



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

SEPTEMBER 2021

www.yretired.co.uk



President's ponderings

Alas, the summer is almost over and, as far as I have been concerned, it has been one marked more by rain than sunshine!

This shouldn't be too much of a surprise! So often the expectations that we have as summer arrives are dashed as it progresses!!

But our weather problems pale into insignificance when we see the reports of flash flooding in The Netherlands and Germany and forest fires raging across Southern Europe.

These are catastrophic events which are way beyond the discomfort of damp summer holidays and soggy barbecues in the UK!

It is perhaps difficult for us, who rarely live with extremes of any sort, to imagine what it is like to live under any extreme conditions, whether that is war or poverty, fear, anxiety or lack of health care.

Yet, this is the situation of millions of our fellow human beings around the world. For them living in a stable, society with sufficient resources is a hope rather than a reality.

While we cherish our 'Two Covid Jab' status, it is easy to overlook the fact that most of the world's population have yet to have any jab at all with all the consequences that that brings.

On the one hand we should take seriously the sentiments of the old Sunday School Song which goes '*Count your blessings, count them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done*', giving thanks for all that we have.

But on the other hand, we need to remember that we have a responsibility as individuals, as communities and as a nation to ensure that others can 'count their blessings' as well.

It is a privilege to be part of a movement that is concerned with assisting so many who find themselves experiencing extreme situations in their lives, whether this is overcoming homelessness and unemployment in the UK, or in providing health care in Refugee Camps in Lebanon, Olive Tree planting in Palestine or promoting interfaith dialogue to combat religious extremism in Kenya.

Whilst we may no longer be physically active in such work, we can still be part of it as we support and encourage the current generation of workers and volunteers with donations and prayers, just as we were supported in our work!

Wishing you a sunny Autumn
Graham Clarke

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MEMBERS CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Colleagues, (June 21)

I had a telephone conversation with Stewart McCrae today, where he told me that about three weeks ago Eleanor Campbell went through a fairly major and pioneering lung operation.

The operation was very successful and fortunately was able to be carried out through keyhole surgery. Eleanor is now at home recuperating and recovering well.

Stewart said that Eleanor would welcome contact from colleagues, so if anyone would like to email her, then the address is ecampbell@cumbernauld.org.uk

Please feel free to share this information with others in the movement who know Eleanor and would want to send her warm wishes for a speedy recovery.

Kind regards

Kerry Reilly Chief Executive – National General Secretary

Dear David,

THE REG WAKE STORY

Did you see that President of Northern Rhodesia and later, Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda died 17th June 2021 aged 97 – a true pioneer for African independence.

I read Reg Wake's fascinating, inspiring and understated autobiography the week President Kenneth Kaunda died.

I was reminded that when we last met (at the Cambridge reunion in his 99th year) he had told me the story, repeated in the book, of how the President had asked him to set up the Youth Service in the then Northern Rhodesia.

A great chat followed because I was able to tell him that my Uncle, Rev Frances J Bedford, had founded Scouting in Northern Rhodesia many years earlier and had advertised for someone to volunteer to become his first Cub leader. A teenage Kenneth Kaunda applied and got the job!

The fact that I had the next door office to Reg for 2 or 3 years in the eighties at the National Council in Walthamstow and that he never told me about his pioneering role establishing the Youth Service in such an important emerging country is great testimony to his humility which, in my experience, was shared by so many of his generation of YMCA Secretaries.

David Bedford
Best wishes **David (Bedford)**

SPECIAL PRAYERS

Please pray for Afghanistan and all those impacted by the Taliban. Pray for women and children whose rights are being abused and ignored.

Pray for Christians and ethnic minorities who are being singled out and targeted. Pray for hope, mercy, justice, and healing in Afghanistan.

Dear David

So sorry to hear of Janet's passing.

She was such an energetic vibrant person. Margery and I were stunned to hear the news, as Janet was one of the last people we expected to leave us so soon.

