 937 8700

### Dates for your diary 2025

Taunton Lunch – **16<sup>th</sup> October.**

London Lunch at the Indian Student Hostel, Fitzroy Square – **13<sup>th</sup> November**

21<sup>st</sup> World Council of YMCA's Toronto Canada – **19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 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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## Encounter With A Duchess

Many will have been saddened by the news of the death of The Duchess of Kent aged 92, who once presented a dilemma for Graham Clarke in 1986 when she officially opened Hawthornthwaite Wood YMCA Family Centre in Leeds. After meeting members and users of the centre she went outside to meet a crowd of cheering primary school children who were on the top of an increasingly sloping grass bank. As she moved along the increasingly steep bank it became likely that she could slip. So, with no officials nearby, the question was, what could Graham do to steady the royal personage without breaking protocol? The only answer was a firm grasp of the Royal Elbow at the crucial moment which was rewarded with a smile and a 'Thank You so much!' and disaster was averted!

Phil Willerton also met the Duchess when she opened Birchwood YMCA – see the photograph, which also includes Graham Angus and Gerald Ward (one time Chairman of the YMCA College). The Duchess was particularly taken with the single mother and baby unit and spent more time chatting to the young mothers than of the dignitaries present.



## Chris Roles Memorial Service

Over 300 friends and colleagues attended the memorial service for Chris Roles former Head of Public Affairs and Director of Y Care International at Hind Street Methodist Church, London on 28<sup>th</sup> July. Memories were shared from staff of HelpAge International and from the YMCA Carlos Madjri Sanvee, Secretary General of YMCA World Alliance, Joahn Vilhelm Eltvik former Secretary General. Among the YMCA Representatives were Denise Hatton CEO of YMCA England and Wales and former colleagues David Pendle, Mike Ray, Joy Madeiros, Kevin Williams, Kerry Davies, and Graham Clarke. Chris had also worked at action Aid< Christian Aid. Royal College of Music and was a lay canon of Winchester Cathedral

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## Girton Lunch 2025

Our first lunch of 2025 held at Girton Golf Club, continuing the tradition of Sam and Maureen Johnson and Jim Lamb, was blessed with a pleasant sunny day and 3 new participants. Sadly, there were notable absences through illness, incapacity, changing the day on which we had held this in the past or attendance at another re-union of ex YMCA colleagues.

We were delighted to welcome Tony and Jenny Miles, up until two days before they had advised Tony was too ill to travel. However, Tony couldn't resist the Wojcik's encouragement. The catering team at Girton responded positively to the last-minute request for 2 extra guests. Tony wasn't able to stay for the group photo'. It was great to see him and Jenny.

The stalwarts were delighted to welcome three newcomers, Ali Robertson from Dumfries, her friend Sandra and Rowena Kerslake ex Trinity Group & Ipswich YMCA. The chatter from the two tables in the room indicated there was news to share, jokes to tell and memories of past escapades, exploits and colleagues to remind and refresh. So much so that some stayed behind afterwards to catch up.

Apologies had been received from Roger Hunt, David Bedford, Mike & Maggie Wilkinson, John & Barbara Drake, John Berry, Clyde Binfield, Andy & Sue Winter, Val & Norman Wallis. Plus, Stephen and Hannah Milner who were in Yorkshire hosting the annual BBBF re-union.

The photograph from Left to right (viewing): -

Front Row: Celia Wojcik, Ann Ingamells, Mary Hills.

Back Row: Thelma & Paul Kerridge; David Pendle; Graham Clarke; Vic Hills; Stan Wojcik; Rowena Kerslake; Ron' Ingamells and Ali Robertson.

Missed the Cambridge Lunch – how about the Great Western Hotel by Platform 2 on Taunton Station on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Or the Indian Student Hostel in London on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Relax on a train instead of driving and stay the night too!

Hope to see you at one or both.



## October Scripture of the Month: -

*"The Lord is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him". ~ Psalm 28:7*

As the days grow shorter and the year begins to turn, this verse offers reassurance: our God is our protector and source of joy. Even in times of uncertainty or change, we are held by His strength and sustained by His love.

## From YMCA Leadership to Y's Retired

We are delighted to welcome Rowena Kerslake as a member of Y's Retired.

Rowena commenced work with Chelmsford YMCA in November 1998, becoming CEO in 2001. In 2008 Colchester became her responsibility too. Leaving in October 2010 to become CEO of Ipswich YMCA which shortly after embraced St Edmond & Waveney to become Suffolk YMCA.

