Old Emanuel Association

APRIL 2025 NEWSLETTER

INTRODUCTION

It was, you know, it really was a solid fifty years ago that a young Robert Stock produced the subject matter for a photograph that was to adorn the presentation wall of Blagdons until we departed our abode only a few years ago. As you know, everything was in black and white back in '75 as you can be confirmed by the photograph on the front cover, although OEs were simply content with just one of the two colours for our own regalia! The 3rd of May 1975…what an afternoon that was…but this paragraph is just a tease really as we will get onto that main story when we reach the end of this newsletter.

This edition contains news of the various aspects of life at the OEA under the titles of our adopted mantra, Connection, Camaraderie, Charity and Community Sports. It points you in the right direction for news of all the school's activities; it reports on a number of get-together gatherings; it informs of the good work being effected by our two prime charities Primary Ambitions and Wandsworth Music and by Grace, a school-leaver last year who is doing fine things in Senegal; and finally it imparts knowledge on the OERFC rugby season that concluded only last Saturday and upon our afternoon in the sun all those years ago in 1975.

It's my final edition having been writing these for around six years and I'll be handing over to Martin Rickman to take the presentation forward. It's been a pleasure compiling some 20 newsletters during this time and I hope they have gone some way to keeping us Battersea Rise students together, happy and bountiful!

1.CONNECTION

1.1 The Development Team at the School really do a job-and-a-half you know with the all the publications that they send out frequently. Since the last OEA newsletter they have issued:-
25th February: The Rose and Portcullis Issue 46 (email)
31st January, 14th February, 7th March and 21st March: News from Emanuel School (email)
… not forgetting four Facebook communications.

It seems pointless to repeat what was said in all but, as I always have stated, let me know (at oeamember@gmail.com) if you are not receiving them and I will get you onto their mailing list. However, as an example, subject matters have included this year's school musical Sweeny Todd; the Hockey, Netball and Football teams; the excellent A level results (even better than when we were there!); The STEM and Refectory Building Launch Event; Simon Dillsworth's Lecture on AI, sponsored by the OEA; Emanuel School's Gala Concert at Sinfonia Smith Square: the School's Charities and Partnership work.
There is every opportunity to connect with the school's activities and doubtless an opportunity to get involved in some, where relevant.

1.2 I'd also like to draw your attention to the **excellent work that Emanuel does within the community.** If you Google "Emanuel in the Community, Partnerships and Outreach Programme" you will come across a comprehensive publication which you can read online detailing all the many activities that happen within the project and which reflects the ethos of the school. What shines through is the school's dedication to their community, their empathy with the community. The school's impact in numbers looks like this:-

32 Partner Schools: 1,080 primary pupils participating in Primary Ambitions: 3,300 pupil swimming hours in the last teaching year for 4 schools: 320 year 4 children participating in Emanuel football tournaments: 11 Partner Community organisations: 35 children participating in Ascent from 10 partner schools: 70 young people playing disability sport on site per term: 4,000+ student hours and 1,850 staff hours working on the partnerships: 144 children in receipt of fee assistance: 300 GCSE booster hours for 2 partner schools: and £19.4million total contribution to the GDP of Wandsworth Borough each year.

2. CAMARADERIE

2.1 On March 9th we saw Alex Noble conduct his second **Old Emanuel Luncheon Club** Event (of many yet to come!) at The Doggett's Coat and Badge aside the glorious Thames at Blackfriars where we were all able to welcome in the burgeoning rays of Spring 2025. There was quite a selected gathering present on this occasion although all are welcome of course. Alex continues to invite you all to these quarterly events with thumbs up enthusiasm and issues timely memoranda a number of weeks prior to each event. If you are not on his dining mailing list, let me know (oeamember@gmail.com) although I believe it won't be too long until he ensures that all on the OEA mailing list receive such missives.

The next event will be in early June at our Hove summer venue, courtesy of our Chairman, John Sturgeon. Go on, you know you want to come. Mr Alex Noble would love to greet you his warm and happy smiling face, as shown!

