

MANCHESTER UNITED MUSEUM & TOUR

PRE-VISIT LEARNING ACTIVITIES KEY STAGE 2



**MUSEUM
& TOUR**

**JOURNALISTIC WRITING:
MUNICH AIR DISASTER.**

MUNICH AIR DISASTER

In August 1957 Manchester United began the new season as defending First Division Champions and favourites to win the league for the third successive season. Their early season form was devastating, dropping only one point in the first six games and scoring 22 goals. The team was young, so young they were known as the 'BUSBY BABES' and they looked set to conquer Europe. They were also recognised as the best club side England had ever produced.

Halfway through the season United were third in the League and had accounted for two teams in the European Cup (Shamrock Rovers 9–2 and Dukla Prague 3–1). The next round of the European Cup was to be against Red Star Belgrade. The first leg was played in Manchester, United won 2–1. The team was confident that this one goal lead would prove to be enough. Success would lead to the European Cup semi-finals for the second successive year. The team's confidence was justified when the Yugoslavian game ended in a 3–3 draw, 5–4 on aggregate.

The last line up for this game was –

GREGG, FOULKES, BYRNE, COLMAN, JONES, EDWARDS, MORGANS, CHARLTON, TAYLOR, VIOLLET, SCANLON.

The following day, February 6th, the team headed home stopping to refuel at Munich Airport. After refuelling, the plane was cleared for takeoff but halfway down the runway takeoff was aborted and they returned to begin their second attempt. Again takeoff was aborted and the passengers were told that a mechanical problem had developed. Most passengers assumed that the journey would be abandoned as the weather had deteriorated and it was sleeting heavily. Despite these conditions a third attempt was made to takeoff. At 3.04pm the chartered British European Airways 'Elizabethan' class aircraft 'RMA Lord Burghley' (code G–ALZU)¹ crashed into a building at the end of the runway and broke up. Twenty–three people were killed in the crash. Later enquiries were to prove that the crash was caused by slush on the runway.

¹ The BEA 'Elizabethan' class aircraft was the Airspeed AS.57 Ambassador made by the Airspeed Division of the de Havilland company and introduced in 1952. It carried 47 to 60 passengers and 5 crew and had a cruising speed of 272 mph.

The following players died in the accident–

ROGER BYRNE, GEOFF BENT, EDDIE COLMAN, MARK JONES, DAVID PEGG, TOMMY TAYLOR AND BILLY WHELAN.

DUNCAN EDWARDS survived the crash, but died two weeks later from his injuries.

The club secretary WALTER CRICKMER, trainer TOM CURRY and coach BERT WHALLEY also lost their lives. Of the nine newspaper journalists accompanying the team on their travels only one survived.

MATT BUSBY was seriously injured in the crash and was rushed to the Rechts der Isar Hospital with the other injured survivors. He was not expected to survive and he was twice given the 'Last Rites'. It was to be six months before he was well enough to return to work.

Also to die in the crash were Mr Willie Satinoff, who travelled all over Europe to watch United, and Tommy Cable the cabin steward. Captain Rayment the pilot of the aircraft was to die of his injuries, as did Mr Miklos, the travel agent that arranged the trip.

Of the players who survived the crash two received injuries that would mean they could never play again. Johnny Berry at 31 the oldest member of the team, was an England player who was unlucky to only win four caps. Jackie Blanchflower was the younger brother of the Spurs and Northern Irish skipper Danny. He joined United straight from school and managed to win 12 international caps.

The United Chairman Harold Hardman vowed the club would continue and Jimmy Murphy (Busby's assistant manager) began rebuilding the team. Junior and reserve team players were promoted and emergency signings were made. The team managed to complete the season's fixtures. In the first leg of the European Cup semi-final United beat AC Milan 2–1, but lost the away leg 4–0. United lost the 1958 FA Cup Final 2–0 to Bolton Wanderers, only three months after the Munich disaster.

Expressions of sympathy flooded into Manchester and the Lord Mayor of Manchester set up a disaster fund. A poem called The Flowers of Manchester was written and this shows some of the feelings of this time. This poem was later set to music and recorded by The Spinners.

