

Robert C Holmes tells readers about his new novel, S.O.S.



My new novel, S.O.S., takes the reader on an emotional rollercoaster, challenging their preconceptions and expectations. Based as it is on a true story, many readers residing upon The Wirral will find that they are familiar not only with the emotional scenario (seeking help supporting an aged parent with mental health issues), but also with many of the surroundings and settings that the protagonist of the story Vince 'Prez' Sinclair finds himself in. Readers will

recognise the cover art as the picturesque view from West Kirby's Marine Lake overlooking the Dee Estuary.

Alarm bells are raised regarding the state of Vince's mother's health when she attends Heswall Police Station (designed by the respected architect Harry Beswick and built in 1911). She claims that her presence was requested by the police, but Vince discovers otherwise. Vince's mother resides in the leafy suburbia of Sandham Grove – an idyllic area where Vince fondly remembers growing up, surrounded by fields stretching away to Ellesmere Port and hacienda style bungalows with well-manicured lawns.

Vince finds himself remembering enjoying drinks with Nigel, his best friend for over forty years, at the Hotel Victoria (also known colloquially as the Victoria Hotel) once of Lower Heswall. A building of majestic bearing built in 1896, it is sadly now a housing estate. He also reminisces about the squash matches that he and Nigel contested at Heswall Squash Club back in the 1970s.

The story moves on apace as it is clear that all is not well regarding the finances of the S.O.S. Motorcycle Club, of which Vince is President. The club holds regular meetings, each known as an 'unkindness' (a term for a 'gathering of ravens'), which is appropriate as the club back patch symbolises three ravens, a bird heavy with symbolism in Norse mythology. An acknowledgement of The Wirral's Norse history, is illustrated in many place names (Thingwall, Thurstaston, Irby, etc.). At one point Vince mentions having rowed the Draken Harald Halfagre (the largest ever reconstruction of a Viking ship) when it visited Wallasey.

When Vince and his friend Nigel meet at Christmas (Nigel having returned from the USA where he lives, to visit his mother) he receives some devastating news.

As the tale unfolds, Clatterbridge Hospital, Arrowe Park Hospital and St Catherine's Hospital make appearances. Barnston County Primary School, which Vince attended before it relocated to Heswall (in 1967) having been situated in Barnstondale, is also mentioned. This was where Vince recalls losing the vision in his right eye as a child, due to an accident playing the game of 'tick'.

The Jug and Bottle public house (originally named Hill House, built in 1870) is the setting, when Vince meets Angel Dubois. Angel is a young freelance reporter who harbours the usual preconceptions regarding motorcycle clubs, namely, that they are all misogynistic hooligans. Vince endeavours to enlighten her by employing his greatest ally: the truth.

Months later Vince encounters Angel again, attending the Wirral Egg Run, a charitable event that raises money for the Air Ambulance, Blood Bikes and not least Claire House. The Run passes through New Brighton, Meols, Hoylake, West Kirby, Thurstaston and Heswall to the delight of hundreds of well-wishers lining the road. Attended over the years by literally thousands of bikers it is a testament of the good that can be done by like-minded folk. This second meeting with Angel could well determine the fate of Vince and his club. Will Vince save his mother? Will he save his extended family?

Vince founded the S.O.S. on the ethos of loyalty, honour and integrity, rejecting the norms of society, yet standing for old-fashioned values. These values are put to the test as the story progresses. Ultimately it is a story of the indomitable power of the human spirit. A tale of a son's love for his mother, a woman's love for her husband, an extended family's love for hearth, home and each other, the incalculable value of true friendship. Based upon actual events it is a raw, unflinching and gritty, yet ultimately uplifting, tale. The grim realities of life are juxtaposed with humour and friendship, as they should be for us all.

S.O.S. by Robert C. Holmes is available in paperback or Kindle formats via Amazon.



About The Author

Robert C. Holmes lives on The Wirral with his wife and son. He is a biker, musician, writer, cat lover and tortoise wrangler. He is passionate about Norse culture and mythology, holds a BA (Hons) degree in Humanities with Classical Studies and has visited Denmark, Norway and Germany on numerous occasions. He enjoys long walks

with his wife, cinema, theatre, concerts, reading, riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle and supporting St Helens RLFC.

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