

u3a

learn
laugh
live

with the Lutterworth u3a's

Come & meet us on
Thursday 3rd June 2021
for our

u3a Day

in the Lutterworth Market Square
from 10.00am to 4pm

No longer working full-time or raising a family?
Now's the time to make the most of life. u3a
gives you the chance to develop your interests,
make new friends and enjoy yourself.

Wycliffe Lutterworth u3a
W: www.wycliffelutterworthu3a.org
E: thewycliffelutterworthu3a@gmail.com

Lutterworth u3a
W: www.u3asites.org.uk/lutterworth

u3a.org.uk

u3a Day - Learn, Laugh, Live - 3rd June 2021

You will all be aware that the National u3a Day will be celebrated early June 2021.

Originally planned for June 2020, then deferred to October 2020 and finally the event was cancelled.

We have joined with Lutterworth u3a to celebrate the National Day and our “celebration” will take place on **Thursday 3rd June 2021**. The aim of the National Day is to raise the profile of the u3a and encourage new membership.

What we can plan for, and what we can achieve, has been dictated by COVID and lockdown rules. And of course a budget!!

On Thursday 3rd June 2021 (Market Day) we will have a “pitch” on the Market Square in Lutterworth. Information about our two u3a’s will be displayed- meetings, interest groups etc. A short walk “treasure hunt” is being devised and there will be a prize drawn for such.

Notices are being posted in the Lutterworth Journal and Swift Flash to promote our activity **BUT** your help is required to pass information by word of mouth.

On the day please visit us on the market square in Lutterworth and of course encourage a non member friend to visit us.

A small number of people have done a vast amount of work to get where we are. My thanks to those involved.

Hopefully see you on Thursday the 3rd June?

Colin Beadle (Vice Chairperson)

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At Home Monthly Meeting

Our May "At Home Monthly Meeting" is scheduled for
Tuesday 11th May 2021 at 10:30 hrs

This has been arranged by Lutterworth u3a - please note the meeting will be on the **second Tuesday** of the month.

This is once again being hosted by "Mirthy".

The talk is :- **"I've Always Wanted a Smallholding"** by *Pamela McLellan*

Duration is 50 mins.

The presentation is NOT interactive.

You must register using the link below if you wish to join this talk.

<https://mirthy.co.uk/u3a-lutterworth/>

Please follow the instructions on the page to register for the talk.

Once registered you will receive a confirmation email with a unique link in it to access the talk. The system will send a reminder email a couple of days before the event. If you register but do not receive the confirmation email please check your junk or spam folders.

Andrea Nichol (Speaker Liaison) / Colin Beadle (Vice Chairperson)

Notices

Used Stamps

Liz White of Lutterworth U3A is still collecting used stamps on behalf of **Medical Detection Dogs**. They can be any used stamps but please could you ensure they have approximately a 1cm (roughly a finger's width) surround.

Please hang onto your stamps until we are able to meet again and give them to Sue Creeden, or you can pop them through her letterbox (25 Holly Drive, Lutterworth) and she will pass them on.

Sue Creeden



A Visit to ER – A Cautionary Tale

It was a holiday all the family had been eagerly waiting for. Although we had been to the US on previous occasions, we had not had the opportunity to explore Washington and New York in any depth. We arrived early in the morning so, having checked in, decided to try out an American-style breakfast. Having weathered the multitude of choices from the sixteen types of toast available to the unbelievable varieties of ways to serve eggs, we tucked-in in preparation for a heady day of sight-seeing. Shortly after breakfast, my wife said she was suffering from a severe ache in her jaw. Resisting the temptation to ascribe this to over-use, I suggested we might consult the pharmacy across the road.

Kind as the pharmacist was, I think the American fear of litigation following a wrong diagnosis played a part in him suggesting we might be better placed visiting the local hospital's ER (Emergency Room for those not familiar with American drama series) to get it checked out as painkillers would not necessarily sort out the root cause. At this point our adult off-springs decided to leave us to it and explore the nation's capital.

So, we duly arrived at the George Washington Memorial Hospital for what we hoped would be a relatively quick and problem-solving experience. The revolving doors propelled us into a reception area which resembled a cross between a hotel lobby and an immigration checkpoint given the bank of receptionists positioned strategically behind secure counters. Finding one immediately vacant we approached cautiously, not knowing the system. "Hiya, hon", said the receptionist in a matter-of-fact way, "How can I help you?". I explained my wife's predicament, probably pulling a more pained expression than that of my wife. "Okay, fill in these forms. Now, how are you going to pay?" All a little sudden and abrupt but I managed to splutter out that we had health insurance. "Yeah, sure. You can claim all the cost back when you return to the UK, but can I have your credit card." Having heard about the astronomic cost of American

health care I momentarily panicked, hoping I was sufficiently credit-worthy, then handed it over timidly like a schoolboy handing in his homework after his first day at school.