FLOWERS OF MANCHESTER

*One cold and bitter Thursday in Munich, Germany,
Eight great football stalwarts conceded victory.
Eight men will never play again, who met destruction there,
The Flowers of English football, the Flowers of Manchester.*

*Matt Busby's boys were flying returning from Belgrade,
This great United family all masters of their trade.
The pilot of the aircraft, the skipper Captain Thain,
Three times they tried to take off and twice turned back again.*

*The third time down the runway disaster followed close,
There was slush upon that runway and the aircraft never rose.
It ploughed into the marshy ground, it broke it overturned,
And eight of that team were killed when the blazing wreckage burned.*

*Roger Byrne and Tommy Taylor who were capped for England's side,
And Ireland's Billy Whelan and England's Geoff Bent died.
Mark Jones and Eddie Colman and David Pegg also,
They all lost their lives as it ploughed on through the snow.*

*Big Duncan he went too, with an injury to his brain,
And Ireland's brave Jack Blanchflower will never play again.
The great Matt Busby lay there, the father of this team,
Three long months passed by before he saw his team again.*

*The trainer, coach and secretary and a member of the crew,
Eight great sporting journalists who with United flew,
And one of them was Big Swifty who we will ne'er forget,
The finest England keeper who ever graced a net.*

*Oh England's finest football team its record truly great,
It's proud successes mocked by a cruel turn of fate,
Eight men will never play again who met destruction there,
The Flowers of English Football, the Flowers of Manchester.*

ANONYMOUS.

<p>ROGER BYRNE</p> <p>Roger was club captain and an England player, with 33 caps. He was only 28 and his wife was expecting their first baby at the time of the crash.</p>	<p>GEOFF BENT</p> <p>Geoff was only on the trip because of doubts about Byrne's fitness. He was Roger's understudy and had captained Salford Schools when they won the England Schools' trophy in 1947.</p>	<p>EDDIE COLMAN</p> <p>Although only 21 years old Eddie had made 85 League appearances for United. He was a very skilful player who was known as 'snake-hips'.</p>
<p>DUNCAN EDWARDS</p> <p>Duncan made his debut for United aged 16, and his England debut aged 18. He was only 21 when he died and was acknowledged to be the best player in England at the time of the crash.</p>	<p>MARK JONES</p> <p>A very powerful half-back who could have been a boxer. He made 103 League appearances for United and was only 24 when he lost his life.</p>	<p>DAVID PEGG</p> <p>David was 22 when he died. A schoolboy international from Doncaster who made his United debut at 17. He was capped at every level for England.</p>
<p>TOMMY TAYLOR</p> <p>Tommy was one of the few players who had been bought. He came from Barnsley for the then record fee of £29,999. Matt Busby felt that the sum of £30,000 would have been like a millstone around his neck! An England international with 19 caps.</p>	<p>LIAM (BILLY) WHELAN</p> <p>A Republic of Ireland international who made 79 League appearances scoring 43 goals. He was United's leading scorer in 1956-57 with 26 goals in 39 matches.</p>	

WALTER CRICKMER	TOM CURRY	BERT WHALLEY
Joined United in 1919 and became club secretary in 1926, and twice even acted as manager (1931–32 and 1937–45). He was known as Mr. Manchester United.	Tom joined United in 1934. He gave 24 years service as a trainer and masseur.	Bert joined the club as a player in 1934. An eye injury forced his early retirement. He became a youth team coach and helped Jimmy Murphy bring many young players to United.

Memorials

On 25th February 1960 Matt Busby unveiled the Munich memorial plaque in a private ceremony for players and directors of Manchester United, together with family and friends of those who died in the tragedy. The plaque was made of granite, quartzite and tin-coated earthenware and was inscribed with the names of the footballers and staff who lost their lives. The clock was unveiled by Dan Marsden, chairman of the Ground Committee which paid for it, and Frank Taylor, the only journalist to survive the crash unveiled a bronze plaque in tribute to the journalists who perished in the crash.

On 22nd September 2004 Sir Bobby Charlton unveiled a new memorial to those killed in Munich in the small village of Kirchtrudering, the site of the crash. Also present was Joy March, widow of captain Roger Byrne, Sir Alex Ferguson, Manchester United Chief Executive David Gill and Club Secretary Ken Merrett along with Karlheinz Rumminigge of Bayern Munich.

On 6th February 2008 The Munich Tunnel at Old Trafford was officially opened by David Gill and Roger Byrne Jnr as a permanent memorial at the stadium.