

The Visit – February 2007

Early in 2007 James and Martin Fletcher decided to travel to Germany as they wanted to visit the site of the plane crash where their sister Mary, cousin Maureen and the other Ramblers had been killed. From newspaper cuttings they discovered that this had happened at Winden am Aigne / Langenbruck. They were aware from the newspapers that the crash had been witnessed by Herr Michael Klepmeir and they therefore made efforts to find him. They discovered that he was the proprietor of a Fiat Car showroom and went to meet him. When James and Martin showed him the newspaper cuttings, which referred to him by name, he broke down in tears.

It transpires that he had personally witnessed the plane crash and was the first on the scene.

Herr Klepmeir is now 70 years old and was obviously moved by the fact that someone had visited the scene after all these years. He was kind and considerate and most helpful. He took James and Martin to the crash site and to the memorial in the local cemetery. He also took them to the graves of his parents and to that of the Parish priest who had blessed the coffins in 1968. At the memorial the Our Father was said in Latin, German and English.

James and Martin left Michael Klermeir with the thoughts of the wonderful kindness and respect shown to our loved ones by those kind German people.

They set off the next day to Seefeld.

The crash was witnessed by Herr Michael Klepmeir. Here he is pictured in February 2007 with his son. They very kindly showed James and Martin Fletcher the scene of the crash and the shrine at the local cemetery.



Memories...

I regret that I wasn't a member of the Liverpool Catholic Ramblers in 1968 but thanks to the fact that my sister Maureen was, I was privileged that year to meet a number of her friends. From springtime onwards the talk was of their holiday in Seefeld, a beautiful resort in Austria at which I had spent a holiday a few years earlier.

I remember initially meeting the dynamic Barbara O'Keefe. She often called to my parents home in Wavertree along with Mike Humphreys. She really was great fun. The more I heard of the Ramblers holiday plans the more I wanted to be with them. And so it was that two friends and I tried to book that holiday only to find that it was fully booked..... We decided therefore to book a later holiday and fly out to join the group on the following Wednesday, 14th August.

I remember especially a pre-holiday party that Maureen organised at our home. I believe that most, if not all the girls were there. They were a great group of lovely young people as were their fellow members. I looked forward immensely to sharing part of my holiday with them. My cousin Mary Fletcher from London, who often came and stayed with us, was also delighted to be going with them. Mary was a really great girl and good fun.

Thursday August 8th was really like any other Club night for Maureen and the Ramblers. The only difference this time was Maureen's fond farewell to Mum and Dad and then she and I drove down to Lime Street station to leave her case in the left- luggage department. Then I took her and dropped her off at the Design Centre for the Ramblers Social. I wished her a casual goodbye and said I looked forward to seeing her in Seefeld.... It was not to be.

At the end of the Ramblers Social that night I believe a number of their friends went to Lime Street station to wave them all off. The group were said to be in high spirits.

Apparently however tears were shed by some of those left behind.

The following day in London my cousin James Fletcher was taking his sister Mary to the station. He treasures those memories of Mary turning to him, smiling and waving goodbye. He then watched her as she disappeared down the subway to the underground station. He was the last person in their family to see her alive.

The events of that day are a memory I can never forget. I recall a lovely summers day as I turned into Shanklin Road. I think it was probably about 5.30pm. I could not understand why there seemed so many neighbours out on the road.

I was greeted at the door by my Dad who anxiously asked "Did I have any news?" News of what? It is hard to appreciate in these days of mobile phones that, then, news travelled slowly. I had heard nothing through that afternoon at work. Slowly I was told of the accident and the fears of Mum and Dad. At that time casualty names had not been confirmed.

Kindly our next door neighbours agreed that I should use their phone to ring the Emergency telephone number. "Was Maureen McLindon on that plane?" I asked. The answer given was "No" but then a moments hesitation as they said "but there was a Mr. M McLindon" Our worst fears were soon realised as also were those of the relatives of all the girls. In total thirteen people from Merseyside were said to be on that plane. The loss of so many young people was a real tragedy.

So many other memories arise; my trip to Anglesey the next day to tell my younger brother John of Maureen's death. (He was there on holiday with friends from the parish)

The support of Mr and Mrs Baxter from the parish who also had lost their daughter Jean. (Maureen and Jean were buried together in Allerton Cemetery)

A visit to Irene Rawlinson's home in Wavertree to give them our support and sympathy.

During this time so many of the Ramblers visited Mum and Dad to extend their love and sympathy. But how do a Mum and Dad get over the loss of a beautiful, caring, only-daughter? Aunt Mary and Uncle Mark Fletcher and others were in the same position. It was all so desperately sad.

Mary and Mark came to Liverpool for Maureen's funeral and Mum and Dad returned with them to London for young Mary's funeral. Police outriders escorted Mary's funeral cortege as a mark of respect.

These now are all just memories of that dreadful time. As they say time heals but for us who are left we have memories of those lovely young ladies who have remained for ever young. God bless them all.

May they continue to rest in Peace.

Peter McLindon