

INTRODUCTION

The end of a holiday dream

It was the morning of Saturday, July 28th, 1973. People throughout the British Isles prepared to leave their homes for a week's holiday in the Isle of Man. Many travelled by boat to Douglas from Liverpool, Heysham Belfast, Stranraer or Ardrossan; some flew into Ronaldsway Airport. Some holidaymakers were already in Douglas since one week had already elapsed of the factory fortnight. More than 40 of these holidaymakers were never to return home. They were to become victims of one of the most disturbing fire disasters in British history: a tragedy that would leave "a permanent scar in the minds of Manxmen" (*Summerland Fire Commission Report*, 1974, Page 82) and a collective sense of guilt on the Island for many years. This book tells the story of how a holiday dream ended in disaster: this is the Summerland story.

A deeply alarming tragedy

Summerland was an indoor entertainment and leisure complex located at the northern end of Douglas Promenade. On the evening of Thursday, August 2nd, 1973, a fire started outside the building and then spread to the interior causing considerable loss of life. The Summerland fire disaster is the worst tragedy in the history of the Isle of Man and left its mark on the whole of the British Isles.

There are five reasons why the Summerland disaster is one of the most alarming tragedies in post-war British history. Firstly, the fire occurred

in a seaside holiday resort at the height of the summer season. Many of the dead were holidaymakers from the industrial towns and cities of mainland northern Britain. In one case, five members from three generations of the same family died in the disaster. Secondly, given that the fire occurred in a holiday environment, many children were caught up in the disaster. Thirdly, the fire occurred in a building that was architecturally unique in the British Isles at the time and had been open to the public for only 25 months. Fourthly, Summerland still today remains the second worst loss of life from fire on land in the British Isles since 1945 and one of the most rapidly developing fires ever to occur in a public building. Fifthly, the appalling death toll occurred when the building was operating well below capacity level. If the fire had occurred after dark, it has been predicted that 5,000 people would have been in Summerland as opposed to the 3,000 estimated at the time of the fire. In this scenario, the loss of lives, with the accumulation of panic and stampede, could have increased to more than 100.

It is the third reason that is perhaps the most alarming, and differentiates Summerland clearly from the Bradford City Football Ground (1985) and King's Cross (1987) Underground Station disasters. Summerland was not an old wooden football stand or an escalator ripe for replacement, but a new building that had been hailed as marking the dawn of a new era of British leisure architecture. The Summerland concept was new and made the Isle of Man complex unique in a European context. In the words of a promotional booklet, Summerland was "a new concept in leisure" whose innovative design would "set the architectural world alight" (*The Summerland Story*, 1972). Summerland was not merely a horrific fire disaster in a small island community; but a tragedy that had reverberations

throughout the British Isles and beyond in the fields of architecture, building design, leisure and public safety.

Book structure

This book is written for the interested general reader. My main objective throughout is to present a large amount of information in as clear and logical a manner as possible. This book seeks to inform the reader about the facts of the Summerland disaster; it is then left to the reader as to what judgments or interpretations are made from the facts and analysis presented. Before continuing, it is important that I state my own positionality with respect to the Summerland fire. Firstly, I am not related to any of the persons killed or injured at Summerland; thus, I do not have a personal axe to grind. Indeed, the Summerland disaster happened before I was even born and in a place that I did not visit until 2003. I would argue that we are all shaped by two sets of forces: our own personal experiences and the experiences of other people that we read about or see on television, for instance. In the second set of forces, the Summerland disaster has had the greatest impact on my own life. I first became aware of the Isle of Man disaster at the age of 11 from the book *The World's Worst Disasters of the 20th Century*. I attribute this impact to the fact that the environment in which the Summerland disaster occurred seemed disturbingly familiar in terms of my own life-experiences: families with young children in an indoor entertainment centre in a British seaside resort at the height of the summer season. The people who died at Summerland happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time; in the random lottery of life and death, I could have been one of them.

The book begins by describing the families and individuals affected by the fire (chapter 1), with a breakdown by age, sex and region of origin. The chapter concludes by placing Summerland in the context of fire disasters in the British Isles. In chapters 2 and 3, the economic rationale and design logic behind Summerland are analysed. These two chapters provide the necessary economic and architectural background that is essential for understanding the Summerland building. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to the evening of the fire and its aftermath respectively, and consider the allocation of blame and the press coverage of the fire. In chapter 6, the main findings of the *Summerland Fire Commission* (SFC) report are presented in a non-technical manner and their implications for the design and management of public buildings discussed. The tortuous road to the re-building of Summerland is considered in chapter 7. In this chapter, a comparative analysis of the original Summerland and the re-built structure is conducted to enable the reader to see how the lessons of the disaster were learnt. Chapter 8 is devoted to telling the stories of some of the people who survived the disaster and the effects that it has had on their lives. In chapter 9, the book concludes by looking at the future redevelopment of the site that saw Summerland – the complex and the infamous name – disappear into history. Thirty-three years after the fire, the Summerland story finally closed in 2006.

All the documents and plans relating to the design of the building and the fire are in Imperial measurements, and for that reason all measurements in this book will be given in feet and inches. A person's age is given in terms of how old they were at the time of the fire.

CHAPTER 1
THE SUMMERLAND DEAD AND INJURED

1.1 The number of deaths

The fire became visible inside Summerland at around 8pm on Thursday, August 2nd, 1973. On the Thursday evening, it was not known how many people were dead or missing. Mr Ian Paterson (personal communication) was watching the wrestling at the Villa Marina on Douglas seafront on the night of the disaster. After hearing several sirens, he went outside to investigate and saw Summerland was on fire. He recalled: “We started getting snippets of what had happened from stunned-looking people who were walking in the opposite direction. The reported body count increased as we walked. I remember six was the first report.” Summerland’s floor manager, Mr Laurie Shaffer, put the death toll at six or seven. “8 die in blazing holiday centre”, said the headline in *The Yorkshire Post*, who like all of the other newspapers was filleting the Press Association (PA) copy supplied by local Manx reporters Terry Cringle and Alan Bell. The headline in *The Birmingham Post*, which had a slightly later deadline for its final edition, said: “10 die, 50 hurt as fire sweeps Manx holiday fun centre”. At this early stage, the paper attributed the deaths to Summerland’s roof, which had “collapsed on to about 300 people below”.

It was not until the early hours of Friday, August 3rd that the scale of the tragedy began to emerge. At a press conference at 12.45am, the Chief Constable of the Isle of Man, Mr Frank Weedon, stated: “We have recovered 21 bodies from the building. They are adults and children, and some will be difficult to identify...Casualties are still being taken from Summerland.

Later today the death toll could be higher”. At 2am, the police said they thought “there could be a further 20 bodies left in the ruins” (*The Irish Times*, 3rd August, final edition). The search for bodies was called off at 3am until daylight. Speaking shortly after 3am, a senior police officer said about 30 bodies had been recovered (*The Daily Telegraph*, 3rd August, final edition), but cautioned that the number of deaths could go higher as the building’s upper floors had not yet been searched. “It is feared that the death toll could rise as high as 50”, said *The Guardian* in its final edition for August 3rd. *The Sun* speculated that “the toll could rise as high as 80”. Mr Weedon said:

“This has been a terrible disaster. Nothing like it has ever hit the island before...All those who died were terribly burned and I cannot even give a breakdown as to their sex, let alone age...The people in hospital are also adults and children and some are very badly injured”.

**Table 1.1: List of missing persons issued by the police on
Friday, August 3rd, 1973
(Police surgeon and inquest documents have been used whenever
possible to correct any spelling mistakes and factual errors in the
original police list.)**

Name	Age	Address
Mr Frederick John Allen	60	Porth-y-Green, Llanblethian, Cowbridge, Glamorgan
Mrs Constance Atkins	46	Park View Road, Kimberworth, Rotherham, Yorkshire
Mr William Stuart Aves	18	Sittingbourne Avenue, Enfield, Middlesex
Mrs Anne Barber	69	South Ray, Broad Carr Lane, Holywell Green, Halifax, Yorkshire
Mr Allen Barker	20	9, Ronald Drive, Fearnhead, Warrington, Cheshire
Mrs Barket	N/A	Address unknown
Mrs Mabel Alice Buckledee	59	Norwood Road, March, Cambridgeshire
Mr Thomas Brady	44	154, Jamieson Street, Govan Hill, Glasgow
Mrs Catherine Brady	43	As above
*Master Vincent Brady	12	As above
Mrs Mary Sarah Boyd	45	4, Jenny's Lane, Ballinderry, Upper Lisburn, County Antrim
Mr John Millar Carson	62	Hillfield Avenue, Walsworth, Hitchin, Hertfordshire
*Mr John Emery	18	Mona Street, Douglas, Isle of Man
Mr Richard Cheetham	52	Bracknell Avenue, Southdene, Kirkby, Liverpool
Mrs Elizabeth Cheetham	52	As above
Miss June Cheetham	13	As above
Mr Frederick William Glayzer	49	Brendale Avenue, Maghull, near Liverpool
Mrs Olive Bertha Glayzer	49	As above
Miss Andrea Margaret Glayzer	13	As above
Mr William Henry Goldsmith	62	Caldercliff Road, Berry Brow, Huddersfield
Mrs Phoebe Goldsmith	60	As above
Mr William Robert Hamilton	30	Scrabo Road, Newtonards, County Down
Mrs Beryl Ann Hendrick	32	The Bengal Restaurant, Douglas, Isle of Man
Mrs Anastasia Hughes	48	664, Queen's Drive, Old Swan, Liverpool
Mrs Marcia Hughes	58	Derby Lane, Old Swan, Liverpool
Mr Stanley Kellet	37	32, Tiree Crescent, Polmont, Falkirk, Stirlingshire
Mr Sean Terence Kelly	21	Woolston, Warrington
Mrs Elizabeth McKenzie	70	17, Great Junction Street, Leith, Edinburgh
Mr Brian McPherson	N/A	No address known
Mr Mack-Keith Maceachern	23	Lower Oxford Street, Castleford, Yorkshire
Mr Hubert James Manning	46	Craster Avenue, Forrest Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Mrs Gladys Mary Manning	N/A	As above
Mr William Morley	19	Tynwald Street, Douglas, Isle of Man
Mrs Betty Ann Moulds	34	Station House, Station Road, Rayleigh, Essex
Miss Beverley Ann Moulds	12	As above
Miss Debra Jayne Moulds	10	As above
Miss Amanda Jean Moulds	10	As above
Mrs Lorna Bryson Norton	35	Haywood Avenue, Marsh, Huddersfield
Mr Bernard Malcolm Ogden	41	Haydock Street, Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire
Mrs Margaret O'Hara	41	North Street, Winterton, Lincolnshire
Miss Tracy O'Hara	10	As above

