



June 2024 newsletter

ALEXANDER THE GREAT?

Many rulers throughout history have been given a cognomen, or nickname. Some relate to physical features, such as Charles the Fat, or to things they did, such as Vlad the Impaler, and these are objective. Some are simply strange; Ivar Ragnarsson “the Boneless”, Ivaylo of Bulgaria “the Cabbage”, Constantine V “the Dung-named”. But many are value judgements like “the Bad” or “the Great” where we may question if they are deserved and what they actually mean anyway.



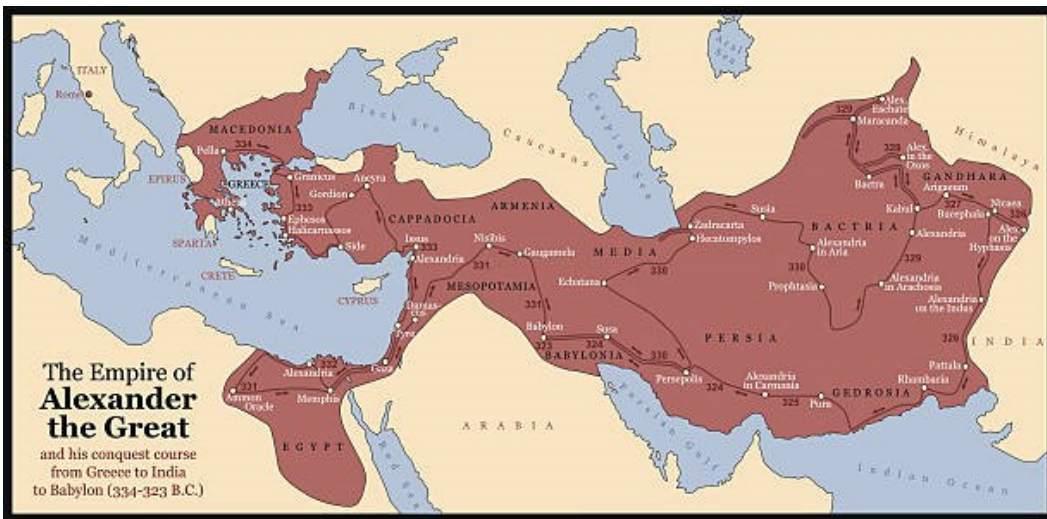
The Ancient Greece group often discuss Alexander the Great, a monumental figure in Greek history, but at the last meeting we decided to have a debate to ascertain whether or not we believed him **to be truly great**. It should be said, of course, that he was not called by that epithet in his lifetime. The debate was very lively and passionately argued from both sides but, fortunately, words were the only weapons

and no battle scenes were re-enacted in the Community Centre. Those supporting Alexander’s right to be called “Great” opened the debate at the May meeting. Alexander was born in 356BCE and his supporters argued that he was a military genius, commanding troops and winning battles from the age of 16. Shortly afterwards he took on and conquered the mighty Persian Empire. He then went on to expand the Greek empire as far as India and Egypt. It was also argued that he introduced Greek culture and language to these regions and that the cultural impact has been long lasting, with artefacts and stories suggesting he was revered and even worshipped for centuries.

Naturally, there then followed the counter-argument that he did not deserve to be called great – well, it wouldn’t have been much of a debate otherwise. One perspective was that he might have been a successful warrior general but, having caused so much death and destruction, he was not “great”. Another argument was that his conquests were

ephemeral as the empire he is said to have created fell apart a few years after his death at the age of 32. The cultural impact was real but was a by-product of the conquests and was not an intended outcome as all Alexander was interested in was winning battles. And, of course, whilst he may have been seen as great by some, it is doubtful if the Persians, for example, would agree. The arguments had finished, the battle lines had been drawn. An expectant hush fell over the room as members considered what they had heard and prepared to vote. The “For” vote was taken first and achieved well but, by a

