



YMCA and YHA Resource Guide

This guide provides an overview of the scope and content of the records of two youth movement organisations: the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Youth Hostels Association (YHA). These collections are both held at the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham. Taken together, the collections comprise 1000 boxes of archival materials covering the committees, activities and development of each organisation in England and Wales, from their foundations in 1844 (YMCA) and 1930 (YHA).

The YMCA and YHA collections provide a fantastic resource for exploring the development of a modern charity, as well as the outdoors movement, physical and mental wellbeing, health and education, the development of fundraising and many other topics.

Overview of the YMCA archive

The Records of the National Council of YMCAs include an extensive series of committee minutes, in addition to governance papers, annual reports, and legal and property files. There are records and publications of local YMCA Associations, the YMCA Divisional Unions and Districts, and of the National Council of Welsh YMCAs. The collection also includes material relating to YMCA events and fundraising, and contains sequences of photographs, slides, audio-visual material, and objects.

The archive includes records, printed material, and photographs of the YMCA's youth, educational and training work and their work with the Armed Forces during the First and Second World Wars, including the

photographic sequence known as the 'Green Books'. The collection also contains material from affiliated organisations, including the YMCA Women's Auxiliary, Association of Secretaries, World YMCA Alliance, and Y Care International.

There is significant material relating to the 'British Boys For British Farms' training scheme run by the YMCA between 1932 and 1968.

The scheme became recognised by the National Farmers Union and other agricultural bodies, and part funded by the Ministry of Agriculture. The scheme became a forerunner to Farm Institutes and Agricultural Colleges.



A member of the YMCA British Boys' for British Farms scheme holding a piglet. Ref YMCA/71/25/136

Overview of the YHA archive

The Records of the YHA include minutes of the National Council and its committees, annual reports, handbooks, magazines and other publications, financial records, hostel and other property files, press cuttings and artefacts; minutes and other records of the YHA Trust; minutes, annual reports, handbooks, magazines and other records of the regions; personal archives of members, wardens and others relating to the association and its hostels including photographs, log books and YHA ephemera.

The archive includes a complete set of the association's annual reports and handbooks and an almost complete set of its membership magazines, principally 'The Rucksack', later 'Youth Hosteller Magazine', 1932-72 and 'Hostelling News Magazine', 1972-85. These printed materials are an invaluable source for any research about the YHA and its activities and its wider role in working with young people and in providing access to the countryside.



A pencil drawing 'Doggy Expressions' by A. Bishop during his time with the Totterdown YMCA Boys' Club, 1930-1931. Ref YMCA/2/3/BRIS/6/3

History of the YMCA and YHA Organisations

History of the YMCA

The YMCA was established in 1844 and originated from regular prayer and bible study meetings of young male shop workers in London. It intended to improve the lives of young male retail workers by instilling in them the Christian faith and persuading them to forsake drinking, gambling, idleness and other vices. Although established as a non-denominational evangelical Christian movement, it soon began educational work and provided valuable opportunities for social and physical activities for its membership. In 1882, the National Council of YMCAs was formed to coordinate the work of all the local associations in England, Wales, and Ireland.

The YMCA organisation also rapidly expanded abroad, and in 1855 the first world conference of YMCAs was held in Paris where representatives of eight countries from Europe and North America met and the World Alliance of YMCAs was constituted. In the last 20 years of the nineteenth century, associations were set

up in Africa, Asia, and South America and associations in America created basketball and volleyball.

The YMCA played an important role during both world wars. The charity was the largest voluntary organisation to support the British Armed Forces during the First World War through the provision of rest huts and canteens. The YMCA also set up the National Women's Auxiliary which recruited large numbers of volunteers for its war work. During the Second World War, the mobile canteen, also known as the 'Tea Car', was introduced to supply food and drinks to troops, other war workers and those made homeless by bombing.

From the middle of the 20th century, the YMCA has focused on youth work, on health education and physical fitness, and on training, and, although initially established for young men and boys the YMCA also provided opportunities for women and girls from the 1960s. Initiatives and



Black and white photograph of Lady Blane, a YMCA canteen worker, holding a rescued cat from a city fire, next to an Auxiliary Fire Service member having a drink of tea behind a mobile canteen.

programmes included holiday centres and hostels, British Boys for British Farms Scheme, Youth in Industry scheme, and drug education projects.

The YMCA has evolved and adapted over its long history to support the needs of the young people it is trying to help and today supports hundreds of thousands of children, young people, and parents every year.