Miss Julie Panter	14	Arnforth Drive, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port
Mr David Piper	17	Enfield, Middlesex
Mr Dennis Arthur Sandford	43	Royal Avenue, Onchan, Isle of Man
Mrs Stennings	N/A	Address unknown
Mrs Elsie Stevens	N/A	Sunningdale Road, Hessle, Yorkshire
<i>Mr Ian Stevenson</i>	25	<i>Auchneagh Farm Lane, Greenock</i>
<i>Mrs Margaret Stevenson</i>	23	<i>Auchneagh Farm Lane, Greenock</i>
Miss Jane Tallon	13	Springwood Avenue, Huddersfield
Mrs Annie Thistlewood	55	Aughton Avenue, Sheffield
Mrs Kathleen Wilkinson	56	Beighton, Sheffield
Master Gary Martin Williams	11	Rake Lane, Upton, Wirral, Cheshire

Bold font: these people's bodies were never recovered from Summerland. These persons are also not mentioned in subsequent reports or documents about the fire. It is highly probable that these four persons appeared on the police list by mistake. Note the limited detail provided about three of these persons with no address or age, and in two cases no Christian name.

Italics: not even in Summerland at the time of the fire.

* Survived

During Friday, August 3rd the death toll rose steadily, with firemen recovering 46 bodies from Summerland by the end of the day. Chris Bates (personal communication), a Lancashire radio journalist, remembered bodies being visible from the air when he flew to the Island on the day after the fire. The bodies were transferred to the ground floor of St. George's Hall, which was used as a temporary mortuary. Colour photographs were taken of some of the bodies to assist in the identification process. Fifteen post-mortems had been conducted by the end of Friday; 27 bodies had been positively identified by Monday, August 6th. The main causes of death were suffocation, carbon monoxide poisoning, burns and multiple injuries from falling (Hart *et al.*, 1975); post-mortems showed that most victims were asphyxiated first. The police also started to compile a list of missing persons. They were assisted by landladies and hoteliers, who notified the police of any guests that did not return to their accommodation on Thursday

night; and telephone calls from people all over the British Isles inquiring about relatives and friends known to be on holiday in the Island.

Staff victims

A roll call of Summerland employees on that Friday morning revealed that seven members of staff were missing. There were actually **five** staff fatalities, so two of these seven persons must simply have missed the roll call. Linda Fletcher (personal communication), a member of one of Summerland's resident bands *Just Good Friends* said: "The staff were asked to sit at tables according to which bar we worked in and it then became apparent that many of the bars had no surviving staff". Among the staff victims was **Mr Mack Keith Maceachern** (23), the Bar Manager. Mr Maceachern (known to his friends as Mac), a keen rugby player from Castleford in Yorkshire, helped holidaymakers to escape from the fire, but died when he went back into the building for a third time to rescue more of the bar staff whom he was told were still in the building. Mr Maceachern's body was found in a narrow passageway close to the bar he managed. **Mrs Beryl Hendrick** (32), who lived above the Bengal Indian Restaurant in Douglas and ran a bar towards the top of Summerland, was also killed in the fire. Mrs Hendrick (maiden name Rowlands) was separated from her husband (Peter) at the time of the fire and was going out with Dennis (surname unknown) at the time. It is possible that Mrs Hendrick escaped the blaze, but then went back into Summerland to find Dennis' son (Alistair Reid, Personal Communication). **Mr Malcolm Ogden** (41), a drummer with the *Don Taylor Trio*, also perished in the fire. The band was in the Marquee Showbar getting ready for that evening's cabaret performance. Mr

Ogden had moved to Laxey on the Isle of Man from Newton-le-Willows (Lancashire) in May 1973 with his wife Ann (29) and her two children Colin (10) and Louise (5); Mr Ogden had only got married to Ann twelve months before the fire at Warrington Register Office. Mr Ogden had previously worked as a drummer at Wigan Casino and Stockport Anitos. Mr Ogden's body was identified by his brother Brian. The other staff victims were bar workers Mr Allen **Barker** (section 1.3) and bar worker Mr Dennis Arthur Sandford (43). One young female employee said: "I have been up all night looking for two boys from our digs and now there are not here. I know for sure they must be dead".

The outcome of checks amongst hoteliers and staff members, together with people reported missing by the general public to the police, was a list of 52 missing persons who were presumed to have died in the fire (**table 1.1**). "It must be assumed they are likely victims", said Mr Weedon. Given that the police list was compiled within 24 hours of the fire, it was understandable that it contained some errors and omissions. Indeed, the bodies of only 44 of the 52 persons named on the list were recovered from the building. One notable error was Mr Ian and Mrs Margaret Stevenson, who appeared on the list despite the fact they were not even in Summerland at the time of the fire. However, a couple with the same surname but from the Scottish town of Kilmarnock died in the fire (Mr Alex Stevenson and Mrs Jean Stevenson), together with assistant transport manager Mr James Bennett (43) and Mrs Beryl Bennett (41) from Southport. Neither of these couples appeared on the original police list.

One survivor told an ITN reporter that he had seen “well over 20” bodies. He said: “[The bodies] were just like a tree trunk, that had been smouldered in a fire. You couldn’t identify them, and well, it’s gruesome to look at”. Many of the child victims of the fire were so badly burned that their bodies simply disintegrated when they were handled by firemen. Firemen originally said they had found 51 bodies by the end of Saturday, August 4th, which included multiple bodies that had been fused together (Edward Austin, Personal Communication). However, later that weekend, pathologists attempting to find the teeth of one particularly badly burned body discovered that it was in fact two plastic chairs that had been macabrely welded together into the shape of a human torso by the fire (David Buttery, Personal Communication). The recovery of bodies was completed by 5pm on Sunday, August 5th. “I am satisfied that every body has been removed from the building”, said Superintendent George Kinrade of the Isle of Man Constabulary in sworn evidence to the coroner. The figure of 50 was, however, corrected to 48, when further post-mortem examinations showed what was thought to be two bodies was simply debris and not human “We [the Manx police] are hoping that this [48 dead] is the final tally. Our list of missing persons is now also 48”, said a police statement issued on Monday, August 6th, as detectives eliminated a man that had previously appeared on the list of missing persons. In sworn evidence given before the coroner on August 9th, Detective Chief Inspector Robert Crompton said:

“Very extensive enquiries have been made since the fire in order to establish all the persons missing, and I am now satisfied by the evidence which will be laid before this inquiry today that every missing person has been accounted for. I heard all the proofs of evidence being prepared.”

Firemen originally thought that two heavily pregnant women had died in the blaze, but their extra bulk was due to heavy coats and handbags (Rob Farrow, Personal Communication). Only 12 of the 48 bodies could be identified by direct visual inspection by relatives. A policeman said: “God help those who come to identify them. It’s worse than a bloody war”. The 48 bodies were positively identified in about seven days from a combination of sex, approximate age, jewellery (e.g. necklaces, watches), teeth (dentures or dental charts) and operations such as caesarean section and hysterectomy (Hart *et al.*, 1975). Some of the victims were cremated on the Island. Staff at Douglas Crematorium found what appeared to be the remains of Summerland’s plastic Oroglas wall and roof in the oven after the cremations (Sam Webb, Personal Communication).

The death toll increased to 49 when Mrs Frances Mary Allen (54) from South Wales died in hospital in Douglas on August 11th. Sixty-five percent of Mrs Allen’s body was covered in burns, almost all the burns being of full thickness; she also had a fractured pelvis and suffered kidney failure. Mr and Mrs Allen had come to the Island to celebrate their Silver wedding anniversary, and both became victims of the Summerland holocaust. Mr Allen was a quarryman and Mrs Allen worked as a cook at a junior school; they had one son.

Nearly two months after the fire, Mrs Allison Little (35) from Kilmarnock died of bronchopneumonia. Mrs Little was admitted to Noble's Hospital with 52% of her body covered in burns, over half being of full thickness. Allison was transferred to Scotland ten days after the fire, where her condition continued to fluctuate wildly before she died on the evening of 29th September 1973 (*The Kilmarnock Standard*, 5th October 1973). Mrs Little had gone on holiday to the Isle of Man with her husband John (a lorry driver) and their daughter Kathleen (11). Both were uninjured in the fire.

Fifty people died in the Summerland fire (48 bodies recovered from the building and two deaths later in hospital). Accordingly, the *Summerland Fire Commission (SFC) Report* of May 1974 states: "Of an estimated 3,000 people in the building at the time, the vast majority escaped amidst scenes of panic, but 50 persons – men, women and children – perished" (SFC Report, Page 1). However, documents in the *Manx Museum* and the *Isle of Man Public Record Office* (see letter below) give the number of fatalities as 49 because they both omit the death of Mrs Little in Scotland nearly two months after the fire.



Office of
The Coroner of Inquests

Summary Courts' Office

Oik Quaiyllyn Briwnys Ghiare

Isle of Man Courts of Justice,
Deemsters Walk,
Bucks Road,
Douglas,
Isle of Man.
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Telephone (01624) 685474
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08 May 2006

Your Ref:

Dr Ian D Phillips
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University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
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B15 2TT

Dear Dr Phillips,

SUMMERLAND FIRE

Further to your letter of the 20th March 2006, we have made inquiries on your behalf with the Manx Museum, who hold many papers on the Summerland fire, and also with the Isle of Man Public Record Office. Both have differing paperwork and each show the number of deaths to be 49.

