



May newsletter

Our member, Yvonne Watkins writes more on Sierra Leone and Educaid (see April Newsletter)

Some Facts

- It has about 8 million people.
- Life expectancy is 59 years for a man, and 61 for a women.
- It is made up of 12 main tribes.
- The official language is English but 12 other languages are also spoken, including Krio.
- It was involved in a 12 year Civil war that badly damaged the country

- **Freetown** is the capital city in the Western part of Sierra Leone. It was the first colony founded for freed slaves once slavery was abolished in 1787



In last months newsletter I wrote about my connection, as a trustee, with EDUCAID, and my long affinity to Sierra Leone. This past February, we spent two weeks in the country, one week with the charity and one week travelling around visiting the museums in the capital city, Freetown, the Rainforest in the East, a Chimpanzee Sanctuary and then a few days on the golden white beaches on the Atlantic coast.

The future for the country with improved roads, solar power and so called "Free Education" is promising but there are still huge challenges. Educaid schools are completely free, as paying for school uniform, books and pens, may prohibit a child attending school. Most students, or Educaidians, live on site and live and learn in the same rooms all day and do not wear a uniform and all education is conducted in English which for many is their third language!

Educaid describes the students as the underserved as they are from very poor backgrounds, often without family but they know their learning is really important to them. They understand that the way to a better future is through education and building a better community for themselves and their country and we were certainly inspired by their maturity and motivation at all times.

At Educaid we believe that education is key to unlocking potential, reducing poverty, improving well-being, strengthening democracy, and creating lasting change.

Below are more pics of my recent visit, and please do visit the Educaid website and if you would like further information, do contact me on: ywatki@gmail.com

See <https://www.educaid.org.uk>

Maronka
Primary School
Port Loko
District



Rolal Secondary School



Unofficial Twinning starts between
Llandudno and Ems Valley Newsletter
editors!

Knowing that I was to be visiting Llandudno at the end of March, I asked Llandudno u3a if there would be any interest in a meeting and an exchange of views.... Priscilla Kemp, their newsletter Editor, replies expressing interest and so we had an enjoyable and productive two hour meeting very close to the 'Smallest house in Great Britain' as you can see from the photo. They couldn't understand how Ems Valley supported five different Wine Appreciation groups and I countered by asking how they ran NINE



different Tai Chi groups! Not sure of the resultant conclusion here but I secretly thought that it must be something to do with the inner mind.... Their membership is nearly 1000, and we are around 550. I think that this statistic is commensurate with their much larger catchment area, because they take in Llandudno and Conwy. (and **we share** Emsworth with Emsworth and District u3a).

One interesting difference, which was immediately evident, was the fact that Priscilla had a small committee to publish their newsletter! I was quite jealous! In the picture above you see Pat on the extreme right who writes on fly fishing and Sue, between Pat and myself, who publishes on rare orchids! But they were interested in my Brick Business group, so much so that I was requested to write a little article on how this came about, and 'what on earth do you talk about'! (for a future edition of Llandudno u3a Newsletter!)

I know that you would love to read what I said (!) ,so I reproduce this below:

Brick Business in Ems Valley u3a

I live on the South Coast in a village named Emsworth, quite close to Portsmouth. U3a has formed an important part of my retired life, and with a visit to Llandudno coming up, I decided to widen the appeal of that trip. I am the newsletter editor for my Ems Valley u3a and thought that it would be fun to try and meet with the Llandudno newsletter editor and compare views! That is how I came to have coffee with Priscilla Kemp together with your Sue and Pat who are on her little committee. And compare views we certainly did!

Your editor was highly amused when I told her that I run an interest group in my u3a called "Brick Business" and have done so for some six years. It now has more than seventy members, the majority of them being ladies. 'What do you talk about' laughed Priscilla! 'Bricks' was my fairly unhelpful reply. I then explained that some six years ago, I had one of those silly moments that led me to come up with an interest group that no other u3a in the United Kingdom had thought of before. But there was some background: my "greats" going right back to the 1700s had made bricks in a fairly small way in what was called "The Forest of Bere" in Hampshire. In addition, I worked in a family Builders Merchants business for thirty three years where one of our specialities was BRICKS!