History of the YHA

The YHA is one of the largest youth organisations in England and Wales. It was established in 1930 'to help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, particularly by providing hostels or other simple accommodation for them on their travels'.

In the last years of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth numerous organisations were set up in Britain, all with the principal aim of providing enjoyment of the countryside. These included such bodies as the Co-operative Holiday Association (1891), Holiday Fellowship (1913), Cyclists Touring Club (1878), School Journey Association, Federation of Rambling Clubs and the Camping Club. By the later 1920s, some of these

organisations (and others) had already introduced schemes to provide cheap holiday accommodation - bodies such as the Holiday Fellowship, and the Northumbrian Trampers' Guild. But there was a growing awareness of the need for more widespread provision of such accommodation. German developments were very important in influencing movements elsewhere in Europe. There, youth hostels had been developed from the 1910s on the initiative of a schoolteacher, Richard Schirrmann; and by 1913 the growing movement in various parts of the country had been organised into the Federation of German Youth Hostels.

In England there was an increasing awareness of continental developments. Bodies such as the Liverpool and District Ramblers' Association

and the British Youth Council became interested in the movement in the later 1920s, the former setting up the Merseyside Centre of the British Youth Hostels Association under the chairmanship of the Rev H. H. Symonds and the latter a Wayfarers' Hostels Association Provisional Committee. Early in 1930 the National Council of Social Services was approached by a number of organisations, including the British Youth Council, and agreed to hold a preliminary conference of all bodies interested in a national Association for Youth Hostels. A further meeting was held in April 1930, where it was unanimously agreed to form such a National Association to promote youth hostels in Britain.

Navigating the YMCA Archive catalogue

The YMCA archive catalogue comprises over 9,000 individual entries. These records provide the necessary scope and content for researchers to determine whether they wish to visit the University of Birmingham and view the original materials. The catalogue is fully searchable via www.calmview.bham.ac.uk.

National Council of YMCA's administration. Ref YMCA/1

Committee minutes, governance papers, annual reports, finance, legal and property papers, and staff papers of the National Council of YMCAs.

Local YMCA Associations, Divisional Unions and Regions, and Council records. Ref YMCA/2

Records and printed materials from local YMCA Associations in England and Wales, including minutes, scrapbooks, prospectuses, programmes, and annual reports. Also includes records and printed material from Divisional Unions and Regions and the records of the National Council of YMCAs of Wales.

YMCA programmes. Ref YMCA/3

Papers and printed material for YMCA youth, training, Christian, education, recreational activities, and health programmes, including British Boys for British Farms, Y Training Services, Dunford House, hostels, camps and holiday centres.

YMCA and the Armed Forces. Ref YMCA/4

Photographs, scrapbooks, printed material and papers regarding the YMCA's work with the armed forces from territorial camps in 1890, the First and Second World Wars, and with the British Army on the Rhine. Includes the YMCA 'Green Books' a series of over 4000 photographs depicting the work of the YMCA during the First World War.

Events, public affairs, and fundraising. Ref YMCA/5

Correspondence, papers and printed material regarding YMCA events, including anniversaries and conferences. Also includes newspaper cuttings and fundraising material.

Publications. Ref YMCA/6

YMCA's serial magazines, including the First

World War Red Triangle, newsheets and newsletters, and directories and annuals.

Also includes YMCA information leaflets and brochures.

Photographs and negatives. Ref YMCA/7

Photographs of the activities of the YMCA, including their national, youth, and training programmes, work with the armed forces and local YMCA association work. Also includes photographs of events, people, premises and local YMCA association work. In addition to a large sequence of photographs organised by topic.

Slides. Ref YMCA/8

Various slides regarding the work of the YMCA, primarily of the First World War and YMCA international work.

Audio-visual material. Ref YMCA/9

Contains VHS and other visual formats regarding YMCA's work, including local association activities, national, youth and training programmes, and work with the armed forces. Also include sound recordings.

Objects and textiles. Ref YMCA/10

Various YMCA badges, ceramics, cups, flags, medals, awards, signs, fundraising items, and uniforms.

History of the YMCA. Ref YMCA/11

Correspondence, printed material and papers regarding the early history of the YMCA, including membership tickets. Also includes articles, publications and notes on the history of the YMCA.

Special Collections. Ref YMCA/12

Contains correspondence, papers, photographs and objects belonging to individuals who worked for the YMCA or were closely associated, including Sir George

Williams, William. H. Mills, William Hind Smith, and Cicely Whittington.