If you wish to contact these organisations to make further inquiries, the addresses are:

Isle of Man Public Record Office
Unit 40a
Spring Valley Industrial Estate
Isle of Man
IM2 2QS

Manx Museum
Kingswood Grove
Douglas
Isle of Man
IM1 3LY

Yours sincerely,

J P Robinson
Clerk to the Coroner for Inquests

1.2 The myth of the extra deaths

When consulting a range of books, newspapers and web-sites (**table 1.2**), it is surprising how many contradict the SFC and give the number of deaths as either 51 or sometimes as high as 53. Marian Kenny (personal communication), the news editor of *Manx Radio*, claimed: “There is clearly no generally accepted definitive figure ‘out there’ for the number of dead in the disaster – it seems to range from 50 to 53 depending on who you ask”. However, are all of these sources reputable or are some sources simply repeating other people’s misinformation? Consider *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group*, who always gave the death toll as “more than 50” when the fire was referred to in the *Isle of Man Examiner*, *Isle of Man Courier* and the *Manx Independent* for many years. In a feature article to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the fire, the *Isle of Man Examiner* (4th August, 1998) claimed that:

“Official police figures state that 51 died but other documents suggest the figure was higher. A coroner’s list names 52 dead and it is believed by some that another died later in the UK, bringing the total to 53.”

At first sight, these statements seem highly persuasive referring as they do to “official police figures” and a “coroner’s list”. I sent letters to the Isle of Man Police and the Coroner’s Department to determine the veracity of the newspaper’s statements. The police and the coroner could not confirm the above statements, and pointed instead to official documents held at the *Isle of Man Public Record Office* and the *Manx Museum* that give the number of deaths as 49 (see the above letter). The figure of 49 is sourced from the Isle

of Man Coroner's Office and is the number of persons that died on the Isle of Man. Mrs Allison Little is omitted from this list because her inquest was dealt with by a coroner in Scotland.

For *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group's* claims to be correct, three bodies would need to have been incinerated in the fire. Mr John Webb (personal communication), the only surviving member of the Fire Research Station team that investigated the fire, said:

“It is highly unlikely that any bodies were incinerated. While the fire reached a high intensity, it was only of short relative duration. Cremation of bodies needs a persistent high temperature over a period of time as in a crematorium. Evidence of the short duration is the damaged but still standing steelwork; if the fire had been hot enough for long enough to cremate a body, the steelwork would have collapsed... I personally think 50 was the total death toll.”

Table 1.2: The death total from the Summerland fire disaster

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS	
Summerland Fire Commission Report (May 1974)	50
Fire Research Station Report (Silcock, Hinkley and Webb, 1974)	50
Isle of Man Public Record Office document	49
Manx Museum document	49
PUBLICATIONS/SOURCES THAT USE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS	
Manx Radio	50
Douglas Centenary (1996) Authors: Kniveton <i>et al.</i>	50
The World's Worst Disasters of the Twentieth Century (1983) Publisher: Octopus Books Limited	50
Mann Ablaze! A history of the Isle of Man Fire Service (1991) Author: Basnett	50
Harrap's Book of British Dates Author: Castleden	50
Here is the News: A Chronicle of the 20th Century Volume II 1951-2000 Published in 2000, Author: Cringle	50
The Isle of Man: A Social, Cultural, and Political History (1975) Author: Kinvig	Nearly 50
Coping with Crises: The Management of Disasters, Riots and Terrorism (1989), Editors: Rosenthal, Charles and Hart; Publisher: Charles C Thomas	50
That Thin Red Line – Fire: The Case for Self Defence (1976) Author: Barlay	50
“Anger and blame in three technological disasters”, in the journal <i>Stress Medicine</i> (1995), Authors: Solomon and Thompson	49
Britain in the Seventies	49
SOURCES CLAIMING THAT MORE THAN 50 DIED	
“Memories of disaster live on 25 years later”, <i>The Isle of Man Examiner</i> , Tuesday, August 4th, 1998	51, 52 or 53
<i>The Isle of Man Newspaper Group's</i> House Style (until February 2009)	More than 50
“Isle of Man's forgotten holiday horror”. <i>The Guardian</i> . Saturday, August 2nd, 2003	51
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	51
Isle of Man Fire Brigade Website (until February 2009) http://www.iomfire.com	51
Wikipedia on-line encyclopedia (until late 2009)	51
“Remembering the victims of the Summerland blaze”, BBC News Website, Sunday, August 2nd, 1998	53

The statement in the *Isle of Man Examiner's* article that “it is believed by some that another died later in the UK” is also bizarre. The death of Mrs Allison Little is a fact (page 12) and certainly not a matter of opinion! Yet, even after including Mrs Little, the total number of deaths from the Summerland fire was 50; her death certainly did not bring the total to 53.

In February 2009, *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group* withdrew the “more than 50” death toll claim after I complained that their claims were “plain wrong [and] should be withdrawn”. Two weeks after I sent the letter of complaint, I received an e-mail from an *Isle of Man Examiner* reporter wanting to speak to me about the matter. The reporter Rachael Bruce told me: “We have used these figures for years, but clearly they are wrong”. She could not offer any explanation as to the source of the *Isle of Man Examiner's* 1998 statements that supposedly were based on “official police and coroner documents”. Despite providing the newspaper with clear evidence supported by several official documents, *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group* still failed to publish an unambiguous retraction of their “more than 50” death toll claim. On 17th February 2009, *The Isle of Man Examiner* ran an article with the headline “**Summerland death toll figure could be amended**” (Bruce, 2009). However, the death toll does *not* need amending but *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group's* inaccurate reporting of it! Even at this stage, *The Isle of Man Examiner* (17th February, 2009) continued to distort the facts to support their false claims about the number of deaths. Bruce (2009: 7) wrote: “The coroner’s report and the official inquiry into the tragedy stated that 50 people died, said Dr Phillips. However, he acknowledged it was possible more people had died weeks, months and years after from injuries sustained in the fire.” This is a

misrepresentation of the facts because in my letter I clearly stated (as I have done earlier in this chapter) that two people did in fact die after the fire from their injuries. However, these two deaths *were already included* in the 50. Despite the lack of a formal retraction, it is encouraging that *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group* has amended past articles about the fire on its web-site from “more than 50” to 50. It seems that the Manx Press now realises that it has been wrong on this matter for many years even though it does not like to admit so publicly. There is no suggestion that *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group* set out deliberately to mislead their readers. For whatever reason, inaccurate information about the death toll was disseminated initially and went uncorrected for years.

The Isle of Man Newspaper Group is not alone in claiming more than 50 died in the Summerland fire. However, these grey literature sources, such as newspapers and websites (**table 1.2**), have a greater tendency to give the number of deaths as 51 rather than as “up to 53”. The most inaccurate source is the BBC News Website, which in an August 1998 article about the 25th anniversary of the fire gave the number of deaths as an affirmative 53. This misinformation could be explained by two factors. Firstly, errors can creep in when journalists use cuttings files as the basis for stories (Marian Kenny, Personal Communication). An account of an event can change subtly over time, with every different version written. For instance, the firemen’s uncorrected body count of 51 was widely reported by newspapers in August 1973. However, when the pathologist corrected the number of deaths to 48, this was much less widely reported, with some papers continuing to use the uncorrected figure of 51. If a journalist prepares a story today about the Summerland disaster and only uses cuttings from the three

days after the fire, they would fall into the trap of believing that 51 had died on the night of the fire. Secondly, it is likely that there is plagiarism going on between these grey sources resulting in the same mistakes being repeated. For instance, I have recently discovered two on-line encyclopedias that give the number of deaths as 51 – the same as Wikipedia. It is interesting to note that Wikipedia now makes contradictory claims about the death toll. Whilst the entry's first line still states 51 died, the number of deaths is given as 50 further down the entry. In the last few months, Wikipedia has removed these inconsistencies and now reports the death toll as 50 throughout.

It is also apparent that similar sources of information often make contradictory claims about the number of deaths. For example, whereas *The Isle of Man Newspaper Group* insisted on using the house style “more than 50” until February 2009, one of its columnists - Terry Cringle (who was the first reporter at the scene of the fire) – gave the death toll as a definite 50 in his chronicle of 20th century Manx history published in 2000 (**table 1.2**). Mr Cringle (personal communication), *Manx Radio's* veteran newsman, confirmed that *Manx Radio* has always given the number of deaths on air as 50. *Manx Radio's* news editor Marian Kenny (personal communication) added: “We may, on occasions, have referred to or even reported on, the existence of a difference of views on the matter – but 50 is the figure we use”. Alex Brindley, who presents the breakfast show on *Manx Radio*, carried out research for a possible documentary on the Summerland fire and despite the supposed controversy about the number of deaths “concluded 50 was the most reliable figure”. Commenting on *The Isle of Man Examiner's* inaccurate statements, Mr Cringle (personal communication) said: “They

work to high standards on that newspaper and I cannot understand why they put these [wrong] figures out”.

There are also discrepancies in the death toll reported by the Isle of Man fire brigade. *The Isle of Man Fire and Rescue Service's* website claimed 51 died, yet a book about the Isle of Man Fire Service written by a Manx fireman (Basnett, 1991) gave the death toll as 50. *The Fire and Rescue Service's* website was amended to 50 in February 2009 following my intervention and the Bruce (2009) article.

I strongly believe the belief that more than 50 died in the Summerland fire is a myth that has been perpetuated over the years and repeated by several publications without being challenged. I am still trying to ascertain the myth's origin, but I can categorically rule out *Manx Radio* as the source of this misinformation. *Manx Radio's* news editor Marian Kenny (personal communication) said: “No one [at *Manx Radio*] can recall being contacted by media organisations seeking information on the death toll. However, any such contact would be referred to Terry [Cringle]”, who always gives the number of deaths as 50.

The “more than 50 myth” may have developed by sections of the media cobbling together seemingly reliable facts that emerged immediately after the disaster but have subsequently been disproved. For example, 53 deaths can be arrived at by combining the number of bodies that firemen said they had recovered from the building (51) with the two people who died later in hospital. The fact that firemen said they had recovered 51 bodies was widely reported in August 1973. In the light of this, it is possible that those sources giving the number of deaths as 51 are using this uncorrected

figure. In section 1.1, it was noted that the firemen's claims were later disputed by pathologists who only found evidence of 48 bodies.