I can remember their wedding and the homily given by the minister. Of course, this and other fond memories of Norman and Janet came flooding back. I have sent a card to Norman, John, Ashley, Sally and Neil.

Hoping you are in reasonable health.

Margery continues her recovery from bowel cancer, diagnosed last July, but have been advised it is likely to be another year before she is back to her new normal. Although it is a long haul, at least the prognosis is positive. You will recognise that we are doubly grateful especially now hearing of the sad news about Janet.

With warmest good wishes
John (Naylor)



Dear David,
many thanks for your prayers. The situation in the crisis region is terrible. So many people have died (to date 132).

The YMCA is not affected, but the people are lost and disorientated. I live in a different region, and I am safe from water, but different calamities can happen to everyone!

Thank you and all of the YMCA brothers and sisters for your prayers. To be our God with his protection also with you.

Albrecht from Germany YMCA

Dear David,
thank you so much for your thoughts and prayers. the flood and its consequences are terrible. One local YMCA (CVJM Hagen) is badly damaged. But there is such a big solidarity.
We are still praying, working, collection donations in the German CVJM movement. It's an incredible experience of being part of a worldwide community I love the YMCA)

Stay safe, god bless

CVJM Deutschland
YMCA Germany
Pfr./Rev. **Hansjörg Kopp**

Generalsekretär
General Secretary



NORMAN WITH WIFE JANET HOPKINS

It is with deepest sadness that I bring you the sad news of the passing of Janet Hopkins, wife of Norman Owen, (Retired YMCA Metropolitan Regional Secretary and CEO of Croydon YMCA).

Janet sadly passed away on Friday 4th June 2021 after suffering from a very rare untreatable illness, Metastatic - Ovarian Cancer.

Norman conveyed that in many ways Janet's passing was a blessing as the rare cancer was untreatable and she did not want to go into a Hospice. Thankfully, at the end, there was no pain and Norman was with Janet all day and at her bedside in hospital as she passed.

Janet worked for the YMCA in a senior position at London Central YMCA in the Health and Fitness arena followed by working for Croydon YMCA with Norman.

If you wish to send condolences please send to:
Norman Owen and their children John and Ashley and to children from Norman's first marriage, Sally and Neil

West Willows
4, Butts Lane
Keevil
Ba14 6LZ

Norman's phone numbers are as follows:
Home: 01380 870417
Mobile: 07768 921 247

Norman also conveyed at the time, that due to Covid restrictions the numbers attending the funeral would be family only, but that he hopes that sometime in the future a Memorial Service or Thanksgiving service for her life can be arranged.

Our prayers are with Norman and family at this very sad time.

David (Editor)

Dear David
What a shock to hear of the death of Janet.

I met Janet at my first AOS conference, there was only 4 Women that year, thankfully things have changed in the movement now. Many times Janet and I shared a room at conferences, she was known to be out for a run and had breakfast before I had even put my toe out of bed.

But despite our fitness regime being poles apart, we always rubbed along.

Janet and Norman looked after me on my return from Sudan. I was staying in Devizes which is not far from where they moved to a few years ago.

Norman had experience of working overseas and knew how difficult it could be to adjust back to a world of plenty and choice, including how many brands of shampoo and conditioner, after all you have used for years is soap.

Janet had me staying with her in a flat in Stockwell as she was the General Secretary, CEO and between them they found me a voluntary position at London Central and a more permanent accommodation at the Barbican YMCA, where of course, my sister met Archie Swan the CEO and they both married and have lived happily ever after.

I feel disappointed in myself that I have not been in touch with Janet and Norman as they certainly supported me when I needed it. Rest in Peace Janet and my love to you Norman at this sad time.

Angela (Hall)

Dear David,
I was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Janet Hopkins.

I first met Janet at an AOS Conference in Scotland in 1982. I think she had been asked by the then President Bill Leyland to look after the newcomer. She introduced me to the fun and fellowship of the YMCA and from that moment I felt I belonged.