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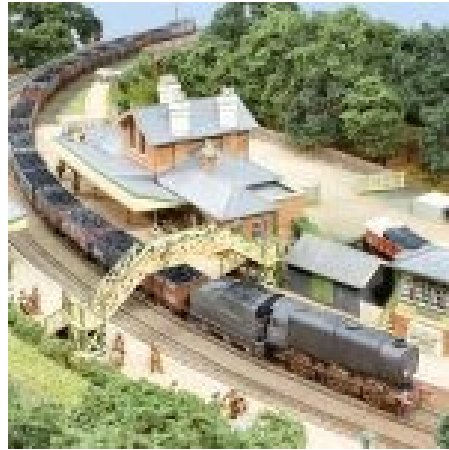
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significant majority, the EmsValley U3A Ancient Greece group voted “Against” and the title of “the Great” was ceremonially stripped from Alexander. Once again, Juliet Walker’s Ancient Greek group had spoken!

Rod Lipscombe

Build up to D Day in 1944

Local history member Malcolm Smith writes to inform us of the Rowlands Castle History and Heritage group will be displaying their D Day model on 29th and 30th June in The Church on the Green to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings. There will be an accompanying display telling the story in words and pictures.



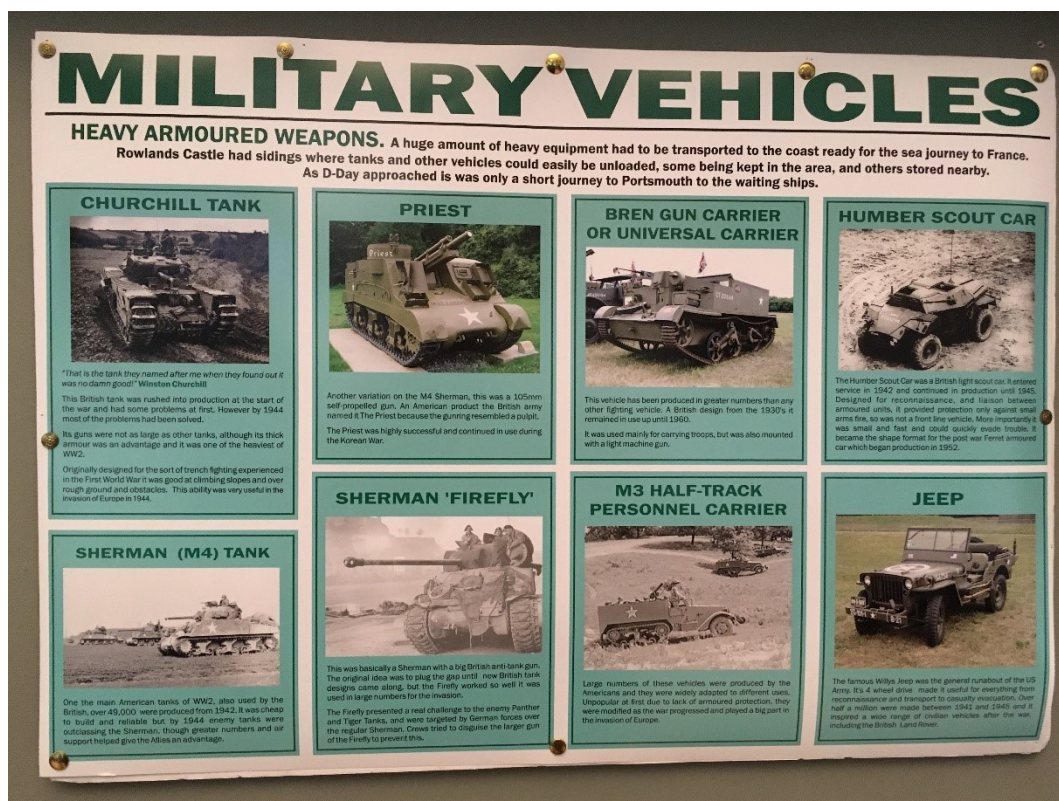
The D Day model was built by master modeller Peter Goss who displayed it throughout the UK and parts of Europe including twice at Rowlands Castle. Peter then offered it for sale to the village and the Rowlands Castle Heritage Centre (RCHC) was formed to purchase it. This was achieved in January 2017 and the RCHC became a registered charity. Rowlands Castle had been chosen as a de-training railway station for allied troops who could be quickly transferred into the many neighbouring forests. The foundations of their huts can still be found in the woods between Emsworth and Rowlands Castle. The picture below shows Peter Goss and his wife handing the model over to the RCHC, and u3a member Malcolm is second from right.



