

THE HARROVIAN

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CHURCHILL SONGS

Royal Albert Hall, 22 November

On Tuesday evening, the School boarded the coaches from the parade ground, two by two, like the animals from Noah's ark, and braved a journey through London. When we arrived we were all ushered to the same doors. As a member of the Upper Sixth, after having stepped over no less than three Shells, I made my way to my seat. My seat was in the very top right of the choir behind DNW. I had an almost bird's eye view. My seat made me realise just how tall the Royal Albert Hall really is. Then the rehearsal began. The once-great tradition of hissing has (unfortunately), in recent years, died out. We checked everyone knew the Churchill verse, which I only just learned this year after having 'sung' it for three years already. After some free time for exploration, I raced back down far too many flights of stairs, returning to my seat waiting to start. James Blunt must be commended for his excellent MC-ing throughout, his dry humour and wit not unfamiliar to those of us who follow his Twitter account. The acoustics of the RAH were somewhat unfortunate for those of us sitting way up at the back. It was incredibly hard to tell where in the song we were and, as such, I watched DNW's conducting with all the enthusiasm of a marauding Elmfield boy waiting to find the right spot to jump into the lunch queue.



Flabbergasted by the fancy Churchill Songs booklet, I hurriedly flicked through the stiff papers to locate the first song of the evening while anonymous boy one and anonymous boy two contemplated and recreated the history of bottle throwing and water spraying in the Royal Albert Hall. My entire body swayed at the dizzying sight of the distant stage, struggling to plant my feet on the worryingly minuscule platform as the all-too-eager boys sprang to action at DNW's orders. After a few minutes, however, even the most glass-hearted of Harrovians embraced the height and softly sang in the rehearsal, saving their voice for the performance. Hardened and giddy from the fumes of alcohol emanating from OHs and parents and the battle to enter the loo, we returned to our seats and exchanged fruitful pleasantries while the orchestra and organists filled the air. When our turn came, none held back – from *Stet Fortuna Domus* to *Home on the Hill*, we sacrificed our vocal cords to fight the overpowering organ in an excellent demonstration of

courage, honour, humility and fellowship. Whenever my voice felt insecure, the platoon of tailcoat-wearing peers stepped in to complete the wonderful, resonating experience. Yes, I did fall over during *Ducker*, and many seemed disappointed that Blunt wasn't singing, but overall it was an admirable singing effort from all. Most importantly, everyone seemed to have memorised all five verses of *Forty Years On*.



It was a tremendous evening. The signing continued and we reached *Five Hundred Faces*, performed excellently by Inigo Cleeve, *Lyon's*. The soloists (from my perspective) seem to get smaller every year. There were the obligatory speeches, of course, but they were (much to my delight) mercifully short. The singing continued with good performances from the School XII, and the speeches were fantastic, and authored by our own Head of English, LSA. The evening drew to its usual conclusion with the School once again raising the roof (as per) on "can this be truth?" in *Silver Arrow*. On our exit, once again there was an immense rush to remove all the boys through the same two doors through which we entered. At this juncture, we also discovered that the coaches had decided to relocate themselves and we had excellent fun trying to find them again. All in all a special occasion in a special venue. Even the less musically inclined seemed to enjoy the singing, and everyone lined up for paninis and Strepsils back at our Houses to help our smarting throats.

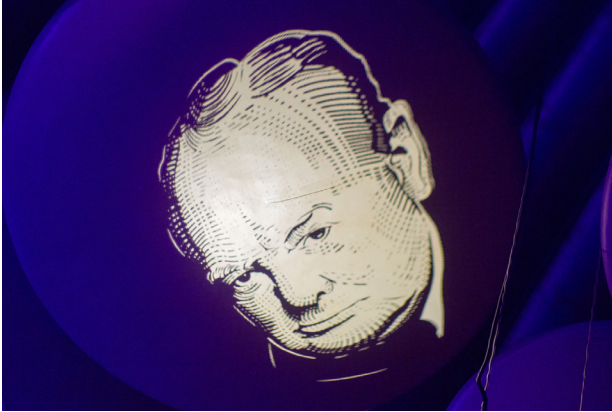
Whimsical Reflection by the boys

Perhaps the thing that has stayed in the forefront of my mind longest of all, the senses I picked up from Harrow Songs at the Royal Albert Hall, is a greater understanding of time.

Leaning on the wall that circles around the cavernous auditorium, I saw literally every generation of living human pass me by. From the smallest Shell (not FSW) to the grandest, oldest, Old Harrovian, our community of alumni is truly representative of the age in which we live, and of how our society has progressed. The collated memories of the hall, on 22 November, could explain every aspect of the last century of human progression. The global contributions of those men, gathered together that day, have shaped our country and our world in an incalculable number of ways. For a short time, I considered what I thought our School might achieve, how we will serve – looking more to myself I questioned whether I

would ever be one of the very, Old Harrovians in that room.

Every face I saw, passing by, had Harrow memories. Every one of them remembers singing a slightly different new boy's solo, their first Speech Room, their first awkward meeting with their year, and their last. It is this shared experience that unites us all – but there is more. The world outside may always change, as will our beliefs, and the backgrounds of boys entering Harrow, but the spirit of the Hill and our customs have not – and never will.



There is nothing more precious, in this regard, than the songs we sing. The majority of our old boys never learned the same curriculum, experienced the same wellbeing PowerPoints, or sat through the same aptitude testing as we do – but they sang our School songs. Seeing this colossal gathering of the ages has brought greater meaning to the music for me. It is almost as if we sing them now for the very purpose of singing them later on. The soil we all once trod beneath our adolescent feet truly is the same. Perhaps we do not pay enough attention to the pedology of this place – but I say we must, it is, after all, what unites us.

Being in the presence of such an august community at the Royal Albert Hall has helped bring my daily repetition into perspective – and perhaps our presence, as the current School, has helped to resurrect in our audience some forgotten memories of the Hill.

A spectacular concert that almost didn't happen
Doug Collins, CEO of the HDT



(Above: Mr Collins and the organising team from the Harrow Association and the Harrow Development Trust.)

At the beginning of the year, it seemed doubtful that Churchill Songs at the Royal Albert Hall would take place. After being closed for a long period during the pandemic, the Hall's concert diary seemed full. However, thanks to the intervention of two parents, Col Stone and Mr Da Silveira Pinheiro, we were granted an audience with the Hall's CEO and Director of Programming. Things soon fell into place and we were allocated the evening of Tuesday 22 November; ideal for the School, a couple of days

after the second exeat and two days before Trials. The Hall may have reckoned that our 450th anniversary was a rather special occasion, to go alongside its own 150th year.

It was the seventh time the School has celebrated Churchill Songs at the Hall (since 1974, the centenary of Sir Winston's birth) and the fifth time I have served as its 'promoter', meaning that the Hall's contract with Harrow was signed by the HDT. On each of these occasions, I am always amazed by the organisational effort involved, such as:

The capacity of the Hall is around 5,250 and most of those seats seemed to be filled. Our excellent caterers supplied 1,101 packed meals for boys and staff during the day. Major Davies of the HRC organised 52 separate coach trips to and from the Hall, plus a number of van trips to deliver instruments and material. Mr David Devine and his Custos team ensured the 5,000 souvenir programmes were distributed in all the right places throughout the Hall. Technicians at the Hall performed around 50 different lighting and sound variations during the course of the concert. PJB and Mrs Nuala Guiney carefully organised specific seating for around 1,000 boys, beaks and staff. DNW and the musicians held many rehearsals, as did APC, LSA and the Readers, as well as the two HRC cadets. Our 'Show Manager' at the Hall, Ms Mo Crowe, now supervising her third Churchill Songs, organised the many moving parts of the day and the concert in her customary quiet and efficient manner.



For an occasion that, at the outset, may never have happened, it turned into, for many people, the 'best ever' performance!