There is simply no factual evidence (e.g. official documents) to support the contention that more than 50 people died in the Summerland fire. In the extremely unlikely event that bodies had been incinerated, one would expect clear evidence from family members or friends along the lines of: "I went to Summerland with Mr X on the evening of the fire, but now he is missing and we have not been able directly or indirectly to identify his body at the mortuary". This is not the case, with the number of persons reported missing to the police by August 6th tallying exactly with the number of bodies (section 1.1). The possibility of a person being incinerated in the fire and not being missed by at least one other person (with their death not being reported to the authorities) in the world is so unlikely that it must have odds of several million to one. The memorial stone to the Summerland dead (**figure 1.1**) does not state the death toll, but instead uses the phraseology "*In memory of all those who lost their lives*".



**Figure 1.1: the memorial stone to the Summerland dead
(Photograph by Elaine Anderson)**

1.3 Who were the Summerland dead?

This section will summarise the age, sex and geographical characteristics of the 50 victims of the Summerland fire disaster. It will then go on to discuss some of the families and individuals affected by the disaster. A list of the dead is provided in the appendix to chapter 1.

Age and sex

Female victims (31) significantly outnumber male victims (19). This gender imbalance is particularly noticeable among the fire's eleven children and teenage victims, eight of whom are girls. Victims' ages range from 10 to 70 (**table 1.3**). Two main age groups are disproportionately represented: children and teenagers (under 20: 11 victims) and the middle-aged (40-59: 21 victims). The number of victims in their twenties is comparatively low (three deaths).

Region of origin

Geographically, most of the victims were holidaymakers (48) from mainland Britain as opposed to islanders (**figure 1.2**); more than half (27) came from northern England. The geographic concentration of victims from northern England is logical, given that a tourism report commissioned by the Manx Government in 1971 found that 63% of visitors to the Isle of Man came from that region (Corran, 1977). The Summerland dead thus provide a snapshot of the geography of Manx tourism. If the northern England victims are disaggregated to county level, fifteen of the Summerland dead came from three counties alone: Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside (**figure**

1.3). Residents of Liverpool, Southport and Warrington were among the victims of the disaster. This reflects the dependence that the Isle of Man's tourist industry has on visitors from northwest England, which accounted for 51% of visitors to the Island in the early 1970s (Corran, 1977). Ten of the dead came from Yorkshire, including people from Huddersfield, Sheffield and Halifax. Two of the Yorkshire victims (Mrs Ann Barber and Mrs Elsie Stevens) had come to the Island on a Wallace Arnold coach holiday, and were with the other 23 members of the group in the Marquee Showbar when the fire broke out. The remaining victims came from the East Midlands (Lincolnshire), East Anglia (Cambridgeshire and Essex); southeast England (Enfield and Hitchin); Scotland (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Kilmarnock); Wales (Cowbridge); and Northern Ireland (County Antrim and County Down).

Table 1.3: Age distribution of Summerland victims

(a) Raw ages

10	10	10	11	12	13	13	13	14	17
18	20	21	23	30	32	33	34	35	35
35	37	41	41	41	43	43	43	43	45
46	46	48	49	49	52	52	54	55	55
56	58	59	60	60	62	62	68	69	70

(b) Age groups

Under 10	0
10-19	11
20-29	3
30-39	8
40-49	13
50-59	8
60-69	6
70 or older	1

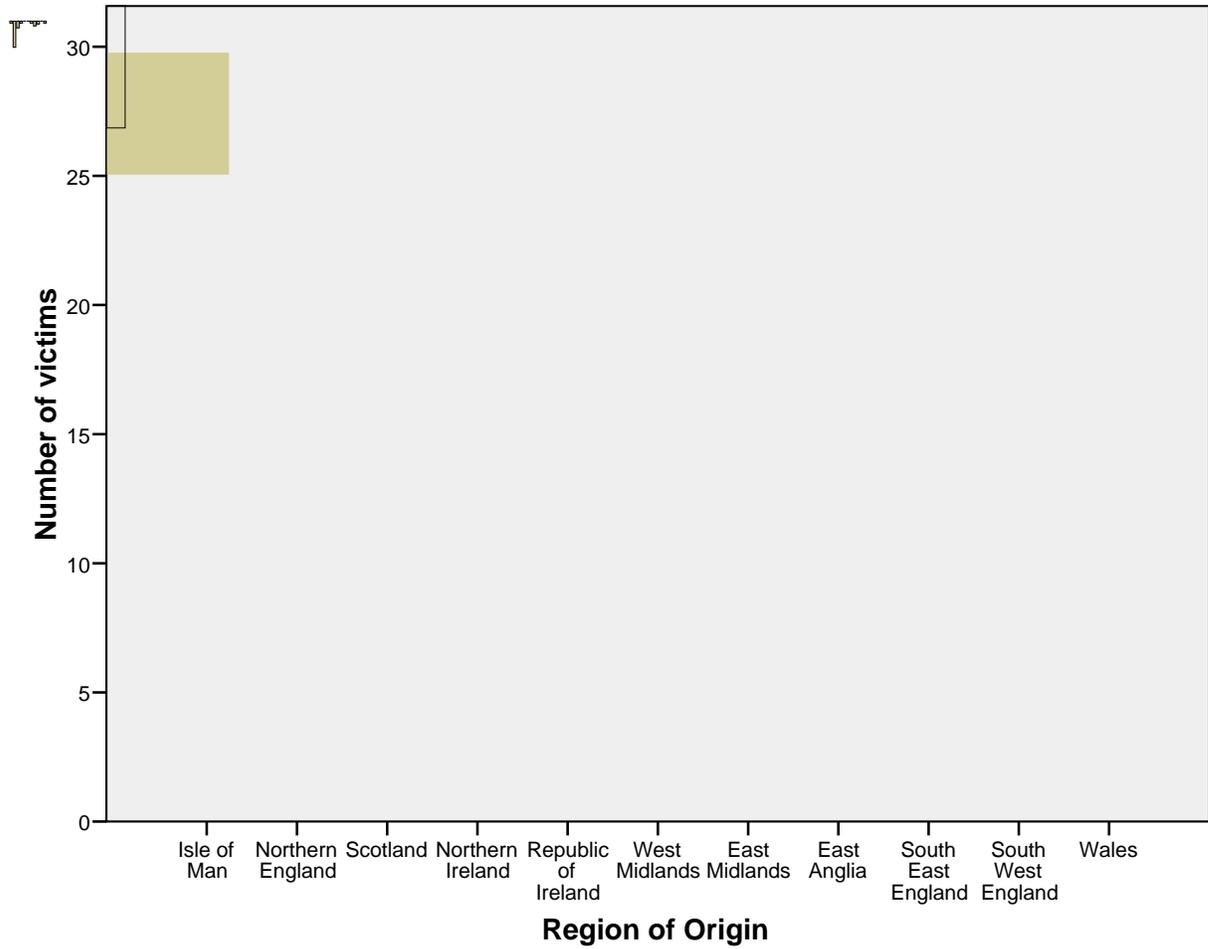


Figure 1.3: Area of origin of Summerland victims

None of the persons killed in the fire came from the West Midlands, South West England or the Irish Republic.

Family groups

The Moulds family

The worst affected family came from Essex. Mr Edward Alfred Moulds (38), known to his family and friends as Ted, lived in the former stationmaster's house at Rayleigh, and was employed as a train driver on the Liverpool Street to Southend-on-Sea line. Mr Moulds lost five members of his family in the Summerland disaster: his wife Betty (34), his three children including ten-year old twin girls Mandy and Debra (**figure 1.4**), and his mother-in-law Mabel (59), who lived at March in Cambridgeshire. Mr Ralph Bosworth, a fellow train driver who had known the Moulds family for many years, went to the Isle of Man to identify the children's bodies. Mr Bosworth said: "The family had been saving all year for the holiday. Mrs Moulds got herself a job so they could make the trip".

The family was in the Marquee Showbar on the fifth floor of Summerland when the fire broke out. As the family descended the flying staircase (chapter 6), a huge sheet of flame, described by Mr Moulds as "like a blow lamp magnified thousands of times", shot in front of him. As the crowd surged forward, he lost contact with his family. Mr Moulds told *The Rayleigh News Review*:

"The heat was unbelievable. I have worked on steam trains and had my trousers scorched or even set alight by the firebox. But this was something else again. It buckled steel girders in the roof."

Mr Moulds said the worst aspect of the disaster was a feeling of helplessness. He added: “There was nothing that could be done. A lot of people criticised the fire brigade but by the time I got out, there were already there. So were the ambulances”.

Mr Moulds was seriously injured in the fire and was detained in Noble’s Hospital, Douglas for several days; he was then moved to Billericay Hospital in Essex. His condition 84 hours after the fire (8am on August 6th) was described as “very ill, slight improvement”. Five work colleagues of Mr Moulds, including Mr Bosworth, travelled to the Isle of Man to visit him in hospital. One workmate said: “He is a quiet chap and all he cared for was his family and his garden”. Mr Moulds said that he was apprehensive about returning to the now empty family home after the fire. After staying with relatives, he sold his house and began afresh at a new house in Rayleigh. A fund was started to help Mr Moulds raise money for the deposit on his new house.



Figure 1.4: Twins Mandy and Debra Moulds

Seventeen children lost one or both parents in the Summerland disaster. Two families lost three persons in the fire: the **Cheetham** family

from Kirkby, Liverpool (mother, father and daughter); and the **Glayzer** family from Maghull near Liverpool (mother, father and daughter).