"Okay," said our receptionist. "Sit over there and someone will be out to see you shortly". Having recently endured a four-hour wait in A&E back home, my wife and I exchanged resigned glances and settled in for the long haul. Within two minutes a white-coated lady appeared and called my wife's name. "Hi, I'm Cindy. Now come with me and we'll get someone to look at that jaw of yours". I think the term is 'gobsmacked' as our jaws dropped literally on hearing this, causing my wife to wince even more.

We were placed in a cubicle where my wife had various tests (blood pressure, oxygen levels and others which are now a blur) and was then told that a doctor would be with us presently. With nothing else to do until he arrived, we could hear quite clearly the conversations on either side of us. The one to my left was particularly interesting. It went something like this. "Yes, I know it's painful, but I need you to keep still. Now, I'm going to numb the area and then we'll be able to take the bullet out." Jaws were dropped once more as we exchanged further nervous glances. At this point a good-looking young man with a stethoscope around his neck appeared which suggested the doctor had arrived. "Right, tell me all about your jaw". Which my wife duly did, obviously enjoying the moment as the doctor in question bore a passing resemblance to George Clooney, ironic as we were in an actual ER.

In no time at all, my wife was whizzed off to X-ray and other scanning departments to find the actual cause of the problem as nothing was obvious to the George Clooney look-alike. With the curtains in front of me now open, I sat there alone watching the comings and goings of patients in various states of undress and distress, anticipating a long and lonely vigil. How wrong! In what seemed like only a few minutes my wife was back with all scans and x-rays complete. We were told it would just be a few minutes while these were processed at which time our doctor would return with the results and talk to us about what to do.

Now, the one thing about being in the ER part of an American hospital is that it is entertaining as well as being somewhat intimidating. The comings and goings of patients continued in front of us, swelling the production line of saved sick and injured people. Suddenly, an urgent bell sounded, as if the fire alarm had been triggered, and a scurry of hurried feet made its way down the corridor in front of us. Once the bell stopped it seemed as though time itself had stopped as we listened intently in the unusual and temporary silence. After a short while, the noise levels gradually returned to normal and the white-coated people came slowly back from where they had scurried with sullen, unsmiling faces. We could only guess what had taken place in that moment.

As we continued to sit there, a hospital-gowned patient was led by the arm across the front of our cubicle. Without any exaggeration he had stitching passing from one ear over the top of his head down to the other ear. The rest of his head didn't look too healthy either, but one wondered if Victor Frankenstein was secretly undertaking work in one of the hospital wings. At this point Cindy stuck her head around our cubicle to see if all was OK. "A little busy here today?", I said. "No, not really", she replied. "You should be here on a Friday or Saturday night".

Presently, our doctor returned to say there was nothing obviously wrong with my wife's jaw, that it was probably just an infection, to take these antibiotics and all would be well. We were told to report back to reception to sort out the administration - in other words, payment. The paperwork following treatment was not dissimilar to a tax return and took quite a while. I looked at the list of treatments and tests my wife had allegedly had, not recognising several of them. "What is a maxilla scan?" I asked. "Oh, I'm so glad you pointed that out to me", she replied. "I forgot to charge you for that". Suffice it to say the bill was heavy and probably three times what I expected. What I hadn't expected was the time taken between arriving at the hospital and finishing treatment was around 45 minutes and yet it took around a further hour to pay for it.

There is one big lesson to take from this, being ill in America can seriously damage your bank balance. Make sure you are properly insured and can pay up

front with a credit card. There are two interesting corollaries to this tale. Firstly, on our return to the UK, my wife's painful jaw returned so she went to see our local GP. Our GP listened carefully to the symptoms, took one look and said, "I think you have a stone lodged in your saliva gland". That turned out to be exactly what it was, not picked up by any of the tests on holiday. After a short period of waiting my wife was admitted to the Leicester Royal Infirmary where the stone was surgically removed. What fantastic medical professionals we have in the UK and, specifically, locally.

The other weird corollary to our American hospital adventure was that some three or four years ago, and therefore some ten years after the event, we received a letter from the George Washington Memorial Hospital. The envelope was addressed to me but with various addresses in US and Canada crossed out, with a final note saying 'Try Lutterworth, UK'. Inside the letter was a cheque for a few hundred pounds saying this is the refund due to you and this is our final attempt to get it to you. All this in spite of a non-problematic insurance settlement! A bizarre ending to a very bizarre experience.