From the Orchestra

It is now almost a week on from the spectacle that was Churchill Songs at the Royal Albert Hall and it is fair to say that I'm still buzzing. Having spent much of the day travelling back and forth from the Albert Hall for rehearsals, the orchestra took their places for their final rehearsal at around 5.30pm, where they were joined by the School who, once settled, sounded in fine fettle, foreshadowing what to come in just over a couple of hours' time. The final rehearsal was productive as DNW remarkably went through around 13 out of the 17 songs that were to be sung later that evening. The School sounded sharp and their vocal cords seemed to have warmed up as they "became friends with the space" as DNW put it. It was now up to the orchestra to do their bit and ensure that the introductions to all the songs were perfect, conveying the correct mood and tone of the songs on the programme. Following the conclusion of our final rehearsal, we were granted a short break. Rather surprisingly from my perspective, nerves were not the overriding emotion backstage ahead of the performance; despite the fact that I had never performed in front of 5,500 people; I was overcome by sheer anticipation and eagerness to simply get onto the stage. One last gentle coat of rosin was applied to the hairs of my double bass bow and the backstage tannoy speaker called the Symphony Orchestra onto the stage. With my bow tightened, the bass stool firmly in place, our maestro strode onto the stage. The baton was raised and, to my relief,

my opening 'C natural' was firmly in time and in tune and off the orchestra went with *Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance No.5*. After an introduction from the Chairman of the Governors and James Blunt, the evening of Harrow Songs commenced. Song after song was sung with gusto, each bow stroke requiring serious stamina on my part, as my right hand grappled with all the weighty bass notes, most notably in the *Song of the Forwards*. It is not every day that we play with a backdrop of 700 boys swaying laterally, alongside an array of captivating lights. To put it simply: Songs from the orchestral stage was magical. Credit must undoubtedly be given to our maestro, who navigated us masterfully through the repertoire as well as the School whose vociferous singing made sure that the "name and fame of Harrow" resonated around the Albert Hall. What a marvellous night it was!

*Speeches, Head of the Guild,
Omar Ait El Caid, Bradbys*

I remember standing with the School XII and singing among the wave of boys around and behind me, facing the tsunami of Old Harrovians and visitors in front of me. Looking over to my left, I was searching to meet the eyes of my fellow performer and reader, who sang with me in the School XII, looking for the signal that it was time to move backstage as we were about to go on. I met the other boys reading with me backstage and we took a few moments to gather ourselves – the last few sips of water, checking that our tails were all okay. I pulled down my waistcoat, covering my shirt, adjusted my bowtie and cleared my throat as the echoes of the final verses of *St Joles* seemed to count us down to the moment we would have to go on stage. Then all of a sudden, a warm, friendly (and frankly beautiful) voice was heard behind us; James Blunt stood with us, giving us some final words of encouragement and telling us to remember to enjoy the moment. Honestly by that point I was already in shock from his casual mention that the sparkly shoes he was wearing were gifted to him by none other than Elton John!



We moved into our positions, single file, and we stepped onstage. I walked to my microphone and stepped into the light. My hands were behind my back. I took a few moments, taking in the expanse of people around me as they sat down. I took another moment before I placed my hands in front of me, thinking back to the rehearsals with APC and LSA, coming to a very present realisation that I was in complete control of the over 5,000 people there, that I was going to be the one to speak first, the one who had to wait for the right moment to begin, to start us off. I spoke into the microphone, my voice echoing around me, and then heard the familiar voices to my left and right as we moved through the dialogue of this performance. In the moments where the other boys were speaking, I looked out into the nearly pitch-black void of darkness from the blinding lights overhead, I tried to really grasp where I was and what it was that I was really doing.

Approaching the end of the speeches, I still had quite a lengthy line to deliver. My nerves had turned more into excitement now. I went on to describe the view of the skyline of the Hill, naming the iconic buildings to each Harrovian; I really wanted to get this right. In one of my lines, which I really felt was paramount to find a connection in my delivery, I delivered: "It was hard to imagine how this view might change over the next... 40, 50, 65 years. Would he still be able to charge the playing fields at the age of 80?" Knowing the generational span of Old Harrovians present on that day, I made sure to look past the nerves and give my all to connecting with these words, for the people there, for this historic and this very special occasion of Harrow 450, and for myself to perhaps proudly look back on, say, forty years on from now.

As applause filled the Royal Albert Hall and we took our bows, a smile stretched through my cheeks before I walked back to my seat with the School XII, feeling more Harrovian than ever, singing my all for the rest of the evening. Shivers of excitement ran through me as I looked to the boy next to me in the final verse of *Forty Years On*, both knowing what we had to do. Not holding back, we heartily sang our School XII's 'Follow up', filling the room around us. *Auld Lang Syne* came, and I grabbed the hands of the boys next to me; looking up to see everyone in every seat standing up with our synchronised waves was magical. What a way it was to close; losing my voice shortly after, I suppose, was a testament to how much that moment meant, individually, and to all of us there who were a part of it. A memory that will live on.

*From the Head of School,
Barimah Adomakoh, Newlands*



Triumphant sounds of nostalgia and joy resounded through the Royal Albert Hall on Tuesday, as 5,000 faces sang our great tradition of songs in melodic unity.

The comedy of James Blunt was seamlessly interwoven into the event, yet the grandeur of the occasion could hardly be understated, with a core memory most certainly formed for all those present on the night. This generation of Harrovians are never again to experience such an occasion from the perspective of a student, yet I am sure we will all return as the years go by and our hearts thrill at the thought of the Hill, to sing our songs once more.

The XII

It is a unique and special achievement for any Harrovian to have the honour of singing in the School's XII. But the singularity of the honour given to a certain group of the XII every five years to sing at the Royal Albert Hall is unparalleled, both in the dignity of the task and the good fortune to sing in a space so prestigious as the Royal Albert Hall. Having been given a set of three songs to practise, *Byron Lay, Songs*, and *Good-night*, with DNW conducting, and Hadrian Ho, *The Head Master's*, as the pianist, preparations in Speech Room began.

The School XII, consisting of Max Morgan, *Moretons*, Jiho Ro, *The Park*, Omar Ait El Caid, *Bradlys*, Rowland Eveleigh, *The Grove*, Henry Ridley, *The Park*, Sean Jarrett, *The Grove*, Maxim Van Aeken, *Newlands*, Edwin Oh, *Rendalls*, Francois de Robert Hautequere, *Lyon's*, Daniel Eldridge, *The Grove*, and Marcos Kantaris, *Lyon's*, were naturally busy to begin with, but, despite some confusion around timings and attendance, they persevered through rehearsals, and achieved a level of cohesion that would be enviable by many other groups of a similar nature.



On the day of Churchill Songs at the Royal Albert Hall, the XII along with the rest of the musicians had to be up bright and early to practise at the Royal Albert Hall itself. Despite a level of tiredness on the Tuesday morning being perhaps to be expected, the XII made a strong start, both for the actual rehearsals, and in exploring the entirety of the Royal Albert Hall. It was a frankly humbling experience, having the opportunity to practise in the Royal Albert Hall, and it thoroughly instilled in us the gravity of the task we were to undertake. Rehearsals went, thankfully, well, with the weeks of hard work paying off in our penultimate preparation before the performance. After making a brief return to the Hill for lunch, we returned to the Royal Albert Hall to make sure we would give our most convincing portrayal of the Sergeant from *Left! Right!*, to polish up our 'Here Sirs!' (DNW made it abundantly clear that there was no silliness to be had in that department), and to give our loudest 'Follow Up!' to conclude the night.