The Cheetham family

Mr Richard and Mrs Elizabeth Cheetham had three children: Mavis, Heather and June. Mr Cheetham was a plastics engineer. The Isle of Man was a regular holiday destination for the Cheetham family for many years. Both Mavis and Heather were married at the time of the fire and so did not accompany their parents or younger sister June (14). Indeed, Heather had only been married for seven months at the time of the fire. Heather and her husband Reg Lea were staying at her parents' house to look after Heather's elderly grandmother whilst Richard and Elizabeth were away on holiday in the Isle of Man with June. The Cheethams' next-door neighbour Mrs Ryan said:

“Mrs Cheetham rang me every night from the Island. She wanted to keep in touch with her mother who also lives in this road. She told me they were having a wonderful time and that June was really enjoying herself...Everybody knows the Cheethams. They're so polite and friendly, and Mrs Cheetham often helps people with odd jobs. June is a lovely girl, and is always willing to run an errand for one.”

Heather and Reg first heard about the fire when the normal television programmes were interrupted by a newsflash. Heather commented that her parents usually went to Summerland on Thursday night and that they usually rang home around 10pm to check whether her grandmother was well. That

Thursday evening there was no telephone call. Reg Lea recalled (personal communication): “It would be impossible to convey the anxiety one feels at a moment like that and whenever either of us sees a number [for relatives to contact] given out on the news, then I know that someone somewhere is going through the same experience and that moment and that feeling comes flooding back.” Mr Lea started dialling the emergency number at about 10.15pm, but he did not get through until 9.30am the following morning. He was informed that Mrs Christian, the landlady of the guesthouse in which they were staying, had reported the Cheetham family as missing. Although Heather was in no doubt that her mother, father and sister June had perished in the fire, they were not informed officially of their deaths until Friday, August 10th (eight days after the fire). Meanwhile, Heather and Reg received a telephone call from the Isle of Man Coroner asking for the name and address of their family’s dentist to assist in the identification of their bodies. What is made even more troubling for the Cheethams is the fact that the family will never know precisely what happened at Summerland on that Thursday evening. Mr Lea said: “My wife has often wondered whether her sister June was with her mum and dad at the time of the fire. This will forever be a cause of anxiety, never knowing if they were together in their dying moments...Time may be a great healer of pain but the pain of such a loss is always just beneath the surface”. The cause of death in all three cases was burning.



Figure 1.5: The Cheetham family

Heather's surviving sister, Mavis, brought a claim for damages against Trust House Forte (THF) and Summerland Ltd (THF's Manx subsidiary) for the death of her younger sister June in the fire. The case was heard in the Manx High Court on 15th December, 1975. The judge was asked to fix the damages at £750 because this figure had been awarded in several similar cases. However, Mr Barry Stanley, for the defendant companies said the accepted damages for a child were £500 and not £750. The Cheetham family was eventually awarded £750 in damages, plus £25 special damages, for the death of June on 23rd December, 1975. The judge Deemster Robert Eason made it clear that the damages were confined to the "loss of expectation of life of a normal child of 13" (*The Times*, 24th December 1975). There was no question of claiming for future loss of earnings or other material losses. Deemster Eason said: "These observations...bring this case within its true perspective and show how limited the remedy claimed in this action is, compared with accident claims with which generally the courts have to deal". THF and Summerland Ltd were ordered to pay the costs of the action.

The Glayzer family

Three members of the Glayzer family from Liverpool died in the fire: Mr Frederick Glayzer (a primary school headmaster), his wife Mrs Olive Glayzer (a secretary at Cadbury Schweppes) and their daughter Andrea (13), who was in her second year at Ormskirk Grammar School. A postcard arrived at the Glayzer's family home on the morning of the fire and was read by their son Nicholas (21). It said: "having a marvellous time". Less than twenty-four hours later, he was informed that his parents and sister were missing, presumed dead. A neighbour said: "He [Nicholas] is very badly shocked. The card from the family had been posted on the day of the fire and arrived this morning". This was the first time that Mr and Mrs Glayzer had been to the Isle of Man since spending their honeymoon on the Island.

Mr Thomas **Brady**, who owned a small restaurant in Glasgow, and his wife Catherine of Jamieson Street, Govan Hill, Glasgow died in the fire. It was originally thought that their youngest son Vincent had also perished, but he surfaced several hours after the fire. The couple's three eldest children Joseph (20), John (18) and Catherine (16), who had not gone on holiday with their parents, flew to Douglas on August 3rd to identify their bodies.

The other married couples that died at Summerland were: Mr Frederick and Mrs Frances **Allen** from Cowbridge, South Wales; Mr James and Mrs Beryl **Bennett** from Southport; Mr William and Mrs Phoebe **Goldsmith** of Huddersfield; Mr Hubert and Mrs Glays **Manning** of Forest Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; and Mr Alexander and Mrs Jean **Stevenson** from Kilmarnock, Scotland.

Mr William Goldsmith (a textile foreman) was identified by his daughter Mrs Joan Ford, a deputy headmistress from Huddersfield. Mrs Ford's sister, Jean Machen, was also seriously injured in the fire, her condition being described as "satisfactory" at 8am on August 6th. Two other Summerland victims came from the Yorkshire town of Huddersfield: Mrs Lorna **Norton** (35) and Miss Jane **Tallon** (13). Miss Tallon was a friend of Mrs Norton's daughter Jacqueline, and went on holiday to the Isle of Man with them. Jacqueline Norton was still in the Intensive Care Unit of Noble's Hospital on August 6th. Miss Jane Tallon was the daughter of the town's Deputy Fire Chief Mr Arthur Tallon. Mr Tallon identified his daughter by a medallion and chain given to Jane by her brother as a Christmas present in 1972.

Having enjoyed a holiday to London together in 1972, Sheffield couples Mr Albert and Mrs Annie Thistlewood went on holiday to the Isle of Man with her brother Mr Harry Wilkinson (an oilman) and his wife Mrs Kathleen Wilkinson. Mrs Annie **Thistlewood** (55) and Mrs Kathleen **Wilkinson** (56) died in the fire; Mr Albert Thistlewood (59), a gardener, sustained first-degree burns and was detained in hospital for several days. Mrs Wilkinson's son Robert (27) had moved to Australia in the autumn of 1972 to work for General Motors in Brisbane. Robert had moved inland in July 1973 and his family had difficulty in contacting him to inform him of his mother's death. The Isle of Man was a popular holiday destination for Sheffield people. A spokesman for Sheffield United Tours said: "We have been running three coachloads every week including [the Sunday before the fire]." The third South Yorkshire victim was Mrs Constance **Atkins** (46) from Rotherham. Mrs Atkins helped her mother escape the fire, but then

went back to get a coat. She was a leading member of the town's Red Cross and did voluntary work twice a week at the general hospital. Mrs Atkins' husband (William) was an engineering inspector.

Mr Maurice **O'Hara**, a central heating engineer from Winterton (six miles to the north of Scunthorpe) in Lincolnshire, lost his wife and daughter in the fire. The family went into Summerland as two separate groups: mother and daughter, and father and son. The two groups met on the top floor of Summerland (the Cruise Deck), where Mr O'Hara was playing table tennis with his son Simon (11). When the fire broke out, Mr O'Hara and Simon became separated from Mrs Margaret O'Hara and their daughter Tracy (10). Mr O'Hara threw Simon over the side of the flying staircase and on to a pile of deckchairs. Simon saw his father being crushed against the side of the staircase. Mr O'Hara's sister-in-law said: "As he turned round to try to find his wife and daughter, he was caught up in the rush of people panicking to get out of the building and was thrown to the ground. Then I think that as he tried to get up off the floor there was an explosion and he was thrown out of a window". Consequently, Mr O'Hara was admitted to hospital with severe burns to his back, chest injuries and a broken breastbone. He was not well enough to leave his bed until four days after the blaze and even at this stage still required assistance to walk. The Isle of Man Police informed the Winterton family in Lincolnshire that Margaret and Tracy were missing at 4.30am on the day after the fire. They were amongst the last bodies to be positively identified. With his father in hospital, Simon was looked after by his auntie and uncle who had both gone on holiday with the family.

The fire claimed the lives of two lifetime friends from Enfield in Middlesex, Billy **Aves** (18) and David **Piper** (17). Mr Piper was an apprentice telecommunications engineer with the GPO. Mr Aves' father had been in contact with his daughter who lives on the Isle of Man. He said: "My daughter was on the phone almost non-stop giving us information. We only heard today that they had not returned to their hotel and were probably dead".

Among the fire's younger victims were two friends from Warrington: Allen **Barker** (20) and Sean **Kelly** (21). The two men had originally moved to London to find work and shared a flat together; Mr Barker worked as a fingerprinting officer at Scotland Yard for 18 months and Mr Kelly as a bricklayer. The pair found the cost of living in London to be too expensive and so decided to seek summer jobs on the Isle of Man. Mr Barker worked in a hotel on the Island and as a barman in Summerland; in April 1974, he was due to start working as a fingerprint officer for the Manchester Police. Alan, who was the only child of Mr and Mrs Ernie Barker, died just eight days before his 21st birthday. To celebrate his coming of age, Alan's family had intended to hold his birthday party in a ballroom and had sent out invitations to more than 100 people. A few days after the fire, the manager of Summerland telephoned Alan's parents to tell them of their son's heroic actions, which he said had helped to save 17 lives. Mr Ernie Barker told *The Warrington Guardian*: "The fact that he managed to save these people bucked us up a little bit. This was the lad we had brought up and it made us proud".

The fire claimed the lives of two Liverpool sisters - Mrs Anastasia Hughes (48) and Mrs Marcia **Hughes** (58). Marcia was a telephonist at *Lyons Maid* and was married to John Joseph Hughes. Both sisters had married cousins (hence the same surname); Anastasia had gone on holiday to the Isle of Man with her husband Joseph Kevin Hughes (a clerical officer) and three children, twins Susan and Stephen (11) and Clair (10).

One of the blaze's youngest victims was Gary **Williams** (11) from Upton on the Wirral. Gary had arrived in the Isle of Man with his father (Alan: a tool setter), mother (Margaret), older brother (Alan) and sister (Dawn) two days before the fire. Neighbours of the Williams described Gary as a "cheery schoolboy who had been looking forward very much to his holiday" (*The Liverpool Echo*, 4th August, 1973).