The model is 16.5 feet by 11.5 feet and depicts the village green in 1944 with buildings still visible today. The green was covered in bomb rubble from Portsmouth so that it could be used as a fighting vehicle repair depot and is surrounded by a model railway. There are a dozen authentic trains which will be running throughout the display. Between 2017 and 2019 we were lucky enough to have the use of a room in Stansted House where we ran weekly displays but since lockdown it has had no permanent home. We display it two or three times a year on special occasions.

occasions.

So this is a rare chance to see it in operation with the added opportunity to learn more about the part that area played in a vital part of the D Day invasion. Entry is free of charge and opening times are Saturday 29th June 12 to 4 p.m. and Sunday 30th June 1 to 4 p.m. It will also be open at the Village Fair on 6th July, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more details about the model and the Rowlands Castle History and Heritage visit our website at www.rhc.org.uk.



Crowds of travellers gathered in Wickham on 20th May for the traditional horse fair dating back to 1269.

On Monday 21st May, members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities gathered in Wickham, Hampshire, for the annual Wickham Horse Fair - one of the oldest of its kind in the UK. Roads, shops and pubs were closed in preparation for this event which is an opportunity to sell and trade horses, as well as for family and friends to meet up, according to revellers and locals. It is also an important date for me, because I was always instructed to never plant out tender plants until "Wickham Fair Day"! Fun fairs, burger vans and other stalls also set up shop to cash in



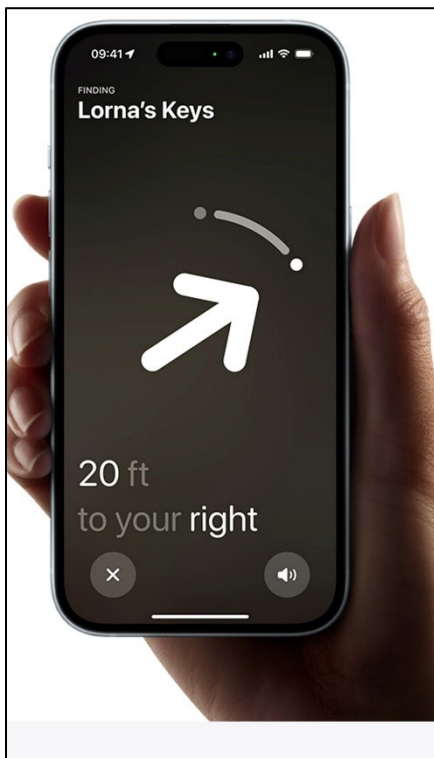
on the historic day that has been celebrated 'every year' since it was founded in the 13th century. Note the traditional red Hampshire bricks on Wickham houses as Brick Business will know!

Editor

June STEM Group Topic

“AIR TAGS – LOSE YOUR KNACK FOR LOSING THINGS!”

Our next Science and Technology Group Meeting will be on Thursday 6th June at 2.00pm at our usual venue in St James Parish Hall. We will be hearing a talk, given by yours truly, about “Air Tags”, which work in conjunction with modern smart phones (Apple and Samsung). Have you ever wanted to find something important like the car keys or

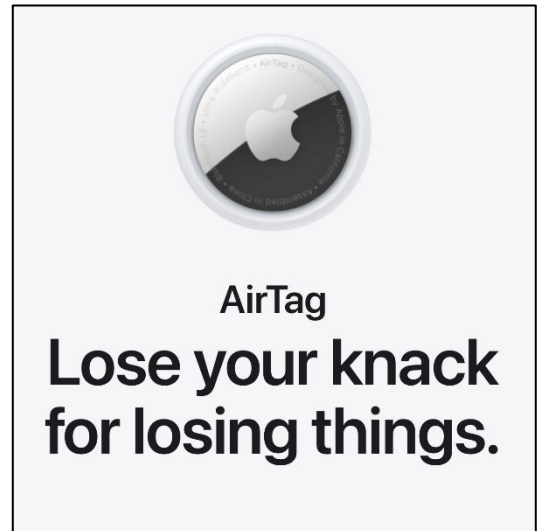


perhaps accidentally left a bag in a café? With advancing years, I've done both!