Before giving the call of 'Follow Up!' at the night's conclusion, we would naturally have to sing the rest of our songs first! Our voices, already somewhat strained by a potentially precarious cocktail of illness and tiredness from previous singing, were now infused with a boost of adrenaline when seeing the ranks of guests, OHs and Harrovians piling and filing into the Royal Albert Hall. That adrenaline would certainly come in useful: our experience of singing was quite literally that of being put in the spotlight, with the lights making our sheet music shine with a most perfect fluoride white that not even the vainest actor could hope for. All around us was a deep inky blackness, and the face of DNW directing us. However, not even this somewhat odd experience could dampen the childlike glee I am sure some of my fellow XII's felt, as I did, at the honour of singing in a space so illustrious as the Royal Albert Hall. Having belled out the previous songs along with the rest of the School, the XII had to quickly take in gulps of water while Mr Blunt announced the next song, before standing up, and singing to the best of our abilities.

The first song we sang was *Byron Lay*, which is a song that extolls the virtues not of the desk jockey or the mark scheme schemer, but of the creative, personified in Byron both 'free from lesson' to 'dream of poetry all alone' and later 'dying for freedom far away', and of the intellectual, in Robert Peel who 'reading rapidly all at ease/pages out of Demosthenes' would later 'stand up on the famous floor' and 'rule the people and feed the poor'. A rousing song which, in my humble opinion,

is thoroughly under utilised by the School, it served as an excellent start for the XII, allowing them to both show the quality of their voices, and the nuance of dynamics they were able to achieve.

Our second song, aptly titled *Songs*, was about, well, songs! Not merely the songs themselves, but about their significance, both 'when hearts are coldest' and when the months are coldest as well. While maybe not as entertaining as some of John Farmer's other pieces, it certainly holds unparalleled poetic meaning, with the lyrics wisely telling the listener both of the importance of songs, and of how they can rouse the spirit.

The last song to be sung was **Good-Night**. Undoubtedly the pinnacle of the XII's singing on the night, the sweet and comforting notes drifted on even as 'ten o'clock' was 'nearing'. While the phrase 'tyrant tutor/placable at last' is an obvious mistake on the behalf of the printer, with such a thing being obviously impossible, it was nonetheless a beautiful ending to *Songs*, and a great credit to the XII getting to sing a song of such quality in a space of such renown. The XII had immense pleasure in getting to perform in the Royal Albert Hall, and can only hope that they did it the justice he deserved.

Address by the Head Master



Good evening, it is a great pleasure to join you here as tonight we praise the former days in our songs which are so precious to us and indeed as we sit in sterner days once again in the history of our nation and our world, these songs give us both the gritty determination and cheerful inspiration to look tomorrow and the next days fully in the face and to make the best of them.

Our songs are a unique element of Harrow's heritage and as we strive every day to be the best boys' boarding school in the world, it is because of the overt living bond between boys in the School, their parents and Old Harrovians that these songs enable us to express. We gather here symbolically in the round, once in a School generation. With my back to the future, the boys currently at School who in every endeavour, academic, sporting and cultural, they show of speed and of courage no lack. They, these boys, sing out to you their parents, the Old Harrovians and the friends of Harrow, and you look back to them, completing in this space a virtuous affirming circle, true as steel in our zeal for the honour of the School.

The seamless synergy of our past the ages drift in rolling tide, these boys and beaks of our now and the futures we are hoping for personally, as a School and globally, is held together in fellowship and exalted by these songs. We celebrate the past as it gives us the drive to refound the future in humility where often a brother shall finish a victory we have begun.

It is a great and wonderful thing to have celebrated our 450 this year: St Paul's, FA Day, Community Day, Son et Lumiere, Service and Leadership among other events, competitions and publications; it has all been a privilege and a treat. As much as we have enjoyed these showcases of current Harrow life we have also, in the response of parents, Old Harrovians and

visitors from near and far, learned more about ourselves and been invigorated and refreshed by their responses. What will we think of ourselves in another 450 years' time? Will Ducker be a bathing place once again as sea level rises to meet us around an island Hill? Will we be the last boys' boarding school in Britain? Will Speech Room, uploaded directly to the cerebral cortex, still be just that little bit too long? In reflecting on our future as we look beyond 2023, I think of Lanfranc and Anselm founders of St Mary's Church on the top of the Hill 900 years ago and John and Joan Lyon 450 years later. Their approaches were not timid, constrained or pragmatic; they didn't seek to somehow predict the future and adapt their aspirations. They did something that we should aspire to ourselves: rather than trying to forecast a future, they set out to define it, to shape it, to lead into it, to make the future into a space of Godliness and the studies of good learning. Let us in turn, the inheritors of their striving, distil our anniversary convictions and suffuse Harrow School and all parts of John Lyon's Foundation with a determination and fearlessness to develop the best education and life-enhancing opportunities for young people.

Before concluding, I want to take the opportunity of thanking on all our behalves: Mr Collins and his team, Mr Bieneman for this evening and all his 450 works, Mr Woodcock, Director of Music, the Orchestra, the XII, the soloists, performers and the School. I would like to thank too Mr Bentinck, Harrow Association President, for what he is about to do and for giving me a unique treat of hearing the words of Churchill from the Speech Room stage earlier this term. And thank you too James Blunt; for fear of becoming star-struck and tongue-tied I have borrowed some words from *The Harrovian* November 9th 1991 where his House play was reviewed: 'Blount was superb, establishing his character with humour and passion, particularly when discovering the foul deeds of his family, nevertheless comically he was the best here and at times he showed real subtlety.' Thank you, James.



It is Thanksgiving in two days' time. Churchill spoke from this stage in 1944 on Thanksgiving Day and, while his words were directed then to our American allies, tonight I bring them back here to embrace equally all the nations and cultures, the world outside so wondrous wide, which together make up and enrich the Harrow Family today. He said then, "We are moving forward surely, steadily, irresistibly and perhaps with God's aid swiftly ... struggling for the same ideals, and joined together until the triumph of the great causes which we serve has been made manifest."

From The Guild

"Churchill Songs was definitely a night to remember, and the School definitely put on a show worthy of the venue that is the Royal Albert Hall. The atmosphere was ecstatic and, as a member of the Orchestra, I must say we played exceptionally well. A huge well done to the School and all the staff involved in this amazing event, and I am sure this makes everyone proud to say they are a Harrovian."

"Absolutely amazing night! I had the privilege to start Songs performing at the organ, and played in Symphonic Winds, Orchestra and School XIs. I truly felt the sheer joy of being a part of Churchill Songs performing in the Royal Albert Hall. Being at the centre of the stage in the Orchestra, I felt the all-encompassing singing from everyone surrounding me. There was a heightened sense of Harrow School spirit from all the boys and OHs all singing at the top of their lungs!"

"The Royal Albert Hall is such an astounding venue, the sheer space accommodating half a thousand people, the magnificent build of the organ, and the acoustic mushrooms all created a perfect atmosphere for the Harrow Churchill Songs for 450th anniversary!"

"Ever since I was told that Harrow went to the Royal Albert Hall, and that I would be going in the Upper Sixth, I have been looking forward to the occasion. And it did not disappoint at all. Despite a long morning of rehearsals with a very early start, the adrenaline kicked in as I walked on stage with the orchestra. The atmosphere was magnificent, and with James Blunt's quick wit and refreshingly short speeches, it was a night to remember. Singing the songs in the School XII is certainly something I'll remember for the rest of my life, as well as the very rousing atmosphere that nearly 6,000 voices brought to songs, especially during *Forty Years On*."

Five Hundred Faces, by Inigo Cleeve, Lyon's



I remember standing up, my nerves at their peak, a flurry of thoughts rushing through my head causing enormous amounts of concern. I opened my mouth to sing, hoping that something resembling a note came out. The spotlight was blinding and I was trembling. I thought of how much work I had put into it and that served as a reassuring beacon that urged me to go on. I heard the voices of the School ensemble as they sang a chorus and I felt an enormous sense of community that I loved being a part of. I was terrified throughout the entire performance, but I was also excited.