The first body to be positively identified was Scotsman Stanley **Kellet** (37), an Electricity Board engineer and foreman, from Stirlingshire. The Kellets usually went on holiday to northern Scotland, but decided to go to the Isle of Man instead for a change in 1973. Mr Kellet travelled to the Island by boat on the Sunday before the fire, with his wife Betty, son Duncan (13) and daughter Laura (9), together with his sister and her son David. Mr Kellet saved his wife and sister, but then went back into the building to rescue more people. A close relative said: "As soon as I heard that Stan was missing, I knew he must have gone back for others. It was just like him. He had a great big heart". Betty and her sister-in-law were "badly bruised by the terrible crush of people" in the fire.

No holidaymakers from the Republic of Ireland were killed at Summerland, although two people from Northern Ireland died in the fire. One of these victims was Mr Wilbert **Hamilton** (30), a factory worker and lorry driver, from Newtownards; his girlfriend Miss Eileen Ritchie (22) was severely burned on her back and legs, and was detained in Noble's Hospital (**table 1.4**). Mr Hamilton had been engaged to Miss Ritchie for three years and the couple had planned to marry in January 1974. A neighbour of the Hamilton family said: "It's a terrible thing. Wilbert was one of the best. He was a decent, quiet lad". The other fatality from Northern Ireland was Mrs Sarah **Boyd** (45), an egg packer, from Upper Lisburn. Mrs Boyd's husband Joseph (54), a post-mortem room technician, suffered burns in the fire and was admitted to hospital.

1.4 Who were seriously injured at Summerland?

With the exception of *The Sun* that put the number of injured persons at 90, first press reports (e.g. *The Isle of Man Courier*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *Daily Mail*) all state that 80 were injured in the fire, with around 30 being detained in hospital. "At least 30 people were in the Intensive Care Unit of Nobles [*sic.*] Hospital; another 50 were being treated in the casualty ward", said *The Isle of Man Courier* as it cleared the whole of its front page to report on the worst day in the Island's history. The Scottish *Daily Record* newspaper reported that about 40 were "seriously injured". A member of staff at Noble's Hospital said: "There has been a large number of casualties. We are up to our eyes in it".

In a paper in the *British Medical Journal*, Hart *et al.* (1975) provide a more detailed breakdown of the number of injured, the nature of their injuries and the treatment they received in hospital. Seventy patients with minor burns, fractures, lacerations and emotional stress were treated, allowed home and then followed up as outpatients. Mr Alan Morgan (personal communication) arrived in Douglas on the Stranraer ferry for a holiday on the day after the fire. He recalled:

“One of my lasting memories was of seeing so many casualties over the next couple of days, walking wounded, lucky walking wounded might be more fitting, with various wound and burn dressings about them, an almost surreal scene with, of course, the terrible backdrop of the destroyed complex.”

Thirty-two patients were admitted to Noble’s Hospital in Douglas.

Twenty-four of these 32 casualties had surface burns (especially to the back) (**table 1.4**), three of the burns victims being children; two patients admitted with more than 50% burns subsequently died (section 1.1). Fourteen had injuries to the chest, abdomen or limbs, including three with pelvic fractures, although none of these injuries was life threatening.

Table 1.4:
Degree of burns in 24 patients admitted with surface burns
(Hart *et al.*, 1975, page 257)

Body surface burnt (%)	<10	10-20	-30	40-50	55	65
Number of patients	11	5	4	2	1	1
Outcome	Recovered	Recovered	Recovered	Recovered	Died	Died

The burns victims: a case study

Ruth **McQuillan** (5) from Northern Ireland suffered third degree burns to both her hands and legs in the Summerland fire. In a letter, she told me what happened after the fire and the treatment she received.

“I was inside a car – possibly a police car – and I remember looking down at my hands. My fingers looked as if they were webbed, presumably as the skin had melted or perhaps melted plastic had fallen on to them. However, the most horrific thing I remember are my burnt legs sticking to the car’s plasticky seats.

Afterwards I remember the horror of the many operations. The black mask over my face particularly terrified me. I have poor veins and had to be cut across the inside of my elbow and the top of my leg for transfusion. Skin was removed from my back and stomach leaving even more

unsightly scars to add to those I had already sustained. I had to lie on my front while the grafts healed. I saw a picture of myself in hospital – a five-year-old child with a face the same colour as the sheets and pillow – a pathetic sight. As I suffered full thickness burns down the backs of both legs, I think I must have been wearing shorts at the time. The tendons at the backs of my knees were really badly affected and did not heal well. I remember the torture of physiotherapy and the dread of seeing the physio appear.

When I was growing up, I was told that I would be reviewed at 18, with regard to further reconstructive surgery. I remember the words plastic surgery being used, and in my innocence I thought the doctors would put magic plastic stuff on my legs to cover my scars – how foolish children are!”

The effects of the fire on Ruth’s life are explored in more detail in chapter 8.

Three of the 32 casualties were admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ITC) with asphyxia. In this group was Graham **Harding** (18) of Douglas, a trainee architect who was working as a part-time barman at Summerland. Mr Harding and another Summerland employee Mr Allen Barker (20) became trapped in a storeroom near the top of the building after the start of the fire. To survive the choking smoke they sat under a dripping tap and placed a sports jacket over their heads which they had saturated with water from a sink (Cringle, 2000). Given that Mr Barker died (section 1.1), it was amazing that Graham was found alive by firemen the following day. Graham lost consciousness in Summerland and suffered an apparent heart

attack on arrival at hospital; he received treatment for 19 days (Hart *et al.*, 1975). Graham's uncle was Summerland's safety officer, who led the staff firefighting party that attempted to extinguish the fire in the burning kiosk (chapter 5). The two other patients suffering with asphyxia were discharged from Noble's Hospital after 14 days and 17 days.

Table 1.5: People detained in Noble's Hospital
List issued by the Manx Police at midnight on August 3rd, 1973
Later documents were used whenever possible to correct mistakes
in the spelling of people's names and addresses
(Bold font: died subsequently)

Intensive Care Unit	
Mrs Frances Mary Allen (54)	Llanblethian, Cowbridge, Glamorgan
Mrs Allison Little (35)	23, North Hamilton Street, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire
Mr Eric Taylor (born 1922)	Falcon Cliff Court, Douglas: organist in the Marquee Showbar
Mrs M Thompson	East Street, Scotstoun, Glasgow
Casualty Ward	
Mrs Catherine Bain (b 1911)	4, Kirk Street, Leith, Edinburgh The sister of Mrs Bain (Elizabeth McKenzie) died in the fire.
Mr Joseph Boyd (54)	4, Jenny's Lane, Ballinderry, Upper Lisburn, County Antrim
Doreen Foote (43)	245, Moira Road, Lisburn, County Antrim
Roy Foote (8)	245, Moira Road, Lisburn, County Antrim
Mrs Dorcas Heppenstall (b 1915)	Woodman Avenue, Huddersfield
Mrs Lilly McIntyre (49)	5, Reelick Avenue, Knightswood, Glasgow Broken arm and leg
Jacqueline MacDonald Norton (b 1959)	14, Haywood Avenue, Marsh, Huddersfield
Linda McQuillan (2)	10, Hart Terrace, Colcavey, Hillsborough, Ulster
Muriel McQuillan (35)	10, Hart Terrace, Colcavey, Hillsborough, Ulster
Ruth McQuillan (5)	10, Hart Terrace, Colcavey, Hillsborough, Ulster
Mrs Jean Machen (b 1947)	13, Westbrook Drive, Waterloo, Huddersfield Her mother and father Mr and Mrs Goldsmith died in the fire.
Mrs Irene Marks (49)	46, Carnbrae Avenue, Newton Breda, Belfast, Ulster
Mr Edward Alfred Moulds (b 1935)	Station House, Station Road, Rayleigh, Essex Wife, three children and mother-in-law all killed in fire
Mrs Ellen Palfrey	Wuring Avenue, Parr, St Helens, Lancashire Had only been in Summerland for five minutes when the

	fire started.
Anne Quirk (16)	Brynn Street, St Helens (Sister of Joyce Quirk) Suffered burns to her legs and a back injury
Joyce Quirk (19)	Brynn Street, St Helens (Sister of Anne Quirk) Suffered burns to her hands, legs and body
Miss Eileen Vera Ritchie (22)	113 Dorrageh Road, Camber, County Down, Ulster (her boyfriend Mr William Hamilton died in the fire)
Mrs Pauline Wynne-Smythe (30)	17, Head Road, Douglas, Isle of Man
Mrs Isobel Stewart (68?)	Hadlow Street, Birkenhead, Cheshire
Mrs Elizabeth Treasure (25?)	Fairoak Road, Southampton
Mrs Hilda Wharton (b 1935)	Burnley Road, East Whitwell, Rossendale, Lancashire
Mr Alan Williams (b 1936)	Rake Lane, Upton, Birkenhead, Wirral
Mrs Rosalind Eileen Wilson (45)	6, Sycamore Drive, Jordanstown, County Antrim

Admitted to hospital after midnight on August 3rd, 1973 or did not appear on original hospital list given to the press	
Mrs Mary Carson (56)	Hillfield Avenue, Walsworth, Hitchin, Hertfordshire Her husband died in the fire.
Mr Graham Harding (18)	Douglas, Isle of Man
Mr Maurice Francis O'Hara (43)	2, North Street, Winterton, Lincolnshire, Mr O'Hara's wife and daughter were both killed.
Mr Albert Thistlewood (59)	Aughton Avenue, Sheffield Mr Thistlewood's wife died in the fire.

*The author has been unable categorically to confirm the identity of the 32nd person admitted to hospital; however, it can be stated that this person was discharged from hospital before August 6th. The 32nd person could be Mr Peter Bain (the wife of Mrs Catherine Bain) or Mrs Bain's brother John Smith (*The Scotsman*, 4th August 1973). *The Liverpool Echo's* (3rd August 1973) list of injured persons includes James Hicklin from Douglas, so Mr Hicklin could be the 32nd seriously injured person.

The geography of the injured

Around four hours after the fire, the Manx police issued a list of people detained in Noble's Hospital (**table 1.5**). The list names only 27 of the 30 casualties then admitted (Mrs Carson and Mr Harding did not arrive

at hospital until August 3rd) because the identities of three of the injured persons were unknown in the immediate aftermath of the fire.