Janet was very much a servant of local YMCAs (Stockwell, London Central, Croydon) but she lived on a very large map and was always very supportive and encouraging to us as National Council staff. Her wide vision was later reflected in her international role with the Girl Guide Association.

In the six months before her passing, Janet and I had been corresponding via email. She showed enormous courage and positivity in handling the uncertainties of her illness.

The last thing she wrote to me a day or so before her condition deteriorated is that she hoped she and Norman would be able to attend the Cambridge re union in July.

Our prayers are with Norman in his loss. We will all miss her energy, her spirit and her sense of fun and hope that the happy memories will, in time, be a great comfort to Norman and us all.

David (Bedford)



Author of "Transforming Glory" and "Vessels of Glory" - Vezi Mncwango

An inconvenient truth about racism.

Racism is a system that projects racialised identities. Simply put, people are racist because they have assumed an identity that is embedded in whom they have been told they are based on the assumptions implicit in these systems.

For example, suppose I tame a pigeon and raise it with chickens, it will grow up thinking it's a chicken and will live on the ground like chickens. This way I have created an environment that has made a pigeon assume an identity of a chicken. Systemic racism works the same way.

And here is the thing about this reality; racist behaviours cannot be changed merely by calling them out. And by this I am not suggesting racist behaviours shouldn't be called out, but rather that it's not enough to call them out, and in fact often just drives racists underground, a fertile ground malignant growth thereof.

My point is until that humanity finds a way of dismantling the underlying systems that give people racialised identities, we need to understand racism will always be with us.

The inconvenient truth is that the world socio-economic systems at the very core are fashioned on racism (and patriarchy and classism).

The only way we can therefore rid ourselves of these ills is to construct alternative systems. This is in fact exactly what Jesus purported to do when he introduced the "Kingdom of God".

This system radically liberated his followers from racialised, patriarchal and classist identities (until Christianity was captured by Constantine) to the extent that the colonialist powers of the time deemed them a threat and persecuted them unto death.

Sanvee Madjri Carlos

Secretary General – World Alliance of YMCAs



The new premises of World Alliance of YMCAs with the Secretary General Sanvee Madjri Carlos, waving from the balcony is situated at :-

World Alliance of YMCAs 12 Clos Belmont, 1208 Geneva, Switzerland.

A Poverty Prayer

Loving God,

*Thank you for your love and kindness.
You are a God of mercy, justice, and compassion,
and yet we acknowledge that these qualities are not always reflected
in our lives, in our community, and in our society.
Help us to respond to suffering, poverty, and hunger
in ways that usher in your kingdom:
to see people as you see them,
to share your loving-kindness in the darkest situations,
to challenge injustices that trap people in poverty,
to build a future that sets people free,
so that everyone can share in the fullness of life,
that Christ offers to us all.*

Amen.

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.



Participants
Left to Right are:

Steven Milner. Roger and Elaine Hunt. David Pendle. David Bedford, Jonathan Martin CEO at Trinity YMCA. Jane "Wake". Jim Lamb. Liz "Wake". Hannah Milner. Paul Kerridge. Vic Hills. Mary Hills. Thelma Kerridge. (President Graham had to leave prior to photo)

Report from the Cambridge Reunion Lunch Held on Wednesday 7th July 2021 at the Girton Golf Club, Cambridge

A more disparate (different in kind!) but amazing group of colleagues you would have difficulty to find but those present at the Cambridge Reunion Lunch held on 7th July 2021 filled the bill!

There is a uniqueness in YMCA retired colleagues and laypersons meeting together to socialise over lunch sharing their experiences of many years through the YMCA! Such was the occasion when 15 persons met together exchanging earnest conversation before, over and after lunch. On this occasion we celebrated the life of Reg Wake and recognised an amazing life and his being a founder of the Y's Retired of the UK.

The meeting opened with a very fine tribute to Reg Wake preceding a 'grace' given by the Y's Retired of the UK President Graham Clarke. A very warm welcome was extended to all and in particular to Jane and Liz, Reg's daughters who much enhanced the meeting with their presence and sharing of their experience of a much loved father and their own unique introduction to all things YMCA, a story well worth sharing. A round of applause was easily compared to England's Football Team scoring a goal!