I remember when I told a Fifth Former in my House that I had been awarded the honour of singing the solo he said "The applause afterwards will change your life," and I was so excited and curious to see if what he said would be true. While it was going on, I was thinking of what other people had said to me earlier in the day. All the reassuring comments helped me direct my singing in a sense. I remember finishing the last verse and at that instant all the doubt, all the worry left my body as if I had been cleansed of all bad things. After silence fell in the hall, a sudden roar echoed in my eardrums. I couldn't help smiling and at that moment I cast my mind back to that Fifth Former and myself in that moment, and I was just so astonished by how right he was.

From the Lower Sixth

If there were any lingering debate as to which British boarding school is the best, last Tuesday's Churchill Songs has brought

it to end. It was the epitome of being Harrow – loud, proud, and mischievous; the whole extended Harrow community united in magic thrall (and I’m wondering if, perhaps in another universe, the Doc himself would have come). A quick Google showed, delightfully, no evidence of Etonian presence in the Royal Albert Hall. And although 10 Downing Street hasn’t seen us in a while, at least we bring people together to smile, be it in sport or study, in grief or joy.



The hall was humongous, reflecting our voices as we sang out into the vacuum. From my seat up on the choir stalls, I could be in Atlanta. The hazy blue lights filled the auditorium like an aquarium. Giant bubbles hovered just below the ceiling; it took me a while to realise it was Churchill’s face, projected in black and white, that lit up some of them. Below was the gentle arc of the rows of seats, curving along the wall until it joined with the choir stalls. The Head Master’s were pressed against the back of the stage, beside the organs, overlooking a giant audience that had gathered on the top floors and fanned out in front of the main stage. It was spectacular to see so many people flooding in to hear us sing. Considering my questionable musical prowess, I felt like I was buoyed beyond myself by our collective heritage.

James Blunt made an excellent MC, both when he spoke a lot and especially when he barely did. Some of his transitions were completely idle and heroically slack, consisting barely of the name of the next song. And while some may put this down to a lack of, say, funding from the School, I loved it. After all, there could not possibly have been a good joke for all the 20 songs that night. The quick pace kept us and the audience alive between one song and the next.

My favourite song by far was *Ducker*. The swaying, of course, was not synchronised even within the same row. In mine, there were two distinctive movements a beat off each other, like an earthquake, an unfortunately I was at the centre of the fault. As I swayed left with the group on my right, the tectonic mass of boys on my left came swinging right, squishing me between some of the strongest guys in my year and the year above, leaving me struggling for breath but grinning nonetheless.

Soon the hours were dreamt away. As I headed back for the coach, amidst a street densely filled with Old and current Harrovians, footsteps, and chatter, I caught the whisper of a phrase from a wild-eyed Londoner: what on earth is going on? We must have caused him some distress – five thousand faces draped in black coats, congregating in central London two hours before midnight, pouring out of one of its most iconic monuments... It reminded me of that first chapter in Harry Potter when the wizarding world surfaced across the UK after the death of You-Know-Who. This was our surfacing. Like Hogwarts, we possess peculiar chant books, dress in weird hats, and play games with balls flying whizzing through the bases. We are mysterious and, as Blunt put it, “eccentric” – but everything a boy’s boarding school ought to be.

*Surging, resplendent –
So songs come!*

From Fifth Form

Churchill Songs this year stood out from the rest. But it wasn’t the singing that was particularly special, neither was the music or the speaking – but only more so than it usually is; however, there was a quality to the night which made it *The Time of Our Lives*. Somehow, the level of dignity was heightened, which became evident as not a single Wiseman’s wife or mother made the Same Mistake, pulling out a flashing phone and filming forty years on or any of the other, somehow personal, and private, hymns.



‘You are beautiful, its true’. I, of course, address the patchy beards that my forgotten friends have seemingly grown to match their coloured dinner jackets and wide grins. I find that one of the most important features of any Harrow event is the return of the recent boys, I call them ‘New Old Harrovians’. An NOH isn’t the type to come back and hang around Church Hill with some contraband in their lips, these are boys whose rosy recollection has somehow kicked in faster than their facial hair. There is something particularly special in the knowledge that, just as you leave, you will always look back and forgetfully wonder, what you were like in your work and your play. This is further evidence that Harrow isn’t a five-year journey, but a five-hundred-year one. More evidence for that is the School’s ability to keep finding ways to charge even the oldest of Harrovians some hidden fees, Winston Churchill is probably still somehow paying it off. Playing *Where’s Wally?* as I sang added kindling to that prevailing feeling of greatness about something more important than me, something I rarely believe to exist.

However, what made me *Stay The Night* was the *Heart to Heart* of James Blunt. Without the ability to summon Winston Churchill (OH, if you weren’t aware) to lead the affair, we found the next best OH, James Blunt, who my more “up-to-date” friends assure me is renowned in the art of the voice, was refreshingly young, much more so than most men in the room. His humour was fitting of this publication but, unlike this publication, every person in that hall was captivated, taking in every word he said with the intended awe. I like to think of this as a good example to follow when I ascend to the role. I hope others see it as a fitting example of how to conduct an event that had the risk of being boring. The only problem was the elitism, I fear Harrow School will never move away from its reliance on elitist schools, like Harrow, when looking for presenters; next time I would suggest some one more down to earth with the everyday Jo-sephai. Luckily, the *Daily Mail* can’t afford to buy a seat in the hall, so there shan’t be any articles about it. In actual fact, it was such a great night it was just hard to Walk Away.

From Old Harrovians

“What a magnificent celebration of everything Harrow!”

“Amazing evening! James Blunt was brilliant... a true star and proud to be a Harrovian!”



“Goosebumps. What a fantastic evening.”

“It was a fabulous evening, with songs sung with great gusto. The speeches, compèring, acting, playing and ambience were outstanding and unique! What a wonderful experience. Many thanks to Peter B and all those who served to make this such a memorable evening!”

“An amazing evening in many senses. Hopefully Winston would be proud.”

“The greatest of great nights ... thank you!”

“An evening I’ll always remember – spectacular.”

From the Mailbag

“Well that seemed to go as well as anyone could have hoped last night. Absolutely seamless with the various speakers doing an amazing job and the singing was magnificent. Huge congratulations to you and everyone connected with getting the event plugged back into 2022 and all that extremely hard work in securing seats and boxes was all worthwhile. I hope you managed to have a moment of satisfactory reflection as we were all in mid flow and that you also managed to enjoy the evening.”

“It was a magnificent event which we enjoyed so much, made all the better to view it in the comfort of the box! I thought James Blunt was truly wonderful, so witty and engaging and we loved the songs and found the Churchill speech incredibly moving.”

“What a wonderful performance by Harrow School last night. It was a fitting tribute for the 450th anniversary and the best yet I think. I have passed on to my colleagues the generous comments you made about the service you received yesterday.”

“James was an outstanding compere I thought, very funny, and *500 Faces* had me in bits, the boy done good.”

“Last night was a triumph; even better than the time before. All the memories came flooding back and we sang enthusiastically, with tears in our eyes and according to my wife completely out of tune. But we didn’t care it was a great evening. James Blount was an inspired choice as MC and the Winston Churchill speech was very well delivered by Tim. So thank you very much for a really special and unique evening. Follow up!! Follow up!!”

“Last night was truly special (once again) – really an extraordinary evening, and my wife and I felt really privileged to be there. Thank you so much for arranging our tickets, and such top-notch ones too in terms of location!”

“Thank you for all your efforts in producing another inspiring night of Songs at The Royal Albert Hall. It’s amazing how events conspired against and then everything fell into line at the 11th hour. This was only my second Songs and my first in the ‘mosh pit’—third row from the front! It was a joy to be so near to the action and a great evening of entertainment. I thought James Blunt was superb. Engaging with the boys, Houses and audience was a great move and added hugely to the evening.”