The gender imbalance of the Summerland dead (M = 19, F = 31) becomes even more marked amongst the injured: of the 31 known injured persons, 23 (74.2%) were women. Ten came from northern England and nine from Northern Ireland (**figure 1.4**). It is noticeable that three of the seriously injured persons came from Huddersfield; four of the victims of the fire also came from the same Yorkshire town (section 1.4). Northern Ireland accounted for the second highest number of injured persons, with three of the nine injured persons being from the **McQuillan** family from Hillsborough. Ruth McQuillan (5) was the most seriously injured and suffered third degree burns (see earlier section on the burns victims). Her mother Muriel (35) had burns on the bottom of her legs, whilst Ruth's sister Linda (2) and father Sammy only suffered superficial injuries. Four of the injured came from central Scotland (Edinburgh and Glasgow); the only Welsh person named on the list (Mrs Frances Mary **Allen**) later died in hospital on August 11th. Outside northern England, the other English persons detained in hospital came from Essex (Mr **Moulds**, see section 1.2) and Southampton. Like the Summerland dead, none of the named injured persons came from southwest England or the Irish Republic. The two Douglas residents detained in hospital included Mrs Pauline **Smythe**, who was the brave manageress of the Marquee Showbar when the fire broke out (chapters 6 and 8).



Figure 1.4: Men, women and children seriously injured in the fire and admitted to Noble’s Hospital

(Map by Kevin Burkhill, University of Birmingham)

Numbers denote multiple casualties from the same family. The two persons who died in hospital are not included on this map; see figure 1.1. The author has been unable affirmatively to establish the identity of one of the 32 injured persons.

By the end of Friday, August 3rd (i.e. around 24 hours after the fire), twenty-nine people were still in hospital, some critically ill with severe burns. Mrs Mary **Carson** (56), whose husband died in the fire, became progressively wheezy on the day after the fire and was admitted to hospital on the Friday afternoon with bronchial pneumonia. Mrs Carson had a recent history of chest trouble after suffering from influenza in 1971. She was discharged from hospital after 14 days. By Saturday evening, two of the 29 remained critically ill and nine very ill. Twenty-five casualties were still in Noble's Hospital at 8am on Monday, August 6th (i.e. around 84 hours after the fire), of which 19 appeared on the original police list issued at midnight on August 3rd. The six persons still in hospital but not named on the original police list included Mary Carson from Hitchin in Hertfordshire and Albert Thistlewood from Sheffield (whose wife died in the fire). The other injured persons not named on the original police list came from Douglas, Hillsborough in Northern Ireland, Lincoln and Birkenhead on the Wirral. **Table 1.6** summarises the condition of the 25 casualties still in Noble's Hospital on that Monday morning. The number of persons remaining in hospital dropped to 21 on 9th August and then to 19 on 13th August; five of injured persons (Miss Jacqueline **Norton**, Mrs Ellen **Palfrey**, Miss Anne **Quirk**, Miss Joyce Quirk and Mr Alan **Williams**) were flown to Liverpool so that they could be closer to their relatives.

**Table 1.6: Condition of casualties detained in Noble’s Hospital,
Douglas approximately three and half days after the Summerland fire
(at 8am on Monday, August 6th)**

Critical	1
Very ill, slight improvement	8
Poorly, slight improvement	1
Improving, satisfactory	1
Fairly satisfactory	2
Satisfactory	12

1.5 Summerland in the context of fire disasters in the British Isles

Given that the Isle of Man is part of the British Isles but not part of the United Kingdom (UK), the following discussion will place Summerland in the context of fire disasters in the British Isles (i.e. the UK, Irish Republic, Isle of Man and Channel Islands) (**table 1.7**). An arbitrary threshold of 30 deaths will be used to define a disaster. The *Summerland Fire Commission* (SFC) states that the Douglas fire “was the worst peacetime fire disaster in the British Isles since 1929 [i.e. for 44 years]” (SFC Report, Page 1). The Commission uses the qualification *peacetime* because around 50 people died in a fire at a Huddersfield clothing factory in October 1941. The fire at the town’s H Booth and Son Wholesale Clothiers spread rapidly because of the building’s wooden design, with a strong draught sucking flames up the staircases. Most of the victims were ‘young girls’, who faced no option but to jump from the building’s second storey when the factory’s main staircase collapsed. Of the 47 known victims of the tragedy, 43 were buried in a common grave. However, the coroner’s office said three males and 23 females were still missing or unaccounted for.

At the time, Summerland was the worst fire disaster in the British Isles since World War II. More than 36 years on, the Summerland tragedy remains the second worst loss of life from fire on land in the British Isles since 1945: only the death toll of 56 at Bradford City Football Ground on the afternoon of Saturday, May 11th, 1985 was higher. When Summerland is compared to other British and Irish fire tragedies since 1945, the closest parallel is seen with the fire at the Stardust nightclub in Dublin in the early hours of Valentine's Day 1981. Forty-eight people died and 120 were injured in the fire, which was the worst disaster in Dublin's history. The fire was started by an unidentified person slashing a seat and then setting fire to it with a match, cigarette or newspaper. The Dromcolliher cinema fire in September 1926 also claimed 48 lives and is the only other Irish fire disaster of modern times. As the village of Dromcolliher had no public hall, films were shown in a large loft over a garage. The wooden loft had only one entrance, which was reached by climbing a ladder from the floor of the garage. There were around 150 people in the loft on the night of the fire, including many women and children. The fire was caused by a lighted candle falling on to exposed film reels. The projectionist tried to throw the film out of the window, but other objects on the table with the candle and the reels of film caught fire.

It is notable that the majority of British fire disasters have occurred in northern Britain. The worst Scottish fire tragedy of the 20th century occurred at a lodging house on Watson Street in Glasgow in November 1905. The building, which consisted of three main storeys and two smaller flats on the fourth and fifth floors, accommodated 368 of the city's poorest men. The fire started at around 6am on a Sunday morning in a fourth floor

flat. Whilst some of the men in these flats escaped by climbing on to the roof, several died as the staircase became blocked with fire and smoke.

Two of the four 20th century fire disasters in southern England occurred at mental hospitals. The first of these tragedies happened at Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum in north London in January 1903. The fire destroyed five temporary wards housing 330 inmates that had been erected seven years before the blaze. The fire started shortly after 5.30am, when a night nurse noticed smoke emanating from a storeroom where patients' clothes were kept. The fire fanned by strong winds spread rapidly because the buildings were erected on timber frames and the wards were linked by an open passage. Just over a year before the Summerland disaster, 30 mentally handicapped male patients died in a fire started by a patient at 2.55am at the Coldharbour Hospital in the Dorset town of Sherbourne in July 1972. The victims of the fire were 'severely subnormal', with mental ages of seven or younger, and died in their beds. The public inquiry criticised hospital staff for being absent from the ward for too long and lax procedures that allowed patients to mix with others on another ward that had access to matches.

More recently, there were two fire disasters in London in the 1980s. Whilst the fire on the Piccadilly line escalator at the King's Cross Underground Station in November 1987 is recalled by most people, a fire at two illicit Soho clubs in August 1980 has largely been forgotten about. The fire swept through the Rodos and Victor Gonzalez clubs in Denmark Place, an alley off the Charing Cross Road at 3.30am on a Saturday morning. The drinking clubs were popular with Spanish-speaking nationals, especially Colombians, and admittance was only granted to people known to the

owner. Indeed, the front door of the building housing the clubs was always kept locked. They had been reports of drug taking, prostitution and illegal drinking at both clubs before the fire. It immediately became apparent that the fire was deliberate, with eyewitnesses reporting a strong smell of petrol everywhere. Some of the victims were illegal immigrants without documentation. Several theories circulated about the motivation of the arsonist, ranging from gang rivalry over protection money, drugs disposal and prostitution. These theories were all eventually dismissed and it was found bizarrely that the arsonist had been motivated by nothing more than an argument over the price of drinks in the club. John Thompson (42) took his revenge by pouring petrol through the building's letterbox and setting it alight.

Table 1.7: Fire disasters on land in the British Isles in modern times

Location	Date	Number of deaths
Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum, New Southgate, London	Tuesday, January 27th, 1903	52
Lodging House, 39 Watson Street, Glasgow	Sunday, November 19th, 1905	39
Dromcolliher Cinema, County Limerick, Republic of Ireland	Sunday, September 5th, 1926	48
Glen Cinema, Paisley, Near Glasgow	December 31st, 1929	70 children
H Booth and Son Wholesale Clothiers, Huddersfield, Yorkshire	Friday, October 31st, 1941	Around 50 47 victims buried
Coldharbour Hospital, Sherbourne, Dorset	Wednesday, July 5th, 1972	30
Summerland entertainment and leisure complex, Douglas, Isle of Man	Thursday, August 2nd, 1973	50
The Rodos and Victor Gonzalez clubs, Soho, London	Saturday, August 16th, 1980	37
Stardust Nightclub, Dublin, Republic of Ireland	Saturday, February 14th, 1981	48
Bradford City Football Ground, West Yorkshire	Saturday, May 11th, 1985	56
King's Cross Underground Station, London	Wednesday, November 18th, 1987	31

1.6 Summary

Fifty people were to die as the result of the fire that raced through the Summerland entertainment centre at Douglas, Isle of Man on Thursday, August 2nd, 1973. Summerland is the worst tragedy in Manx history and remains the second worst loss of life from fire on land in the British Isles since the Second World War. Forty-eight bodies were recovered from the building and two people died later in hospital, bringing the total number of deaths to 50. Statements in the media claiming that 51, 52 or 53 died are not substantiated by any factual evidence or official documents. The main causes of death were suffocation, carbon monoxide poisoning, burns and multiple injuries from falling. Most of the fire's victims were holidaymakers from mainland Britain as opposed to islanders; around half came from northern England, with a notable concentration from Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Most of the victims were children and teenagers (under 20) and the middle aged (40-59). The families worst affected were the Moulds from Rayleigh, Essex (five deaths); the Cheethams from Kirkby, Liverpool (3 deaths); and the Glayzer family from Maghull near Liverpool (3 deaths). One hundred and two persons were injured (two later died). Thirty-two of the 102 were seriously injured and so admitted to hospital; 24 of these had surface burns and 14 had injuries to the chest, abdomen or limbs, including three with pelvic fractures. Nineteen people remained in hospital 11 days after the fire. Most of the persons seriously injured in the fire came from Northern England, Northern Ireland and Central Scotland. The remaining 70 casualties were treated on the night of the fire for minor burns, fractures and lacerations, allowed home and then followed up as outpatients. Significantly more women than men died or were seriously injured in the Summerland fire.