A further merger with Cambridge & Peterborough became Trinity Group in November 2017 where Rowena became Deputy CEO until retiring from YMCA employment in May 2024. She now runs Kerslake Consulting and has "just" been asked to be a Trustee of the Central and Anglia Trust Fund.

In the section of our application where we ask about other involvements and responsibilities Rowena writes: -

*"I was part of many national groups – Brand steering group being a notable one, fundraising, childcare, housing, etc. I enjoyed all the Prague youth events taking a group of young people each time. I attended WUN in China latterly in 2022 with Tim. I was part of the delivery team for the 175 events at Excel in London and had set up discovery visits with many YMCAs in the four nations for the visiting YMCAs. It was great being a YMCA tour guide! At the event, I took charge of the registration desk, which was a full-on job".*

Rowena hopes to join us for lunches.

Her photo' shows her and Tim walking near the sea – one of her favourite pastimes.



## 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.

### Harvest: -

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up".*

**~ Galatians 6:9**

Harvest is a season of thanksgiving – for food, for provision, and for the blessings that sustain us. But it is also a reminder of perseverance. Just as farmers sow in faith and wait for the harvest, so too are we called to continue in faith, hope and love, even when the results are not immediate.

## Taunton Lunch Apologies

### JOHN BERRY

I have had every intention of attending this year, but unfortunately, I had three teeth removed last week and having a lot of trouble with it. Yesterday the socket was cleaned for the second time this week and I now have a course of antibiotics.

The pain has been dragging me down, Ibuprofen (600mg) and Paracetamol don't touch it! I will not see the technician for the new plate until 14th October! I have tried to bring this forward, but the dentist won't commit himself at this stage as it has proved less straight forward than anticipated.

So, it is porridge, soup, puréed fruit and custard (occasionally cream or ice cream!) for another nineteen days!

That's two lunches cancelled out of three - not good. Maybe third time lucky on November 13th(!) in London.

I should be grateful if you would kindly offer my apologies with good wishes to all on the day.

### DAVID TIPPING

My apologies for not coming back to you regarding the lunch. I just wish I was feeling better to venture out a little more. I appreciate 85 is not the end of the world, but at present I have a number of health issues making it difficult to venture far.

It's also rather sad I don't have any contacts any more within the YMCA. I joined British Boys for British Farms in 1961 for 5 years, then the Training Course in London. Then Asst at Bolton YMCA. I stayed only 18 months. I married Edna a Bolton Girl, I was appointed General Secretary of Neath YMCA, which included a house, this was 1966. Stayed at Neath until 1971. Then went to Nottinghamshire Age Concern from there to Elmbridge Borough Council as Community Services for the Elderly Manager, took early retirement in 1995 (55) then worked at Wisley Gardens (p/t) for 5 yrs. Then at 60 took a job at the Walton on Thames Health Centre (p/t) decided at 70 to retire!

Yes, the YMCA continues to do a very good job. Neath YMCA, South Wales is 150 yrs Old this Year and still doing a good job!

A brief summery! I do hope you have a successful Lunch.

**I always appreciate a response, however brief, as in that way I know you are still receiving Y's Retired communications. Vic**

## Letters From Sweden

Graham & I were "relieved" [because many of our invitations to join Y's Retired do not receive responses] to receive this letter from Camilla Bohm Coleman.

"I have not been well this Summer, but now I am feeling much better.

9 years ago, I got a rare disease called NMOSD (Neuro Myelitis Optica) Inflammation in the spinal cord and optic nerve. Over a night I got paralysed from the waist down. At that time, I still lived in Västerås luckily my daughter Kristina worked as a physiotherapist at the local hospital. I can walk now but it has/is a long rehabilitation. That is why I did not take part in the 175 years celebration of the YMCA in London.

If you want me to write a CV so you know what I have done since I worked with Tony Miles, Judith Jenner .... I can do that".

***We have asked Camilla for that with a photo too.***

"Since me and the children moved to Sweden, I have worked för the YWCA- YMCA and also with adult education. I was the chairperson for the local YMCA in Västerås for many years. I have been involved with the Parasport movement here.

I have also been opening my home for young people who needed an extra family, I worked together with the social services in Västerås".

"Just now I am living in Sollentuna, a suburb of Stockholm, my 3 children wanted me to be closer to them. At the moment, I am what we are called in Sweden Leisure politicians. Subjects I am involved in are disability issues, Immigration, Youth etc".

