

SAILING ON LAKE CONSTANCE

At the end of the garden the poplars are swaying in the breeze, their leaves singing like the sea rolling onto a shingle beach. A week ago we had been elsewhere: writes Ken Dickinson.

Introduction

Lake Konstanz (Der Bodensee) lies on the southern edge of Germany. The north shore and 16 kilometres of shore from the western end extending south to Konstanz are German. Konstanz straddles an overflow of the lake which opens out 3kms later into the Untersee which terminates 14 kms later in the River Rhine. The southern shore of the Untersee and the south shore of the Bodensee are Swiss. A small section of the lake at the eastern end is Austrian. The lake is 62 km long east to west and 14 km wide at its maximum. There are German and Swiss villages all round the lake. It seemed an ideal place for a summer cruise.

The German (1) and Swiss (2) Tourist Offices produced good information together with the sailing regulations. As expected from last year's experience on Lake Geneva (3) the Swiss required documentation, inspection and reporting to the police. The German regulations were more lenient. As long as the sail area was less than 12 m² then there was no need to report. All was well as long as we left the spinnaker at home. The restrictions on engines appeared to mean that below 5 HP there would be none. A letter to the official authority (4) in Constance produced a 4 page document, a form to complete and a request for 30DM. A reply written in the most conciliatory tones (composed by a long-standing German friend) resulted eventually in a letter giving permission to use our 2 HP outboard engine.

A chart was purchased at the suggestion of Imray Laurie (5) by telephoning Hamburg (6). Of course, the woman spoke excellent English and trusted me to pay (cost 38 DM). We did not obtain a pilot book because one did not seem to be available. A road map of the Bodensee area is published by Kompass (7) and complimented the chart. The Lake is deep and shelves quickly and no anchor was taken.

Neither the German nor Swiss Tourist Offices at local level gave details of yacht havens or launching facilities. The chart was helpful but not detailed enough to determine where to start. However, a leaflet (8) issued by the Konstanz and District Hoteliers had a photo of the Land Hotel Bodensee, Wallhausen which showed small boats, a quay, a launching ramp and a hotel just behind. A map in the brochure showed a marina. I telephoned in March and to my delight the receptionist spoke English (how lucky we were - no one else *on* the Hotel staff did). I booked in for two nights in June and confirmed later by letter.

First Days On Saturday June 20th after crossing the Channel (Dover to Calais) on the 19th we arrived at Wallhausen very hot and tired in the late afternoon. There was the Hotel and the quay and the ramp. A cold glass of beer on the Hotel terrace was needed at once. The equanimity restored I spotted two men leaving a pontoon of the haven and walking off. I left the terrace to port to intercept them. They came onto the terrace to starboard. We met and they told me that Mr Blum was the Harbour Master and I could find him in his office on the quayside. No one in office. A large man was leaving another pontoon. I asked his help in my abysmal German. He was Mr Blum. He spoke no English. He was very friendly, happy for Jacana (1131) to be launched down the ramp but it was impossible to ask about the berth - neither could progress that far. Our room was excellent with a balcony overlooking the water. I could relax. All seemed well. We would be able to sail. The day was losing its heat - yachts were coming into the Yacht Haven for the night. The little later afternoon wind was fading. The sky was blue. There was some high cirrus but the weather looked settled. Swifts screamed as they flew on high, a blackbird sang from a housetop across the road and the kites were starting to circle over the lake looking for fish now that the yachts were no longer a nuisance.

Sunday June 21st Hot. Wind force 0-1 0800 hrs

Rigged Jacana in the hotel car park and then trolleyed her across the road, down the ramp and tied her up in a berth alongside the quay. Tidied up. Had lunch on grass alongside jetty and were away at 13:46. Paddled out between two lines of berthed yachts (bow or stern to pontoon and other end attached by warps to pilings).

