



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



JULY 2013

www.yretired.co.uk

GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear colleagues and friends - greetings

How pleasing it has been to note that during April over 50 Y's Retired of the UK members have met in venues as wide apart as the South West, Cambridge and Scotland. From each area the reports received indicate a depth of friendship created through the YMCA and yes with much nostalgia memories of moments passed are still held with affection!

The month of May did not do too badly either for the annual reunion of the 'Class of 60/61' held in Nottingham not least to honor the 90th birthday of Arthur Bennett - a further 11 attended as reported by Peter Brookes. Congratulations Arthur even if there was an element of difficulty in blowing out the candles!

I have been 'musing' recently on the significance of the Christian Faith in present day society highlighted for me in that the church of which Eve and I are members is celebrating its centennial. A whole year of events extremely well programmed by a 'committee' (what else!) includes a series of lectures on 'Science and Faith' by eminent academics including theologians.

These events pose the question, "At what time of our lives do such 'encounters' convince one as to whether we find further enlightenment or alternatively are doubts awakened on closely held beliefs?"

The 'saying', quote. "I am packing my bags for eternity and it is amazing what I am leaving out!" when applied to the Christian faith of the majority of our retired readers of the Newsletter like Arthur now into his 90's presents challenges to one's understanding of a lifelong 'living the faith'!

It begs the question do these lectures simply stimulate the intellect or in equal measure stimulate the soul? The only adequate answer appears to be, well that is up to the individual! *I suggest you may like to comment with a brief article to our Editor David!!*

Your Y's Retired of the UK committee continue to render a fine service and appreciate the prompt manner in which membership subscriptions and donations to Secours Speciaux together with donations to the Trust Fund are paid.

The latter is in need of your support in order that we might play our part with representation at meetings of the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (WFYR).

The holiday season is upon us. May you all find time to enjoy 'breaks' of whatever kind given restrictions through age and health needs.

Warm regards - Jim Lamb



Photo of my dear colleague and life long friend Arthur Bennett and Rosemary surrounded by their children Suzanne and Matthew, their respective spouses, alongside five grandchildren and godchild - on the wonderful occasion of Arthur's 90th birthday party held on Tuesday 28th May - 24 hours before his actual birthday. (Ed)

Please read Peter Brookes contribution of Class 1960-61 within the newsletter

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YOUR PRAYERS PLEASE

Dear Colleagues - prayers are requested for dear friends and colleagues whose names I bring to your attention - those that are suffering with specific illnesses and ailments. Please also remember in your prayers, their families and carers - **Rodney Stone - Eddy Brady - Roy Weaver - Colin Mawby - Bob and Barbara Brunswick** (Editor)

So sorry but this letter from **Gordon Wickens** got mislaid and relates to the Nov 2012 newsletter. Gordon writes:-

I was very interested to read in the last issue of the Y's Retired newsletter, the post script in Christine Douglas's letter about Sir Francis Portal, Chairman of the YMCA National Commission. If what she says is correct, then Sir Francis was doubly connected with the Williams family as his wife, Jane, Lady Portal, is also a Williams and a direct descendant of Sir George
With best wishes - sincerely **Gordon (Wickens)**

Dear Folks,

Just a note to let you know that the class of 60/61 is still going strong, and that those who were able gathered in Nottingham this week for our annual Jamboree. The main reason for Nottingham was to mark the 90th birthday of one Arthur Bennett. We were actually a week early but we knew that his family would be doing something special on the right date. There was as usual much laughter and stories which began "do you remember?" And of course we all remembered but still roared with laughter. At one point I thought we were going to be asked to leave the hotel. After so much laughter Arthur had just enough puff to blow out the candles on his cake.

Those in attendance were Arthur and Rosemary Bennett, Paul and Elizabeth Harper, Freda Scott (widow of Keith Scott), Barbara Kent (widow of Mike Kent), Hans Wirz, all the way from Switzerland, Ted and Jeannie Milburn, and Olive and Peter Brookes.