But there was another reason, my partner, who was to become Madam Chairman of our u3a throughout the difficult lockdown period, had presented me with a massive weighty tome "BRICK – A world history" for my birthday, together with tickets for a visit to a great little Brick Museum near us. The stage was thus set, because the first ten lessons were all in that book, in historical order, starting - would you believe - !0,000BC in the middle of Mesopotamia, or was it Jericho on the banks of the Jordan? They were sun dried bricks of course but that sun must have has a lot of heat in it because some of that brickwork has survived till the current time!

We progressed through the Roman period when the Legions carried their brick making equipment on their backs, to the Medieval world, Renaissance in Italy, the Tudor period with those flamboyant chimney pots, amazing Dutch ornate gables in Holland, the terracotta revival in the 19th century and eventually the industrial revolution when brickmaking was transformed from a handicraft into a mechanized industry. When we arrived at the current time, we ventured outside to do local walking tours, sometimes with guides. But the membership grew and grew and these walks became impossible (we were too many on the pavement) and lockdown meant "ZOOM" meetings. So I systematically travelled the local towns and villages to photograph interesting brick buildings and put together a presentation each month.

Then there was a call for a repeat of the original "history" talks because so many new members had joined and heard about these from the original few. (and the original few had forgotten!) That was a bit of a 'doddle' for me or should have been, if I had bothered to save those power point presentations! But I am in Llandudno this particular March, a town that does not view Brick Architecture as a high priority. You can completely understand this because of the abundance of



grits, sandstones, siltstones and slate, but very little good old fashioned clay! (We have plenty in Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex!).

I am now on the hop on hop off bus starting from Llandudno, I get off at the Castle in Conwy. I turn into High street, Conwy – and lo and behold – intricate brickwork adorns the Castle Hotel! (see two pics). Not only red bricks but also some fancy terracotta work which would have been fired in a kiln exactly as those bricks were fired! I grab my camera – back home will enjoy this.



Priscilla asked me to put pen to paper to let you share my interest, hence this little article. I am not sure that an interest group with Bricks in the title will succeed in Llandudno, and I am also not at all sure that “Stucco, Render and Stonework” would excite the members, but remember, James and Robert Adam, and indeed John Nash did just that in the late 1700s when they built those fashionable parts of

Regency London!

My other brick photo enclosed impressed me no end, I cannot tell you where it is because I cannot say it,



spell it or even read it. I liked the bricks however, you will just have to ask my coach driver where it is – the clue is a Railway Station and an emporium that seems to sell everything! Hey Ho!
Alan Borrow

STEM GROUP APRIL FOOL – PLUS more serious stuff later in the Newsletter

Being close to 1st April, our visiting speaker, Karen Fry, gave us a very humorous talk on the natural history of that rare mammal, the ‘Haggis’, mentioned in the writings of the poet Robbie Burns. Found wild only in certain remote Scottish islands, we learned that they are also farmed for their milk and fur! This talk was very enjoyable and created more laughter than ever heard at one of our meetings! I gave it 5 stars for scientific content and 5+ stars for entertainment! Karen has a zoology degree and is a local teacher. This talk was given to a sixth form group, who almost believed it and also at a local Burns Night Dinner. Highly recommended, if you missed the talk and get another chance to hear it!

Geoff Whalley

(see below)

Farming practices

- Haggi are farmed for their fur, meat and their special milk – see later.
- In recent years Haggi are captive bred
- Free range Haggis is very expensive



Mating behaviour.

- Display behaviour includes standing on their hind legs and hopping from side to side.
- This is the origin of the scottish highland dances.



Correction – Last Newsletter

Our article about the new “REAL ALE” group spelt the name of one of the organisers wrongly – apologies Les, should be Les Brokenshire. Also the email address for you to contact this new group should have been: realale@emsvalleyu3a.org

Book Group 2 currently has 2 vacancies.