2.2 OERFC President's Day, April 5th 2025. Taunton Avenue

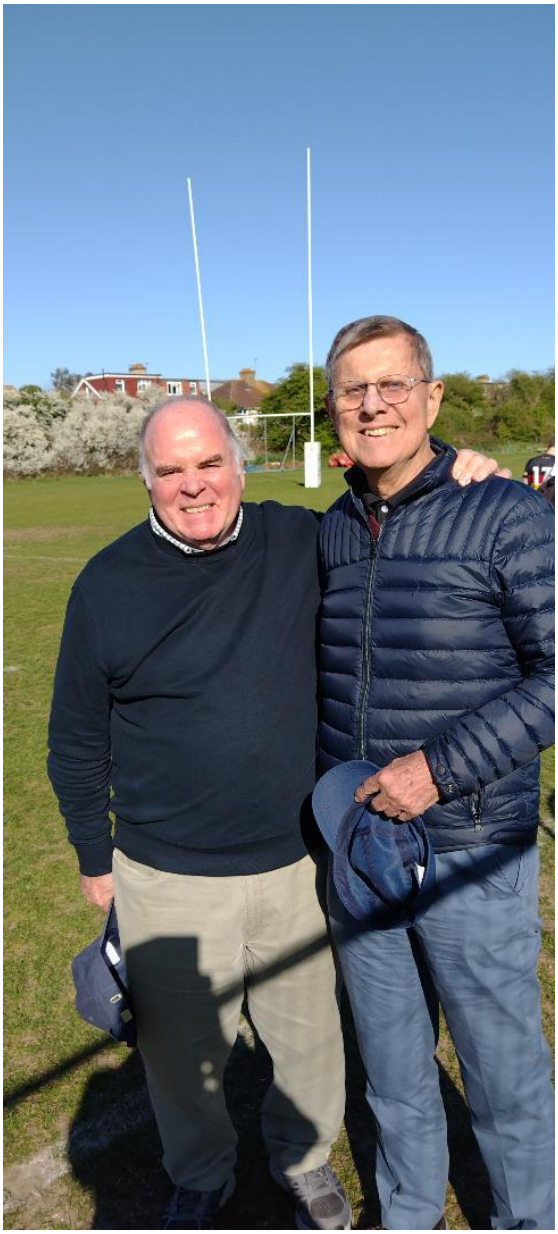
There's no disguising that it's been a difficult few years on the pitch for Old Emanuel Rugby Football Club. We've previously reported on the outstanding work that the club has achieved in creating a brand-new clubhouse but that results on the pitch had been elusive for various reasons. However, I'm now very happy to report it looks like that period could well be behind the team. Last Saturday was the final day of the season and just take a look at the results since 25th January 2025.

- Harlequin Amateurs 15 OERFC 24
- OERFC 43 Haslemere 19
- Old Paulines 12 OERFC 64
- OERFC 53 Reigate 18
- OERFC 35 London French 14
- Old Freemans 17 OERFC 38
- OERFC 24 Southwark Lancers 12

Seven glorious wins in a row to finish the season, ending fourth (of 10) in the league having played 18, won 11, drawn 1, lost 6 with 56 points: Points for 455 and against 274. Haslemere won the division with Southwark Lancers coming in third. That end of the season run was all important.

OE's Victory Huddle post the 24-12 win over Southwark Lancers 2nd April 2025

So now we can talk of the side being highly successful on the pitch too which will only build upon the success being enjoyed within the clubhouse. It doesn't mean promotion this year, but promotion truly becomes a reality for next.



Incoming President Peter Lippiatt and Outgoing President Brian Cassidy (435 games, 72 tries) posing alongside Past President Andy Bryce (252 games, 157 tries) and Club Captain and VP Geoff Price (300 games, 275 tries!!) who were all remembering just how fast they used to be in the seventies/eighties and vaguely wishing that it was all possible again today, too.*

** Pete's many OERFC games and tries are unrecorded.*

The ebullient and energetic Bran Cassidy will complete his two-year Presidency stint at the end of April and the ebullient and energetic Peter Lippiatt will then step up to the frame. It's not my position to say thank you to Brian, but, nevertheless, thank you for all your hard work, Brian… And bon chance me old fruit gum to Peter in helping to drive the club forward to prosperous times. Thank goodness Trump can't put a tariff on rugby!!

What a grouping: Simon Parley, one of the key members of the tour-de-force team behind the creation of the new facilities in Taunton Avenue (138 games, 68 tries): Andy Hodge, Past President and Captain of the club (358 games, 18 tries): and the aforementioned Peter Lippiatt and Geoff Price.

Whilst this article may fit better under the "Community Sports" heading I've placed it here for the sole purpose of emphasising the fact that the OEA may have moved from their Blagdons home but we do have another now, via the courtesy and generosity of the OEA, in Taunton Avenue. The venue and its extensive facilities are for hire for any occasion. Any member of the OEA Committee will let you know how. A view of the bar is shown below (Spot the ever-present model!)

