

Y'S RETIRED OF THE UK



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

SPRING – 2026 | WWW.YSRETIRED.UK



President's
Ponderings

AN EASTER REFLECTION

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As I write, the war in the Middle East shows no signs of abating and the news is of more suffering and destruction across the region and a growing threat to the wider global economy including our own food and fuel prices. Alongside this there is also the war in Ukraine now well into its 5th year. I sincerely hope that by the time you read this article there will be some reestablishment of peace.

But as these and other difficult situations continue (including perhaps our own family and personal difficulties) we quite naturally ask, 'Where is this all going to end? Where is this all leading us?' These questions are often impossible to answer from where we are standing right now. The clash between what we hope for and what we see happening is often very painful.

As we approach Easter, I am reminded of the situation faced by the disciples and followers of Jesus who, after his crucifixion and burial, must have been asking these same questions - 'Where is this all going to end and where is it leading us?' The hopes and joys that they had experienced while following Jesus and the promise of the coming Kingdom of God had been pulled from under their feet. And yet, on that Easter Sunday morning around the empty tomb, there was a very different set of circumstances to that of Good Friday... despair was replaced by joy, uncertainty by hope and darkness and sadness became light. Death itself was defeated and the gift of eternal life was made available for all. A new future was revealed through their encounter with the Risen Christ that was later to unfold with the gift of The Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Here is the heart of our Christian Faith. As we ask those questions about where the sadnesses and challenges of life are going to end, where are they leading us, we are reassured that the future is in God's hands, the future is one of eternal peace, justice and goodness as Jesus promised when he said '*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not be troubled and do not be afraid*' (John 14:27)

May that message and the joy of Easter be our ongoing encouragement.

NOTICE FROM YMCA PENSION AND ASSURANCE PLAN (DB SCHEME)

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

To help with the ongoing administration, it is important to let the YMCA Pension Plan Administrator know of any changes to your circumstances, such as change of address. You can do this by contacting YMCA Pension and Assurance Plan, c/o Broadstone Corporate Benefits Limited, 23 -25 St George's Road, Bristol, BS1 5UU."

Email address: YMCA@broadstone.co.uk

Telephone number: 0117 937 8700

LONDON GATHERING

Where: YMCA Indian Student Hostel

When: Wednesday April 22nd

We listened to your feedback re bringing this lunch earlier in the year and a time that allows the purchase of Cheap Day travel tickets.

Our President Graham and Neil our Convenor are delighted to invite you as follows.

Convene from 12.30 to 12.55.

Prayers in the Chapel at 1.00.

Lunch - Select what you like to eat and drink at the Restaurant Counter and pay at the till. We will eat together in a private room.

Tea and Coffees will follow.

I am in the process of organising someone to address us after we've eaten.

Then stay and chat catch up etc until you need to leave.



PLEASE advise Vic whether you are able to attend - or not - by April 13th at the latest?

Last time, Mary and I combined our lunch visit with an evening at the Theatre in the West End. Just a thought...

Dates for your diary 2026/2027

EGM – to discuss Working Title for Y's Retired – **9th July 2026** On Zoom from the Lunch @ Peterborough
21st World Council of YMCA's Toronto Canada – **19th – 26th July 2026**

AGM 2027 – **16th March 2027 @ 10:30**

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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In Memoria

Since the last newsletter we have to report the passing of a number of people who have contributed to the YMCA over a number of years as staff, volunteers and partners.

Tony Miles 1938 – 2025

Tony served the movement for so long, contributed so much and was known and loved by so many, that within the bounds of this newsletter it would not be possible to include all the tributes we have received. Vic included many in the eulogy he delivered at Tony's funeral, copies of which can be e-mailed to anyone requesting one. I also unearthed a copy of one of the scripts Tony wrote, this one celebrating the AOS Presidency of Derek Sheppard from (I think) 1987, copies of which I can also e-mail to those who are interested.

