**How 1st Malden made the front pages all over the world (Almost).**

It is the night of 4th September 1975, Rod Stewart is No 1 in the UK charts with Sailing, Leicestershire had just won their first Cricket County Championship and The Good Life was a top TV show! Later, on the 5th an IRA bomb would explode in the lobby of the London Hilton Hotel, tragically killing two and injuring 63. It is this terrible event that very nearly led to 1st Malden making the front pages of the world’s newspapers – here is how.

Back then the 1st Malden HQ had a stage at the back where the leaders’ room and stores are now. The stage had not been used for some time and was used to store newspaper for recycling, some of the group equipment and a whole array of paraphernalia. The HQ was built in the early 1930’s and it is likely that very little had been done to the electrics over the intervening years. It is no great surprise therefore that an electrical fault caused a fire to start around the stage area. Fortunately for the group a neighbour spotted the flames and called the fire brigade who attended and put the fire out. The fire was restricted to that area of the HQ and by good fortune the roof, although damaged and would eventually need to be replaced, did not collapse.

It is at this point where this story really starts. Fleet Street photographer, Scout leader at 1st Old Malden and good friend of our then scout leader Harry Ward, was asked to come to the HQ and take some photos of the damage for when the insurance claim was put in. John did as asked and returned home with his camera and photos (remember this was the days before digital cameras and all the images were on film). Later that day John received a phone call telling him about the explosion at the Hilton in London and told to get there asap to take pictures for the next day’s papers. Upon arrival the police had cordoned off a large area around the hotel making it difficult to get close to take decent pictures, but like all the other press photographers in attendance John did the best he could. When the roll of film finished John passed it to a dispatch rider to take the film to his office to be developed. After a few hours John finished for the day and set off home. It was then that absolute panic set in, as he suddenly realised the camera film roll not only included the Hilton but the 1st Malden HQ fire. Stopping at the nearest telephone box (no mobiles in those days) John called his boss and the conversation went something like this.

John *“Hi boss about those photos of the Hilton..”*

Boss *“Terrific, your shots of the foyer have totally licked all the opposition. No one else has anything anywhere near as good as yours. We’ve wired them all round the world, they will be in all the papers tomorrow”*

John “*Look, I will explain later but meantime Kill’em. Yes, don’t wait, issue a Kill notice”*

At this point John had to explain that the great photos were not of the Hilton but of the 1st Malden HQ which were on the same roll of film! The picture here is the one radioed around the world.