2.3 Fulham vs Crystal Palace FA Cup Quarter Final.

What on earth is this article doing in the newsletter I hear you ask? Well, there were a number of us OEs at Craven Cottage just ten days back. It was of course the wrong result. Oh yes it was, but it struck me, whilst there, that if an OE was ever going to support a football team and they turned left out of the school they were either going to support Fulham or that team in blue, and if they turned right it would be The Eagles…or perhaps Charlton in former years. (Post-bag ahoy!)

But anything can be an excuse for an OE gathering, surely? Twickenham, Quins, Bristol RFC or Bristol City, Racing, Ice Hockey, Opera, Theatre…anytime, any-place, anywhere!! Should anyone be game out there to co-ordinate such gatherings let me know and I'll ask Andy Robbo, our Social Secretary, to contact you. You never know such outings might even be enhanced by a pint or two.

2.4 A Newsletter without a photo of Ian Blair? Surely Not!

Indeed not! Heaven forbid! He's been entertaining again over there in Trump Country. I simply wanted to share a photo of the renown centre of yore (123 games, 31 tries plus oh so many for the seconds and thirds) with an erstwhile and well-dressed senior citizen of this parish…Mr Robert Barlow (299 games 110 tries), together with their respective better halves.

Blairs and Barlows in Refined Dining Mode.

3. CHARITY & SPONSORSHIP

A significant percentage of the annual OEA income goes in support of our selected charities with the school's excellent Primary Ambitions initiative always receiving good mention within this newsletter but there are other bodies and individuals whom we have helped/are helping along the way and all their work is to be applauded. More of that shortly, but firstly:-

3.1 Primary Ambitions

Forgive me…you could well have read this before but this aspect of our spend has been close to my heart and I thought it would be a good reminder (within my swansong newsletter) of the good the initiative achieves and our role within that. I hope we will continue to give this important charity all the help we can.

This is a relatively recent note form Lisa Irwin at the school who has been responsible for its success. I believe she has now moved on to other things.

Primary Ambitions continues to thrive. We offer a wide range of enrichment opportunities for our partner primary schools on Friday afternoons during term time. These sessions are led by our Lower Sixth students providing the opportunity to hone teamworking, leadership and presentation skills as well as to build relationships with children that they might not encounter otherwise. Our partner primary school children relish the chance to experience hands-on science, orienteering, clay creature making, debating and more.

Our partner schools need us more than ever. For many, resources are on a knife-edge. This not only impacts their ability to provide Primary Ambitions style activities in school but also impacts their ability to attend our programme. Many of the schools are single form entry and have little budget to provide enrichment opportunities - they rely heavily on PA to help plug this gap.

Taking public transport for some is just not manageable. We currently provide as much transport as we can including the three school minibuses (currently with two volunteer drivers); two from Grand Motion and five from Wandsworth Community Transport. The Grand Motion minibuses are new additions this year. They are expensive but our view is that if we do not provide the transport the children can't come which impacts our partner school children as well as our own Lower Sixth.

*We are so grateful for the funds that you have provided. Your generosity has enabled us to provide transport for **five** schools to attend a 5-week module of the programme via Wandsworth Community Transport minibuses. This means that have enabled 75 partner school children to access 375 hours of enrichment through Primary Ambitions. This is a huge impact!*

Georgia Orchin, a member of the Senior Leadership team at St George's Primary in Battersea states,

"Through this program (Primary Ambitions), our students have blossomed into poets, swimmers, gymnasts, scientists, technicians, and so much more. The opportunities provided by Primary Ambitions have not only expanded their horizons but have ignited passions and talents they never knew they had.

One of the most significant aspects of Primary Ambitions is the inspiration our children draw from the students at Emanuel School. Being championed by older peers has not only boosted their confidence but has also set exemplary standards for them to aspire towards.

From our perspective, Primary Ambitions has been invaluable. It supports us in delivering an engaging and comprehensive curriculum, enriching the educational experience of our children beyond the confines of the classroom.

We wholeheartedly endorse Primary Ambitions and commend Emanuel School for their dedication to fostering the growth and development of young minds. It's programs like these that truly make a difference in shaping the future generation."

Without your ongoing support OEs, we would be unable to impact the children in our local community in such a positive way. Thank you so much!