Richard Hill

4th WEDNESDAY WALKING GROUP

Co-ordinators: Sue & Peter Creeden

Tele: 01455 557888

April 2021 Walk Report

Twenty two of us plus one dog set off from the pub car park in Braunston having completed the COVID-19 formalities. The rain from earlier in the morning had gone and the skies cleared to allow the sun to shine down on us. We had a short break in Flecknoe, a remote little village. We returned via the canal towpath watching out for the boaters and wildlife. Being the first walk of the year there was a buzz of excitement and a sense of appreciation that our organised walks had got going again.

George Robertson



4th WEDNESDAY WALKING GROUP

Next Walk: Wednesday 26 MAY 2021

Walk Organisers:- Tony Allen 01455 552087 mob 07770 580 828
Paul Butler 01455 699437

In case of changes to Covid-19 rules and recommendations prior to the walk, please email sueandpeter.creedon@talktalk.net if you intend to join this walk. We will then be able to inform you of the final arrangements.

Walk Suitability: Please review the walk description and consider if it is suitable for you.

Start Point and Time: Bulls Head, Wolvey, LE10 3LB (Tel 01455 221100).
Meet at 9.45am (possibly 5 minutes earlier if you are pre-ordering lunch) to depart at **10am** promptly



Toilets are available – note that the pub operates a one-way system. When I was there I walked in through a door left of the Conservatory and exited to the car park via the door just visible left of the outdoor-seating/fenced area. (Indoors, the tables are reasonably spaced out).

Directions to start : From the A5 roundabout at Magna Park take the 3rd exit heading West. Two miles after the Fosse Way crossroads fork left on Mill Lane just

beyond the prominent sign to Copston Magna. Drive downhill through Wolvey Heath then turn left to pass Galliford Try and rise up left towards the church. The Bulls Head is on the right. Return trip from Lutterworth - 16 miles.

Route and distance: The route is fairly level with **NO stiles**, approximately 5 miles and will take about 2 1/4 hours including a break. Hopefully we won't lose anyone this time around like before (due to a mislaid walking stick

Outward Leg

From the pub, the walk follows the pavement downhill along the main road, past Galliford Try, and then right up Mill Lane in Wolvey Heath (this is the way you drove in by). Turning right off it along Mill Road we then enter our first field and skirt the edge of this and the next one before descending to, and across the bridge of a small stream. Walking slightly uphill through a meadow we then emerge at Wolvey cemetery and strike out East through a meadow, an arable field and several field edges to reach our turning point. This is about 60% of the walk completed.

Return Leg

After taking our tea break at a collection of concrete blocks, we then head for home along the hard-surfaced Wolds Lane farm road which, after a few potholes, settles down to an easy walk back to the Bulls Head. Should the weather, and mood, prove suitable we may well divert through the churchyard to cut out a final part of the road.

Optional lunch – (Please note that Tony originally wrote these notes to do the walk in November so I suggest that you treat them only as a guide).

Please order before departure.

This is a Marsden's pub and menus are shown on the Bulls Head web site (www.bullsheadwolvey.co.uk).

After our recce I had Gammon from the LEISURELY LUNCH "Light Bite" £6.75 Menu and it was sufficient, or should have been. But as starters and Desserts were only £2 extra I went wild and had Breaded Mushrooms & salad as well as Bramley Apple and custard afterwards. No dinner for me that night!

There is a traditional selection on the FEEL GOOD FOOD menu, priced £8.95 to £9.95. The SPECIALS Board is £10+.

See Covid Note on next page

IMPORTANT COVID-19 NOTE

Please can you:

Review your personal health and circumstances referring to current Government guidance and decide if it is safe for you to walk

Consider the health risk category of anyone else in your household

Avoid touching gates and path furniture wherever possible

Bring hand sanitizer and possibly gloves

Bring a face mask just in case of an unexpected incident

Remember to maintain social distancing at all times

Not share food or walking equipment with walkers not in your household

POETRY GROUP

Co-ordinator: Sylvia Hitchen Tele: 0116 247 8353

Sylvia.hitchen@btinternet.com

On a hot, sunny April day 5 of us met al fresco to share poems on the topic of humour. We all enjoyed the easy rapport of being together after many zoom meetings.

We started by remembering Jill Graham, a long standing group member by sharing 3 poems. Jill had a wide ranging love of poetry and we knew she especially liked- Bloody Men, comparing men to buses when your wanting a new relationship and three come along all at once and My Lover, listing all points good and bad about her lover both by Wendy Cope and I Saw a Jolly Hunter by Charles Causley ending with the jolly hare getting clean away.