The “Air-Tag” is a truly amazing device, which helps to solve this problem, through precision tracking of lost objects, down to an accuracy of about 6 inches.

How does it do this? Those of you with some knowledge of radar will know that a conventional radar can only track to a precision of about 150 metres. So, we'll learn how this is achieved using UWB, “Ultra-Wide Band” radar, built into a modern smart phone. Additionally, using an entirely different technology, these Air-tags can track the location of objects

anywhere in the world. I used two of them recently to track and retrieve my luggage on a flight to and from Thailand. A live demonstration of both tracking modes will be included.



An Air-Tag also makes an excellent Birthday Present!

Any member of Ems Valley u3a is welcome to join us if interested. Just let me know via the email

stem@emsvalleyu3a.org .

Geoff Whalley STEM Group Leader

Wine Doodles:

This month we (**Wine five**) carried out a tasting of Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir.

A good Pinot Gris should be a nice refreshing wine ideal for drinking on a summers day (always serve chilled). Of the three we tasted the best was Vin D'Alsace 2021 which I got from Waitrose, Chichester for £11.99.

Pinot Noir is not a grape variety that I often pick for myself or the wine group as it tends to be lighter, less full bodied than many of us prefer. However a wine group should always try the full spectrum or you will never find new favourites.

That said this tasting just confirmed what we felt, two were just poor, but one was so bad that I feel compelled to make an AVOID recommendation. Don't buy Sainsburys Taste the difference 2021 Pinot Noir it was so awful that 4 out of 15 tasters put it in the slop bucket, only once before have two tasters do this.

So as you can now tell we don't always get the pick of wines right, in fact if you end up with three bottles that are well liked out of the six you are doing very well indeed, but then that is why you should be a member of a wine group in order to try wines you never would normally pick yourself as sometimes you will be surprised to find one that you really enjoy.

Best wishes from Wine Appreciation Group 5 **Mark Parker**

Wine One Tasting

It is really interesting to read another wine groups take on a particular wine varietal. Above you see that “Wine Five” enjoy Pinot Noir. We sometimes try this ‘King of Burgundy’, but our Pinot noir tastings never seem to hit the mark! One longtime member even states that he doesn't like ANY pinot Noir! Of course it could be to do with the cost of Burgundy wine – you need to pay some £30.00 to £40.00 a bottle to get respectability! But look around and loads of

other wine areas are now planting this somewhat difficult grape. We tasted a German Pinot Noir from the Baden area, and it proved to be very interesting. We are told that this area, on the German side of the Rhine level or just below Alsace, is an up and coming area for Pinot.

This month we tasted a Rosé to herald our long awaited summer. I introduced it as Aldi's £7.00 answer to the iconic "Whispering Angel" which will set you back £20.00 plus. Not sure if they all agreed – it is always difficult to get a concerted view when you have over 30 members tasting. But I thought that it was a very nice tittle and it definitely sported the pale pink hue that the devotees of Provence wine always look for. I mentioned that I had been served a "SHOCKING PINK" Rosé in a Cyprus restaurant last week and – in spite of the garish colour – it tasted OK! It is quite amazing how colour affects taste in food and drink.

Alan Borrow

Judgment of Paris

AUTHOR, wine writer and consultant Steven Spurrier, joined the wine trade in London way back in 1964 and later moved to Paris where he bought a wine shop in 1971. He then opened L'Académie du Vin, France's first private wine school in 1973. Spurrier was always slightly aggrieved about the snobbery surrounding Bordeaux and Burgundy French wine. In 1976, he organized a Paris Wine Tasting, which matched top French wines to their Californian equivalents. The results (a Californian victory) shocked the wine world and elevated the status of California thus promoting the expansion of wine production in the New World. A second tasting held in London, a few years later supported those findings.