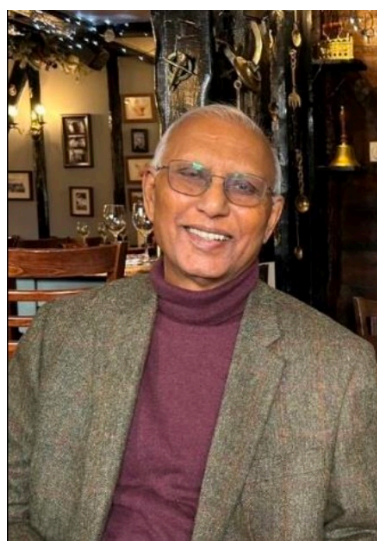


Training in the 1960's as a Youth and Community Worker in Leicester, Tony worked for the YMCA at Reading, Bournemouth and then became Southern and South Eastern Regional Secretary, a mammoth task, which after a number of years led to him becoming CEO of Ealing YMCA, where he stayed until retirement.

Tony's humour, approachability, humility, faith and consideration were what endeared him to so many people and he acted as a mentor for many of them no wonder we received so many tributes and stories of his exploits and acts of kindness. For anyone who knew him, he will always be remembered in so many different ways.

Chandu Christian 1937- 2026

A large congregation gathered at St Alban the Martyr Church Holborn in February to give thanks for the life of Chandu who died on 14th December 2025. A much loved and highly respected tutor and later principal of the National YMCA College, A former Teacher and YMCA Secretary, Chandu was not only influential in the lives of many YMCA Staff but also a whole generation of Youth Work Practitioners particularly a number of Diocesan Youth Officers.



Amongst the contributions made at the service were those who recognised the significance and importance of his book 'Accompanying Young People on their Spiritual Quest' written with Maxine Green and his part in advising in the establishment of a youth service in post-apartheid South Africa.

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In Memoria

Beryl Goodall

Beryl was the wife of former Regional Secretary and AOS President the late Alex Goodall and passed away in March, although born in Ireland. They met whilst young people attending church in Morningside Edinburgh when Alex was working in banking. However, marriage had to wait while Alex took up a YMCA post in Malaya leaving Beryl behind! They married upon his return and spent their early years of marriage in Nigeria where Alex was Fraternal Secretary. On returning to the UK Alex worked at Croydon YMCA, established Watford YMCA and later as Regional Secretary for Yorkshire, Humberside and the North East.

They had two children David and Mary. In retirement Beryl and Alex moved to North Berwick where Beryl was involved in the Prestonkirk Church Choir in East Linton and The Dunbar Choral Society, as an avid Crossword solver, for many years Beryl kept up a daily phone call with Rodney Stone checking on that day's clues! Always a warm host, she welcomed visitors to the old farm steading that was her home until a few years ago until she moved back to Yorkshire to be near to David.

David Miller

Was a 'volunteer' member, serving on the board of the London Central YMCA including a considerable spell as Chairman of the Board.

A call to all bowlers in our ranks.

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



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.

March Scripture of the Month: -

"He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers." ~ **Psalm 1:3**

**Together we Bloom
Brighter**

British Boys for British Farms (BBBF) Reunion at North Cadbury Court

On 23 May 2024 we had a very successful 9th BBBF Reunion at North Cadbury Court (NCC) in Somerset. This is the third time we have been to NCC: 20 BBBF boys plus 18 partners and friends attended, unfortunately four on the day were unable to come. Prior to the reunion, Hanna and I were approached by Janet Montgomery the owner of NCC and her PA Julie O'Devlin to provide any information we had on those who attended the YMCA BBBF Farm Training Course from 1950 – 1966 at NCC. Janet, with the help of Julie, is writing a book on the history of NCC which will include the BBBF days. During the Reunion, Julie interviewed as many people as she could. This was a very interesting challenge, and we all gave her our full support for this project. Lots of books and documents were on display. Julie took us on tour of the Court and the gardens. Rory Montgomery, son of Janet Montgomery and now the Farm Manager, who we had not met before, was taken aback with the BBBF history. After the Ploughman's lunch and dessert, Rory took us over to the Manor Farm buildings to see the dairy, grain stores and of course their famous cheese making parlour. We saw the huge cheese store, where the cheeses are kept from 18 months to 3 years! There is a regular collection of the cheese going mainly to London for distribution. The day ended with a light tea. We thanked Janet, Rory, Julie and all NCC staff for their hospitality and for their enthusiasm for BBBF. Stephen suggested that as NCC is the only BBBF centre left which we can easily visit, that we now call NCC our 'home' for BBBF. Later, Julie requested the NCC BBBF recollections we have on file. The photos of this Reunion taken during the day by a member of a media team were also added to this USB file. We look forward to seeing the book when it is published.