Group favourites included:

The Garden Party by Philip Rush, a comic description about an Australian garden party, particularly apt given our garden setting.

Two by Roger McGough- Poetry Please which had us racking our brains to identify the different poems mentioned in it and What My Lady Did.

How to Conceive Boys by Claude Quillet written in early 1600 was written as sound medical advice at the time, the wife having to recline at ease on her right!

Finally by the old favourite anon and well known by Terry Wogan fans The Pig, a pig disdainfully leaving a drunk in the gutter as unfit company.

Next month's topic is Fitness, Sport and Exercise (exercise clothing and trainers not obligatory) and weather permitting we will meet outdoors again.

Anne Watson

GENTLE CYCLING GROUP

Co-ordinator: Sue Creeden

Tele: 01455 557888

Unfortunately, it was about the coldest day in April when nine enthusiastic members gathered at Ullesthorpe Garden Centre for the first ride of 2021. However, that did not chill the spirits. We split into two groups and headed off to Ullesthorpe itself where we collected the final member of the group. We enjoyed a whiz down the hill to the Claybrookes before climbing up again to High Cross. We turned into Bumble Bee Lane and enjoyed another downhill stretch to Sharnford. Turning right onto the main road we cycled through the village and then did another couple of right turns to reach the coffee stop at Fosse Meadows for a very welcome break. Our return journey was through Frolesworth and Leire, up to Ashby Parva and back to the Garden Centre. This distance was approximately 12.5 miles. Everyone enjoyed being out in a group again.

The next ride is scheduled for **Wednesday 19th May**, starting from **The Elms, Lutterworth**. If you fancy joining us you will be very welcome. We ride in groups of no more than six a short distance apart and take our time, stopping for short breaks and walking up any steep hills! Just give me a call on the above number or email me - sueandpeter.creeden@taltalk.net.



PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Co-ordinator: Michael Bates

Tele: 07899937595

Photo Group Zoom Meeting held on 30th April

The last Friday in the month was, as usual, the date for the Photography Group Zoom meeting and once again was very well attended. After a good catch up, gossip and light-hearted banter the meeting proper got going and, in a change from the usual format, the entire meeting was taken up with this month's picture topic which was "A Song Title". Throughout April members have been sending in their pictures which represent or suggest songs. These were shown and then the group spent a short time trying to work out, or guess, likely titles before a clip of the actual song was played. Some songs were relatively easy to spot whilst others were rather more obscure and there were even a few that could not be worked out until the audio clip revealed the answer.

A grand total of 50 images were presented and, remarkably, there were only 2 pairs of duplicate song titles.

All-in-all it was a very entertaining meeting which generated a lot of chatter and discussion throughout and showed that the group has wide tastes in music and also has some very "lateral" thinkers! We also had a lot of fun trying to remember the names of some of the performers and groups and groans of frustration, or cries of "I knew it really", were regularly heard!!

Next month's meeting will be held via Zoom, a week earlier than usual, on Friday the 21st May starting at 10:00am and will be hosted by Mike Chapman.

Rawdon

Here is a small selection of images from the meeting. Can you guess the song titles?? [Answers on page 34.](#)



Mike Chapman



Ruth Bones



Stephen Carter



Penny Ross



Val Ridley



Colin Beadle



Trudy Haddon



Peter Sands

FRENCH CONVERSATION

Co-ordinator: Sue Hicks

Tele: 01858 880273

22 April 2021

Zoom meeting, well attended. Pearl had devised a great quiz which questioned and informed our knowledge of French food and drink (but will we be able to remember?). We discussed various topical subjects including lockdown projects.

The next meeting will be on 27 May, and Ray and Judith have offered to test us on our general knowledge of France.

Sue

GARDEN GROUP

Co-ordinator: Sue Creeden

Tele: 01455 557888

At last plans are being made for our first garden visit since August 2019! All being well, we will be paying a visit to **Westbrooke House, Little Bowden on Tuesday afternoon 29th June**. The gardens comprise 6 acres in total and are approached through a tree lined driveway of mature limes and giant redwoods. Key features are walled flower garden, walled kitchen garden, lower garden, pond areas, spring garden, lawns, woodland paths and a meadow with a wildflower area, ha-ha and hornbeam avenue. The garden featured in Alan Titchmarsh's "Love your garden" in May 2019 on ITV and has recently been photographed for a popular garden magazine.

More details to follow in the June Bulletin.