CONTIO LATINA

Speech Room, 26 November

This year’s Contio was delivered deftly and ably by the Head of School, Barimah Adomakoh, *Newlands*. He commanded the stage with confidence and spoke with fluency and ease, despite asking his listeners to forgive the quality of his Latin in the opening (something he has not studied for the past four years).

With the death of Queen Elizabeth, foreign wars, and all that has happened in the School’s celebration of its 450th anniversary, there was a lot to recount in this year’s Contio. Adomakoh began with a hopeful theme of setting new and better standards for ourselves, to ‘break the old moulds’, and to create new lifestyles for ourselves that will be sustainable for the environment, inclusive for our wider society, and engender friendship and understanding between boys in the School.

His words about the death and funeral of the Queen were particularly touching, and he said a lot about what the School and country had done to celebrate her life. He also praised both our outgoing Chairman of Governors, Mr John Batting, as well of his own House Master, EWH, who will finish his tenure as House Master of Newlands this year.



The Contio ended in a very different fashion from previous years. Because of Mr Batting’s retirement from his position of Chairman of Governors, the Contio finished with a speech by the Deputy Head of School, Arnaud du Roy de Blicquy, *Elmfield*, who gave his own brief Contio (in English) to thank Mr Batting. Adomakoh then presented Mr Batting with a silver arrow, designed and made by the School, as a farewell and a thank-you gift. The School stood to sing *Silver Arrow* (Mr Batting’s favourite song) and concluded with *Forty Years On*.

It was a marvellous occasion in the midst of Autumn Trials, and a small respite from the onerous task of revision. Well done to Adomakoh for an excellent Contio this year, and we wish to thank Mr Batting once again for his service to the School.

OPINION

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters to the editors

DEAR SIRS

I hope you will allow me to use your Correspondence pages to say thank you to the whole School for their special performances of *The Silver Arrow* and *Forty Years On* at Contio to mark my retirement as Chairman of Governors. Together with the entirely

unexpected gift of the beautifully boxed silver arrow, carved out of English walnut and inlaid with silver, Contio rounded off a week that will stay with me forever.

As I said at Contio, the School's performance at Churchill Songs on Tuesday was exceptional, and the whole evening has been rated by many guests as the best ever Albert Hall Songs. I would like to repeat my sincere thanks, on behalf of the Governors, to all of you. I hope that performing at the Royal Albert Hall will be as memorable for you as it was for those of us who first performed there back in 1974.

Our songs provide a unique way of bringing together and connecting generations of Harrovians. Last Tuesday evening's Churchill Songs shows again why Harrow's ability to create such a spectacular evening is the envy of many other schools – and rightly so!

Yours sincerely
JOHN BATTING (THE PARK 1972-2)
CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS

HARRY WATTS

Terribly wrong answers by boys

By what name is the religious teacher Siddhartha Gautama, who lived in South Asia in the fifth or sixth century BC, more commonly known? *Genghis Khan*

Who is the Prime Minister of India? *Veeraj Puri*

Which legendary outlaw led a band of 'Merry Men', including Little John, Will Scarlet and Alan-a-Dale? *Peter Pan*

Who is the head of the gods in Norse mythology? *Jesus*

Abel Makkonen Tesfaye is the real name of which Canadian singer-songwriter and record producer? *Taylor Swift*

Which Indian-born British-American novelist was stabbed multiple times as he was about to give a public lecture in August? *Victoria Beckham*

Which 1966 album by The Beatles shares its name with a type of firearm, and was released in 2022 in a special super deluxe edition? *50mm PaK 38 Anti-Tank Gun*

'So I'm cuter' is an anagram of which famous Hollywood actor and producer? *Tim Crouse*

SPORT

ALL BLACKS

Harrow was privileged to host the New Zealand All Blacks XV, the A team to the Senior All Blacks side, as they prepared for their fixture against The Barbarians. Throughout the week, the team used the pool, meeting room and trained on the hallowed Sunley field. Mike Kemmett and his Grounds team did a superb job preparing our world-class pitch for our world-class visitors. Each day, boys trickled down to watch the All Blacks train and, on Friday, three Harrovians: captain of The XV, Cameron Ellis, *Rendalls*, vice captain, Toby Ferneyhough, *Elmfield*, and Kepu Tuipulotu, *Druies*, were lucky enough to join the All Blacks XV for a training session, jumping in and doing Harrow proud with their performances. After that session, which all rugby-playing

Harrovians were invited to watch, there was an opportunity for photos and autographs with the players. The maverick fly-half/full-back Damian MacKenzie was particularly popular, posing with all the boys in a group photo. The All Blacks XV very much enjoyed their stay and we look forward to welcoming them back in the future.



BADMINTON

1st Away, Charterhouse, Mixed-U18A, Won

Emerging victorious in our home fixture last week with Charterhouse, the 1st VIII were keen for a repeat performance on the Charterhouse courts. The team was slightly adapted, with a few boys missing for orchestral pursuits and university preparation. This led to two new additions, Warren Chew, *Newlands*, and Elliot Chua, *The Knoll*, testing their mettle and representing Harrow for the first time. Over in Pair 1, John Kwong, *Lyon's*, and Wilfred Leung, *Druries* – an established and complementary duo – performed with their usual skill and humility; they won every game, leading with at least six points. In Pair 2, David Nakhmanovich, *The Knoll*, worked with a different partner, William Wang, *The Head Master's*; the pair was exciting to watch and made an impressive team, winning by even greater margins. Over in Pair 3, the less-experienced duo of Elliot Chua, *The Knoll*, and Jackie Guo, *The Grove*, gave their debut. They had a close game against Pair 3, with the scores reaching 22-20, and lost their first game to Pair 4. However, they quickly recovered, treating the initial setback as a warm-up, and won both matches. Finally, in Pair 4, Dawei Sun, *Newlands*, worked with Warren Chew, *Bradlys*, in an exciting first match. The pair's relative inexperience was no impediment; both matches were won with ease. We have enjoyed playing with Charterhouse and welcome them back next term for the Harrow Cup.

1st v John Lyon School

John Lyon arrived with a strong team comprising a mix of high quality and developing players. Harrow in response decided to modify its team sheet to field a good mixture of different talents. This produced a series of fascinating matches, with pairs being tailored to create the closest possible contests. Once again it was strength in depth that carried Harrow to victory; most matches have been secured through dominance in the third and fourth pairings and today was no exception. The John Lyon first pairing was particularly strong, but even their heroic efforts were not enough to scale the cliff of Harrow wins further down the order. William Wang, *The Head Master's*, and David Nakhmanovich, *The Knoll*, were a stand-out ad hoc pairing in terms of the quality of the badminton they produced. They did not win all of their matches, but each pushed the other to play at their best and this was great to see. Overall, this was an excellent way to finish an unbeaten term for Harrow.

RUGBY TOUR

Half-term, to Milan

The current Upper Sixth have been a terrific rugby year group throughout their time at Harrow. They were the victors in one of the most memorable games The Sunley has seen in the last ten years with that famous last-gasp win against Trinity Croydon in the Under-15 National Cup quarter-final. However, on reaching their Upper Sixth year, something was missing for them – the opportunity to tour overseas. With that in mind, a plan was put together. Rather than the usual long-haul overseas trip, a short-haul tour to Italy planned for half-term, and just for the boys of the Upper Sixth, was put into place.

