

13 Merseysiders died in a plane crash - but hardly anyone knows about it

Fifty years on, a Liverpool family reflects on the crash in Bavaria that claimed 48 lives

BY **PADDY SHENNAN** SPECIALIST WRITER 05:00, 18 JUL 2018



Fifty years on, a Liverpool family reflects on the crash in Bavaria that claimed 48 lives
(Image:Liverpool Echo)

A relative who lost his sister and a cousin in a plane crash in Bavaria which killed 13 Merseysiders has praised the German people who continue to remember the tragedy 50 years on. Eight of the victims – seven from Merseyside and a relative from Essex – were young women who were going on a walking holiday, while six were from the same Merseyside family. Des McLindon, 76, from [Wavertree](#), will travel to the village of Langenbruck – between Nuremberg and Munich – next month to attend a special Mass and join a procession to the cemetery where there is a memorial to the 44 passengers and four crew who died on the British Eagle Viscount G-ATFN City of Truro plane.

The plane crashed on the afternoon of Friday August 9, 1968. There were no survivors.

Des's sister, Maureen McLindon, 20, a nurse at Broadgreen Hospital, was one of a group of seven young women from the Liverpool Catholic Ramblers Association who were on their way to Innsbruck in Austria for a walking holiday they had organised themselves. They had flown from London, where they had been joined by Des and Maureen's cousin, Mary Fletcher, 25, from Essex.

The other members of the walking party were: Barbara O'Keefe, 25, a gym teacher at Blessed Ambrose Barlow Secondary School, West Derby; Valerie Humphreys, 22, a teacher at St Hugh's Primary School, Wavertree; Jean Baxter, 24, a teacher at Our Lady's of the Assumption School, Gateacre; Mary Byron, 25, a teacher at Blessed Edmund Arrowsmith Secondary School, [Whiston](#); Irene Rawlinson, 23, a civil servant from Wavertree and Monica Hanna, 25, a shorthand typist from [Bootle](#).

Two of the women – Valerie Humphreys and Monica Hanna – were last minute replacements for two others who couldn't travel.

The other six victims from Merseyside all belonged to the same extended family, who were planning to visit to a relative. The tragedy saw husband and father George Hall, who was from Halewood and did not travel, lose his wife and three children. They were Mrs Eileen Hall and their children Barbara, 13, Veronica, 11, and Brendan, nine. Also among the victims were Mrs Hall's mother, Mrs Elizabeth Staunton, 69, and her son (Eileen Hall's brother) Peter Staunton, 32, both from [Gateacre](#).



Maureen McLindon, who died in a plane crash 50 years ago in Bavaria (Image: LIVERPOOL_ECHO)

The British Eagle aircraft – Flight Number EA802 – lost all electrical power at 1.04pm BST (2.04pm local time) and crashed, 25 minutes later, on to an embankment of the Nuremberg-Munich autobahn, near Langenbruck, Bavaria. It had left Liverpool at 8am that day, arriving at Hawarden in Flintshire at 8.30am and then London Heathrow at 9.20am. It was scheduled to take off from London at 10.25am but was delayed until 11.37am.

An investigation could not determine with certainty the cause of the failure of the electrical system, but a report stated: “It may be assumed, however, that a fault occurred in the DC generator control circuit. Faults had occurred repeatedly in the electrical supply system without their true cause being discovered.”