APPENDIX

SUMMERLAND FIRE DISASTER: LIST OF FATALITIES

(A) BODIES RECOVERED / AUTOPSY LIST (48)

Name	Age	Address	Body identification Cause of death Other details
Mr Frederick John Allen	About 60	8, Porth-y-Green, Llanblethian, Cowbridge, Glamorgan	Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning
Mrs Constance Atkins	46	3, Park View Road, Kimberworth, Rotherham, Yorkshire	Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August Carbon monoxide poisoning
Mr William ("Billy") Stuart Aves	18	29, Sittingbourne Avenue, Enfield, Middlesex	Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August Identified from silver necklace with a St. Christopher medal and a gold signet ring Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning A bank clerk. His best friend Mr David Piper also died.
Mrs Anne Barber	69	South Ray, Broad Carr Lane, Holywell Green, Halifax, Yorkshire	Post-mortem examination conducted on 3 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning Switchboard operator at Leeds City Police Mrs Barber's husband (Peter) was a garage works manager.

Mr Allen Barker	20	33, Ronald Drive, Fearnhead, Warrington	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out 3 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning</p> <p>Died whilst in the same room as Graham Harding who survived by sitting under a dripping tip and soaking his jacket in water</p>
Mr James Hewitt Bramhall Bennett	43	15, Albany Road, Southport, Lancashire	<p>Not on list issued by police on 3 August; post-mortem examination conducted on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Wife also died in fire</p>
Mrs Beryl Bennett	41	15, Albany Road, Southport, Lancashire	<p>Not on list issued by police on 3 August; post-mortem examination conducted on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Husband also died in fire</p>
Mr Thomas Brady	43	Jamison Street, Govan Hill, Glasgow	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Wife also died in fire</p>
Mrs Catherine Brady	43	As above	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August</p> <p>Husband also died in fire</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide in lungs</p>
Mrs Mary Sarah Boyd	About 45	4, Jenny's Lane, Ballinderry, Upper Lisburn, County Antrim, Northern Ireland	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning</p>

Mrs Mabel Alice Buckeldee	59	94, Norwood Road, March, Cambridgeshire	<p>Post-mortem examination conducted on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Her daughter (Mrs Betty Moulds) and her three grand-daughters were also killed in the fire</p>
Mr John Millar Carson	About 62	13, Hillfield Avenue, Walsworth, Hitchin, Hertfordshire	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning</p>
Mr Richard Cheetham	52	46, Bracknell Avenue, Southdene, Kirkby, Liverpool	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Wife and daughter were also killed in fire</p>
Mrs Elizabeth Cheetham	52	As above	<p>Post-mortem examination conducted on 3 August</p> <p>Severe burns</p> <p>Husband and daughter were also killed in fire</p>
Miss June Cheetham	13	As above	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Mother and father also died in fire</p>
Mr Frederick William Glayzer	49	8, Brendale Avenue, Maghull, near Liverpool	<p>Post-mortem examination conducted on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Wife and daughter were also killed in fire</p>

Mrs Olive Bertha Glayzer	49	As above	Post-mortem examination conducted on 3 August Asphyxia and burns Husband and daughter were also killed in fire
Miss Andrea Margaret Glayzer	13	As above	Aged 12 on police list; post-mortem examination conducted on 3 August Asphyxia and burning Mother and father also died in fire
Mr William Henry Goldsmith	62	5, Caldercliff Road, Berry Brow, Huddersfield, Yorkshire	Post-mortem examination conducted on 3 August Identified by small gold ring Asphyxia following severe burns Wife also killed in fire
Mrs Phoebe Goldsmith	60	As above	Post-mortem examination conducted on 4 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning Husband was also killed in fire
Mr William Robert Hamilton	30	100, Scrabo Road, Newtonards County Down, Northern Ireland	Post-mortem examination conducted on 3 August Identified by gold signet ring Burning and carbon monoxide poisoning
Mrs Beryl Ann Hendrick	32	Flat above the Bengal Restaurant, Douglas (and prior to that of 74, Royal Avenue, Onchan, IoM)	Mrs Hendrick's body was initially wrongly identified on 3 August as being that of Mrs Lorna Norton (both women were in their early to mid thirties). Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning Ran a bar in Summerland

Mrs Anastasia Hughes	48	664, Queen's Drive, Old Swan, Liverpool	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Identified from gold, five stone ring</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Her sister Marcia also died (see below)</p>
Mrs Marcia Hughes	58	22, Derby Lane, Old Swan, Liverpool	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Identified from watch</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Her sister Anastasia was also killed (see above).</p>
Mr Stanley Wyllie Kellet	37	32, Tirie Crescent, Polmont, Falkirk, Scotland	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning</p>
Mr Sean Terence Kelly	21	106, Longbar Lane, Woolston, Warrington	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p>
Mr Keith Baldwin Maceachern	23	<p>Lower Oxford Street, Castleford, Yorkshire</p> <p>(but at the time of the fire was living at 'Swiss Villa', Switzerland Road, Douglas)</p>	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Summerland's bar manager</p>
Mr Hubert James Manning	46	27, Craster Avenue, Forrest Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	<p>Post-mortem examination conducted on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Wife was also killed in fire</p> <p>Mr Manning worked as a shot blaster.</p>

Mrs Gladys Mary Manning	55	As above	Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August Asphyxia and burning Husband was also killed in fire
Mrs Elizabeth McKenzie	70	17, Great Junction Street, Leith, Edinburgh	Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August Post-mortem examination performed on 4 August Asphyxia and burning Mrs McKenzie was widow of Lewis McKenzie (a master painter)
Mrs Betty Ann Moulds	34	Station House, Station Road, Rayleigh, Essex	Christian name given as Elizabeth in list issued by police on 3 August; post-mortem examination conducted on 4 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning
Miss Beverley Ann Moulds	12	As above	Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August Cause of death: burns Mother, grandmother and her two sisters were all killed in the fire
Miss Debra Jayne Moulds	10	As above	Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning Twin of Miss Mandy Moulds
Miss Amanda Jean Moulds	10	As above	Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning Twin of Miss Mandy Moulds

Mrs Lorna Bryson Norton	35	14, Haywood Avenue, Marsh, Huddersfield	<p>Identified incorrectly initially; this body was in fact that of Mrs Beryl Hendrick</p> <p>Correctly identified and post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>A friend of Mrs Norton's daughter (Miss Jane Tallon) was also killed in the fire</p> <p>Mrs Norton was legally separated from her husband Denis John Norton at the time of the fire.</p>
Mr Bernard Malcolm Ogden	41	21, Haydock Street, Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire (but at the time of the fire was living at 'Sea Level', Laxey Beach, Laxey, IoM)	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning</p> <p>Summerland's resident drummer</p>
Mrs Margaret O'Hara	41	2, North Street, Winterton, Lincolnshire	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Daughter was also killed</p>
Miss Tracy O'Hara	10	As above	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Mother was also killed</p>
Miss Julie Panter	14	12, Arnforth Drive, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August; positively identified by jewellery</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and burning</p> <p>Julie was the daughter of Victor John Panter (a chauffeur).</p>

Mr David Piper	17	13, Harrow Avenue, Bush Hill Park, Enfield, Middlesex	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>His friend Mr William Aves was also killed in the fire</p>
Mr Dennis Arthur Sandford	43	74, Royal Avenue, Onchan, IoM	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August</p> <p>Identified by his gold watch</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning</p> <p>Bar worker in Summerland Age given as 44 in police list issued on 3 August</p> <p>Former manager of Nursery Hotel, Onchan Had lived in Island for about 18 months</p>
Mrs Elsie Stevens	About 68	44, Sunningdale Road, Hessle, East Yorkshire	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning</p> <p>On a Wallace Arnold coach holiday Body identified by fellow holidaymaker George Gibson</p> <p>Mrs Stevens was the widow of Stephen Stevens, a retired bank manager</p>
Mr Alexander ("Alex") Gibson Stevenson	35	128, Cameron Drive, New Farm Loch, Kilmarnock, Scotland	<p>Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August</p> <p>Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning</p> <p>Wife also killed</p>

Mrs Jean ("Sheena") Nichol Davis Stevenson	33	128, Cameron Drive, New Farm Loch, Kilmarnock, Scotland	Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning Husband also killed
Miss Jane Tallon	13	48, Springwood Avenue, Huddersfield	Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning Identified by medallion and chain Daughter of Arthur Tallon, Huddersfield's deputy fire chief She also knew another of the fire's victims – Mrs Norton
Mrs Annie Thistlewood	55	6, Aughton Avenue, Aughton, Sheffield	Post-mortem examination carried out on 3 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning Identified by gold watch
Mrs Kathleen Wilkinson	56	107, School Road, Beighton, near Sheffield	Post-mortem examination conducted on 3 August Burning and asphyxia Related to Mrs Thistlewood
Gary Martin Williams	11	35, Rake Lane, Upton, Wirral, Cheshire	Post-mortem examination carried out on 4 August Asphyxia due to carbon monoxide poisoning and severe burning

(B) DEATHS IN HOSPITAL (2)

Name	Age	Address	Body identification Cause of death Other details
Mrs Frances Mary Allen	54	8, Porth-y-Green, Llanblethian, Cowbridge, Glamorgan	Had come to Island to celebrate Silver Wedding Anniversary Died early on 11 August in Noble's Hospital, Douglas from 70% burning, a fractured pelvis and kidney failure Husband also died
Mrs Allison Little	35	Kilmarnock	Died on 29 September 1973 nearly two months after the fire