YMCA Women's Auxiliary. Ref YMCA/13

Committee minutes, reports, papers and photographs of the national, and local, YMCA Women's Auxiliaries. Also includes papers of members of the Women's Auxiliary.

Association of Secretaries of Great Britain and Ireland. Ref YMCA/14

Association of Secretaries annual conference programmes and papers, governance and finance papers, publications and magazines, and papers of the World and European Association of YMCA Secretaries.

World Alliance of YMCAs. Ref YMCA/15

Minutes, reports and publications of the World Alliance of YMCAs, area committees, and international YMCA associations.

Y Care International. Ref YMCA/16

Published and printed material from Y Care international, the humanitarian aid movement of the YMCA.

Other CRL collections

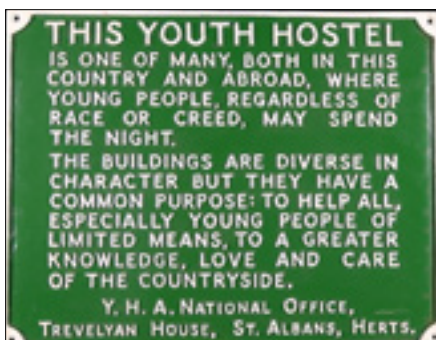
CRL holds the records of the London Central YMCA Association (ref CYMCA) and the George Williams College (ref YMCA/ACC116). Deposits of material from individuals who worked for, or were closely associated with, the YMCA are held in YMCA/ACC.

Other repositories holding YMCA collections

Prominent collections include the Scottish National Council of YMCAs archive are held at the National Archives of Scotland and The YMCA of USA archive at the University of Minnesota. Papers of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) are held at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry.

Navigating the YHA Archive catalogue

The YHA archive catalogue comprises over 7,000 individual entries. These records provide the necessary scope and content for researchers to determine whether they wish to visit the University of Birmingham and view the original materials. The catalogue is fully searchable via www.calmview.bham.ac.uk.



Cast iron sign detailing the objectives of a YHA hostel. Ref YHA/OB/3/5



YHA volunteers at Southend-on-Sea Carnival, 1954. Ref YHA/LG/2/ALL/3

Dissertations and academic studies about and relating to the YHA. Ref YHA/DI

Reports and dissertations written about YHA or related activities and donated to the YHA archive. Some of the dissertations were written after consulting material in the archive.

Individual hostels, properties, and hostelling: papers, images, and ephemera. Ref YHA/IH

Photographs, postcards, cuttings and ephemera relating to individual YHA hostels.

International and overseas hostelling organisations. Ref YHA/IN

Papers and publications produced by and concerning international and overseas hostelling organisations, including reports and papers from the annual conference of the International Youth Hostels Federation.

Local groups. Ref YHA/LG

Records relating to local YHA groups comprising printed materials, photographs and press cuttings.

Members, officers, and wardens. Ref YHA/MO

Collections of principally donated material relating to YHA members, hostelling activities, and the work of YHA officers, wardens, and staff, including voluntary staff. The material in this series provides a personal insight into the world of hostelling and the work of the YHA, and their impact on the daily lives of individuals.

National governance and administrative records. Ref YHA/NG

Reports, correspondence, papers, newsletters, and finance ledgers, relating to the administration and governance of the YHA at a national level.

National publications and printed items. Ref YHA/NP

YHA publications and reports, as well as publications about YHA and hostelling. The series includes a complete set of annual reports and reviews, 1931–2016, and an almost complete set of national handbooks and accommodation guides, 1931–2011, which provide important financial and organisational information about the YHA, their work, and their hostel network.

Hostel objects and artwork. Ref YHA/OB

Collection of objects including artwork, commemorative glassware and ceramics, signs, and miscellaneous items.

Property records. Ref YHA/PR

Correspondence, papers, and reports concerning property owned and leased by YHA used as hostels, staff accommodation, offices, and shops. Includes some papers relating to proposed hostels which were never opened.

Regional groups and areas. Ref YHA/RG

Materials from regional groups and areas pre- and post-1960s re-organisation, including the post-1986 re-organisation.

Special events and celebrations. Ref YHA/SP

Correspondence, papers, photographs, publicity material, and invitation cards, relating to royal visits and YHA celebration events, including YHA and hostel jubilees and hostel openings.

Study guides and reference material. Ref YHA/ST

A series of study guides compiled by YHA Honorary Archivist.