Richard 'Mac' McAlister died on February 28th 2015, just thirteen days after his 84th birthday and on the day Old Wilsonians' Football Club were celebrating their annual Vice Presidents' Day, and news of his passing made this a particularly sombre occasion.

Mac's contribution to the football club was immense, as was his dedication to the Association per se, and he was there from the start of our tenure in Hayes Hill in 1959, and it was therefore considered apposite that VP's day should henceforth be named in his honour, and a large number of Vice Presidents made their way to our headquarters on a brusque, spring afternoon to remember our hero and catch up with old friends, acquaintances and team mates

And this year attendees had the added incentive of seeing Mick Pilgrim receive an award from the AFA celebrating his 50 years of service to football – and most of it for the OWs – and reuniting the successful 1st Xl side of the 1976/77 season, of which Mick was such an important and integral part.

Were they the best team ever to represent the OWs, as they invariably claim? - think the side who won the AFA Cup, in successive seasons, and the Old Boys Cup besides, may have something to say about that!

The afternoon began with Stuart Paton saying a few words to the early risers – must admit that I missed that as I arrived just as the games were about to start.
"Jane told me to write everything down as, otherwise, I would forget something", he confided, and it seemed to have worked.

Before the games started a minute's silence was observed in honour of Del Saunders, a life Vice President of the AFA, who had also served on the London Banks and the SAL league committees for many years, and who was a member of Nat West Bank FC .

All games, that is, apart from the 8th Xl's encounter with Bank of England where, twenty seconds into the game, the referee realised that he had forgotten to observe this important tribute and stopped the game in order to do so.

(He was later nominated as the sides 'Dick of the day' as a consequence, which he accepted with great pride by…….. booking the entire 8th Xl squad)

Bill Hartley asked where Mick "was umpiring" – it's called refereeing, Bill, and he was in charge of the 4th Xl's game against Actonians Association 5th Xl at Hawes Down, although it was disappointing to learn that he was not supporting the referee's strike, called for this day in protest at the amount of abuse such officials endure these days. How are you progressing with your reading of 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists', Mick (?)

On entering the Club house I was pounced upon by Stan Quantrill – he's a bit like a jack in the box – who plied me with a myriad articles, including one by the 'The Cat', written in a tabloid newspaper. There was no date on it but it featured a news story about Nottingham Forest, which quoted their manager, Brian Clough, whilst Bobby Robson was the England manager at the time

Pat and Annie McAlsiter were already in situ and it is always a delight to see them – the Club has a lot to thank them for as they embraced the passion that their patriarch held for the Old Wilsonians, which must have been particularly difficult for Pat at times, whilst Annie, along with her sisters – wasn't there a Woody Allen film of that name, or am I confusing it with 'Hannah and her sisters', provided pie and beans for the football teams after games for longer than they probably care to remember as brothers Ian and Chris were demonstrating their silky skills on the field of play in OW colours

I soon got into a conversation with John Wilson, one of the AFA representatives who had come to make the presentation to Mickey
"I will not be making the presentation myself; I'm just one of the party", he modestly explained

Meanwhile, outside on the pitches, the 1st Xl hit five goals past Crouch End Vampires in the first half, thereby destroying my Togger prediction before the game had hardly even started, and the 8th Xl were enjoying a far more sedate game against Bank of England, which they eventually lost 1-4, and, over at Hawes Down, the 5th Xl were demolishing Polytechnic 6-1.

The aforementioned 'Cat' arrived, dressed as a farmer, and Les Wilks, who had earlier in the week visited Hayes to tidy up the memorial garden, was as sprightly as many a quarter of his age. What a legend he is, with Old Wilsonian blood running through his veins; even his car registration number is OW57!

And so to the presentation of the award to Mick Pilgrim for his 50 years dedicated service to football, which went back to his days at Primary school

Mike Harris started the proceedings and seemed determined to re-tell, in vivid detail, every minute of that aforementioned 1976/77 season to a degree that some were in such a deep sleep that they missed breakfast the following morning and, after a full English, a shave and a change of clothes, Paul McKiernan, who was presenting the award, asked how he could possibly follow that; very easily, seemed to be the general consensus

Paul praised Mick for his dedication to football over the past 50 years which, indeed, is a truly remarkable achievement, and makes the club very proud, particularly as Mick follows in the equally esteemed foot-steps of the aforementioned Mike Harris, our Life President, who has also been honoured with this award

Mick's reply was warm and heartfelt, demonstrating his total commitment to the OWFC, for which he is admired by all and for which we are extremely grateful; thanks Mick, for all the time and effort you have given us over the years, both on and off the pitch.

He praised Lynn, his wife of over 40 years, who has put up with his obsession for all of that time and only flipped once - when she began to cut up his kit

The evening was also shared by daughter Sarah, grand-daughter Jessica, son-in-law Ben, brother Ian and sister-in- law Denise, all of whom, I'm sure, were equally proud of Mick's achievements

All of our 1,000 games squad were in attendance, Terry Adams, Geoff Robinson, Lou Barry and Bruce Graham, and I happened to mention to the latter that he scored 25 years ago and will be featured in this week's 'All our Yesterdays'

"I'll read it this week", he promised; you should read it ***every*** week Bruce!

There were also four representatives from the class of '56, with Terry Adams managing to get into both

And then there were the ever constants to thank and appreciate - Ian Forbes ***always*** provides a fine spread of food whilst the first people you see on arrival at the ground are Ian Pilgrim and Stephen Millward, busily helping people to park their cars, something they do ***every*** week; and on Sundays, too.

And so ended another 'Mac' McAlister Vice-President's day, made particularly special by Mick's award , of which our hero would have thoroughly approved. And one that he would have been a worthy recipient of himself