Noted that there were four entrances to Yacht Haven and sailed away east in a light wind rising occasionally to force 3. Many yachts about enjoying leisurely sailing. A few motor cruisers making noise and speed but virtually no waves. So we went across the Uberlinger See towards the town of Ubergerlinger and then tacked SE towards on shore and then across again and back towards W side of island of Mainau. We saw some moored yachts on buoys, picked up Yacht Havens at Uberlinger, realised that we could not land at Mainau, saw signs marking Nature Reserves and Beaches and acres of no anchoring. It was delightful and we ran and reached back to Wallhausen having sat in a flat calm and used the outboard twice. At 17:10 we were back at the ramp. Mr Blum appeared. No! we were not to berth by the jetty. Mary fetched the trolley and strong-armed Mr Blum, a friend of his, Mary and I pulled a steel-plated Wanderer up the ramp with relative ease. She spent the night in the adjacent dinghy park.

Monday June 22nd 0700 hrs 9/1 0 cloud (thin) warm. Wind force 2 - 3

0800 hrs Thunder, heavy rain 15 minutes. Yellow warning lights flashing 40/minute (means "storm probable"). They continued to flash for next three hours.

Now the hotel was very comfortable and the weather a little dubious and I needed money as the hotel would not accept a VISA CARD. Solution - book in for another night, to local bank in the next village by bus and enjoy a delightful walk back through the woods. Skies now clearing, plenty of cumulus wind force 3-4 from SE, but best of all we had seen a stork soaring on high as we left Dettingen.

We launched at 1230. A difficult wind that caused trouble in the haven by its restlessness. Jacana with sail hoisted did not want to spin round downwind to leave the haven but was determined to remount the ramp. A forceful swing a leap aboard and away we went. Once out "at sea" the wind pushed up towards the Western head of the lake in a truculent manner. To

windward was a massive stretch of woodland rising 3-400 feet from the lake side with clam water by the shore. We stayed well off and surged along on a broad reach to run. Then a jibe, the jib aback and the wind, without permission, had turned 180". We beat westward in a gust force 3-5. Lunch was a spasmodic affair and **I was** not certain I was hungry, There were very few yachts about today and some were reefed. We headed over to Sipplingen and towards Bodman with the jib furled at first. Mary very relaxed "ignorance is bliss" said "and we have a steel plate". Three hours to head of lake and then having viewed the vast bed of reeds (a nature reserve) we turned for home and admired the attractive old style buildings of Bodman, its church and yacht havens. The sail home was fast and equally squally. Wallhausen was nearby in 1.5 hours and we turned head to wind near to the haven and dropped sail. There certainly was a wind. In total confidence I started the outboard. It did not respond, unfurl jib, cut paddles but we were against the wooden side of the entrance. I stoop up and hand-over-hand brought Jacana into the haven but it was the wrong entrance. Out oars and I rowed Jacana correctly to "our" entrance. A competence witnessed by a fast 18 foot sloop under instruction by an expert in a motor boat that came in as we struggled. No comment. No **offer** of help.

This evening we decided to retrieve Jacana using car, trailer and winch and were in position for action when the redoubtable Mr Blum appeared. He almost pulled the forestay out in his enthusiasm.

Tomorrow we are off. What about the outboard? "Forget it" says Mary "it wilt start next time". Should I forget it altogether and rely on oars? Irritation settled during the calm of the evening, a beautiful sunset, kites over the lake, a heron on a piling, coots and grebes in the reeds nearby.

THE CRUISE

Tuesday 23rd June 0630 hrs 9120 Low cloud
 0800 hrs Wispy cumulus windforce 2 west

Away before breakfast to Honda Marina and Volvo agent 100 yards away. Friendly family firm. Outboard starts first time in his water tank. He, a very strong efficient man, is not satisfied. Out with the spark plug with difficulty. "Old English" he tells me and replaced it with "New German". Still not satisfied he re-tunes the engine. By 0900 hrs I am having breakfast a happy man. We pack up, leave the Land Hotel without paying - on one about - having booked in for two nights, 6 nights hence.