I think this will be the last of our gatherings, something to do with anno domini, but no doubt we shall find ways of meeting up, especially when Yorkshire and Somerset have a game. The YMCA has a lot to answer for.
Best wishes to the three of you,
Peter (Brookes).

Dear David
Dorothy and I embrace the Middle East (it used to be called "Biblelands" and was known for its Christmas carol sheets that many churches used). They print a quarterly news magazine and we were very pleased to see the details about Gaza YMCA which I enclose. Perhaps you could use it in Y's Retired or some national material. It is so good to see another charity supporting our international work.

Thank you for all your work in producing our Newsletter and best wishes to Sue and your family.
Sincerely yours - **Barry (Ward)**



Chris Wilby, retired Executive Director of the YMCA Leisure Centre in Scarborough, received the British Empire Medal from the Lord James Crawthorne at County Hall, Northallerton at the end of March 2013.

Chris worked for the YMCA all of his working life, starting at Wakefield YMCA at the age of 17, before going to London for full time training and then becoming General Secretary of Guildford YMCA. He eventually moved to Scarborough YMCA in 1974, where he was Executive Director until March 2011.

He remains on the Scarborough YMCA Board of Management.

Dear David,

I had the pleasure, no, joy, of attending Unify 2013. The new chair of YMCA England gave testimony. The Lord Jesus was honoured in word, action and worship. Numbers were higher than prayed for.

Building on the foundations of the Central Region the Met is now alive with a new generation of smart young leaders at CEO level who want to serve Jesus.

It's time of praise that our prayers for our Movement have been heard in Heaven.

John (Drake)

I have heard just this morning of an individual donation of £50 and also Glenrothes YMCA £100 earlier this month making a total of £953 from Scotland for Secour Specaux- but you may already have heard of these.

Thankfully that side of things is out of my hands and being handled at James Love House! I'm now wondering how we can keep the momentum going in future years but we must try.

John (Knox)

(Excellent news from our Scottish brothers and sisters)

Dear both,

A shock and sad discovery! I tried contact with Ernie Carroll to share news of Peter Parfitt's death. They were long time buddies. I was then informed that Ernie died in July last and that "YMCA" had been informed! Have no idea who was informed but very sadly no felt obligation to tell Y's Retired!

Water under the bridge but a sad reflection on 'Movement' concern and communication?

Both Peter and Ernie were postal contacts for N/L circulation and I will inform Lorraine accordingly.

Warm regards. Reg.



Do you want to share a breathtaking experience? Do you want red noses, red cheeks, wind blown hair and the exhilaration of being on an open top bus ride which took three hours to get us from St Ives to Penzance, through the most awesome terrain, and the wildest of untamed seascapes?

And to cap it all we did it all for free on our bus passes!

It is not however for the faint hearted, nor for the travel sick! More gentle pursuits are available in the grounds of Treloyhan Manor, St Ives, with an outlook which is both tranquil and serene, set in luscious verbiage, the nostrils assailed with the scent of wood smoke, intermingling with wild garlic and the other fragrances of Spring and the visions of primrose, daffodil, magnolia, shielded by pussy willow and camellia, a hint of May peeping through as the bluebells unfurl! The gardener has his work cut out, but seems very contented with his lot!

So do our companionable hosts, as they shepherd us through the most pleasurable of four days

Entertained? Yes, but not only is the landscape wild!! so was the Rev'd Steve, WILD excited by what is happening in this corner of the woods! We are enthralled by his 'Powerpoint' presentation of the recent Easter celebrations, and the strongest of bonds developing between the churches! The new Archbishop of Canterbury has been down to set his seal of approval and prayer, The needs of teenagers are being considered and the most imaginative plan for skate boarding, with the acquisition of a large premise which belonged to the diocese of Truro has been established! There is one condition, that they attend bible study first! I gather there is a queue to get in!

