

Holtaheia plane crash victims remembered for 50th anniversary

When Rosalind Jones was 15 years old, her life completely changed in August 1961. On August 9th, her younger brother Quentin left for a holiday in Norway, along with two masters and 33 schoolboys from Lanfranc School (now Archbishop Lanfranc) in Croydon and



three Cunard Eagle crew members. They flew from London to Stavanger on a Viking code-

named 'Papa-Mike', but before touch-down the plane disappeared. The night turned into an never-ending nightmare for their families. On August 10th 'Papa Mike' was found - crashed into a mountain called Holtacheia. There were no survivors. It was a horrific, unbelievable tragedy. A black cloud descended on Croydon - many knew the boys and their families. Croydon became world famous because it was the worst disaster to happen to any school in peacetime.



Sir Michael Parkinson, who at the time of the tragedy was a young reporter for covering the story for The Daily Express, says "Certain stories stick in the mind. I had covered

disasters before but the Lanfranc air crash, involving as it did so many young people, was particularly poignant and has remained in my memory ever since."

In 2008, with the 50th anniversary of the tragedy approaching in August 2011, Rosalind was determined that all the victims should be remembered, so she set out on writing a commemorative book, envisaging something simple - a photograph and a page of 'Memories' for each of the victims. What happened was far greater. After advertising for contacts in Monica Porter's popular 'Missing and Found' column in the Daily Mail, which brought in the majority of the British contacts worldwide, and placing adverts in Croydon newspapers, libraries and websites, Rosalind was sent thousands of emails over three years and a greater picture of what happened 50 years ago gradually unfolded.

Vividly readable because it is compiled from first hand accounts, the book starts with everyone alive; details the flight out to Norway; the search to find Papa Mike; the painstaking rescue of the victims; then describes the aftermath of the tragedy in Croydon. It also discusses new theories as to why the plane crashed. The book is illustrated with 42 pages of monochrome and colour photographs. Nearly 300 people from both Norway and Britain contributed their memories.



Her research revealed just how much the Stavanger Red Cross had personally given in the rescue and she determined that all royalties from her book (which is also translated into Norwegian as 'Flystyrten i Holtæheia' - 'Plane Crash on Holtæheia') should go in tribute to their sacrifice, to help their International Aid work.



“The Lanfranc Boys” by Rosalind Jones is published by Craigmore Publications, in association with Filament Publishing Ltd, in paperback June 29th 2011 at £12.99.

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Further information on the book from:

Chris Day, Filament Publishing Ltd

Telephone 020 8688 2598

email chris@filamentpublishing.com

www.filamentpublishing.com