We meet in the afternoon of the first Tuesday of the month in each other’s houses. There are 8 of us when full. We usually have a summer outing; last year we visited the Watts Gallery and previous trips have included a visit to the Globe to see “Julius Caesar”, Chawton House and Winchester. In December we have a lunch at which the results of our vote for our favourite book of the year are announced. Each year we select a theme and these have included family relationships, books which have been adapted for cinema or TV and The Arts. This year our theme is books written in the first person. So far we have discussed “My Antonia” by Willa Cather, “Testament of Youth” by Vera Brittain, “The Bean Trees” by Barbara Kingsolver and “The Towers of Trebizond” by Rose Macaulay. In May our book choice is “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd” by Agatha Christie. Future selections so far are “My Sister, the Serial Killer” by Oyinkan Braithwaite and “The Penguin Lessons” by Tom Michell. If this appeals to you and you would like to join, please contact Group Leader Sandra McGregor via the group webpage.

Craft group get ready for Easter!



We've been having a Spring & Easter theme these last couple of months and it's been great fun. Making door wreaths etc., today we were at Diana's house which she kindly volunteered due to the dreadful fire at the Community Centre, which is our usual venue.

Angela Blunden



Bletchley Park visit – 15th April.

Emsworth and District u3a joined forces with our Ems Valley u3a to visit Bletchley Park, which was once “Britain's best kept secret”, on Tuesday 15th April. Simon Winslow did a magnificent job in coordinating our side of the arrangements, and finally on the day took charge, because the Emsworth and District coordinator was unable to travel. It was at Bletchley that cryptologists, especially Alan Turing and Gordon Welchman, managed to break the

code of Nazi Germany's "Enigma" machine (seen below), and later even more complex encryption systems. We were told that this eventually led to the development to the world's first digital electronic computer. The codebreakers'



contribution to the Allied victory in WWII is immense. Yet for decades after the war, none of this was commemorated or even talked about. All former staff of Bletchley Park were sworn to secrecy, they were not even allowed to tell their family what was going on there, or where they worked. Only gradually did the secrets come out, from the mid-1970s.

Ems Valley did arrange a visit some 12 or 14 years ago, and I was there. But this not stop me from wishing to visit again, and so much more of this derelict historic site has been restored so now it looks very similar to what it looked

like during the war. Many of the buildings contain a whole range of museum exhibitions. We had a total of five hours actually there and we were still not able to take in everything!



At the beginning of WWII it was only a relatively small group of experts who worked here, including mathematicians and linguists, but allegedly also chess champions and people who excelled at solving cryptic crossword puzzles. At the end of the war, an army of some ten thousand worked there!

In September **Winston Churchill** makes an official visit to Bletchley Park to thank the codebreakers for their invaluable work. He calls them his **"... geese that laid the golden eggs and never cackled"**



We saw the infamous "Enigma" machine, a device used by the Nazi German military to send encrypted messages. Using multiple letter-scrambling wheels called 'rotors' it produced cyphers that were deemed unbreakable. The device could be set to billions of different encryption combinations. It was clear that this system could not be broken by intelligence alone, it also had to be sped up by means of mechanization. A key figure in developing a machine to do just that was Alan Turing, a pioneer in what would become known as computer sciences. He wasn't the only great mind behind Bletchley Park, but he is usually seen as the key genius that made the difference. The machine that Turing (and others) devised at Bletchley Park to help break the Enigma code was called "Bombe" – why that odd name for the contraption was chosen is somewhat unclear. I didn't go on the official tour because I had been before, but most of our group did. I therefore missed seeing the Bombe on this occasion, mainly because I was persuaded to first visit the Radio museum where Richard Swaine, Morse code operator first class, once removed, was busy sending coded messages

to persons in uniform who were actually standing just two feet away from his busy finger button.....(see pic)

Many thanks to Simon Winslow and the Daytrippers group for this wonderful outing!

Editor

U3a Emsworth Camera Workshop Group - Salisbury Trip

On Monday 31st March 2025 - the Camera Workshop Group travelled to Salisbury for our March photography trip.



Three of the group travelled by train on Monday morning, and first headed to Salisbury Cathedral where we spent an hour or so taking shots of the outside of the cathedral and surrounding buildings, plus a Peregrine on one of the shires. We then went inside the cathedral and managed to get some lovely images.



Cleric deep in thought inside the cathedral



We then retired to a local cafe called the "Rifleman's Table" for lunch on the green before visiting the National Trust - "Mompesson House". After a walk of around 10/15 mins to the start of the Town Path on the Salisbury Water Meadows, where we had ice creams due to the hot weather. We also walked to the Old Mill and managed to get some nice shots of the local wildlife.