Now, some fifty years later, The Old World has fought back! (in wine terms, the Old World comprises of Europe and the New World is represented by The Americas, South Africa and Australia and New Zealand) At the London Wine Fair this year, A new Taste-off was held! 32 top wines were tasted and marked by 21 highly qualified tasters. Europe won, but only just. When the aggregate scores were totalled, Europe managed 2621 points whereas The rest of the world managed 2604 points.

Top rated White Wine – Pegasus Bay Bel Canto Riesling from Waipara Valley North Canterbury New Zealand and top rated red was a Rhone Hermitage. There was none of the controversy and bitterness following the 1976 tasting and Sarah Abbott the British Master of wine who helped select the entry bottles generously said that at the elite end of



wine, producers had much in common wherever they were. She added "When you think about it, it's a crazy thing to be turning a beverage into a work of art that is destined to be drunk!" My thanks to Tony Perry in Wine One who brought this new tasting to my attention!

The picture above depicts Steven Spurrier surrounded by tasters at the 1976 tasting. (you could say – a slightly surreal Spurrier situation?)

Editor

Editor – any stories from Wine 2,3 and 4??

Loxwood Canal Chartered Boat Journey and Pub Lunch – 11th July.

Canal tour cost is £16.00 per person. Signup deadline and payment is on 4th July.

Join us for a journey lasting 11/2 hours on the this little known section of the Wey and Arun Canal.

There are just 2 seats left to fill on this trip. Interested? Contact Steve Gorban via the web site.

WHO WERE THE NUNS?

Local History members were addressed by Dr Caroline Bowden, an old friend of Yvonne Copeland, at their May meeting – the intriguing title was “Who were the Nuns?” This was a project at Queen Mary University of London until 2013. The project team studied the membership of the English convents in exile created by centuries of persecution of Catholics in this country from the 1600’s.

Caroline has continued to expand her research and talked about the convents and the families whose daughters left the local area (Portsmouth-Chichester-Harting) to join the exile convents in France and Belgium. These included Emsworth’s own Convent, Saint Annes. Only after 1800 or thereabouts did convents start to be founded again in England, we were told. The 16th and 17th centuries were periods of nationwide religious disturbances in England. From the reign of Queen Elizabeth I onwards, the eradication of Catholicism became part of national ideology. Being Catholic was a punishable offense and was associated with treason to the Crown and to the ‘true religion’. Parliament began passing penal laws that discriminated against non-Anglicans, and particularly Catholics, since they acknowledged the Pope’s authority. Those Catholics who refused to attend the Anglican Church services became known as recusants. The anti-Catholic sentiment was exacerbated by various crises and threats, such as the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. The survival of English Catholics was ensured, for instance, through the training of priests on the Continent and the Jesuit mission, as well as these nuns in exile.

How many people become nuns each year in the UK today? You may be surprised to know that , the Catholic Church in England and Wales says that the number of women becoming nuns has reached a 25-year high. Their figures show the number of women taking their holy vows has trebled in the past five year. (45 last year).

It was in 1922 that group of sisters opened a convent at 34 Havant Road, Emsworth, opposite what is now the Emsworth Sports & Social Club, who originally rented their land from the Convent on the opposite side of the road. You may have noticed ‘Convent Lane’ as you walk into Emsworth. The original convent building was altered to a dialysis centre, and is now luxury flats. Back in 1973 there were only 4 sisters left and they decided to rejoin their Order in Arlington, Massachusetts in the United States, St Anne at Bethany. Our thanks to Yvonne Copeland for arranging this most interesting presentation.

2024 year end A.G.M.



Thursday May 23rd saw the 2024 A.G.M. take place at the Baptist Church. Nearly 70 attended which satisfied the “quorum”. Your Chairman thanked the hardworking committee for their work and support during the previous twelve months. Elections were completed and there remains a vacant place on the committee. The whole business section was most efficiently completed in just twenty minutes leaving time for a talk about the work of COPP prior to the D Day landings by Richard Swaine.