The first night, Mervyn's introductory theme centred on the subject 'Aslan is on the move!' Those of us who are familiar with the famous 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' a C.S Lewis, classic will know what that means. There is Renewal and revival here with the emergence of Spring! The Winter is past, the time for the singing of the birds has come!

The others present, the very elite of Christian gentlemen led the other devotions very sensitively, and we prayerfully remembered former companions, and those unable to share with us physically, at this time...the musical accompaniment to our gatherings was an inspiration as Des Willcox exercised his gifts on the piano, and I, for one enjoyed shutting my eyes and listening intently!

The second day we travelled to the setting for the film 'Ladies in Lavender', calling in on our way at a little obscure chapel which has taken on a new purpose and lease of life as a retreat for prayer and "quiet contemplation!" (the Dgibna chapel,) We did need to be fit to circumnavigate the hilly terrain and we did realise we had perhaps put on too much weight. Not all of us, I might add!

We also gleaned some new knowledge as Mervyn thought of having his photo taken at a little tin chapel in Chidwith, he, playing the organ, being videod by Dave Libby wielding what looked like a typewriter - It was of course an Ipad, but Margaret had an Ipod! Well, Mervyn has been a 'pea in a pod!' 'kidney twin to Ruth, our daughter, and somehow they became two pods and four peas! Work that conundrum out if you can! Liz can work it out! The answer? It lies in two grandsons! One and one make two, two and two make four!

The Cantabile choir held us spellbound with selections from Stainer's Crucifixion and 'Olivet to Calvary', on the last night, and Liz Harper should be conducting her own show as Television Quiz Hostess!, as she is certainly good enough! We had a great laugh as we pooled our little grey cells and came up with the most imaginative interpretations, especially about 'the birds and the bees', football, feathered friends etc. As you can imagine, some of us were better than others! We wanted Ray Allen and Sam and Maureen Johnson on our team! Alas we drew the short straw, we had Mervyn and me! And we are dunderheads at quizzes, but good at laughter!

We enjoyed ourselves so much we have pre booked for next year and our warmest thanks and appreciation go to Margaret Libby for her negotiating skills as she gets us the best price possible!

So, watch this space, and plan to join us, next April Distance no object, The Robertson's came from Galloway, the Coopers from Hastings, The Johnsons from Cambridge, and the Harpers from Somerset, the Milners from Dorchester, but deemed it well worth the effort. See you next year? **Eight have already booked - dates 28th Apr - 2nd May 2014**

**Notes of a meeting of the Cambridge Group of the Y's Retired of the UK
for lunch on Friday 26th April 2013 at the Girton Golf Club Restaurant**

Present: **Jim Lamb, Reg Wake, David & Wendy Miller, Sam & Maureen Johnston, Ray Allen, Tony & Jenny Miles, Eric Hodgson, Roger & Elaine Hunt and David Bedford.**

Apologies: **Richard Long, Ron Ingamells, John Drake, Denis Mitchell, Margaret Powell and Barry Ward.**

Report: It is pleasing to share the only real formalities was the opening Grace and the closing Benediction with 'hands round the table'!

A warm welcome was extended by the convenor Jim Lamb who referred to this 'gathering' being the second following a successful event the previous year when 7 persons had attended but now he was pleased to report this year - 13! It was purely due to the fact that **David Miller and Reg Wake** each had a daughter living and working in Cambridge and David had suggested 'we' meet for lunch sometime – the rest is fast becoming history but not least to share that Reg a professional YMCA staff member was in at the inauguration of the Ys Retired of the UK (the first?) and David the first Layman!

Almost needless to say when YMCA colleagues lay and professional meet the air becomes 'xvzx!' with nostalgia not least when names from the past were recalled and memories played tricks such as one incident when a somewhat hilarious 'quote' was attributed to **Philip Wragg** to realise later that it was Ronnie Howe!