Sue

1st WEDNESDAY WALKING GROUP

Co-ordinators: Peter & Irene Moore

Tele: 01455 552594 Mob:- 07931 568792

email.- peter79moore@gmail.com

Date of Walk :- Wednesday 16th June 2021 - PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

Driving distance:- 5 Miles each way.

Walk leaders :- Peter & Irene Moore. email.- peter79moore@gmail.com Tel.-01455 552594

Meeting Point and Time : Lutterworth Recreation Ground car park at 9.30am to leave at 9.35am.

Start Point : Pig in Muck, Manor Road, Claybrooke Magna, Leicestershire. LE17 4AY.
Leave 10.00am.

Toilets available.

Directions to Start :- Through Bitteswell and continue on to Claybrooke Magna. Pub on right hand side, at far end of village. Car park on site.

Order lunch from very good *Lunch time Menu*, before starting walk. Varied choice of food. The best by miles is the finest Carvery in Leicestershire. At £7.45.

Route and Distance :- Exit the car park into the main road, cross over ,with care, onto a footpath, go diagonally over fields and cross the main road again but in the opposite direction. Pass by Claybrooke Mill, turn left and right and exit into Ashby Parva, further footpath to Fosse Meadows on return to Pub.

1 stile. 5 Miles. Gentle walk through farmland

Good choice of Food , extensive Lunch time menu. Gluten Free Food available.

Summary. Varied Walk , mostly field paths and some quiet road walking , Fairly flat walk. There are 3 Water Mills on route. Lovely spot for the coffee break.

Next Walk:- 5 miles : 1 stile : Crick : Great selection of food : A country walk, passing the deer herds.

2nd WEDNESDAY WALKING GROUP

Co-ordinator: Mike Chapman

tele: 01455 209972

This edition covers both May and June walks

Walk 1 – Wed 19th May 2021 – Note, this walk is on the THIRD Wednesday.

Walk Suitability: Please review the walk description and consider if it is suitable for you. Please also ensure you adhere to all Covid guidelines in force at the time of the walk.

Walk Organisers: Peter & Irene Moore email.- peter79moore@gmail.com Tel: 01455 552594

Meeting Point and Time: Lutterworth Recreation Ground car park at 9.10am to leave at 9.20am.

Start Point: Friendly Inn, Main Street, Frankton, Warwickshire. CV23 9NY. Leave 10.00am. Toilets available.

Directions to Start: Take A426 passed Tesco 's, at tee junction before railway , turn right, follow signs to Princethorpe, after large off- set island filter left to tee junction, turn left , follow for 1 mile and turn left at bend signed Bourton and Frankton. After 300 meters turn right into Frankton. Pub on right. Return distance 22 miles. **If you are not staying for lunch, please park on the quiet road and meet at the “Large Circular Seat”.** Order lunch from very good “Lunch time Special Menu” before starting walk. Varied Choice of food. Gluten Free Food available.

Route and Distance: Retrace your car journey (but walking) and after 200 metres turn right onto Bridleway, at road turn left. After ½ mile turn right onto Farm Track and turn left through field gate, at bottom of field exit at gate and turn left at road, after ¼ mile turn right and left onto “Old Leamington Spa to Rugby Railway line”, (15 miles in Length of the London and North Western Railway branch line opened in 1851). Follow for approx. 2 miles and exit left at bridge onto track up field, at farm follow footpath back to Frankton, hopefully passing

“bluebells” on route. With a further surprise to come. 1 stile. 4.2 Miles. A gentle starter walk for all to get “back in shape” ready for a busy Summer

Summary: Varied Walk, mostly field paths and some quiet road walking. Fairly flat walk. Lovely spot for the coffee break with all having a seat.

Walk 2 – Wed 9th June 2021

Walk Suitability: Please review the walk description and consider if it is suitable for you. Please also ensure you adhere to all Covid guidelines in force at the time of the walk.

Walk Organisers: Lesley & Mike Chapman 01455 209972

Meeting & Start Point, Start Time: Lutterworth Recreation ground car park 9.10am to leave at 9.20am.

Directions to Start: Head to the M1 south, and turn onto the A14. Continue as far as junction 2 (Kelmarsh/Maidwell). At the end of the slip road, and junction of A508, turn right (sp Maidwell). After entering Maidwell, take the left turning towards Draughton. (At the junction there is a signpost to “Primary School”). Drive along the narrow winding village road and after leaving the village, travel a further half a mile. The disused railway line has a car park on the left. Return trip, 32 miles. Walk starts at 10:00am.