3. 2. Wandsworth Music

Also close to my heart (with apologies for the personal nature of my comments) is the amazing work being undertaken by a relatively quiet, yet extraordinarily large charity entitled WANDSWORTH MUSIC. I had the privilege to be to present at The Royal Albert Hall last Monday, 31st March, to experience "A celebration of music featuring 1,600 young musicians from Wandsworth." Yes…1,600…from our days that two full schools' worth of students!!

What to say? It was an outstanding performance. First there were 200 secondary school pupils from across the Borough performing *West Side Story…A Musical Theatre Collaboration* with a dozen songs from the favourite musical featuring rivalry between the Jets and The Sharks blending in with the Romeo and Juliet story at its centre. This picture will give you an idea of the scope of their production. What professionalism displayed by amateurs.

Next came a performance from the *"Wandsworth Inclusive Ensemble"* entitled *"Better Together"*… an important selection of music created by pupils at Special Schools in Wandsworth. The rhythm created by this group was simply enjoyed by them…you could see it in their faces… and by all listening.

There followed the *Year 10 Chestnut Grove Steel Pan Band*, a tradition at the Chestnut Grove Academy. Pretty sure there was a queue afterwards to do with Summer BBQ bookings!!

Then *The Wandsworth Street Band* came to the stage. This group was originally formed in Roehampton to bring musical opportunities to young people in and around the Alton Estate. It has its roots in the New Orleans Marching tradition…so there we were for a time, amidst the wonderful music of that amazing southern American metropolis.

The 300 singers of the *Wandsworth Secondary Choir* congregated next to perform *O Fortuna from Carmina Burana* followed by *Billy Joel's Lullabye*. A moving performance, indeed.

And then finally, la piece de resistance, and the item that we had contributed to by paying some of the rehearsal transport costs…*The Wandsworth Primary Choir* comprising 900 primary school pupils, bobbing up and down with excitement, waving at parents, parents responding with glee, all remembering a never-to-be-forgotten evening singing songs from Wham!, Paul Simon, Aretha Franklin with a tad of Wake Me Up Before you Go Go thrown in for sheer pleasure, all accompanied by *The Wandsworth Philarmonic Orchestra*.

There was some audience participation at the end with a Beatles sing-along, although, come to think of it, most of the parental audience shouldn't have known the words. That's our generation material thank you.

I think we can be proud that we helped so many young people to enjoy themselves and that we helped give them that memory for life,

3.3 Grace Stimpson in Senegal

Members paying attention will remember that we volunteered to help a volunteer in her teaching experience in Senegal. The OEA were very pleased to be able to help Grace with a small donation towards the purchase of class equipment for her year's extraordinary, chance-of-a-lifetime teaching experience…her first year out of Emanuel. She has kindly sent us this summary of her time there so far.

"My experience so far in Senegal is difficult to encompass in words. It has been an introduction to a new life, an immediate switch - not only from student to teacher- but from a culture I was familiar and comfortable with to one entirely alien.

Replete with the cockerels' crow and call from the muezzin (Ed…the person who proclaims the call to daily prayer) each morning, it is like walking out into a busy conversation - one full of goats, children, neighbours, water vendors on donkey drawn carts, Wolof, French, Pular, Serer and a little Mandinka. (Ed…Languages of the country.)

Grace in amongst her pupils in Senegal

To live and teach here is to be part of a community in constant communication, a privilege one can't quite imagine from the concrete streets of a London borough. I feel lucky to not imagine but live it each day.

My primary takeaway insofar is that the Senegalese principle of ´Terangà' (which inadequately translates as ´sharing') runs far deeper than the meals we eat together, gathered around one bowl: it's a way of life."

All at the OEA are so pleased it is more than you expected Grace and wish you well in your remaining time there and in your career ahead, enhanced inordinately by this experience.

3.4. Wandsworth Girls Indoor Cricket Scheme

We were also pleased to be able to support the Wandsworth Girls Indoor Cricket Scheme with a significant contribution to their expenses. I reckon you can probably understand the costs involved by simply studying the poster that advertises the initiative.

Without a doubt it fits neatly into our aspirations as to how we should be supporting local Wandsworth children.

Young girls who have a musical interest, wish to play cricket and would like to take part in our Primary Ambitions initiative now have the opportunity to benefit from OEA generosity in a multitude of ways should they be so fortunate to take part in all the activities with which we have been involved these last 12 months.

I'll leave the report on our involvement in this scheme to the next newsletter and the next editor. It will be more appropriate then in the summer months.

…. And Finally (as they used to say in " News At Ten"….)