At the risk of excommunication I have to share that **Sam and Maureen** our hosts for the lunch had made elaborate arrangements as to how payment for the excellent meal should be made. Sam had provided a list of names present to the restaurant staff cashier responsible and each paid their dues as respectable YMCA personnel do BUT when all but Sam had departed the poor cashier in distress had to tell Sam that two had not paid!! Yes you have guessed rightly - Sam and Maureen!! Quickly remedied may I add!

Suffice it to share there was agreement by all present that we repeat the event again next year but not to clash with the South West Group meeting – early May 2014 was suggested!



Comments from three colleagues present following the event.

"We had another great Reunion on Friday!!"

"I'm very glad for there seemed to be general agreement that we should 'do it again'

"Thanks. I really did enjoy the reunion. Thanks for inviting me. The YMCA is very special to me – its' always good when faith and fun go hand in hand."

People in the photo from left to right.
Front Row (seated) Jenny Miles, Maureen Johnston, Wendy Miller, Elaine Hunt.
Back Row; Sam Johnston, Eric Hodgson, Reg Wake, Roger Hunt, David Miller, Jim Lamb, Ray Allen, David Bedford, Tony Miles.

CONTINUATION FROM BARRY WARD'S LETTER

Whenever I speak in churches about Christians as salt and light in the Middle East, the example I turn to first is Gaza. This troubled and impoverished territory, no bigger than the Isle of Wight and with 70% of its people living below the poverty line, is home (some would say a prison) for 1.7 million souls, most of them refugees. In their midst are maybe a few thousand Christians, about 0.1% of the total population. Despite their small number, the Christians punch way above their weight, being responsible for a hospital, several health and dental clinics, two vocational training centres, a YMCA providing services to youngsters, a branch of the Palestinian Bible Society, several Christian schools and a number of Greek Orthodox social projects.



I wrote about the position of Gaza's Christian community in the **Church of England Newspaper** in April, and then had the privilege of visiting Gaza for the second time in May. As I went through the 1km-long covered walkway from the Erez checkpoint, I used my smartphone to post on Facebook: "*Dozens of birds fluttering away freely on the other side of the mesh. An aviary in reverse – we are the caged now*".

A recent (June 2012) UN report on the **humanitarian situation in Gaza** highlighted that since the Israeli blockade began in June 2007, little has improved, especially economically. "*The continued ban on the transfer of goods from Gaza to its traditional markets in the West Bank and Israel, along with the severe restrictions on access to agricultural land and fishing waters, prevents sustainable growth and perpetuates the high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and aid dependency*".

The needs in Gaza are enormous. Over the last three years Embrace will have sent over £75,000 to support Christian social projects in the territory. We would love to do much more.

Embrace the Middle East Donations can be made via <http://www.embraceme.org/donate-now>



Dear David, I have been talking with Joe Renshaw. Joe has a remarkable record of YMCA service, dating back to 1938. He was closely involved with London Central and Community Services during the war years and the "blitz", took Tea Cars to East End and much more. He moved from community Services in Bedford Square and apart from his years in Sierra Leone remained with them, eventually becoming the Supplies Department. Sadly, he does not enjoy the best of health but has care, meals on wheels etc, but clearly very lonely. We spent a long time talking 'old times' and I think he quite enjoyed recounting his YM experiences - which he felt to be long forgotten. He has been engaged in clearing accumulated papers, including these photos of his involvement with the old and memorable North/South cricket matches played on the town ground at Skegness as part of the BSA/AOS conferences. So why are the colleagues in the photos? I confess that even my old brain fails to recognise all in the group but I have tried. So picture of two - Ronnie Howe and Joe Renshaw. Picture above them - L/R Wilf Pearson? (not known) Reg Keeble (others not known) Front - Jack Houghton, Ronnie Howe, Rodney Stone? Harry Steel, (not known) Stan Griffiths, Norman Ingle, Ernie Bakewell, Gordon Wicken. Picture Top Right - Bill Sargison, Jack Houghton, Ronnie Howe, Joe Renshaw, Reg Keeble? Bolton, Stan Charlesworth, Bob Brunswick. My problem - young men grow old not recognised in their youth. Where did I leave my memory - **Reg**. (Well Reg - I think you actually did extremely well - thank you - Editor)

THE PASSING OF PETER PARFITT

It is with great sadness that we are writing to tell you of the loss of Peter Parfitt who passed away peacefully on Thursday 16th May at his home of the last 20 years, Morden College, with his family present.