On 10 July 2025 we visited the Yorkshire Air Museum. 6 BBBF boys plus partners and friends attended to see the Museum and the various old aircrafts and of course, the YMCA Austin K2 Tea Van which is being restored in the Fire Engine Garage there by Gary. Gary is obtaining a larger table so that he can take the engine out of the vehicle to fully look at the engine. No money is required at present but will be in the future. Some panels need replacing as well as all the woodwork in the back of the Van. In the below photo of the Tea Van: Note the mugs and the Silver Spoons hanging down.

On 11 July 2025, our 10th BBBF Reunion, we met at Bishop Burton College near Beverley. 10 BBBF boys plus 10 partners and friends were able to attend. The College gave us a really warm welcome and took us around the grounds to various locations by mini-bus including the farm livestock (Cows, calves, pigs, horses). They also have a large Horticulture Department with beautiful gardens, a very interesting non-farm Animal Care Department and an extensive Engineering Workshop. Both visits were very interesting and enjoyed by all.

Next BBBF Reunion

The next reunion will be on Tuesday 13th October 2026 again at North Cadbury Court in Somerset, courtesy of Janet, James and Rory Montgomery.

As well as being an active farm it is an event centre and the only former BBBF site left of the original fourteen. Truly now the home of BBBF.

Contact Stephen Milner :-

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New Member Welcome

Welcome to Reverend Phillip Wright. Whose contact with YMCA began at Romford as a member of the Youth Club in around 1984, becoming a volunteer some months later and a Board Member until 2006 with some gaps in between but always connected to Romford YMCA whilst working in other YMCS's.

The gaps consisted of: - YMCA National College – Student 1990-1992

West Kent YMCA-Youth & Community Worker- 1993-1995

West Kent YMCA- Hostel Support Worker – 1995-1996

London City YMCA – Hostel Support Worker 1996-1998

YMCA Partnerships in Prisons (Chelmsford)-1998-2002

Forest YMCA – Lifelong Learning Director-2002-2003

Romford YMCA – Hostel Manager/Housing Director 2003-2006.

Phil' was also Chair of Metropolitan Region but can't remember the dates.

His current job is Lead for Chaplaincy, Bereavement & Medical Examiner Officers - Barking, Havering & Redbridge University Hospitals Trust.

And as his photo' reveals he is Club Chaplain for West Ham United Football Club.

We look forward to catching up with him at one or more of our lunches.



Members News

Many of you will remember Clyde Binfield, YMCA Historian and long serving of the YMCA college board. Clyde has sent us a recent photograph of himself and a coastal view of Morocco taken on a recent holiday.



Easter: -

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
~ 1 Peter 1:3

From First Epistle of Peter, this verse is a reminder that Easter isn't just about what happened, but what it means for us now. It speaks of a fresh start - of being given new life and a hope that is alive, not fading or uncertain. Even in difficult moments, it points to something steady and renewing at the heart of faith.

Mary McGinty: How I Ended up Working for the YMCA

At the end of 1978 I found myself unemployed. I had been teaching, doing part-time youth work and adult literacy in Belfast and Derry for 4 years but had decided to move back to my parents' home in Worcestershire. I had gone to College on the Falls Road in Belfast in autumn 1971, wanting to teach Reception but in my first few weeks we were offered the opportunity to take part in a pilot Youth Work course in the College. I had no idea what 'youth work' was but went along and ended up continuing it as a 2-year option alongside my teaching qualification. I enjoyed working with teenagers so much that I was no longer interested in working with 5-year olds!

My first, very limited, contact with the YMCA happened when we had a visiting tutor from the YMCA on the Shankill Road. He came to us as it was not just too dangerous for us to visit that part of Belfast but, as Roman Catholics, we were legally not allowed on the premises by the YMCA constitution at that time.

In Feb 1972 my first placement was at a Community Centre in Turf Lodge, a very deprived, strongly republican area of West Belfast bordering the Unionist Shankill Road. This was just after Bloody Sunday, and buses often stopped running due to rioting. A friend and I would have to walk a considerable distance on a desolate road with blocks of flats all boarded up running between the 2 communities.