Away at 1126 heading east along line of buoys guarding bathing beach. Wind force 2 (west) gliding along delightfully towards Mainau. A hot pleasant day. Just over an hour later wind variable and the East force 0.5. We are beating. A large Swiss yacht inshore of us is now ahead. A leisurely lunch - what a contrast to yesterday. Wind fitful and so at 1410 test outboard and Jessy fired first time. Wind again and we beat across a Meersburg (confirmed by compass and Magellan G.P.S. 2000). Aim is to reach Immenstaad. As we approach North shore the haven has two large poplars on east side. The chart has photos of some of the havens. This must be Unteruhldingen not Meersburg. Poor progress. Beat along north shore towards Meersburg Mary points out that she can see 5 large ferries crossing the lake from Meersburg to Konstanz. I explain "rule of the road" to Mary, receive a doubtful look and a long blast from a large ferry that had to alter course 100 metres to avoid us. (Learn next day that ferries have right of way).

Pass the Schiffahrshafen (Ferry terminal) seeing lorries and cars driving on or off. On past small town harbour and another yacht haven that looked full and so at last a nautical mile past the town, we motored into a quiet haven and Mary went ashore, asked and found Jacana a place alongside a series of tough concrete steps that encircled the inner end of the haven by the yacht club. We tied up with care - a brush alongside could not be tolerated and walked for half a mile back towards Meersburg to find an excellent hotel for the night. Sailing for 5.5 hours was enough on a **hot** day. We showered, had out statutory whisky and lemonade, ate and then returned to put Jacana properly to bed. Caught the warp of 32 foot yacht coming in late from Bregenz and for the first time talked to fellow sailors.

Wednesday June Hot. No wind. Blue Sky

Leisurely breakfast. Walk into Meersburg.

Lovely old town with castle, old buildings many tourists shops and a supermarket for more lemonade.

Back to yacht haven by late morning. Leisurely organisation of Jacana. Tried to get information on Hagnau from a departing yacht. Failure. Then a strong voice from above the concrete steps tells us that Hagnau is excellent and suggests a **beer**. We join Helmet and his wife at the Club House and talk and talk. Great company. He says "Why not stay here another day". We resist and at 1340 he shoves us off with such force that we both fall down in the boat, Jessy starts and we motor out. Minimal wind ESE just not beating. Aim Hagnau 2.25 nautical miles away. Land on small gravelly beach at Hagnau to find accommodation and then after leaving luggage at an old hotel, sail a further mile or so to **yacht** haven and berth by 1630. Very, very **hot** in haven sheltered by high dykes. Mary has a swim in the lake as I deal with Jacana and I manage a paddle up to my knees. A cool beer and then we walk to hotel and relax.

Thursday 25th June Hot. No wind.

Jacana ready by 1030. Little wind **as we** return to Hagnau to collect luggage. Jacana almost damaged by large swell caused by ferry as I hold her on beach - sudden influx for two minutes of 2-3 foot waves.

Plans of crossing to Swiss side of Bodensee no use in these conditions. Decided to head west with wind from east force 1-2 but use motor across ferry lanes and behave well. Sail on to Uhldingen Haven in centre of village. Shouting harbour master shows us an excellent berth alongside a small jetty. No clambering over bows today, meet the crew of a yacht from Bregenz again and learn more of lake winds, harbours and villages. Spent night in Gasthaus above a fish shop.

Friday 26th June Warm. Total cloud cover. No wind.

