

HATHERN HERALD



The Hathern Parish Council Magazine

SPRING 2024

hathernparishcouncil.org.uk



PAGE 3



PAGE 4



PAGE 10

WELCOME

Spring has sprung in Hathern, marking the end of a challenging winter filled with road closures due to flooding and re-surfacing. Despite occasional moments of feeling trapped within the village, Hathern remains a vibrant and resilient community, bustling with activity.

In this edition of our village newsletter, we embark on exciting journeys with our fellow residents. Steve Thorpe shares his inspiring plans for an epic cycle journey in support of Cancer Research, while we delve deeper into the life of our regular contributor, Peter Sergeant, in our Meet The Neighbours feature.

Former councillor Emma Ward introduces an innovative skill-sharing scheme, enriching our community spirit. Additionally, Graham Patient unveils a fascinating piece of local history—a little-known Cold War bunker nestled just outside Hathern.

As always, we bring you updates from the Parish Council and Hathern Community Library, ensuring you stay informed about local affairs.

Let's embrace the arrival of spring and anticipate brighter days ahead. Enjoy the read and until next time, let's cherish the warmth the season brings.

Benjamin Hardy

Benjamin Hardy
hathern.herald@gmail.com

INSIDE YOUR SPRING ISSUE

- 03 **SPECIAL FEATURE:**
Steve's LEJOG
- 04 **Parish Council News**
- 06 **Meet The Neighbours:**
Peter Sergeant
- 09 **Community Matters:**
Keeping Our Grass Verges Clean
- 10 **Hathern History:**
The Hidden Bunker
- 12 **SPECIAL FEATURE:**
Time4Leicestershire
- 14 **Community Matters:**
Hathern Community Library

EDITORIAL TEAM

BENJAMIN HARDY, MARTIN CLAYTON, RACHEL BENNETT

CONTRIBUTORS

MARTIN CLAYTON, GRAHAM PATIENT, PETER SERGEANT, STEVE THORPE, EMMA WARD

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROY DANN, HATHERN HISTORY SOCIETY, STEVE THORPE, HATHERN COMMUNITY LIBRARY



SPECIAL FEATURE STEVE'S LEJOG

Three years ago, plans were brewing for a remarkable bike ride from Lands End to John O'Groats (LEJOG) to celebrate a milestone 60th birthday.

However, life's unexpected twists took precedence, and now the journey falls upon me to undertake solo.

For those unacquainted with LEJOG, it spans approximately 950 miles, offering an expedition filled with both challenges and triumphs. Having conquered previous cycling excursions, including Newcastle to Edinburgh, Severn & Thames, and the Outer Hebrides, this solo venture promises to push the boundaries even further.

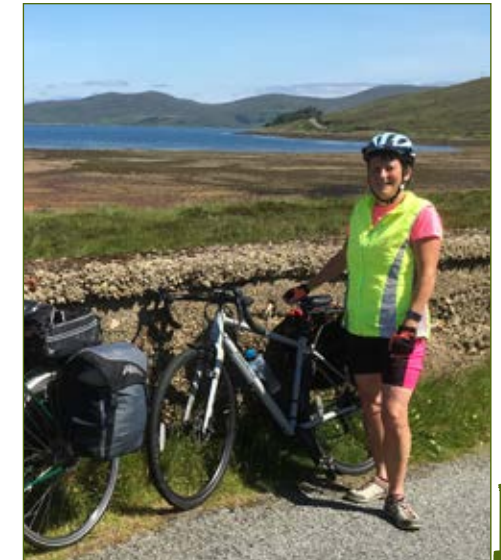
Undertaking the journey 'unsupported,' meaning carrying my own luggage without camping, the estimated duration is 15 to 16 days. The route unfolds along the picturesque South coast to Plymouth, crossing over Dartmoor, through Bristol, and into Wales

via the Severn Bridge. It then winds its way through charming towns such as Monmouth, Warrington, and Lancaster, before traversing the breathtaking landscapes of the Lake District. A brief respite amidst the scenic beauty precedes the onward journey through Carlisle, along the old A74 to Glasgow, up Loch Lomond to Fort William, and finally over to Inverness before reaching the northernmost point of Scotland.

However, this journey holds a deeper purpose beyond personal achievement. I am undertaking this challenge sponsored for Cancer Research, in memory of my beloved Gill, who bravely battled breast cancer. Gill's 14 year resilience and indomitable spirit serve as my inspiration to contribute towards advancing cancer treatments for the future.

