

## HENLEY YMCA

We believe in creating transformational opportunities for young people and the community as a whole.

YMCA Henley provides a range of facilities and activities for the communities of Henley and the surrounding area.

We provide self-contained accommodation for 31 young people (16-25's) as we believe that everyone deserves a safe place to stay. Our residents are offered tailored support to enable them to achieve the transition into independent living – long term.

We believe in being active and put this into practice at every opportunity by offering a diverse set of classes in our activity living centre. In addition, we offer an opportunity to participate in a variety of football activities for all ages and abilities. Our facilities include a floodlit five-a-side football on a state of the art Soccer Real 60 football pitch, and a 11-a-side grass pitch.

**There is so much more. So please have a look through our website to find out about the varied work we do and what we have to offer – we think you might be surprised!**

You can also visit our brand new Twitter page for daily updates [here](#)

There are 114 YMCAs in England, each is shaped by the community it is a part of and by the people that it serves. Listening to voices and needs. Our ethos is based on three original principles – the importance of having a healthy mind, body and spirit.

The YMCA movement is now the oldest and largest charity in the world. Helping hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged people worldwide. In Henley it is a valuable resource, a life line, a stepping stone, a place to have fun and a safe place for many young people.

YMCA Henley has had a long association with the YMCA movement.

It was founded in August 1857 when “three young men resident in Henley met two from a neighbouring town and were led to hold a prayer meeting in a meadow at 9 o'clock.”

By the end of September 1857 there were 14 members and in October the official rules of the “The Henley Branch of the YMCA” were adopted. The activities of the new YMCA were focused on “promoting Christian Unity among young men, and the diffusion of vital religion among the masses of the people.” Weekly meetings of bible readings and singing were conducted in the Sunday School room.

In April 1901, the YMCA moved to a “handsome and commodious corner building in Imperial Parade.” The Annual Report of 1902 shows that they now had 140

members. In addition, apart from the weekly Bible reading classes, the YMCA offered lectures of an “interesting as well as instructive character” such as the “Ants and their Ways and Worms and their Work” as well as Musical Evenings.

There was also a Cricket and Football Club as well as a Gymnasium, thus delivering the core YMCA message of Body, Mind and Spiritual development.

In 1912, YMCA Henley started to produce a monthly magazine, (see photo), these gave details of the monthly programme and provided an inspirational quote for the year.



1912 – *“Let your lions be girded about and your lights burning”*

1913- *“Through God we shall do valiantly.”*

1914- *“fight the good fight of faith”*

In 1923 the committee accepted an offer to lease a field on the current site just off Watermans Road on the southern fringe of the town.

In 1924 YMCA Henley were given a cheque for £500 by Mr Robert Fleming (the brother of Ian Fleming) in order to purchase the field at Watermans Road. At the same time they obtained planning permission to build a pavilion alongside the field.

In 1927 they moved to new premises on Station Road which were sold in 1971, thus paving the way for the move to YMCA Henley’s current site.

The building of the pavilion was postponed due to the war and was finally built in 1974 with funds raised by the sale of the main building on Station Road.

Through the early and middle part of the 20th Century the work of YMCA Henley was largely devoted to spiritual and sporting activities based mainly around football. These activities as well as the youth groups etc. were staff predominately by volunteers.

However, in response to changing needs, in the 1990’s the YMCA decided to develop part of its site to provide affordable housing for young people with a Henley connection. Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Gloucester opened the scheme of 31 self-contained studio apartments and flats in October 2000.

Thus in 2000 the current set up of YMCA Henley was born. Our facilities are home to a diverse range of activities that reflect the YMCA’s mission to promote the development of the whole person in body, mind and spirit. There are exciting plans to expand and develop YMCA Henley work with young people and the community over the next few years to reflect ever-changing social, physical and spiritual needs.

YMCA Henley has a long history and hopes to continue growing from strength to strength in providing services much needed by the diverse communities of the Henley and surrounding area.