Night has been hot and there were midges about in the evening. So where today? Would like to cross to south but where is the wind? Visit Lake Village Museum reconstruction dating back to bronze age. Away under paddle and outboard by

1215. Dark overhead, yellow storm light flashing 40 minutes as we leave haven. Wave farewell to Bregenz yacht which is going south under sail and engine. We head to Überlingen Ost under outboard keeping close to shore. Wind comes up from south west. Thunder and lightning over south shore anoraks on a little rain - off anoraks and then heavy rain. Prepare to reef, rain eases. Wind drops. Enter Ost Haven and given berth 317 and have to pay for the first time. Friendly very competent harbour master and wife. Largest haven we have been in - 400 + berths. Land in sunshine at 1500. Put Jacana to bed and rain really starts and continues. Walk in towards Überlingen and book in a first hotel we come to - very good. Excellent meal in town that night after rain cleared away. Lovely famous old town that has given its name to this section of the Bodensee. Castle, old city walls, very deep moat and marching bands. Poor visibility across lake to south east. Yellow lights still flashing.

Saturday June Cooler. Overcast Force 0-1

Not raining. Aim to Sipplingen or Bodman. Left at 1130 as a little wind from west came. Felt sorry for International Skiff Championship here today plus other high speed racers. Talk with young crew of International 14 footer - fitted with trapezes multiple foot straps on gunwale and an enormous genaker. Thought how I waggle my feet over the oars and under the toe straps occasionally. Like me talking to a Grand Prix Racing driver. Yet they were very friendly to a "has been". Didn't hoist our mainsail until we were clear of the windward racing mark. A frustrating sail/motor to Sipplingen. Two yacht havens there and asked at first about berthing but told by motor boat to go on to second. How fortunate, 10 minutes later the wind came up from the west and we had a delightful sail beating up to Ludwigshafen. Ask passing yacht and told to go into larger haven. Here very fussy harbour master instructs us where to berth and tells us what to do. Result chaos but we finish sitting outside his little hut and relaxing in the afternoon sun and breeze. Leave him at 1630 and walk into village and find guest house for the night and good meal later on water front watching the rain come again across the lake.

Sunday 27th June Humid rainy night (with clock chiming theirs) Force 2

Away 1015. Good beat across the Bodman and look at two havens. The one furthest from the village is on edge of nature reserve. Sail down lake to Wallhausen Force 3 gusting 4 overtaking incompetent German yacht with sails tight in. Wind shifting 90° to 80° at times. Rain for 20 minutes "Trax". Jacket on for first time as it was cool. Gentle wind into Wallhausen and no problems retrieving Jacana and towing her across road into hotel car park. Ashore by 1230. Lunch on our same balcony at 1330 and very good welcome by hotel staff.

Monday June

A visit by bus to Mainau and Konstanz and next day we headed homewards leaving a very large lake that behaved like a beautiful unpredictable girl never known her own mind. Constance is not an appropriate name.

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Time to leave the garden "How about a Whisky and Lemonade", "Why not try the Gaillac Red wine" (9). We did - it was great.

LOG DISTANCES (Approximate)