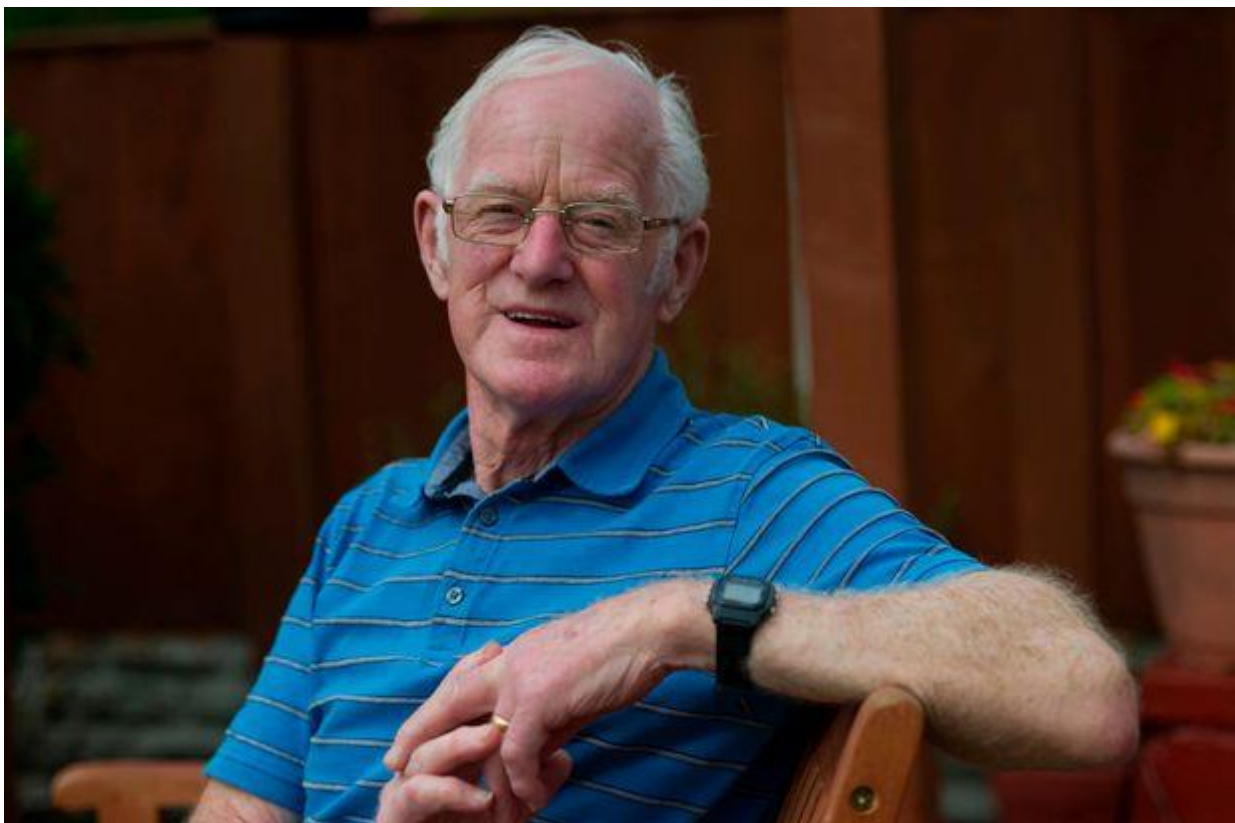
Just two months after the accident, British Eagle closed its Liverpool base due to financial problems and a month later, on November 6, 1968, stopped flying completely.



The service which took place in the graveyard of St Katharinas Church on the 40th anniversary of the plane crash in Langenbruck, Bavaria

At the time of the tragedy Des McLindon and his wife, Veronica, lived in Grant Avenue, Wavertree, while his sister, Maureen, lived in the family home in nearby Shanklin Road, with their mum and dad, Pat and Mary, and other brothers Peter and John. And Des recalls: “Maureen came to our house the night before she was to get the train to London to meet up with Mary and then join the flight to Innsbruck. She was very excited – it was holiday time. And it was a big deal because so few people flew in those days – and this was Maureen’s first flight.

Des remembers the air of unreality when he heard the news on the day of the plane crash, saying: “I was a joiner and had been working in Skelmersdale that day. My wife, Veronica, opened the door when I came home and said ‘There’s been a plane crash’. I said ‘It can’t be Maureen’s plane’.”



Des McLindon, from Wavertree, whose sister, Maureen McLindon, and cousin, Mary Fletcher, died in a plane crash 50 years ago in Bavaria (Image: Liverpool Echo)

Veronica, who remembers the “sombre” mood in the city after the news had been reported, recalls: “Maureen’s friend, Jean Baxter, was also among the victims. Her dad was a fire officer and he came round to the house and told me – I don’t know how he got his information.”

Des, meanwhile, reveals: “The next day we went to Broadgreen Hospital, where Maureen worked, to get her belongings – to empty her locker and go and see the matron. It was so sad. Maureen was a very bubbly person – and a very caring person.”

And Veronica adds: “We used to go out cycling together at weekends all around **Halewood** – and she was one of our bridesmaids when we got married in 1966. “I was pregnant at the time of the plane crash with the first of our two daughters, and she was so looking forward to the birth.”



The memorial in the graveyard of St Katharinas Church in Langenbruck, Bavaria for the victims of the plane crash which took place on August 9, 1968

The Queen sent messages of sympathy to the bereaved families, while a little over two weeks after the tragedy – on Sunday August 25 – a memorial Mass was held at Liverpool’s Metropolitan Cathedral.

And Des says: “Our first daughter, Julie – Maureen’s niece – was born on December 31, 1968, which meant a tragic year had ended on a good note.

“And what I want to stress today, all these years on, is how grateful we are to those people in Germany who have never forgotten what happened in their village of Langenbruck 50 years ago. People there have kept in touch and will again be marking the anniversary this year.”

He adds: “Maureen’s remains were buried alongside those of her friend, Jean Baxter, in Allerton Cemetery, but there is a memorial in the graveyard of St Katharina’s church in Langenbruck. My brother, Peter, and I visited it on the 40th anniversary. Peter is unable to make it this year, but I will be representing our family with my cousin. A special Mass followed by a procession to the graveyard will be taking place on Sunday August 12.

“The people of Langenbruck have been so good over the years – they have looked after the memorial and have never forgotten the people who died.”