Rome plays host to first O80 hockey in Italy

Although having to settle for silver behind Australia in this year's Masters World Cup, England O80 were still reigning European Champions and had been invited to play two exhibition games against a Rest of Europe O80 team at Tevere HC in Rome at the end of October. Enjoying a cloudless sky and a temperature of around 22º both teams were eager to start at 13.00 on Monday 26th October. To mark this first ever O80s game to be played in Italy, 88 year-old Italian legend and 1960 Rome Olympian Alessandro Vannini, was invited to get the game under way. England dominated play against an invitation team that took time to settle. Ken Wilcock controlled the midfield and was instrumental in providing goals for Tony Jones (2) and Adrian Stephenson with a fourth added from a penalty corner strike by Narinder Lota. Rest of Europe pulled one back before the end making the final score 4-1. In a second game two days later the effort of the first and much sightseeing in Rome on the Tuesday rest day took it is toll on the Rest of Europe team and England's fitness and experience of playing together gave them a convincing 7-0 win with goals from Narinder Lota (2), Hugh Mason, John Peirce, Adrian Stephenson (2) and Tony Jones. Rest of Europe were not without their chances but the England defence proved impenetrable.

England O80 and Alliance International continue to encourage the idea of O80 around the world in their search for additional opposition and it is hoped that Wales and Belgium may be able to contest the O80 section at Lille next year in the WMH European Cup alongside Netherlands and Germany

England O80: John Young (Havant), Bill Greenwood (Yeovil & Sherborne), Brian Nichols (Westbury & United Banks), Brian Murrill (Folkestone), Andy Holden (South Lakes), Narinder Lota (Eastcote), Martin Kavanagh (St Albans), Nigel Spencer Knott (Southgate), Ken Wilcock (Bowdon), Vinny Smith (Worcester), John Peirce (Woking), Hugh Mason (Bromsgrove), Tony Jones (Canterbury), Adrian Stephenson (St Albans).

Rest of Europe: Edo Gobbi (Italy), Martin Vellinga (Netherlands), Fred Fuhrmann (Germany), Alan Bryce (Scotland), Robert Groeneboom (Netherlands), Ian Downie (Scotland), Roy Crichton (Scotland), Kiki Schmitt (Italy), Martin Petty (Scotland), Kieran McLernan (Scotland), Felix Metselaar (Netherlands), Peter Child (Germany), Alessandro Vannini (Italy), Doug Morrice (Scotland).

WGMA secretary Jawed Khan, Italian player/umpire and Rome resident had made the arrangements with Tevere HC and built a small tournament around these two games. Scottish Thistles, Welsh Dragons, Belgium Old Lions, Gens Italica and Alliance contested the men's event and LX Ladies Blue, LX Ladies White, Scottish Thistles and Alliance competed for honours in a women's section. In true WGMA tradition, it was a festival event in which competitive hockey blended perfectly with a great social gathering. For the record the hosts Gens Italica won the men's section beating Scottish Thistles 3-1 in the final while Scottish Thistles' women's team came out on top in the women's competition beating LX Blue.

Adrian Stephenson