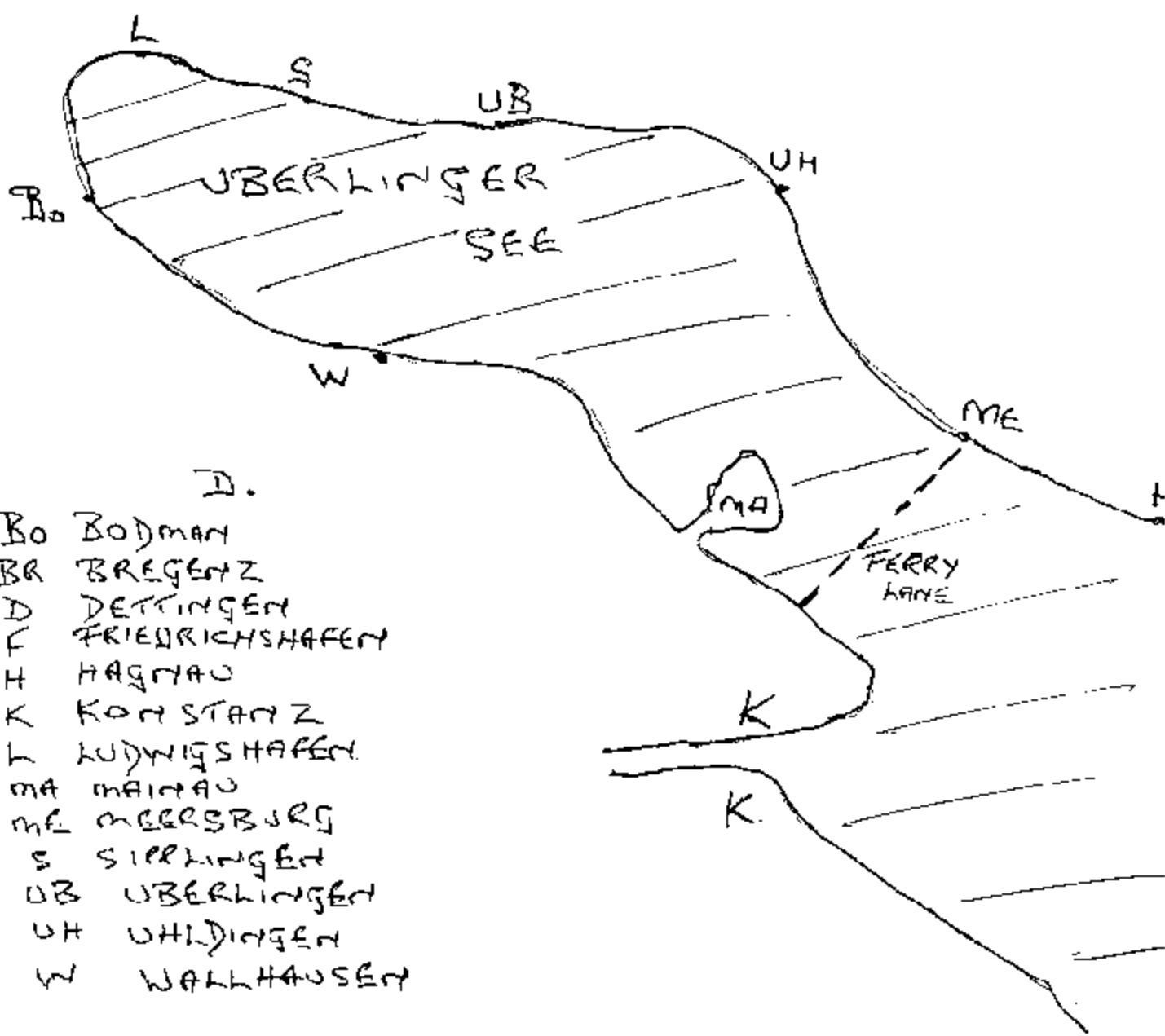
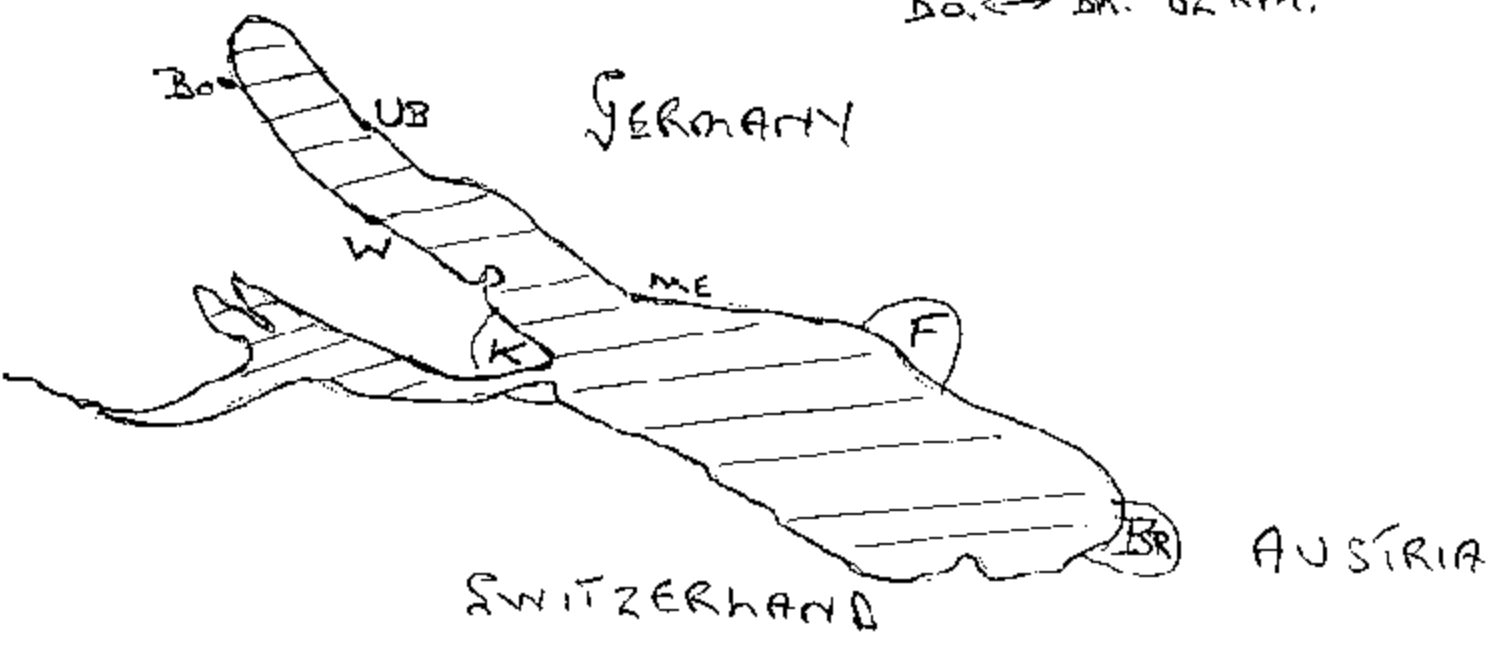
21st June	Wallhausen towards Mainau & return	9	Nautical Miles
22nd June	Wallhausen to Bodman & return	12.5	Nautical Miles
23rd June	Wallhausen to Meersburg	10.5	Nautical Miles
24th June	Meersburg to Hagnau	4	Nautical Miles
25th June	Hagnau to Uhldingen	6	Nautical Miles
26th June	Uhldingen to Überlingen	3	Nautical Miles
27th June	Überlingen to Ludwigshafen	8	Nautical Miles
June	Ludwigshafen	7	Nautical Miles