Route and Distance: The walk starts with a short section along the dismantled Brampton Valley Way, then follows field paths and village pavements back to cross the A508. From there, we take a concealed alleyway to a short field path section, before walking along a quiet country lane. We then turn left over field paths towards the railway line for the final 1.6 miles back to the start. The walk distance is 4.9 miles with two stiles. There are a few gentle hills in this walk.

Next Walk. Wednesday 16th June 2021. From Claybrooke Magna. 5 miles, 1 stile.

Co-ordinators:- Peter and Irene Moore - please note change of date.

Mike

ENGINEERING, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Co-ordinator: Chris Ridley

Tele: 01455 209920

April Meeting Zoom Event

The 1948 Berlin Airlift and Interview with Ron Poulton

This month's two-part Zoom event was well received with some 26 attendees viewing online.

From an original suggestion by Andy Hetherington, the resulting presentations were the culmination of effort from both Michael Bates in researching archive material / content and Mike Chapman who "Zoom proofed" the presentation / interview together for the group.

The meeting featured an interview with ESTG member Ron Poulton (Ron's son was also able to join us on Zoom) who served in the RAF Regiment around the time of the Airlift. Ron was stationed in Berlin on the ex -Luftwaffe air base at Gatow and I explored Ron's time there with a Q&A session recorded with Ron specially for our meeting.

It is worth remembering that when Ron was serving in Berlin it was 100 miles within the Russian occupied zone, and the Russians were able to control access from western Germany, occupied by the western allies. Also, it was only about 3 years after the end of WW II and Germany was only just starting to recover, with the help of the western allies, from the devastation of the war.

I have included some maps and photos which give relevance to the air corridors through which supplies were being flown into Berlin and the geographical and political partitioning of Germany post WW II.

In part one of our meeting, we revealed the situation existing in Berlin in 1948 through a montage of photos, maps, statistics, and unique B&W film shot at the time. This emphasised the urgent requirement for essential supplies and demonstrated the

acute need to help the humanitarian crisis of the west Berliners, then under siege by the Russians. Russia had imposed the blockade in protest at the introduction of the new 'Deutsche Mark' as part of the European Recovery Program (ERP), a proposal for economic restructuring of Germany proposed by the western allies. Russia intended to force the western allies to withdraw the 'Deutsche Mark' in preference to the hyper-inflated 'Reichsmark', a currency used throughout the Russian occupied zones. The western allies, principally America, refused to withdraw the ERP and this created a stand-off between the Russians and the western allies. Supplies in West Berlin would very soon have become depleted, and President Truman in April 1948 authorised the airlift, fearing any land-based action would trigger a war with Russia. The airlift would last until Sept 1949 providing urgently needed supplies including, all kinds of basic food stuffs, fuel, Coal, Medicine, and clothing.

During this time, some 400,000 tons of supplies were delivered by the RAF involving 700 aircraft making nearly 300,000 flights to sustain over 2 million West Berliners. At the time there was no mechanical handling so everything had to be loaded and unloaded by hand.

An unusual aspect of the airlift was the involvement of RAF Coastal Command's Sunderland flying boats flying from the Elbe in Hamburg to Havel Lake in West Berlin. We saw an excerpt from a public information film showing Short Sunderland Flying boats delivering supplies like 'salt', a commodity which would have caused potential corrosion problems with 'normal' aeroplanes but the 'Sunderland's' were specially protected from saltwater corrosion.

Due to the success of the airlift the Russians lifted their land blockade in May 1949.

The **second part** of the meeting featured Ron Poulton who, as an 18-year-old conscript was sent, after basic training in Catterick, to Germany to serve at RAF Gatow in Berlin.

We recorded our conversation with Ron which took the form of a Q&A session over Zoom. Ron related his experiences of both the journey by sea to Holland, where everyone aboard was seasick except himself as he spent most of the trip on deck and in the galley!!

Ron's recollection of his posting to Gatow, was informative and amusing and Ron gave a good insight into the running of the base where he was detailed to help guard the supplies as they arrived by plane. However, when on duty he had his service Lee Enfield .303 but without ammunition just in case this sparked off an incident!

Apart from guarding the base, and attending official parades, Ron also drove all sorts of vehicles in Germany including "3 tonner" trucks. Ron wryly described the time when he was travelling through the forest loaded up with Mortars, ammunition, a few servicemen in the back and an officer up front, they suddenly veered off the road and headed for the trees, ending up down a slope with the lorry's contents all over everyone including the officer. Who was driving it was Ron of course!

At the height of the airlift, fully loaded Allied Aircraft were landing 'one every minute'. Ron relayed how the Russians tried hard to stop these landings by overflying the airfield and sometimes actually landing and taking off, frustrating the allied pilot's approach runs. On a couple of occasions this ended in tragedy with a total loss of life in both Russian and Allied aircraft crews.