An Egret fishing in the freshwater stream at the water Meadows.



After an enjoyable and interesting day, we travelled home, pleased with all our images that we had captured.

On Monday 14th April, we each showed our best six images from the trip on our monthly zoom call, and had open positive discussions on each image.

Russ Wakefield - 15th April.

New Banksy hits EMSWORTH

A new coffee shop has opened in Emsworth and Doug Cole, mural artist from Portsmouth was putting the final touches to the mural to the side wall of 'South Street Coffee' as I passed. It reminded me of a town called Sheffield in distant Tasmania! When I drove through their streets a good few moons ago, I was in the middle of the annual Street mural contest which was world renowned. Every building



seemed to have a mural on one of its walls! On the left is Doug's interruption of South Street, and on the right is just one of hundreds from Sheffield, Tasmania. Readers will remember neighbouring Chichester having a go at murals a year or so ago. I wonder if this South Street mural will inspire others to paint our town? Or maybe, there could be some objections..... Ed.



Ancient Greece Group head to Santorini ... in Chichester!

As I write this, in mid-April, it is almost exactly a year since we went as a group on our trip to Athens and the Peloponnese. We are not going away this year, but we have done the next best thing by having lunch in the blue and white painted, bougainvillea-draped Santorini restaurant in Chichester.

On a glorious sunny day you can easily imagine you have just walked in from an Aegean beach, rather than South Street. Twenty of us – group members and some partners - enjoyed a very convivial time, with the upstairs room to ourselves and a delicious meal of with lots of choice. 'Soutzouzakia' sounds so much more exotic and appealing than 'meatballs in tomato sauce' and 'Horiatiki' much crisper and more authentic than 'Greek salad'! We'd certainly recommend giving the restaurant a try. It's a family-run business – something they are proud of – and they were very easy to deal with when organising the event. From Tuesday to Friday lunchtimes you can have three courses for £14.95, which is excellent value. I am not being paid to advertise them, by the way! We'd genuinely liked it and want to go back later this year.

Juliet Walker

See below for happy Greek diners!





Rare Wild Orchids on our doorstep

A mile south of Selbourne is Noar Hill Nature Reserve. Managed by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, this site is one of the UK's finest examples of chalk grassland and a habitat referred to as scrub mosaic: a paradise for both plants and people. Once medieval chalk pits, Noar Hill is now a refuge for numerous plants and animals that have colonised the disturbed, predominantly chalky landscape there. Some of these are nationally rare species threatened mainly by habitat destruction.

Amazingly, eleven species of the UK's wild orchids make this delightful place their home. In order to witness the succession of fabulous flowers which pop up throughout the spring and summer, it is best to schedule two or three visits between April and mid July. In early spring there are lovely displays of Cowslips as well as Early Gentians, an endemic species which is becoming increasingly rare. The Early Purple Orchid also flowers in mid to late April and persists into May. Peak orchid flowering time is from mid June to the end of July, except for Autumn Lady's-tresses which you can see in late August. Two of Britain's rarest species, the Fly Orchid and the Musk Orchid, grow in this

reserve, which is classified as a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Musk Orchid colony at Noar Hill is of national importance. Other orchids found here include Common Twayblade, Pyramidal Orchid, Fragrant Orchid, Frog Orchid, Common Spotted-orchid, Southern Marsh-orchid and, everybody's favourite, the Bee Orchid. **(Pic on right: Early spring at Noar Hill, Below left : Musk Orchids at Noar Hill nature reserve. Below right- The Frog Orchid)**



As a consequence of its diverse flora, Noar Hill is also well known for the number of butterflies that can be found there, and over 35 breeding species have been recorded on the site. There are good populations of Duke of Burgundy and Brown Hairstreak butterflies, and other rarer species such as the Silver-washed Fritillary are present in good numbers. This is also a good site for the Small Blue butterfly whose larvae feed on Kidney Vetch which is plentiful on the reserve. Even the strange Fairy Shrimp puts in an appearance at Noar Hill. This invertebrate can be seen in puddles on rutted tracks after rain, its eggs surviving the dry periods between showers. On warm summer evenings it might also be possible to see glow-worms and to hear the Nightingales that live in the woodland and scrub on the reserve.