4. FIFTY YEARS SINCE WE TRIPPED THE TWICKENHAM TURF

As I stated at the top of the newsletter it's 50 years since the middle of three Old Emanuel RFC Sevens performances at Twickenham of 1970, 1975 and 1980. It's the 1975 version where we enjoyed not just 14 minutes of fame… but 42!!

Three Shields denoting the OEs playing at Twickenham in the Middlesex sevens of 1970,1975 and 1980, photographed in the bar of OERFC last Saturday

It was Saturday 3rd May 1975. Ten miles up the road at Wembley Fulham FC were in competition for another rather important cup against West Ham but down at Headquarters spectators were a-queuing for a spectacle of running rugby where they were about to see 75 tries scored in the space of six hours (I've just done a quick add-up!)

If you refer to the photo on the front page of this newsletter you can re-live the highlight of the afternoon - Bob Stock scoring in the corner to eliminate London Irish in the first round proper by 6 points to 4 before a crowd of approximately 30,000, but that was after we had defeated Rosslyn Park by 4 points to 3 in a preliminary round played in front of about 10,000 spectators (or was it just a 1,000? It felt like the former). Yes, we eventually lost to Richmond by 24 points to nil which, of course, was a disappointment not only to us but to all in the crowd which by then had grown to 60,000 who were giving full voice to supporting the OEs.

I was one of the fortunate seven that afternoon but, frankly, apart from the amazing roar of the crowd I remember little of the day. I'm not sure I even touched the ball…I must have…there were hardly many of us on the massive pitch within the cathedral that afternoon. I do know though that it had been the experience of a lifetime, that the programme cost 15p and that a seat in the West Stand would set you back £1.60.

Fortunately, I've got friends and fellow players with better memories so what follows is my summary of their summaries. Thank you to them, otherwise this article would have fallen somewhat flat!! We have of course lost Tony Stevens and Johnnie Evans in the meantime. We remember them fondly in this article. Johnnie replaced Peter Gough who broke his jaw in the preliminary week (and has never been the same since?)

Let's start with the captain of the day, Mr Geoff Price seen earlier in this newsletter. His memories start a week before in the preliminaries at London Irish RFC's ground in Sunbury and they reminded me that it was probably our most exhausting day of rugby ever played in that it took four qualifying games (7 minutes each way) in order to reach the hallowed turf, seven days later. On that qualifying afternoon, we beat our old pals, Old Reedonians 25-0. Went onto conquer Merton 14-10 (a tad close!); Then some more old friends, Old Surbitonians' second team 16 points to 4, thence Bec Old Boys' second team 10 points to 4. (They stated second teams…if they employed the same tactics as we did in 1970, it was likely to be their firsts!). Our reward for that exertion, yes exertion, was indeed a trip to said hallowed turf, a "happening" with which we have bored many a person since.

Thence as stated the following week…off to Twickenham. Geoff recalls vividly as you will see. (In the paragraphs that follow the words in italics are those of the respective contributors.)

Geoff Price Diaries
Saturday 3 May 1975

The OE supporters are at Twickenham in force but not too many others. We've been drawn against Rosslyn Park in a preliminary match (I won't bore you why) and it's halfway through the first half. We get a penalty on their 10 metre line and call a move. A "Number 3". This involves a couple of dummy runs around the pivot with Tony (Tiger) Stevens taking the ball down the middle. It takes a couple to stop him and he manages to slip the ball to me as he goes down. I run it in from 25 metres and kick the conversion. We are ahead 6-4. The rugby is attritional rather than spell binding. Soon, we are near the end but they break through. Their wing looks to do some showboating behind the posts with a flamboyant side-step but I manage to whack his arm and dislodge the ball. He knocks on and we have won the game.

So, into the first round proper. We play London Irish. We win 4-3 with the try immortalised by the photo on the wall at Blagdons as Bob Stock squeezes in. Without a doubt, it serves them right for kicking a penalty rather than trying to score a try!

Who's next? Richmond – the current holders and one of the tournament favourites. We try hard and get tremendous support but they are just too strong. So at 4.40pm (about the same time as the Fulham defeat) we finally depart the competition which Richmond go on to win against Loughborough Colleges in the Final.