"Kristina lives with her partner Marco, who is a Coast Guard and their children Mille 5 years and Misax 1 year old 10 minutes from me. Mattias, my youngest, lives at the other end of the city. He works with fitness and healthy eating and runs his own company".

"We all speak Swenglish; we are trying to teach the small ones both Swedish and English".

I am so grateful that you and Graham have been writing to me!! THANK YOU!!

***To Y's Retired Folk – if you would like to correspond with Camilla please advise Vic.***

## Paul Steps In

With the support of the Ys Retired Committee Paul Smillie has agreed to be nominated as the British representative on Secours Specieux, the international support fund for YMCA staff with emergency financial needs. We are grateful to John Naylor who has served on this group for a number of years and will be stepping down at the 2026 World Assembly.

## 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)

## Reflections from David Bedford

*David Bedford was unable to join the Cambridge Lunch and later sent this email/letter.*

*Do his recollections trigger your memories of past colleagues and times spent with them?*

David wrote: -

Did you as a child, like me, take boxes of harvest festival fruit and veg to the elderly after the evening service? I always used to think to myself as a child "it must feel nice to be remembered". I felt just like that when I received the card!

I have been thinking about colleagues who welcomed me into the YMCA in the 1980s and taught me all I knew about the Movement. These were largely the great figures who had joined the YMCA in or soon after the War and who became lifelong servants. How honoured I was (perhaps I didn't appreciate it at the time!) to have a neighbouring office at the National Council to people like Gordon Wickens, Ron Harkness, Roy Weaver, Reg Wake, Sam Johnson Derek Shepherd, John Naylor and Ron Ingamells. Also to have such close relationships with the regional staff of the day (eg Graeme Angus, Roger Hunt, Tony Miles, Norman Owen, Alex Goodall, Graham Clarke, David Smith and, early on, Bill Leyland). What great fun and fellowship we had!

I could certainly have done with their support when I became Hon Chairman of the National Council some 12 years after I had left the staff but most of them had retired by the time I needed them in that difficult role!!

It was the wonderful Sam who got me involved in Ys Retired. He must have known I was going through a difficult time as Chairman and I remember him calling one night to invite me, essentially, to rejoin the fellowship I had left when I left the staff.

Great memories of outstanding people. I hope to get to the re union next year.

## London Lunch at The Indian Student Hotel Fitzroy Square, November 13th

In response to Neil Sherringham (who is co-ordinating on our behalf) email to Leonard Salins CEO of ISH (London & Birmingham) he responded: -

*"We are also excited to meet all you veterans of the YMCA on 13<sup>th</sup> November. The chapel prayer, tea/coffee and lunch arrangements will all be taken care of and we will firm up the arrangements as the day comes closer. Our team will do our best to make your meeting and visit as comfortable and refreshing as possible".*

The provisional arrangements are as follows: -

10.30 onwards – Coffee & Tea on Arrival

11.00 YMCA World Week of Prayer Time in the Chapel

12.00 Lunch – followed by Coffee & Time with England & Wales CEO – Denise Hatton

16.00 Depart

COST £25

**Full Details – when we have them, will be sent to all those who have previously expressed an interest or respond to this:- [vic\\_hills@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:vic_hills@yahoo.co.uk)**

## It's Nearly Time

David, our local organiser has agreed the following timings: -

12:00 Noon onwards – Arrivals & Meet in Bar area

12:45 – Meal served in Conference Room 1 (Same as last year)

Below is the menu – Can you please make sure your selections (along with any dietary requirements) are with Vic **ASAP** to complete to the pre-order.

For those contemplating staying at the Hotel – just a reminder this is run by Dulverton Group YMCA and is adjacent to Platform 2 of Taunton Railway Station. To book to stay you need to do so via the normal booking process – speak to the hotel directly on 01823 331844. You won't find that number on the booking websites!

We look forward to seeing stalwarts and newcomers at this event soon!

### YMCA Trustees Lunch

£18 per person



### Starter sharers:

**Basil & Tomato Soup**

**Bruschetta, Olive, Hummus sharing board**

Cucumber Stick, Celery Stick, Carrot Stick

### Main Course:

**Flat Bread with Hummus, Falafel, Red Pepper Tomato, Lettuce, with a Garlic Sauce.**

**White fish with White Sauce served with Green Beans and New Potato with Dill.**

**Chicken with Forestière Sauce served with Green Beans, New Potatoes and Dill.**

### Dessert:

**New York Cheesecake**

**Chocolate Fudge brownie**

**Cheeseboard, an array of cheeses, crackers and grapes.**