Directions: OS Map Reference: SU742319

Noar Hill nature reserve is about a mile from Selborne, in Hampshire. There is an access point with limited parking space on the verge near to the reserve. If you enter GU34 3LW into a satnav system it should take you to within 50 metres of this spot. From this parking position, take the track to the left. After about 100 metres a narrow path on

the left leaves the track; take the narrow path which, in a further 100 metres, brings you to a gated entrance to the nature reserve.



And... while you're there:
The charming village of Selbourne is also well worth visiting, not least because it was the home of Gilbert White, one of the first English naturalists to record wildlife observations in a systematic way. The house in which he lived for most of his life, and the garden where he made many of his observations, have been restored using the notes that White left about them. His carefully preserved journals and books are still an inspiration to naturalists today. The house and garden are open to visitors all year round.



Sue O'Reilly (Sue is a member of Llanduno u3a and an expert

on Orchids. Your Editor met her recently in Llandudno, and we arranged a trade off on articles! She got Bricks - I got rare Orchids!)

THE LAMENT OF THE EMSWORTH OYSTER

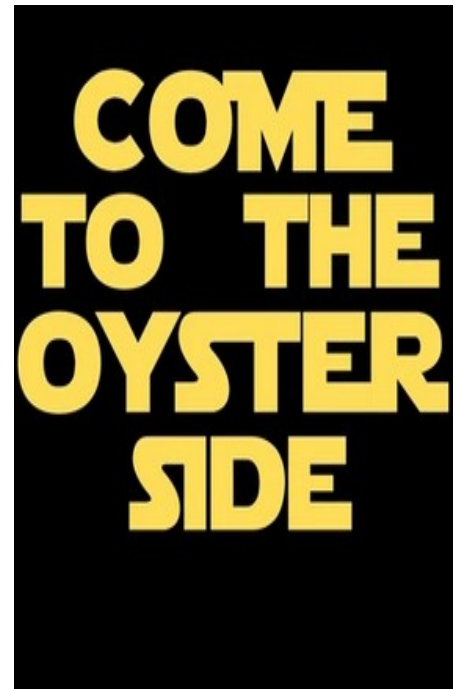
They're putting me back
don't you know.
All scrubbed and clean,
dangling in the detritus of your scenic waters.

Last time,
we killed a bishop, or maybe a king?
We were banned from London Town, cast aside
leaving your waters to the turgid tide.
But here's the thing,
hardly our fault the waters were polluted,
with sewage and debris.
We did our bit, filtering the waters,
returning human waste to the sea.

We had our limits, now they want us back again.
Nothing has changed; everything is worse.
Our Olympic achievement....50 gallons a day!
cannot save this town from
the dastardly plots of Southern Water.
We cannot deal with plastic and litter....
Too many boats
Too many people
Far too much excreta.

We will try to be helpful,
but I really must stress,
you cannot expect our beautiful, little shells
to clear up your mess.

K.S. 11.3.25



Please note: The Poem "The Lament of the Emsworth Oyster" contributed by member K.S. has no connection to the STEM article below – just a coincidence, two articles on same subject.

Introducing Oysters back into our harbour - STEM April Talk

Charlotte Johns told STEM members at our last meeting, about a voluntary project that she and her sister have been running to reintroduce oysters into Emsworth Harbour to help clean the water and remove pollution. She spoke about the project recently on "BBC South Today".

A quote from Lottie: -

"As a lifelong inhabitant and lover of Chichester Harbour, our waters and the ecosystems they support have always been a passion of mine, and so the opportunity to tackle such a significant problem with such an effective nature-based solution feels like a no brainer to me!"

A pilot scheme has been set up in Emsworth Yacht Basin by Lottie and her team, with the support of The Friends of Chichester Harbour and The Blue Marine Foundation. It was so refreshing to hear about something potentially positive for our precious local environment from such an enthusiastic pioneer! We hope that Lottie will come back to tell us about the results of this inspiring scheme.