REFERENCES

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- Switzerland Tourism** Swiss Centre, Swiss Court, London W1 8EE V
- "A Cruise on Lake Geneva"** 12-15 The Wanderer No. 50, Autumn 1997
- Landratsamt Konstanz** -Schiffahrtsamt Reichenaustr 37, 78467 Konstanz
- Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson Ltd** Wych House, St. Ives, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
- Bade and Hornig** Herrengraben 31, 2045 Hamburg Tel: 040 37 481 - 01 Bodensee, Navigationskarten 1996
- Kompass Wanderkarte** Bodensee Gesamtgebiete IC, Stanfords 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP n
- Tourist Information** Konstanz GMBH Postfach 110 21 52, D-78421 Konstanz
- Guide National Chamber d'Hotels Prestige** Et Gites De 1998, "Banteaux, Ferme de Bonavis", No. 423 Situated 80 miles South of Calais)

BODENSEE

Bo. ↔ BR. 62 Km.



- D.
- Bo BODMAN
 - BR BREGENZ
 - D DETTINGEN
 - F FRIEDRICHSHAFEN
 - H HAGNAU
 - K KONSTANZ
 - L LUDWIGSHAFEN
 - MA MAINAU
 - ME MEERSBURG
 - S SIPPLINGEN
 - UB UBERLINGEN
 - UH UHLINGEN
 - W WALKHAUSEN