With the crack squad assembled, featuring members of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd XV's, we met at Heathrow on the Saturday of Half Term, fresh faced and bushy tailed. Captain of The XV, Cameron Ellis, *Rendalls*, was notable for his absence – England duties took priority and so Ollie Miall, *Newlands*, the only other Rugby Lion in the Upper Sixth, stepped in as captain. Kit Keey, *Druries*, took on the arduous task of “off-field captain”. Our journey to Venice was all rather smooth, until we approached the famous floating city and cracking turbulence took over, making our arrival in Italy a bumpy one. Paddy Elliot, *Druries*, clutched his chair in despair but all was well and the boys were on excellent form. On arrival, it became quickly clear that this was not a jolly. We headed straight to Mogliano RFC for a training session; we had a big game on Sunday morning and had to get on with preparations. Training went well as we adapted to the humid conditions and had our first encounter with the pesky flies of Northern Italy, buzzing round the face in total annoyance. With training over, the Tour bigwigs (JLM/AGJ/Dr Barke/CJRD) met the Mogliano President who promptly invited us back the next day to watch their 1st XV play in the Italian Premiership. Italian hosting was already impressive.



Training done and the sun setting, we made our way inland to our hotel, the Veronello Sports Resort just outside Lake Garda. That night, we made our first cultural error. Hungry from a long day of travel, we heartily tucked into several bowls of pasta each – only to realise that was simply the *primo piatti* and the main was still to come. Bloated Harrovians then headed to bed in anticipation of a big game on Sunday morning.

Sunday started early with a 90-minute journey back towards Venice. Today's opponent was to be Benetton Treviso Under-19 academy side. One of two professional rugby academies in Italy, Benetton are a well-known rugby entity, not least for their famous green-and-white striped shirts. We played at La Ghirada, the sports city set up by the United Colours of Benetton company to host their sports teams. The distant clatter of the Benetton Under-17 match was drowned out by the noisy Quidditch – yes, Quidditch – players on the central pitch. Several bearded young men passed our boys as we warmed up and the fear had begun to set in. The boys had done their research; Benetton had several Italy Under-18 internationals playing. We'd done our

research too – the JLM/AGJ coaching duo were outmatched by our coaching opposition – 60 international caps v 0. Where was JAA when we needed him?

A beautiful day in Treviso, but the pesky flies were back. JLM's anger in the warm up, telling the boys to ignore the flies, was almost brought down by his own swallowing of flies mid-shout. Regardless, the boys were ready and the game was off (only after we'd double-checked the team sheets and asked that a 20-year-old prop not play!). Immediately, Gabriel Black, *West Acre*, was hammered off the kick off and JLM briefly wondered what he'd got everyone in for. But, resilient as ever, Harrow struck back, striking first with a wonder try from Walid Nsouli, *The Knoll*, straight from a set-piece back play. This, however, triggered Benetton into life as their massive forwards came roaring back to take the score to Benetton 19-7 Harrow. However, the Harrow backs struck back again with Miall carving through a try and a 19-12 scoreline at the break. Philip Truscott, *Elmfield*, struck early, and suddenly Harrow were right in it at 19-19. Then, the first moment of magic of the trip. Keey booted the ball deep, Tito Edjua, *Lyon's*, chased and the bounce was favourable, back towards the Harrovian who chipped it over the full back, chasing it down to score acrobatically. Harrow had the lead and time was running out! Gutsy defence held off our Italian foe and we managed to secure a well-earned win. There was a short (curtailed due to defeat?) post-match ceremony. The boys then went off to watch our friends at Mogliano and retired back to the hotel.

Monday was our first day of leisure. Sore bodies enjoyed pizza for lunch and a lovely sightseeing tour of Sirmione and Lake Garda, including an excellent boat trip around the beautiful surroundings. JLM's efforts to get the boys to engage with Catullus' poetry while visiting his hometown were ignored. In the evening, we went bowling and then out for food before back to the hotel. On Tuesday morning, we went to Verona, training in the morning alongside the Italy National team at the Payanni Centre before exploring the gorgeous ancient/modern city central to Shakespeare's famous tale. Jasper Cockburn-Miller, *Bradlys*, was spotted looking longingly at Juliet's balcony, hopeful for a Juliet of his own. After some free time in the city, we headed home for a short video session before dinner and an early night ahead of a big Wednesday and game two.

On Wednesday, we headed early across to Milan, Italy's most fashionable city was about to welcome a messy rabble of Harrovians. We started off at Casa Milan, the HQ for AC Milan and explored their museum, shop and, of course, café. After that, we headed into Milan. JLM's walking speed caused a brief split in the group as the slow Harrow shuffle struggled to keep up as we sought out our restaurant in the shadow of the famous Duomo. Tucking into our turkey escalope, it became clear that the afternoon's proposed activity of a bike tour was not going to be time-practicable so we cancelled that for a Charlie-Cross, *Newlands*, led walking tour instead – and for some an opportunity to head to Macdonald's. With Milan ticked off our list, we headed back to the bus to head out to Rho RFC to face our toughest opposition yet – the Centro di Formazione Permanente Milan – essentially, a side made up of the 35 best players in the four Northern regions of Italy. No drama.

A stunning night began to unfurl as the sun set over the artificial field of Rho RFC. Our Italian opposition were decked out in the Azurri blue kit of the Italy national team. Harrow, meanwhile, were a rag-tag last-minute assembled crew, who had three subs and a melange of injured witnesses. We were outdone off the field again – CJRD, armed with a tripod and handycam to film the game, was met by the Italian Rugby Media Manager, who had three cameras and a drone. Professional stuff. Yet, once again, the Italians could not handle the initial charges of the Harrovians. Dani Neal, *Moretons*, storming off in the second minute to propel Harrow into an early lead. Once again, though, the Italians came storming back, playing with a relentless pace that disarmed Harrow's brave defence.

Miall snagged a 98m interception try to bring Harrow back into the game but this was proving a tough test as the Italians increased their lead. However, showing the sort of resilience that has been on show on The Sunley all season, Harrow got back into the game: Ivan Thayil, *Rendalls*, storming off for a superb individual score and Edjua doing his ridiculous athletic bouncy ball thing again. It was, however, too little too late as Harrow fell 29-26. But we left an immense impression on our Italian friends who could not believe that this was a school side. A proper 'third half' followed; socialising with our opposition, lots of kit swaps, pasta and a bit of karaoke on the way home were enough to top a superb day.

The final two days were all leisure. On Thursday, we had a terrific trip to Maranello to visit Ferrari HQ, learning about the history of the race team and brand and even having a go at the pitstop experience. Who knew changing tyres could be so fun? On the way home, a last-minute change to the programme saw us stop in Mantua, the home of Virgil (the boys didn't care). With glorious weather, we took over the central square with a table for 28 and a long lunch enjoyed by all as we reflected on a great trip. Finally, on the Friday, we headed back to Venice, toured and explored the wonderful city and soon found our bus back to the airport and a journey home.

This was a superb trip: a special set of memories for the boys, outstanding rugby combined with a terrific atmosphere off the pitch. All the boys should be thanked for their outstanding conduct (even drawing compliments from a member of the public) and AGJ, JLM, CJRD and Dr Barke thanked for leading the trip.

FIVES

Tournament v Eton, at home, 24 November

A much-anticipated match against the old enemy at home produced some stunning fives in parts but a mixed set of results for Harrow.

Casper Stone, *The Park*, and Gus Stanhope, *Moretons*, lost 2-1 after three long sets and were a little erratic in their set pieces. They will learn from this and are still improving. Henry Procter, *Bradlys*, and Jack Artis, *The Head Master's*, put in an improving performance but lost to a very solid pair. The third pair of Valentine Ballingal and Algie Anderson, both *Moretons*, however, produced a stunning win with some superb rallies and are becoming a very settled pairing.

Elsewhere there were good wins for the Under-15s at first and second pair for Tosin Oyegade, *Moretons*, and Judah Amankrah, *The Knoll*, and Olly Filo and William Martin-Jenkins, both *The Park*.

The Shell boys have only just started this term and are enjoying their fives.

RACKETS

Harrow v Marlborough College, Away

1st v Marlborough College, Won

Veer Patel, *The Knoll*, and Stephan Baranov, *Moretons*, produced a strong performance to win 3-1. Both boys played consistent attacking rackets throughout.

