



Gerald Bowthorpe
(1949-56)

Gerald Bowthorpe, who died on 30 March 2013 at the age of 74, was the most loyal and committed of Whitgiftians. His presence on the rugby pitch during the period of OWRFC supremacy was a key element in the achievements of those great teams but, after his playing days were over, he also added so much by way of leadership in the rugby club and the Association as committee man, chairman and President. Gerald, who had thrilled spectators with his unquenchable love for rugby and his appetite for tackling and try scoring, seemed just as content to put out corner flags, act as duty officer and chair the Benevolent Society. Indeed, the outstanding attribute that Gerald demonstrated throughout his life was a sense of altruism and a great interest in helping those not as successful as he.

Gerald joined Whitgift in September 1949 and by the time he left in December 1956 had enjoyed a glittering career. Of course, he was an outstanding rugby player (1st XV for three years, Surrey, London Counties and England), but he also represented the School at athletics, tennis, hockey and swimming. He was a senior prefect, house captain of Dodd's and a warrant officer in the CCF. After School, in the manner of the time, he spent his National Service in the

army and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery. It was after his time in the army, part of which was spent on active service during the EOKA emergency in Cyprus, that he began to play regularly for the OWRFC and to develop his career with the OCS Group, of which he eventually became Executive Chairman. In a period when the Club was playing at a very high standard and travelling extensively for its fixtures (from Plymouth to Gosforth via New Brighton and Manchester) his durability and skill were celebrated. It was only last year that his record of appearances for the Club 1st XV was exceeded. Gerald had the ability to play at the highest level and, no doubt, could have moved to a more fashionable club to reach the top of the tree but his sense of loyalty and comradeship would never have permitted such an action. Gerald played with and against internationals but was happy to take the field with his friends in a highly successful, but nationally unremarked, team.

Gerald had the benefit of a strong family life: he was married to Diana ("Didi") for 44 years and they had two children, Nigel (OW 1982-89) and Kim, who, though precluded by gender from being a Whitgiftian, is employed by the School as manager of the Whitgift Health Club. As Diana's sister Wendy was married to David Priest, another member of the 1960s OW rugby team, the comprehensive nature of the commitment of the Bowthorpes to all things Whitgiftian can be seen.

The family have been active members of Sanderstead United Reformed Church for many years and, as with the rest of his life, Gerald threw himself into all aspects of Church activity. It is this sense of doing good for all, fetching, carrying, ferrying, delivering or whatever was required that most epitomises the man. Perhaps his life can be best summed up in a sentence from the report of the 1st XV game against Dulwich in 1956: "the other personality of the match was Bowthorpe, who was here, there and everywhere in defence ... and who still retained sufficient breath to score the two decisive tries in the second half".

Gerald was a man of simple habits and traditional views whose sheer goodness shone through and who never shrank from any task, however insignificant. This is the splendid and much loved man who is mourned now by his family and a host of friends.