There followed a 'round robin' when each person present briefly reported on their work or association with the YMCA. Included was an important input by Jonathan Martin CEO of the Cambridge & Peterborough YMCA (Guest) who had spoken to the group of exciting developments in his work pre-covid and now how the 'virus' had struck at the very heart of the YMCA causing very serious problems for the future.

A pleasant but brief interlude was when Roger & Elaine Hunt presented Jane and Liz with Orchids marking the occasion in memory of their father Reg Wake.

There then followed an 'address' by Stephen Milner on the birth and history of the British Boys for British Farms Scheme (BBBF) post war and present. It was an outstanding achievement. The Chair thanked Stephen not only for the presentation but also to thank him on behalf of the YMCA for his outstanding research and arranging occasional meetings with 'men' who were once BBBF 'BOYS'.

It was a memorable day in the life of Cambridge Reunion Annual Lunches!

"I know – because I was there!" Jim Lamb Organiser

A SHORT RESUME OF THE PRESENT DAY WORK OF YMCA'S IN ENGLAND & WALES

- YMCA England & Wales is made up of 101 member YMCAs working to ensure young people have opportunities to thrive and contribute positively to their communities.
- YMCAs operate in 700 different communities across England and Wales, impacting upon the lives of more than 570,000 people every year.
- YMCA is the largest voluntary sector provider of supported housing for young people in England and Wales, providing a bed for 8,800 people each night and collectively helping more than 20,000 people experiencing homelessness each year.
- YMCAs provide a safe space for 41,960 young people through our extensive youth services work, welcoming almost 20,000 young people through our 79 youth centres throughout England and Wales.
- YMCA is the largest sector provider of nursery and childcare provision, working with 207,000 children, young people, parents and carers to provide the best possible start in life, offering support into teenage years and beyond.
- YMCA England & Wales enables more than 28,000 people every year to engage in education and training to enable them to improve their opportunities in the job market.
- YMCA is the largest voluntary sector provider of services promoting physical activity in England and Wales, helping more than 132,000 people of all abilities and experiences to look after their health and wellbeing through healthy living activities.
- YMCAs connect almost 72,000 young people with someone to talk to or a helping hand, offering specialist guidance and practical skills to best equip them to overcome whatever challenges they may face.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Now that our summer is drawing to a close, contributions to future Y's Retired of UK would be very gratefully received, perhaps with a jpeg photo attached as well.

Now the lockdown has lifted, share with us how you and your family were affected, where you went of holiday, what your plans are for the future. I would love to hear from you. Sent to:-

ses.dhs@hotmail.co.uk

Reg's story continues:-



And so it was “down to the sea again” some thirteen years after leaving it in fact, but now as a passenger and First Class to boot! Elder Dempster’s “Apapa” (pictured above) lay at Liverpool Landing Stage. The day in May 1959 was one of glorious sunshine. As the gangways were lowered and lines splashed from jetty bollards, we were on our way down the Mersey – destination Takoradi, port of Ghana.

A time of mixed feelings. The difficult decision to leave Colin and Jane had been spoken of but the heartache and misgivings about the decision were the more real as ‘Apapa’ moved down stream. Our disembarkation was simple and speedy on account of the courier sent to meet us taking complete charge. Accra made a visual impact of bustling city life. We were delivered to the offices compound of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development to which I was to be attached. The spacious furnished flat was part of a three storey block of six, all accommodated with expatriates on three year short term contracts. We had use of a Peugeot 403, complete with the CD plates of a former user. We engaged “Miller” as cook/steward thanks to a recommendation of Ted and June Ewing, our YMCA friends. We felt so lucky to have “Miller”, so named by former employers, as he took us under his wing from the start and did much to make the rough places smooth.