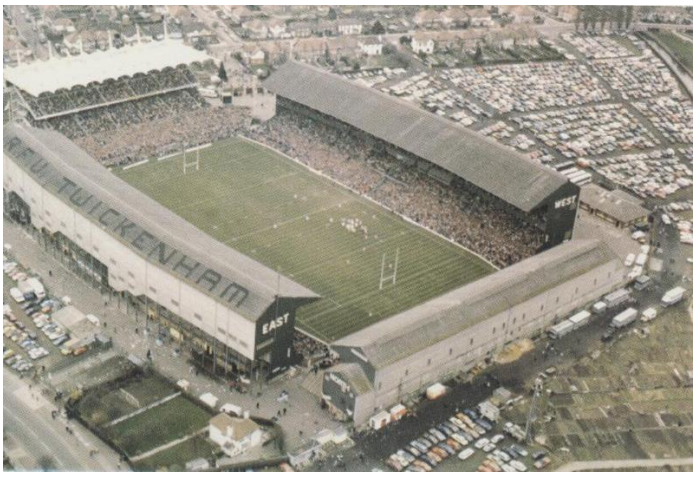
Geoff concludes with the fact, and I believe this still to be the case (Stewart Melville Former Pupils excepted), that no other Old Boys side has ever won twice at Twickenham. The competition closed in 2011. So that's our record for good!!

Our dear friend Johnnie Evans was a real tricky centre. The best of his day. Should have played for Wales. Creative, elusive, wonderful. Boy do we miss you John and wish that you were here for these quiet fifty-year celebrations. His brother Dave, who we also all know and love, penned a few words.

My brother John enjoyed a number of highlights in, dare I say it, a distinguished OE Rugby career. But unquestionably above them all was the game at Twickenham against Richmond – then skippered by Tony Bucknall of England fame – in the quarter-final of the Middlesex Sevens at Twickenham in 1975. Unbelievably we'd already beaten both Rosslyn Park and London Irish – then senior clubs. In the first of those games John threw one of his trademark dummies to the delight of a massive crowd (though he wasn't quite fast enough to make it to the line).

But Richmond was a step too far. At kick-off John confided to Bob Stock alongside him "I think I'm rather exhausted, (or words to that effect.)"

In later years John would tell of how hard it was to describe the sheer thrill and the adrenalin rush of playing in front of more than 50,000 people, virtually all of whom were willing the OEs to win. Twickers, a few years later, shown below.



The photogenic Bob Stock, he of Blagdon's wall of fame and folklore, sent me these significant number of memories, for which I thank you, Bob:

I have a number of memories of the day. After 50 years, I can't promise they are completely reliable, but I remember:

- *Tony Phillips appearing in the changing room before the London Irish game, reporting with a gleam in his eye that the Irish were getting nervous.*
- *David Evans abandoning us after the Rosslyn Park match to watch Fulham and West Ham in the FA cup final.*
- *The enormous individual baths in the changing rooms, designed for internationals twice my size.*
- *The suggestion in the middle of the afternoon before the Richmond game that we should tannoy Ian Blair to come urgently to the changing rooms with his kit.*
- *Being asked for our signatures as we left the changing rooms.*
- *Standing in the centre of the pitch before the Richmond game with Johnny Evans to cheers from the capacity Twickenham crowd.* (Bob…this one is my favourite! Andy)
- *Chasing and catching Tony Bucknall (ex England back row) with Tony Stevens in the Richmond game and being turned as if we weren't there.*
- *The sinking feeling of chasing the Richmond winger (twice) with no serious hope of catching him.*
- *Returning to Blagdons in the evening to discover it half empty, with our supporters too exhausted to celebrate any further into the evening.*

- *The obvious memory is the London Irish try and my version goes like this. We had a line out on or around the Irish 22. Brian Davis was our line out jumper, but in a similar position in the qualifying rounds I'd thrown to Tony Stevens by mistake, resulting in an unexpectedly soft try for us from the front of the line out. Against London Irish, there was no need for a call as it couldn't have been more obvious from the expression on Tony's face that he wanted a similar throw. The Irish were more alert than our previous opponents, but Tony took the ball on deep into their 22 before slipping it back to me to get over the line. Not particularly pretty, but it put us in the lead with a minute to go.*

- *In the absence of BBC footage, an alternative version for late evening reminiscing in the bar has us on the halfway line in the final play of the match…..*

The curious thing about the day is that I don't remember being particularly nervous. Perhaps that was because we had little to prove and nothing to lose. In pretty much any other situation since then, I would have been terrified at the thought of performing in front of 50,000 people.

So I think that is it for our memories of this important day in our lives, in the history of OERFC and in the history of the OEA.

I hope I am forgiven for including this article in my final edition as editor of the OEA newsletter. I wish you all health and happiness for the future. It's been a pleasure to serve this past six years. A bientot!

Andy Bryce. Marlborough 1963-70.