Not all of Ron's time was spent on the Gatow base, he volunteered for a large games event entering as a Javelin thrower despite having never thrown one before. To his surprise came 5th overall.

Time off- base was spent sometimes in Berlin where events could get 'lively' at night and another off-base excursion was in the mountains for 10 days skiing holiday. The excursion cost a total price of 10 shillings (in old money) all found, which even then would have seemed to be particularly good value.....!

In a final comment, Ron explained that the whole experience as an 18-year-old had had a profound effect on him and that he had "grown up very quickly" after returning to England and de- mobilised in 1950. What Ron experienced in Germany changed his attitude to life, enduring right through the remainder of his working life as a builder and to this day.

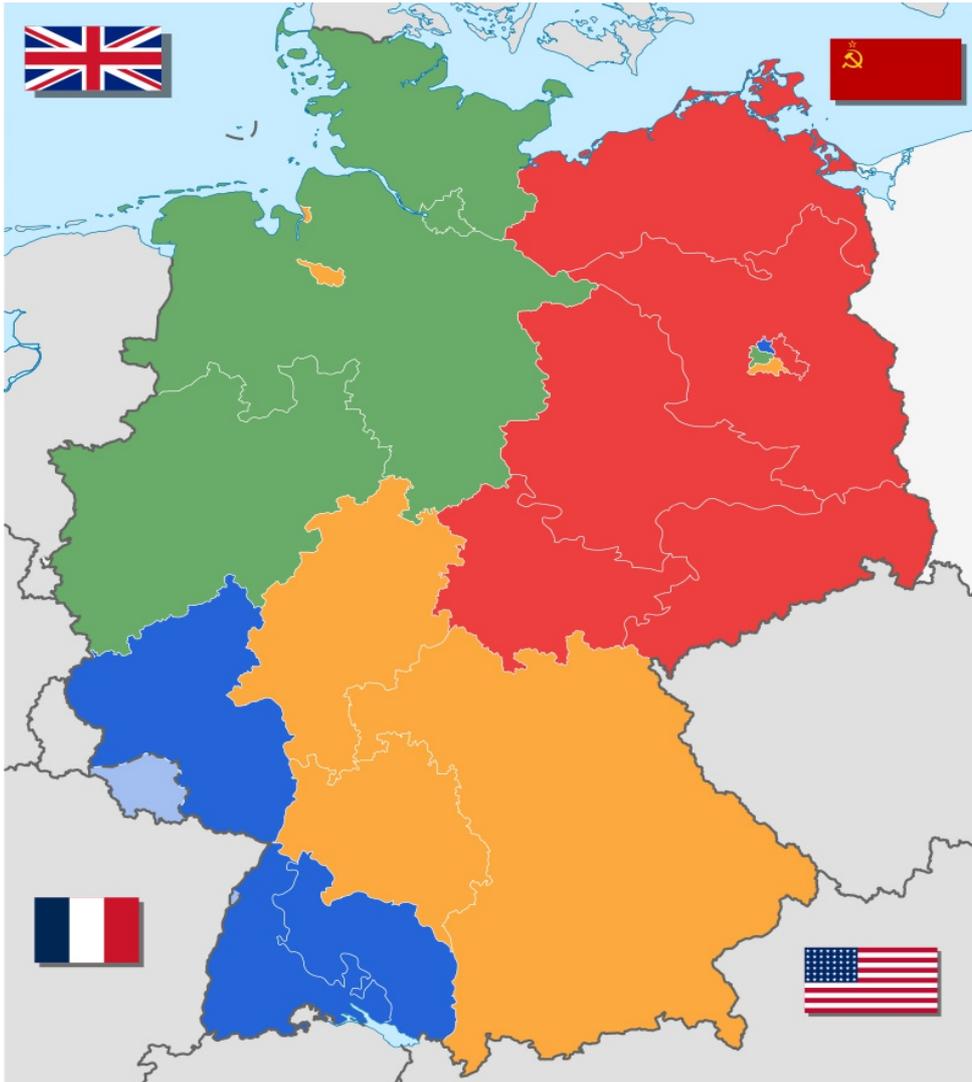
My thanks go to Ron, who kindly gave his time to recall his experiences, to Carol Poulton who helped organising the interview and the "two Mikes" who did the techie stuff.

Chris Ridley

Maps and pictures on following pages.