2nd v Marlborough College, Lost

Mostyn Fulford, *The Knoll*, and Casper Kingsley, *Elmfield*, fought hard in a competitive 1-3 loss. Fulford further demonstrated the significant improvements he has made and Kingsley made some useful contributions.

Colts v Marlborough College, Won

Tom Campbell-Johnson, *Druries*, and Algy Royle, *Rendalls*,

produced their best rackets of the season to win a tight match 3-1. They saved game balls against them in the first and second games to win them both. This was testament to their temperament as well as their skill.

Junior Colts v Marlborough College, Won

A first appearance after injury for Jack Nelson, *Newlands*, in partnership with Ben Hufford-Hall, *Moretons*, playing to a high standard to produce a 3-1 win against older boys in a tight match.

SQUASH

The School v Eton, 24 November

1st v Eton College, Won 1st V 5-0 Eton

The First V played with great confidence to win all their matches against Eton, in a tight and mature display. Jat Tse, *Rendalls*, Tarquin Sotir, *Druries*, and Darren Chiu, *Newlands*, remain undefeated this season.

2nd v Eton College, Won 2nd V 3-2 Eton

Honours were a little more even in the seconds match, but Harrow won 3-2, with Awni Dajani, *Moretons*, Jay Madan, *The Park*, and Arhan Maker, *Druries*, recording 3-0 wins.

RUGBY

The School v Bedford, 26 November

The XV away v Bedford School, Won 43-17

The XV continued their undefeated run of performances this season with a 43-17 win away at Bedford. The XV rose to the challenge of a mid-Trials fixture and dispatched their Midlands opponents with glorious rugby.

Harrow's back line threatened every time the ball got into the wide channels. First half tries from Thayil, *Rendalls*, Edwards, *Moretons*, Griffin, *The Head Master's*, and Cross, *Newlands*, gave Harrow a 24-10 lead at half-time. Harrow dropped their intensity for ten minutes to give the Bedford pack a sniff at half-time. With the wind at their backs in the second half, the Harrow side opened up even more and converted tries from Miall, *Newlands*, Edjua, *Lyon's*, and Nsouli, *The Knoll*, put the game to bed with Harrow finishing 43-17.

The XV will be pleased to secure the win against a strong and physical Bedford opposition and will be buoyed that they are now within a single performance of completing an unbeaten season away at Epsom next week.

2nd XV away v Bedford School, Won 52-10

After two disappointing results against Eton and Tonbridge, the 2nd XV produced a brilliant performance to dispatch a spirited Bedford side. The 2nd XV got off to a great start after some thumping defence from Rob gave us field position from the scrum. Neat interplay in the midfield saw Charlie ghost through and under the posts. KK added the extras.

Bedford hit back strongly and held the ball for a good eight minutes, probing the 2nd XV defence in a breathless passage of play. They broke the line several times, but a sublime cover tackle from Kurran on the line prevented an otherwise certain score. Buoyed by this, the 2nds advanced up the field – Baba showed soft hands to help us boss out the back, Kit ghosted through the gap and a lovely pass from Andrew put Jasper away in the corner. KK added the conversion again and we were 14 points to the good. Growing in confidence, the 2nd XV then scored two further tries in quick succession – for the first, good vision from JC saw the ball spread early. This allowed Kurran to race in from the right wing having stepped left and right.

with a great sense of fellowship enjoyed their final time on the Sunley pitch as a year group together. Sam Winters, *Elmfield*, scored a hat-trick of tries and Cam Knight, *Newlands*, had an outstanding performance.

Colts B v Bedford School, Won 35-0

This match was so incredible it has taken me 48 hours to recover enough to write a report of sufficient magnitude – this was certainly one for the annals of Harrow rugby, the musty history books, the front cover of the *Harrow Record*, and perhaps even a BBC Sport evening report with the delightful and witty Gabby Logan. A tempestuous match with more twists and turns than a bowl of spaghetti in a blender.

A telegram warned us of the tough battle to come Bedford. Stop. Are pretty good. Stop. Bring reinforcements. Stop. The whispers drifting around the cloisters were well-founded as we were up against a mighty team with experience and valour. Dunne, *Elmfield*, and Jones, *West Acre*, were selected as the captains due to their ability to speak coherently, write legibly on the team sheet, and smooth-talk teammates into any situation they see fit.

No one would have believed, in the final few weeks of this Autumn term, that this fortitudinous battle would be watched so keenly and closely by intellects greater than ours and yet just as mortal as our own; that as the Colts Bs busied themselves about their various pre-match concerns they were scrutinised and studied by their opposition, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency we swayed across our home field of dreams Julian 1 busy with our lineouts and rucking practice, serene in the assurance of our empire over matter. It is of course likely nay probable that Bedford were engaged in a similar kind of brash preparation, alas we shall never know for sure. No one gave much thought to the (slightly) older world of Bedford School as a source of danger or thought of their Bedfordian warriors only to dismiss the idea of being beaten as impossible or improbable. Yet across the gulf of space adjacent to the tennis courts, minds that are to ours, as ours are to those, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded our formidable team with envious eyes, and slowly but surely drew their plans against us. And so, as the eerie whistle blew across the damp and surreal landscape, the skirmish commenced.

Harrow won the toss (the good old “which hand is the grass in”) and received the lucky egg playing down the 1% gradient hill, which gave us the tactical advantage from the kick-off. After a bit of handbag ‘argle-bargle’ either side of the centre of the pitch, Boreham, *Elmfield*, took on the role of rugby espionage extraordinaire with a fabulously-timed dart over the line that left Bedford looking like someone had pinched their winning lottery ticket. The game was afoot.

After ten minutes of back and forth, both sides’ less-than-exemplary fitness became apparent, and it was the joggers’ time to shine, as the tortoises began to win the race. We kept pressing their pack for some space, again and again. Just like banging one’s head against a mathematics textbook eventually causes a breakthrough (or so I have been told), our front line spotted a whisper-thin gap, opened it up, and laid it off to Mr Dunne, *Elmfield*, who gracefully handed off an oncoming forward, much to his disgust, and hopped over the line to tap down our second.

They came back at us again and again like an old girlfriend that just will not leave you alone. We did not pick up the phone, but they kept on calling. We had to put more points on the board, and fast. They kept finding gaps in our defence, and after a three-pronged attack almost scored, but were held up by our carefully-placed pile of our forwards – the exemplary Nathan Karri, *Rendalls*, Louis Deshpande, *Moretons*, and Sam Howes, *The Grove*, who put their bodies on the line for the good of the cause. For a few moments, Bedford repeatedly

For the second, Barimah bounced several defenders from the base of the scrum before feeding the onrushing Andrew who cantered over. Kit converted both.

Bedford hit back with a score of their own after several effective pick and goes. Kurran then scored again to add to his tally but the details of this were a bit hazy – I think it was off the kick-off. The highest praise must be saved for our first phase score from the ‘Eagle’ play, designed initially for the 1st XV but executed flawlessly by the 2nds. Neat interplay between Barimah and JC released Dino on the arc, he then drew the fullback perfectly to put Kurran away for his third. At this point, things got a little shabby – Barimah nearly scored but was instead cursing in his now customary Latin after he lost control of the ball with the try line looming. Gaffaney, who was a wonderful nuisance to the Bedford lineup all day, decided to turn up a week early for football trials and volley the ball to Bedford’s fastest player from the kick-off. Luckily, they knocked it on, and it was half-time, 42-5, and time to regroup.

The 2nd XV carried their excellent momentum into the second half – a great break from JC and quick hands from Harry saw Netti muscle over on his debut for the 2nd XV. Netti, who based on today could passably earn a living as a chiropractor, then put in one of the seasons most epic tackles to deny Bedford an otherwise certain score.