‘Combined Operations Pilotage Parties’ (COPP) was a top-secret unit during the Second World War. They had two core roles.

To carry out covert reconnaissance of enemy-held beaches before a planned amphibious assault. As well as mapping enemy beach defences and surveying the underwater approaches for uncharted hazards, they also took soil samples to determine the load-bearing capacity of the beach – nothing would be more embarrassing than seeing your tanks become bogged down in soft sand. On the day of the invasion, they also provided expert navigational assistance to the invasion forces – by piloting in the landing craft or by sitting off shore at precisely identified locations to shine guiding beacons out towards the invasion forces. This was a most timely talk by Richard, as the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings was almost upon us, and it was well received. Then tea was taken, followed by a pictorial quiz of old Emsworth by yours truly. I say ‘Quiz’, but in truth it was more like a cross between Speakers corner and Would I lie to you! However the ladies present, some quite competitive I might add, won the day with a narrow one point victory over the gentlemen. Everyone went home happy ‘cos the male section adopted their usual laissez-faire demeanour. Another success for Tim and Rod, as Tim reaches the end of his first year, and the completion of a sparkling new Web Site for Ems Valley! **Editor**

Bricks Business arrives at the current time!

A request from Jill Millar a year ago caused me to run a series of “The History of the Brick” once again. Originally presented before Lockdown, these seven sessions have covered the development of the common brick from 10,000BC to the current time. Tuesday 28th May saw the culmination of this series, 1900 to today!

We saw amazing structures built in mud sun dried bricks which have survived today, if looking a little battered! But these were in China and the Middle East. It was the Romans who first brought their fired brick knowhow to these shores, and when they left us some 400 years later, we stopped making bricks and went back to bent hazel and wattle and daub. But, being resourceful, we were able to rob some of the Roman buildings and reuse their bricks. When the mortar was made with lime, it was quite easy to clean up bricks, for reuse. Warblington Church shows some minor examples of reused Roman bricks.

Here in Great Britain, we were then very slow to get started again with brick making. It was influence from the Low Countries that stimulated the rebirth of brickmaking. The local belt of ideal clay for this ran diagonally from Emsworth travelling in a north west direction, through Rowlands Castle, Cowplain, Petersfield to Selbourne and Alton. But in truth, bricks could be made from any soil providing it had an element of clay content. There was evidence of silt extracted from the bottom of Kings Road being mixed with other clay! Houses were often built locally with bricks fired on site – from the soil dug from the foundations. Itinerant brick makers toured the area offering their services. And the results were good, look around you today – you don’t see too many bricks affected by the weather some 200/300 years later!



Our group now has a membership of over 50 but it is quite lucky that all do not decide to attend every meeting because Mountford Three would not cope. However we regularly achieve an attendance of 30 and ladies still outnumber the gentlemen! If you are interested contact me via the web site.

Alan Borrow

Picture on left shows a house in the Meon Valley – you cannot say bricks are boring!

Electric vehicle owners should ONLY be allowed to charge their cars using wind and solar power, otherwise it's just pretend



Trying to eat healthy



Salad with bacon bits

Three contractors are bidding to fix a broken fence in Downing Street. One is from Bristol, another is from Birmingham, and the third is from London.

All three go with a civil servant to examine the fence.

The Bristol contractor takes out a tape measure and does some measuring, then works some figures with a pencil.

"Well," he says, "I figure the job will run about £900:

£400 for materials, £400 for my crew and £100 profit for me."

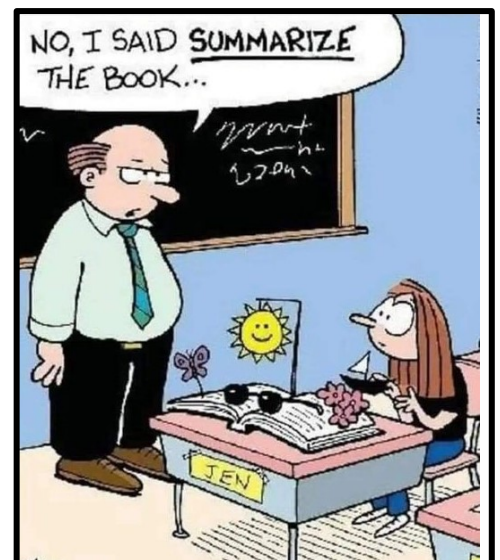
The Birmingham contractor also does some measuring and figuring, and then says, "I can do this job for £700: £300 for materials, £300 for my crew and £100 profit for me."