Stay tuned for updates on the funding page with Cancer Research. Your support and any assistance with accommodation along the route would be immensely appreciated. Let's come together to make a meaningful difference in the fight against cancer.

Steve Thorpe



COUNCILLOR VACANCY

Seven months since the Local Elections, we're pleased to report that both Lewis Fuller & Tracy Smith have settled in well to the council fold – however we still have a space!

The Parish Council has a range of responsibilities as we've alluded to before – from Green Spaces through to Bus Shelters, Grant Schemes to Street Furniture – but we always encourage each councillor to take a specific interest in the part that they're passionate about.

If you've ever wanted to have a larger input into your village, now's a great time consider it. The Council are keen to have as many voices as possible – and the empty seat at the table is crying out to be used!

Please contact the Clerk (clerk@hathernparishcouncil.org.uk) if you'd like to find out more.

HATHERN WILDLIFE GROUP

We were really pleased at our December Parish Council meeting to get an update from Hathern Wildlife Group.

The group have been working hard over the last couple of years on our Shepshed Road Allotment site, transforming the land toward the rear of the site into a fantastic Wildlife Garden – complete with it's own pond and residents!

The initial works on the site were funded by the Parish Council, and at our meeting we were thrilled to hear that the group have set



themselves up with their own Constitution and Bank Account – this will allow them to expand their grant opportunities for other projects too. One of these was explained to us on the night – a grant enabling the group to purchase and install several bird boxes around the village, including two larger owl boxes. The Parish Council also approved a small grant of £350 at this meeting to provide them the funds toward this and are looking forward to seeing updates of how they're utilised.

A further thanks must be given to the Wildlife Group who have recently begun the process of hedge planting in the Allotment car park. Rewilding spare strips of ground like this is part of our environmental strategy and the Group took it with aplomb! It is anticipated that by Easter this first phase will be completed.

You can keep an eye on all the Wildlife Group's comings and goings through their blog on their Facebook page – simply search "Hathern Wildlife".

PARISH PRECEPT

It's coming up to that time of year again where the letters fall through your door – the Council Tax increases. Whilst Hathern Parish Council have not escaped the increases in costs across the board, we're pleased to see that our modest increase to the Parish precept (under £4 per house, per year), is below a lot of others.

The Parish Council are expecting large increases in a range of areas this year as contracts come to an end (particularly in Green Spaces) and it's important we continue to be able to maintain these kind of services.

GOING GREEN - A DIGITAL HERALD?

As part of the Parish Council's environmental pledges, it's become apparent to us that not everybody actually wants a paper copy of this publication through their door, with a digital copy sufficing for many.

With this in mind, if you wished to have a digital copy only sent to you upon each release, you can now signup to this scheme via our website. Simply go to www.hathernparishcouncil.org.uk/herald and fill in the form to have a copy sent to your inbox each issue!

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

A reminder of our meeting dates for the remainder of 2024. All of these meetings are at Hathern Village Hall from 7.30pm. All are welcome to attend for the meetings entirety and we will always take public questions at the beginning of the meeting (and even try to answer them if we can!)

8th April

13th May

1st July

12th August

30th September

4th November

16th December

PETER SERGEANT: TRAIN OF THOUGHT

It's funny where a train of thought will lead you. Take for example John Worsfold's snippet in February's Hathern Church Magazine, No.508 which told us that February 15th would be World Hippo Day. For many people of a certain generation the first thing to come to mind when reading that would have been the refrain "Mud, mud, glorious mud!" from a 1950s' West End show in a song about the hippopotamus written and performed by Flanders & Swann. But who were they?

Michael Flanders (the words) and Donald Swann (the music) first met when they were fellow pupils at Westminster School in the 1930s but by the late 1950s and the early 1960s they were world famous, performing their witty and topical revues "At the Drop of A Hat" and "At the Drop of Another Hat" in Britain, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand and America.



two wonderful revues and their 'creature' songs (published in The Bestiary of Flanders and Swann) were recorded and produced by George Martin (yes, that George Martin, the 'fifth Beatle') and those records continue to inspire those following in their footsteps (or, in the case of Michael Flanders, 'wheelchair tracks' as, having contracted polio during his service in the Royal Navy during the Second World War, he was obliged to use one).

