



**Issue No: 191**

**Driving the wheel of fellowship**

## January '21 Newsletter

**Programme for the next two months.**

Speaker Finder    Grace & Thanks

### January

Monday	4th	Normal Meeting	David Ayres	Sally Hollis
Monday	11th	Normal Meeting	Anne Baker	Graham Johnson
Thursday	14th	Council Meeting	7-30 p.m.	
Monday	18th	Business Meeting		
Monday	25th	7-30 p.m. meeting with Wycliffe		

### February

Monday	1st	Normal Meeting	Rose Chapman	John Wilson
Monday	8th	Normal Meeting	Val Cooper	David Toone
Thursday	11th	Council Meeting	7-30 p.m.	
Monday	15th	Business Meeting		
Monday	22nd	Normal Meeting	Elaine Turner	Peter Osborn

If you are unable to carry out your 'duty' please find a substitute and tell  
**John Howell** Tel: 01455 553209 email sheila.m.howell@hotmail.co.uk

## **'In our youth**

For those of us who were brought up in the South of England the choice of job between leaving school and starting work and National Service were what I would call our carefree days. We had no responsibility and only needed some money to pay for our entertainment. Girlfriends never came cheap. And getting to London for many of us by train was not only time consuming but boring.

Like many "train commuters" it took at least 2 hours a day. Some created chess clubs to while away the time— some looked out of the train windows while others just caught up on their sleep having been out most of the previous night. Whatever it was you caught up on the previous night's activities and a few of us just wanted to disrupt our fellow commuters tranquillity. I was one of the latter needing our space and needing a compartment to ourselves. Thinking back we were a downright menace to our fellow commuters. Each day was a challenge just wondering what we could do without getting into too much trouble from our older commuters, we were just a pain to everyone.

One idea was to release a newspaper out of the open train window which clung to the side of the moving train until it found the guard with his head out of the guards van window further down the train. The paper had the effect of wrapping itself around his head just as the train entered the platform.

Other ideas were to be selective in who we wanted to join our compartment. Having a fit of coughing was quite effective as someone had ideas of joining our compartment.

On one occasion we decided to lift one of the girls onto the "stringed" luggage racks and leave her there until we reached the termini, at the time she wondered whether we would remember to get her down as we all got out. Later that week she had her revenge by handing one of the fellows her double bass to look after on the rush hour train home, from then on she was treated with respect and was always offered a seat. Our piece de resistance was a spate of the group sending us cards while on holiday addressed to members as " Name - last compartment on first coach 7-15 a.m. Caterham to London". To our surprise was delivered by the postman who played along with it for a couple of weeks making our fellow commuters laugh at our audacity at even asking (being a termini may have helped).

Our fellow commuters must have wondered what we would think about next  
All good fun that put a smile on our travellers faces.

### **Talk by Mike Southall**

After a number of years as Export Manager for Pegler, Doncaster, covering the USA, Middle East and development markets, Mike was encouraged to take an opportunity to assume control of Pegler Rus, in Russia, becoming the commission agent for the area. This was in the mid 1980's and Pegler had taken a 'Know How Foundation' grant to enable light assembly work in St.Petersburg. Within a month of working in Russia the Company was registered and supplying plumbing, heating equipment and ventilation to the more affluent people in St.Petersburg, Moscow and Samara.

Mike gave a few anecdotes of the time he spent in Russia and briefly they are as follows:

One of Mike's first visits was to meet some new customers and they arranged a 'get to know you' weekend in a holiday resort (similar to Butlins) based by the side of the Volga river. All went well until they were to leave and Mike had to admit he had hidden his passport. As the meeting was geared towards them seeing if they could trust Mike, he also had reservations and hid his passport in case it was stolen. It was hidden behind a loose brick, in the chalet, and everyone helped to locate it.

Osinovay Rocha was the old Mayor's house in St.Petersburg and when Pegler Rus were asked, by the local Military construction company, if they could provide a heating system with individual temperatures in each room, and an order was placed. The building was wooden with a metal roof and, in winter, an outside temperature of minus 25. This was not straightforward. Heating in St.Petersburg was supplied by two large district heating schemes which meant the heat came from two central sources to feed the city. This particular system would be a stand alone gas fired system using the equivalent of what we used to call Towns Gas, which had a different calorific value to that of Natural Gas. Despite general scepticism the installation proved successful and when they revisited the client he asked if there was anything he could do for them. They needed a new warehouse and office and they were asked to call back the following day. This they did and were directed to a military construction site where they were allocated a warehouse and were able to use the same canteen as the soldiers. When asked what this would cost, they were just told 'you do not exist'.

Samara was the centre of the military, space research and chemical industry and was on the banks of the Volga. In the War valuable Russian relics were stored there as it was located in the centre of the country.