The community will remember him as a gracious, humble and charitable person, who dedicated his life to the service of God and his fellow man. We shall also remember him as a tolerant, unconditionally loving father, and devoted husband to Eileen.

His funeral will take place on Wednesday 5th June and take the form of a simple service commencing at 10.30 a.m. at St. Mary's Church, Letchworth and burial at Ickniel Way Cemetery, Letchworth. This shall be followed by a memorial service at Morden College Chapel in Morden College, 19 St German's Place, Blackheath, London. SE3 0PW at 2.00. p.m.

We would like to welcome you to either or both of these commemorations of Peter's life.

Please respond to Christine at any of the above contact points at your earliest convenience if you would like to attend.

We respectfully request that no flowers be sent, but that monetary donations may be made instead to Peter's most supported charity, "Send a Cow". These should be sent to Christine or John at the below addresses, or be brought on the day of the funeral.

John & Stephanie Parfitt - Christine & Geof Reed

Directions to Morden College Chapel, Morden College, 19, St German's Place, Blackheath, London. SE3 0PW
By car: Address as above. Satnav SE3 0PW or OS map ref 540329, 176412.

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Eleventh meeting of the Scottish YMCA retirees

The eleventh meeting of the Scottish retirees group took place in Tollcross YMCA, Glasgow on Tuesday 23 April 2013. Peter Robertson was welcomed to his first meeting of the group. Ten retirees gathered, together with Tollcross Secretary/Treasurer Douglas Gould, youth worker Darren Gillan and two part-time staff members, Abby and Michaela. Six other retirees apologised and news was shared, where appropriate, regarding the health of some. The group very much appreciated the warmth of welcome received from Tollcross, including the work of the three volunteers who had come to make sure we had plenty to eat and drink throughout the day.

After having a look around the YMCA premises we had the usual catching up with news of one another, including health news, news of retirement activities including work with some Local Associations, and the news of one of our number, Ted Milburn, who has joined a Barber's Shop Chorus.

Following this we had a presentation about the work in Tollcross. It was exciting to learn of the wide variety of work, the openness of the building and programmes to local young people and older folk too, the seven day a week programme, the development work on the building and the very strong Christian base of all the work. We were interested to hear that Tollcross every week still runs pre-church time Sunday morning worship with a variety of speakers and considering a range of subjects.

After lunch there was another sharing session to provide an opportunity for anyone to share news stories of YMCA work from a wide variety of places. These stories ranged from local associations around Scotland, including Tain YMCA which had been visited by Tom McPherson and John Knox the previous week as assessors for "Working Towards Excellence", to work in Gaza YMCA; from the YMCA retirees meeting in the SW of England earlier in the month and which had been attended by Peter Robertson, to the money raised by individuals and by Local Associations in Scotland for Secours Speciaux, now totalling £953. Support for Secours had first been raised at the April 2012 retirees meeting in Aberdeen and following a request from that meeting the National Council had opened the opportunity to share information about Secours at both national and local level.

It was agreed to ask the National Council if the next retirees meeting could link IN with the YMCA Scotland Annual General Meeting on 5 October 2013 as it had done in 2012. Peter Croy was subsequently approached and he enthusiastically agreed. The retirees group will meet on its own in the morning, share lunch with the National Council representatives, and then share in the AGM in the afternoon.

Tom McPherson closed the meeting with prayer
John Knox