One of those inspired by those recordings is Peter Sergeant who writes articles for this publication and whom older members of the village community may remember performing Flanders & Swann songs (including The Hippopotamus) at a concert in Hathern Primary School on 13 October 1984. In what would now be known as a 'tribute act', Peter and Stephen Smith – whom Peter first met when he joined the staff of Loughborough Grammar School in 1975 – became Flanders & Swann for the night, Peter in the wheelchair and Stephen at the piano, complete with standard lamp as per their forebears' staging (see accompanying photographs). So how did that partnership come about?

Peter and Stephen began their musical association in 1982 as a contribution to a LOROS fund-raising event at the school. On that and subsequent occasions (see above)



In 1967, however, Swann decided that enough was enough so the partnership came to an end and they went their separate ways, though remaining good friends. Thankfully, their

they performed as Flanders & Swann but such was the success of their collaboration that they eventually felt emboldened to write and perform their own material dovetailed with that of F&S whenever they got together to do a show. And they now perform as themselves, i.e., as Smith & Sergeant, which they are still very happy to do . . . and, ahem, at the drop of a hat.

For the past 40 plus years they have continued to write and refine their own material, having been encouraged to develop their act by none other than Donald Swann himself, and they were particularly privileged in July 1992 when Claudia (Michael Flanders' widow) asked them to perform their songs and those of F&S at a party she gave at her home in West London. That extraordinary event was the result of being invited to Donald's house in Battersea Park Road, London, in May 1992 where – after entertaining him with their own songs – they

were astonished to be asked if they would 'sing one of ours'. So they did. Now they can never perform Misalliance, a tale about the ill-fated romance between the honeysuckle and the bindweed, without remembering the remarkable occasion when they sang Michael's words to Donald's music, played by Stephen on Donald's piano, to him in his own music room! That, Peter and Stephen agree, was a truly unforgettable experience.

According to Peter, there is much more to tell about their career as entertainers in the style of their predecessors but, as Michael Flanders would have said, that might be for "some other time" and besides, this train of thought needs to come to an end. Perhaps the best way of doing that, therefore, is to illustrate S&S's debt to F&S, by presenting for perusal the lyrics of one of their songs about a familiar and well-loved creature, the robin.

ALL SQUARE

(SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT)

I'm just a cockney robin but I know what's right and fair
So it's time you knew the truth about the Berkeley Square affair.
You see, back in the eighteenth century (before they saw the light)
The birds and beasts knew day was day and night was always night.
Then comes the nineteenth century, as all things come to pass,
And 'fore you know, the dark's aglow because of blooming gas!

Well, one bright day in August I 'ad to take a flight
To another part of London from which was mine by right
Because I'd 'ad this sparrer who was getting on my wick
By crowing 'ow 'e'd croak me if I didn't quit there quick!
I s'pose 'e thought it clever to make a cheap remark
To show off for a sparrer 'en or maybe for a lark,
But I took 'is 'int and beat it (though I knew he wouldn't dare)
And my wings that fast till I came at last to a place called Berkeley Square.



There, seeing 'ow the evening was drawing to a close,
I finds this bush and nestles down and falls into a doze.
Well, 'ardly 'ad I closed my eyes (now no more sparrer's prey)
When I 'ears this 'iss and then (get this) the night turns into day!
Well, 'ow was I to know 'twas gas? I mean, I'm not well read!
(About the breast, yes, I'd agree but not inside my 'ead!)
So, anyway I thought I'd start to try and stake my claim
Upon this square whence I 'ad come, and strive to make my name,
So up I pipes and settles down to make the world take note
By singing it the finest song to come from out my throat.

I must 'ave been inspired that day! I sang with might and main
And when I paused to take a breath, a voice cried, "More! Again!"
And peeping out from in the bush I spied there in the street
A couple dressed in Sunday best – the girl, she looked that sweet –
And the bloke, 'e turned to 'er and said, "Now, Fanny, ain't that rare,
To hear a bird so late at night, and here in Berkeley Square!"
"So late at night"? What could he mean? And then 'twas plain as day!
The lamps was lit! So that was it! I blushed, I'm bound to say!

Then there I sat, quite feathered down; my crest it took a fall,
And there it should 'ave ended, but sadly, that's not all
'Cos then I made the worst mistake I ever could 'ave done
And stayed inside the bush, you see, and lost what I 'ad won,
For when 'e says to 'er "What bird can sing like that at night?"
She tells 'im I'm a nightingale – and 'e thinks she is right!
Well, any robin worth his worm knows well that – at a push –
The nightingale can only blow some raspberries from a bush
So out I 'ops to show myself, but, by then, they 'ad gone
And where they'd been the gas lamp's gleam on empty pavement shone.