During one exhibition there Mike was invited, along with Dr. Shmelov his customer, to visit the secret space centre located in the central park. Although it was secret, everyone knew where it was. Despite thinking that it would take authorisation from Moscow to gain a visitors pass we were told that all we had to do was go around to the rear of the centre and knock on the door and ask for Igor. This we did and proceeded to be shown various pieces of space equipment. At that time Mike was approached to see if he would buy some watches. These were very poor quality and when he said no; Shmelov told him he must buy them. Shmelov's Company registration number was 1 and as a doctor of Cybernetics had a high local profile. He said as far as anyone was concerned he only dealt with wealthy westerners.

When Mike explained he wasn't one of them Shmelov said he knew that and Mike knew that but the Space people didn't – so he had to buy the watches. Further into the centre Mike was approached and asked to buy some sewing machines. Again Mike declined and again Shmelov told him he must and so a collection of machines were added to the watches. They came to a large hall which had tables, chairs, food and staff. The site Director came out and toasted Mike and everyone had something to eat and drink and once the Director left Mike and Shmelov were escorted off site. When Mike asked what this was all about, apparently the State had not paid any wages for two months and effectively Mike had done so.

When working abroad Mike explained that you have to trust your colleagues and in some cases he had an armed car with them when they went into the countryside, while on other times a bodyguard was present. Despite that he never felt threatened and while there were lawless areas it was a case of being sensible. He felt more threat when he was walking through Cabrini-Green in Chicago than he did in Russia.

In August in 1998 the rouble fell to a quarter of its value overnight. When Mike started in Russia all business was

cash in advance, by 1998 he had to give three months credit to compete with Finnish, Italian and German companies. With the fall of the rouble no-one paid their bills as they didn't know what exchange rate to use (all pricing was in dollars). Unless the market improved by November, when the permafrost came down, then it was unlikely to see any market movement before March. As things didn't improve Mike's wife suggested that a more locally based occupation may be preferable and he joined Bosch in Worcester.

### **Air Ambulance to the rescue**

Over the year we have had talks from members on a variety of subjects.

Our latest from John Wilson who recounted a lucky escape that occurred some 16 years ago. A school bus, returning from taking Lutterworth Grammar School students into school, swerved off the road and careered across John Wilson's lawn ending up embedded in their bedroom. You can imagine the huge shock and fright his wife Sue had looking out of the bedroom window to see a bus coming towards her as she was changing that morning. Roy the driver had blacked out whilst driving the school coach and had lost control of the steering as he left the road. The ambulance and fire brigade were both called along with the newly formed Air Ambulance who attended to the driver who was critically injured following the accident—luckily at the time there were no children on board. The crew of the air ambulance who had responded to the call took Roy to the Northampton General Hospital some 12 miles away arriving there in just 5 minutes.

It was established that Roy had had an epileptic fit, the cause of the accident, but he made a full recovery from his injuries. However it left poor John and Sue overseeing the repairs to their bungalow but thankful for a lucky escape.

*Sent to the Press over the weekend*

## Lutterworth Rotary Club's Santa Sleigh

Santa and social distancing do not really go together at Christmas except when it's a special D-Day. The occasion arose because the Lutterworth Rotary Club arranged Santa Sleigh events in Morrison's car park and at the town square market during December in support of Lutterworth and District Age Concern and Rotary charities.

At the Morrison's event ninety year old Derek Day asked if he could sit next to Santa because he had always wanted to as a child but never had the opportunity so Santa obliged as it was outside, only for a moment and Derek had waited patiently for over eight decades.

The Inspire Santa Sleigh has not been used before in a static role but due to Covid 19 Rotary's main fund raising events, the Plant and Craft Fair, the Big Bike Ride and Santa Fun Run had all been cancelled so the Club was grateful to have the safe use of the Sleigh to raise funds and bring happiness to children (young and old).

**Out of the total of £700.00 raised 50 festive parcels will be given to the most vulnerable local pensioners, as nominated by Age Concern, to bring some Christmas cheer.**

At the town market Rotary was supported by Neil Greene who provided a hog roast adjacent to the Santa Sleigh. Lutterworth Rotary Club would like to thank Morrison's, the Town Council, Neil Greene, Plantool for the free use of a generator and Inspire for allowing Rotary to use their Santa Sleigh.



*Please see a few photos taken on the two days of Santa on his sleigh together with Neil and his Hog Roast*





T'was two weeks before Christmas,  
And all through the town,  
People wore masks,  
That covered their frown

The frown had begun  
Way back in the Spring,  
When a global pandemic  
Changed everything.

They called it corona,  
But unlike the beer,  
It didn't bring good times,  
It didn't bring cheer.

Contagious and deadly,  
This virus spread fast,  
Like a wildfire that starts  
When fuelled by gas.

Airplanes were grounded,  
Travel was banned.  
Borders were closed  
Across air, sea and land.

As the world entered lockdown  
To flatten the curve,  
The economy halted,  
And folks lost their verve.

From March to July  
We rode the first wave,  
People stayed home,  
They tried to behave.

When summer emerged  
The lockdown was lifted.  
But away from caution,  
Many folks drifted.