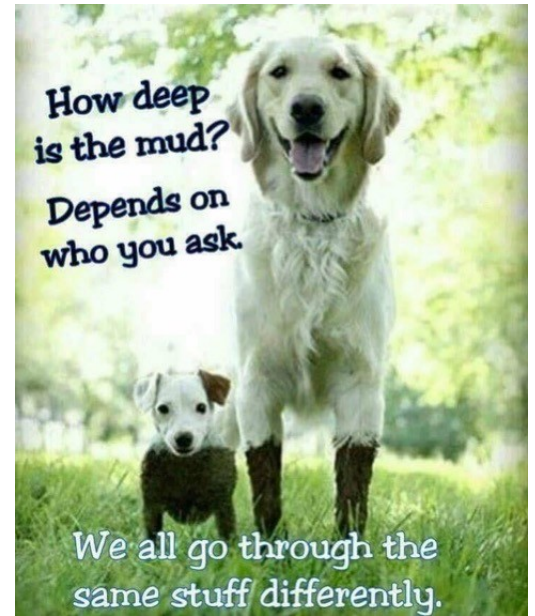
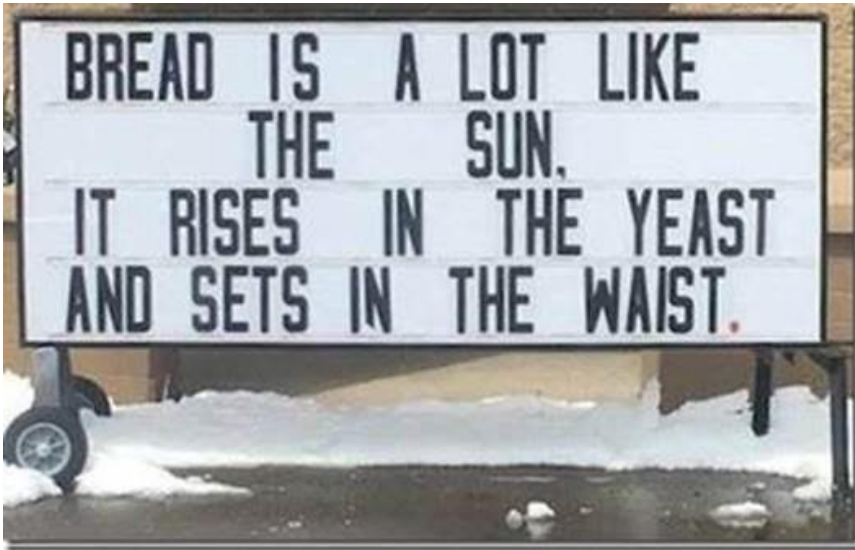
The London contractor doesn't measure or figure but leans over to the civil servant and whispers, "£2,700."

The official, incredulous, says, "You didn't even measure like the other guys! How did you come up with such a high figure?"

The London guy whispers back, "£1000 for me, £1000 for you, and we hire the guy from Birmingham to fix the fence."

"Done!" replies the government official. And that, my friends, is this how the government operates





tomorrow

(noun)

A mystical land where 99% of all human productivity, motivation, and achievement is stored.



All contributions for the next newsletter please to:

alanborrow1@gmail.com

(please note new email address)

STOP PRESS:

There are 520 members in our u3a. If you enjoy reading this newsletter, think about sending in a contribution to the Editor. Members like to read about members! Remember - It is not the sole prerogative of Group Leaders to send articles in. In fact you will be helping and supporting your Group Leader by writing about events in your interest group. (He or she already does a lot of work on your behalf)