Geoff Whalley



Oysters... keystone species providing ecosystem services

INCREASED WATER CLARITY

Can benefit recovery of seagrass and other coastal aquatic plants



INCREASED FISH PRODUCTION

Provides a suitable feeding and nursery grounds for fish



INCREASED OYSTER POPULATIONS

Provides a spill over effect to local oyster fisheries



CULTURAL VALUE

Have previously formed the heart of coastal communities



IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

Removes pollutants from the water column



● Provisioning services

● Regulating services

● Cultural services

BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT

Form a complex structure that provides shelter and food for a diversity of species

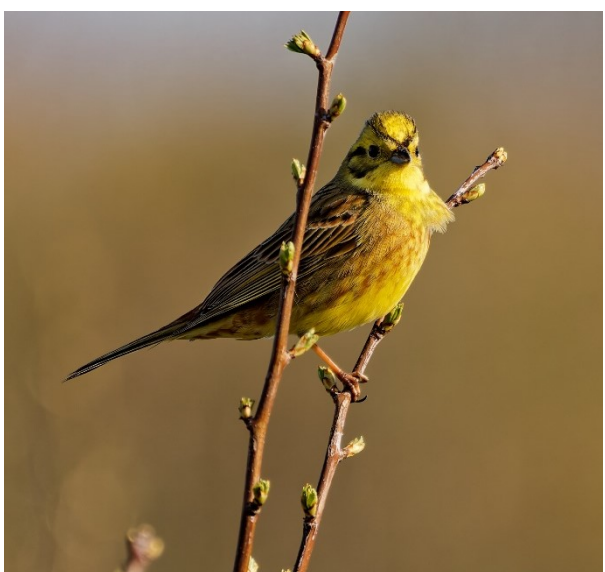


DENITRIFICATION
Removes excess nutrients

STABILISATION OF SEDIMENTS

Reduces the resuspension of fine sediment, improving water clarity





Our u3a is full of talent – William Saywell captures the above birds in beautiful detail: Left to right: White-tailed eagle riding the thermals (Chichester harbour between Prinsted and Nutbourne), Snipe at Nutbourne, Swallow on the wire and a Greenfinch.

A DROP OF BLOOD!

The next STEM meeting is on Thursday 1st May, 2.00 pm, at our usual venue - St. James Parish Hall. You may remember that Wendy Jones gave us a really good talk on the Human Heart in February. By popular demand, she is back again with a talk, titled "A Drop of Blood". This will cover the blood cells and how they function. ABO blood grouping and RhD. Plasma proteins: what are they and why are they so important? This promises to be a really good session, judging by the amount of interest and discussion afterwards at our February meeting! All members of Ems Valley U3A are invited to come to this talk if interested. Just let me know, so we have an idea of numbers.

Geoff Whalley

QUOTATION CORNER: This Month the subject is "BIOGRAPHY"

Discretion is not the better part of Biography **Lytton Strachey**

Biography should be written by an acute enemy **Arthur James Balfour**

An Autobiography is an obituary in serial form with the last instalment missing **Quentin Crisp**