After qualifying, I taught at a boys secondary school in South Belfast as well as 2 nights a week in a local youth club, run by an order of nuns. Not one of the safest places to be as the previous youth worker had been shot dead outside the club a few months before. South Belfast was a much more mixed area than other parts of the city, but the school was a short distance from Ian Paisley's church and the catchment area for the school and youth club included the strongly republican areas of the Markets and Short Strand. Boys often had had their homes raided in the early hours with British Army looking for fathers or older brothers who might be involved in terrorist activities. A frequent response on disciplining a pupil would be 'Miss, I'll get my Da up to see you.' Scary, but in fact Northern Irish parents had great respect for teachers. Many of the boys in the youth club were the same ones I taught during the day. It was fascinating to relate to them in a different way and although I was Mary in the youth club, they were very aware of boundaries and in school I was Miss McGinty.

Living in NI in the early 1970's with an obviously Roman Catholic name but English accent, English driving licence and old Austin A40 with English number plates proved interesting.

By the end of 1978 I decided I needed to get out of the toxic environment and returned to England. Teaching jobs in rural Worcestershire and Gloucestershire were few and far between and there seemed no understanding of working with young people in a more informal way. In Belfast, a few secondary schools employed Youth Tutors to work with 'ROSLA' pupils. I did some supply teaching in Redditch and found it far more stressful than teaching in Belfast, even with the threats.

Looking for jobs in the very last TES printed before Times staff went on strike at the end of 1978, I spotted a small ad for a YMCA post for Youth at Work Service (YAWS) based in Cheltenham – only 15 miles away. I knew there was legislation that meant I couldn't be discriminated against just for being female, so applied.

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)

How I Ended up Working for the YMCA cont.

I was interviewed early in January 1979 at Cheltenham YMCA by Reg Wake, Bill Sargison and Brian Davidge (Chair of the Regional Personnel Committee). I met Ken Allison who was working for YAWS in a small basement office there.

I remember an interview question about my experience of group work – I talked about working with a small group of students on an adult literacy course. At that time, I had little understanding of group work in youth work terms.

I thought this would do me for a while until I got a teaching job again, though I soon realised I much preferred being able to design courses that met the needs of the young people, instead of following a set curriculum.

In Jan 1979 No 1 in the charts was YMCA by the Village People so I found myself mumbling into my hand when friends and family asked what my new job was!

I began work in Cheltenham sharing not just a tiny basement office but a desk with Ken Allison. My work was with a scheme Bill Sargison had set up in Cheltenham YM for 16-17 year olds leaving school with no qualifications and not much chance of getting a job. Many of them had problems with literacy and numeracy as well as behavioural challenges with few life and social skills. It was a programme funded by MSC (Manpower Services Commission) as one of the forerunners to YTS.

To be continued in the next edition!

Y HUB

At our Y's Retired meeting last November, Denise Hatton (Chief Executive of YMCA England & Wales) outlined the progress of better communication with the different parts of the Movement and indeed her new confidence in describing and working for the YMCA's in England as Wales as a Movement. As you might imagine we were all really encouraged to hear this. One expression of this new impetus was a new online news service called Y Hub.

Following that meeting we have discussed with Denise the possibility of better integration of Y's Retired within the Movement and as a first step Y's Retired members have been given the opportunity to join Y Hub. If enough of us join, then the argument for further integration will have been made so we really do encourage you to join up.

Just to give an indication of what the Y Hub covers, recent stories have included a Milton Keynes YMCA resident who has written to the Prime Minister asking him to back the YMCA's 'Building Futures' housing campaign, details of how to nominate candidates for the YMCA Youth Ambassador campaign and coverage of events celebrating Cheltenham YMCA's 170th Anniversary. (As a former General Secretary of Cheltenham YMCA, I found this one particularly interesting as I was unable to attend the final event due to my stroke). It is reassuring that the YMCA seems to go from strength to strength despite our absence and that it continues to contribute in many different ways to the resolution of today's societal issues and problems.

Interested? Contact Andy Winter (andywinterworld@gmail.com) and he will send the link and information that you'll need to join.

Over & Out

Thanks to all the people who contacted me after finding out about my stroke however, due to its effects I am now standing down as editor of the newsletter. I find that even the most mundane tasks take me at least three times longer than they used to.

This edition was only possible due to the efforts of my son Callum who came over from his home in Singapore to support Jayne and myself in the early days of my recovery.

If you are interested in taking over, please contact Vic or myself. Many thanks – Phil Willerton