Office hours took account of the heat hence a starting time of 07:00 with a long break at lunchtime and then on till 16:30. The scope of the Department’s operation was impressive. Special sections included Mass Literacy; Women’s Work (including Child Care, Nutrition, Home Economics, Market Gardening; Visual Aids/Film Unit; residential care for Juvenile Offenders and Remand Centres; Works (including Housing, Water Supplies and Roads – in partnership with the PWD); and a coordinating role with the voluntary agencies, including youth organisations, Scouts and Guides, Boys Brigade, church units and YMCAs. Designated Adviser/Trainer for Youth Services, my post came to cover social groupwork at all levels.

Each year we were sat the airport again to meet up with Colin and Jane for another much welcomed and treasured few weeks together. In early December 1960 it was our turn for a trip back to the UK. A short stop in Khartoum and then onto Rome arriving in the early hours of the morning. We opted for a conducted tour by coach seeing all the famous sights, including St Peter’s cathedral and on the Sunday Peggy and I waited with thousands watching at the balcony for his Holiness, Pope John XXIII to appear for the blessing.

Once back in Ghana the surprise package with safe delivery came in Ridge Hospital of Elizabeth Mary on 10th Oct 1961. Mother looked well and coped as a past master.

With due paternal deference, I thought the little blond bundle an absolute charmer.

As the time of our final departure drew near, YMCA Overseas Secretary Sandy Fraser began soundings about the future. He was anxious that after re-establishing our personal UK base that I leave for the then **Central African Federation** as soon as possible. We eventually reached a compromised date of August 1962. Peggy and I had already agreed that she would remain in our new home in Belfast until after Christmas. The weeks seemed to fly past and the time came for me to fly from London to Salisbury via Rome. The pressure to have me in post quickly was so Edgar Carter, then Secretary to the CAF of YMCAs was in sore need of overdue leave. I arrived 1st September 1963. At the time, the CAF was in process of breaking up. Nyasaland became an independent Malawi under Hastings Banda, and Northern Rhodesia was moving rapidly to become Zambia. Southern Rhodesia still had Ian Smith’s UDI and years of savage bush war to come before emerging as an independent Zimbabwe.

YMCA development had been organised on a Federal basis, with a Central Council based in Salisbury. With pending political changes, such structure could not survive. Separate and autonomous Councils, able to identify with national aspirations and needs, were seen to be vital. Sandy Fraser had confided that he saw the possibility of me becoming National Secretary to the Northern Council at an appropriate time, but much would depend on how Edgar viewed the overall situation. Operations in Salisbury consisted of a Business Training School housed in two adjoining shops in town, offering courses in shorthand/typing and bookkeeping with a nearby property being converted into a hostel.

When the Carters returned from their six months leave, I left Salisbury to travel 500 miles North to Ndola. I met Wally Brookbanks, the interim Chairman of the YMCA group responsible for the projected development. It was from the Lottery, and I suspect Wally’s influence, that the grant was made to under-write my salary and expenses for a three year period, plus capital to purchase a property in town, previously owned by the local Women’s Institute and to be converted for YMCA purposes.

On 23rd February 1963 I journey South to Salisbury to meet and welcome my girls to pastures new. They arrived on the “Rhodesian Castle” in Beira. After huge happiness and greetings and after a hotel stay, early the next morning, with luggage stowed firmly lashed onto the roof rack, we set off for Salisbury. Because of the rains, the luck on our journey deserted us. The road was flooded, so we were directed to a nearby rail station and onto flat-topped rail wagons. Eventually we moved off with flooding both sides of the embankment. After an hour of further travelling the train moved to a siding and a ramp where the car could drive ashore.

At a crucial point, the train engine jumped the points and was stranded – so were all the cars. After a few hours and a large group of gentlemen the train engine was lifted and levered back on the rails. The whole process took several hours. We stopped for some much need food and drinks having been in the stressful heat for such a long time. After staying with the Carters overnight, we set off on the last stage of our journey. With occasional stops on the way, we made a safe and pleasant trip to Ndola thus completing a not uneventful round trip of 2000 miles.

More to come in the NOVEMBER edition of the Newsletter.....