I wasn't even in the Index! (Of John Major's autobiography) **Edwina Currie**

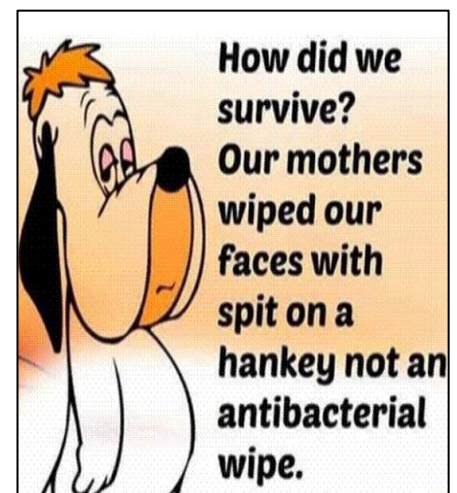
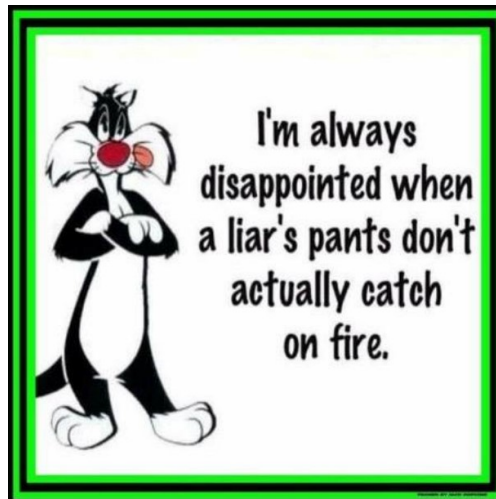
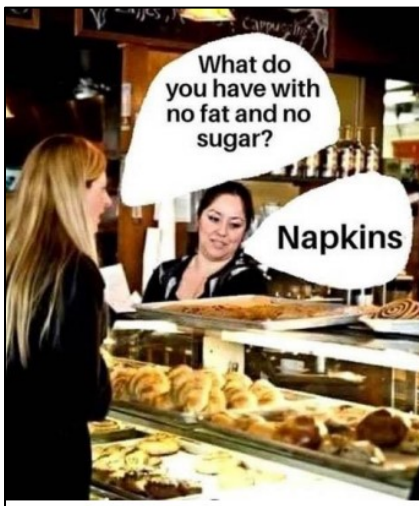
Autobiography is now as common as adultery and hardly less reprehensible **John Grigg**

To write one's memoirs is to speak ill of everyone except oneself **Henri Philippe Petain**

Biography is the mesh through which real life escapes **Tom Stoppard**

Only when one has lost all curiosity about the future has one reached the age to write an autobiography. **Evelyn Waugh**

Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is always Judas who writes the biography **Oscar Wilde**



**MOST PEOPLE
DON'T THINK I'M
AS OLD AS I AM
UNTIL THEY HEAR
ME STAND UP**



**I wanna be
14 again and
ruin my life
differently.
I have new
ideas.**

FOR THOSE THAT HAVE NEVER SEEN A CATFISH !!



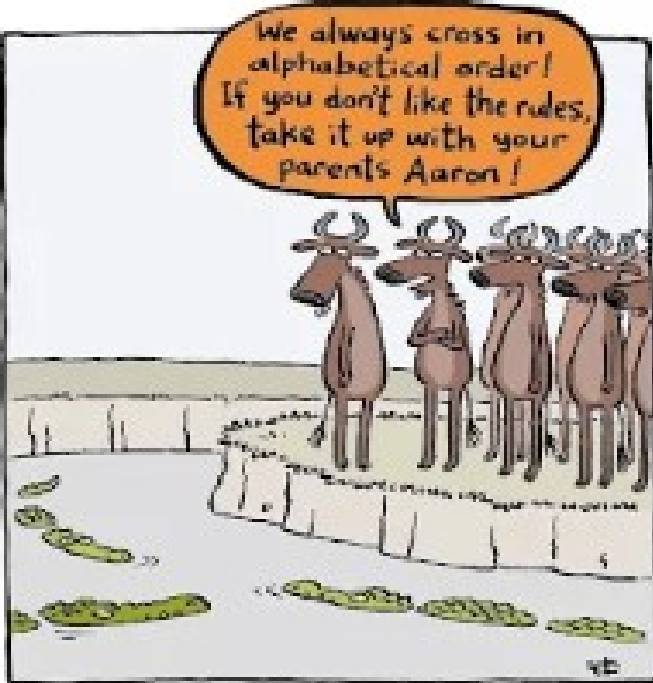
DO YOU EVER GET UP IN THE MORNING,



LOOK AT YOURSELF IN THE MIRROR AND THINK... "THAT CAN'T BE ACCURATE."

GETTING OLDER IS JUST ONE BODY PART AFTER ANOTHER SAYING, 'HA HA, YOU THINK THAT'S BAD? WATCH THIS.'

We always cross in alphabetical order! If you don't like the rules, take it up with your parents Aaron!



I CAN'T HEAR YOU AND YOU'RE WRONG.



I ASKED THE LIBRARIAN IF SHE HAD ANY BOOKS ON PARANOIA.

SHE LEANED IN CLOSE AND WHISPERED "THEY'RE BEHIND YOU"

All contributions for the next newsletter please to:
alanborrow1@gmail.com