Bedford nonetheless hit back with a well-worked try in the corner, but a sublime pass from Keir put Kurran in for his fourth and sent the game beyond doubt. There were some wonderful cameos too from 3rd XV captain Paddy, who was unlucky to have a certain try called back for a forward pass, and from Gian and Tiarnan who shored up the front row with aplomb as the changes were rung.

Congratulations too to Gaffaney, Stratton, Dino and Barimah who all made their debuts for the XV. All in all, a heartening performance from the 2nd XV who head into their final test against Epsom on Saturday looking to end the season in style.

3rd XV away v Bedford School, Won 48-12

It was a day for flair play (and fair play). Harrow started the game on fire scoring three rapid tries. Superb finishing from Zak Banton, *Newlands*, who once said “I don’t run to score but mainly to avoid being tackled, scoring is a bonus”. Henry Emerson, *Newlands*, also used his pace and power to break tackles and score. Patrick Elliot, *Druries*, was zipping the ball around nicely from the base and score his own try under the posts. Louis Parry-George, *The Park*, was outstanding throughout adding structure and distributing nicely as well as running hard a straight in typical LPG fashion (a bit like an RPG).

The pick of the tries involved some slick passing culminating in a slick no-catch tip pass by Fuad Abualsaud, *Elmfield*, under significant pressure, it went straight to the hands of Banton who danced and ran away from contact until he was able to put the ball gratefully on the line without having to get his shirt too dirty.

Equally as good was the next try where Maxi jinked and dance past a few defenders before kicking it through for Cameron Elliot, *West Acre*, who dribbled the ball à la Kylian Mbappe until he was able to dive on it to score a very jazzy try.

Comedy moment of the day, the three props all swapping shorts because Fikunmi Olutunbi, *Lyon’s*, lost his. Slightly indecorous on the sideline in front of all the parents. Tiarnan O’Brien, *Bradby’s*, threw some outrageous dummies and side stepped a variety of defenders in Kurt-Lee-Arendse style but no one threw a bigger dummy on the day than Oscar Sutherland, *Lyon’s*.

Archie Tait, *The Head Master’s*, Digby Emus, *Rendalls*, and William Everall, *The Grove*, all had excellent debuts.

Colts A v Bedford School, Won 60-12

Superlatives do not do this result justice, a focused group

turned us over more easily than a Sunday tabloid newspaper enjoyed over a full English breakfast. 12-0 was the score, but it was far from comfortable.

They looked strong, but we had some reserve strength to muster. Leonardo Lord, *Lyon's*, who's aerodynamic haircut allowed him to sneak through their pack and ship the ball out wide so that Abraham Sameen, *The Knoll*, could nestle through the back line like a hungry honey badger searching for grubs in a hornet's nest.

Then came the most glorious moment in rugby since Jonny Wilkinson's 2003 World Cup-winning drop goal.

A careful penalty kick to win a lineout somewhere near their 22 was the opening act in our Master Plan, which signalled to the troops that it was about that time. They then formed a respectful guard of honour for the ball as it sailed from Sam Howes' grip gracefully to the lifted third man, who was so airborne at the time that he could actually see over the hill enough to check on the condition of the cricket pitches (he reports that all is in order). He took the cue and landed as gracefully as a swan, then turned away from the howling wind, ready to be cushioned by the warm embrace of the front row either side of him who would begin the driving maul, with Mercer-Wong, *The Park*, providing extra fuel to stoke the fire.

We had practiced this repeatedly in our training sessions, and indeed enjoyed a brief forty-minute focus group discussion about it the previous week, but I had yet to see it executed so flawlessly, with such flair and gusto. Bedford did not expect such a strong push from an everyday line out, and their forwards were quickly overpowered by our front row gladiators.

Bedford then cottoned onto our secret strategy and started throwing bodies randomly into the maul. The maul began to slow, but ground was still being made. Discarded and spent Bedford bodies started to emerge from under and around our side of the maul (which shall hereafter be referred to as the tank), indicating that our supreme power was too much for them to bear – never before had they come across such a brilliant piece of tactical insight as a rolling tank from the 22.

Bedford's forwards needed backup urgently, and they cried for help, but it was few and far between, and far too close to the eleventh hour. Each time they lost a player in the maelstrom of bodies, our tank gathered more pace, as we committed more and more bodies to the big push. Having had some experience over the years as a Physics beak measuring things moving, I'd estimate the infantry was lurching forward at approximately 0.743 m/s (that's 1.662 mph for those still working with a sliderule and refusing to switch from imperial units). With only a fraction of a furlong to go, the finish line was in sight. Activate beast mode.

Our steaming tank drew energy from the surroundings by letting out regular deep grunts of engagement which I believe frightened their team and accelerated our gains. Our forwards' weary boots were now grappling the uneven earth on the Eastern flank of the pitch, which had a sturdy top layer but a soft muddy underbelly, a bit like the skin on Grandma's rice pudding that's been left out too long. We cared not about the conditions; we knew this was our time. Each man now had his sights on the prize, and it had our name on it. All for one and one for all. Hu, *The Head Master's*, saw their weakened defence, disengaged momentarily to contemplate his mortal existence, before re-engaging with a powerful shunt which

gave the tank the momentum it needed to overcome the now sizeable pile of bodies we faced.

As we approached the line of destiny, now with over 13 Harrovian men in the maul against a weary 12 Bedfordians, the man at the back snatched the ball and dived forward as smoothly as Tom Daley to lay the baby down to rest in the comfortable home of the opposition's in-goal area. His work was done, rest well now little one there is more for you to do yet. I was so ecstatic at this moment, I forget who actually put the try down (I'm informed it was one of the boys listed above), but this was most certainly a collective team try, complete with the participants now leaping for joy with much elation that this hair-brained scheme had actually worked.

With our confidence bursting at the seams like a bluer after five years of heavy usage, we drove forward with less-experienced Bedford players bouncing off our front row like insults at a Nigel Farage conference, and started to take a few heavy knocks. Despite the bruised state, we insisted on playing on, and would not give up. Bedford spotted this weakness and poured salt in the wound by leading each charge with their colossal prop, let us call him Colossus. It took almost our entire team to bring Colossus down. Despite his John Wayne-style dying crawl, we eventually ripped the ball from his Hulk-like grip and overturned the attack like a greasy apple turnover. We then began to play plenty of advantage. The advantage law is the best law in rugby, because it lets you ignore all the others for the good of the game, which we took full advantage of to use their repeated knock-ons to sneak through allowing Lord, *Lyon's*, to score us another.

We brought our blood, sweat, and tears to this match, and left it all on the pitch, as a gift to our valiant, but bettered opponents. Many thanks Bedford, a brutal but brilliant encounter. On we march.

Sometimes magic can happen. This. Was. Magic.

Colts C v Bedford School, Lost 19-24

This was a close, competitive game, with tries from Feo Mishin, *Elmfield*, Mungo Lawson, *Elmfield*, and Edmond O'Callaghan, *Elmfield*, together with two conversions from Mungo Lawson.

Junior Colts A away v Bedford School, Lost 7-28

A slow start saw the JCAs four tries down in the first 20 minutes. With a change of pace and increased determination, they began to play direct and constructive rugby, but were not able to turn the early score line around.

Junior Colts B away v Bedford School, Won 24-12

Junior Colts C away v Bedford School, Won 17-14

Yearlings A v Bedford School, Lost 5-12

A highly combative performance with a tremendous amount of courage and heart shown to stand up to an organised and physical Bedford side.

Yearlings B v Bedford School, Lost 7-48

Yearlings C v Bedford School, Won 17-15

Yearlings D v Bedford School, Won 52-7

Yearlings E v Bedford School, Lost 14-36

Yearlings F v Bedford School, Lost 5-65

The Academy v Bedford School, Lost 15-35

Ways to contact *The Harrovian*

Articles, opinions and letters are always appreciated.

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CELEBRATING OUR PAST
REFUNDING OUR FUTURE