



HISTORY OF THE YMCA IN ENGLAND

The YMCA Movement in England is one of the largest youth development charities in the country. Although the YMCA has changed considerably since it was founded 160 years ago, our guiding principles remain the same. From small beginnings, the YMCA Movement has grown to become one of the biggest Christian charities in the world working in over 120 countries with 30 million members worldwide.

1844 The first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was formed by George Williams in St Paul's churchyard in the heart of London.

1851 The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London proved to be a milestone in the YMCA's history as publicity leaflets distributed at the time helped to develop links with other countries.

1851 The American YMCA Movement, founded in 1851, led the way in addressing physical fitness with gym openings and a wide program of activities. It went on to invent both basketball (1891) and volleyball (1895).

1888 The British YMCA Movement opens a large gym at London Central Association, marking a shift towards personal health and fitness.

1894 The YMCA had become so significant that its 50th anniversary was marked with George Williams receiving a knighthood from Queen Victoria and the Freedom of the City of London. Sir George died in 1905 and was laid to rest in the crypt at St Paul's Cathedral.

1914 During World War I, the British YMCA extended its work across the Channel to support the troops. YMCA huts provided soldiers with food, drink and free writing paper and envelopes.

1932 The YMCA launched two initiatives to help tackle rising unemployment: British Boys for British Farms, which placed unemployed young men as agricultural workers on farms; and an Employment Department, which found jobs for 38,000 ex-servicemen.

1945 The YMCA continued its war work and mobile canteens were introduced to bring refreshments to the troops.

1959 A government report was published on the need for better leisure facilities for teenagers. As a result, many YMCAs began youth clubs to help young people with their personal development through recreation, leisure and informal education.

1970 The YMCA George Williams College was established to provide professional training for youth workers. It remains today one of the leading training colleges for those working in informal education.

1980 YMCA Training for Life was launched which would result in the creation of YMCA Training - one of the UK's leading vocational training organisations.

1980 Milton Keynes YMCA was established.

1994 The YMCA began work in prisons and young offenders' institutions.

2005 The 150th Anniversary of the World Alliance of YMCAs, culminating with a global event in Mumbai, India from **17th - 22nd August 2005** on the theme 'Celebrating, envisioning and building peace with justice.'