Berlin Airlift - maps and pictures

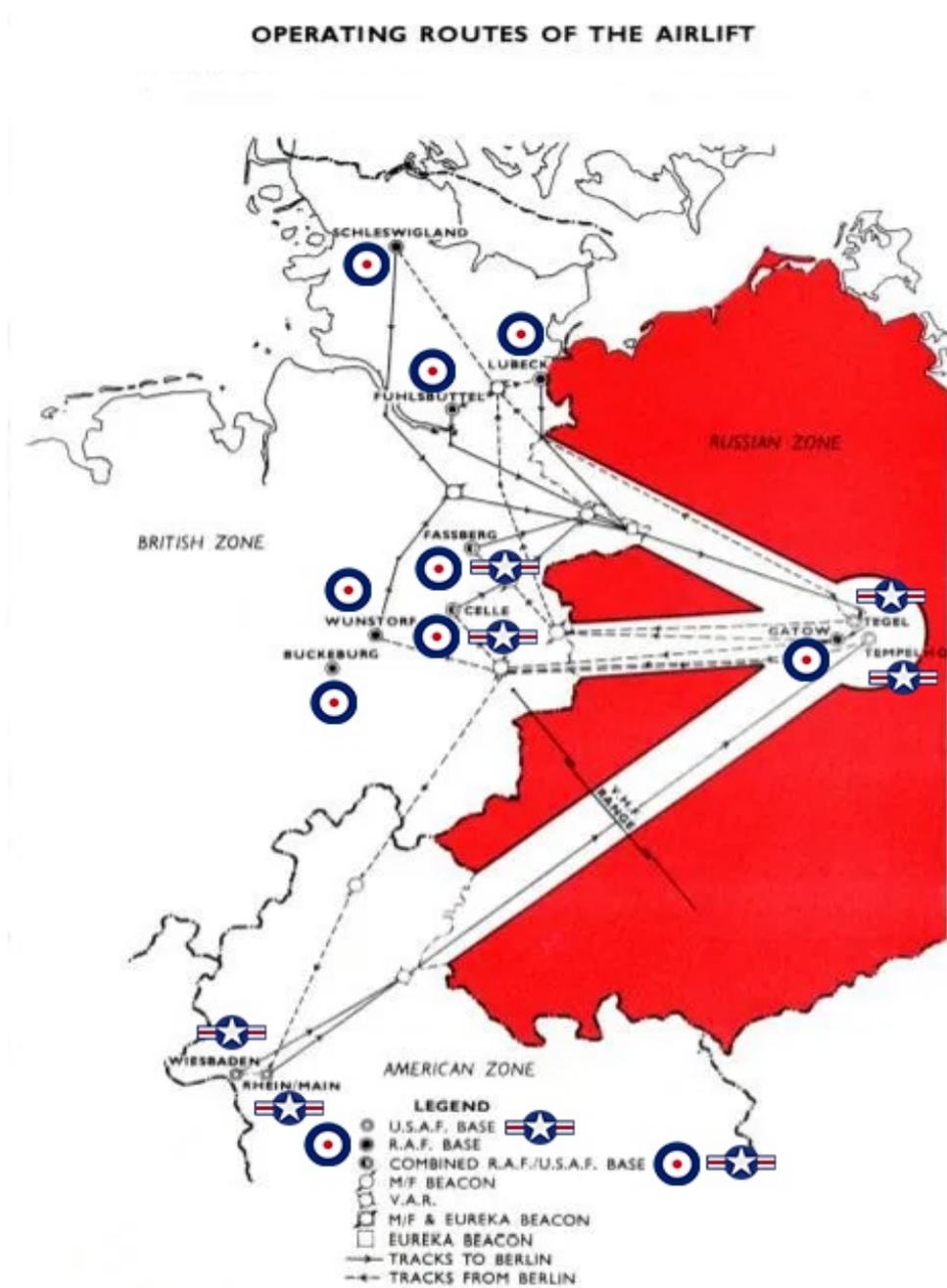
Berlin was 100 miles within the Russian Occupied Zone



Only 3 'air corridors' provided access to West Berlin from the Western Allies occupied zones.



Allied airbases serving Berlin during the airlift



Berlin Occupied Zones



RAF Handley Page Hastings landing at RAF Gatow, Berlin



RAF Regiment airmen on Parade at RAF Gatow, Berlin



RAF Gatow, Berlin – Main Gate



Iconic Berlin Airlift picture. American C-54 Skymaster overflying Gatow, German civilians scavenging for scrap while RAF Regiment airmen patrol the perimeter, probably without ammunition!



Answers to photo quiz:

These boots were made for walking

Chim Chimeny

Breakfast at Tiffanys

All you need is love

Lady in Red

Two pints of lager and a packet of crisps please

California Dreaming

On a carousel