Well, I was choked; I'll tell you that! That Fanny; she's to blame!
It's 'er what done the robbin' of me and my good name!
But now you've heard, the truth is out about that summer's night
And 'ow the nightingale got 'old of the robin's copyright
To 'ave a song about him sung and give 'imself an air,
So set the record straight, my friends –
'Twas a robin that sang in Berkeley Square.

Words © Peter Sergeant 1990 Music © Stephen Smith (after Manning Sherwin) 1991

To hear an audio version, search @smithandsergeant on YouTube.



COMMUNITY MATTERS KEEPING OUR GRASS VERGES CLEAN

In our picturesque English village, where lush greenery adorns every corner, it's easy to overlook the impact of litter on our environment and local wildlife. Yet, the simple act of picking up litter from grass verges can play a significant role in preserving the delicate balance of nature that thrives in our community.

Every piece of litter left strewn across our grass verges poses a threat to the diverse wildlife that calls our village home. From birds to small mammals and insects, these creatures rely on the grass verges as habitats, sources of food, and safe pathways for movement. When litter lingers in these areas, it not only detracts from the natural beauty of our surroundings but also endangers the lives of these animals.

Plastic bags, bottles, and wrappers can entangle unsuspecting animals, leading to injury or even death. Small creatures like hedgehogs, often unseen in the twilight

hours, can become trapped in discarded cans or bottles, unable to free themselves. Additionally, ingesting or becoming entangled in litter can disrupt the natural behaviours and reproductive cycles of local wildlife, further endangering their populations.

Furthermore, littering has indirect consequences on the ecosystem as a whole. Leachates from decomposing litter can contaminate soil and water sources, affecting plant growth and aquatic life. Moreover, the presence of litter can deter visitors from enjoying outdoor spaces, diminishing the sense of community pride and connection with nature that defines our village.

As responsible residents of this beautiful village, it is our duty to take action. By regularly picking up litter from grass verges and disposing of it properly, we not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of our surroundings but also contribute to the well-being and survival of our local wildlife. Let's come together to keep our village clean and protect the natural treasures that make it so special - next time you're out walking, whether it's with the dog, or on the way to the shop or even walking to school, why not pick up just one piece of litter and throw it into the bin?



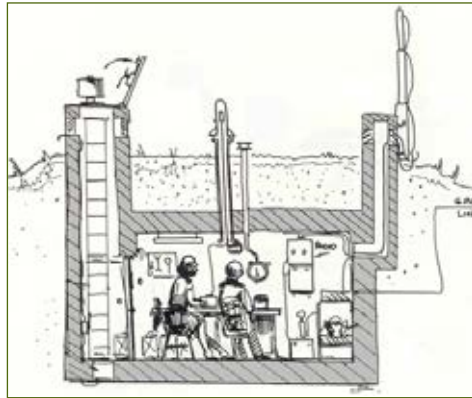
HATHERN HISTORY THE HIDDEN BUNKER

Walk up Shepshed Road – past Lammas Drive – past the entrance to the allotments. Keep walking but look carefully or you will miss the wooden garden gate set incongruously in the hedge. It appears to lead nowhere. Walk 50 yards further up the road to the bridleway that heads off left. Walk a little along the bridleway and look back down the hedgerow. You will see that the wooden gate fronts a blackthorn thicket that bulges out into the field – no larger than the footprint of a modern house. You have found Hathern’s hidden cold war history. Get as close as you like – you won’t see much more than a small steel hatch atop a stubby square turret because the bulk of the history is buried underground – a reinforced concrete bunker constructed in 1959 when nuclear war was felt to be a real threat.

According to some stories it was built to shelter local dignitaries. Sorry – Hathern dignitaries were not that important. Such elite bunkers were built – but not here. Our cold war

souvenir is one of 1500 Royal Observer Corps monitoring posts dotted across the country. They were built to detect and monitor surface radiation in the event of a nuclear explosion. An older network of above-ground posts for spotting enemy aircraft was deemed insufficiently safe in a nuclear weaponised world.

The underground posts were constructed by local contractors overseen by the Air Ministry Works Department and the Royal Observer Corps to a standard design.



A hole between 9 and 14 feet deep was dug, then a foot thick floor, 7 inch thick walls and an 8 inch thick floor were constructed using reinforced concrete. The whole structure was bitumen coated to waterproof the interior. Soil was compacted over the top in a 4 foot mound, leaving the access shaft, doubling as an air shaft, protruding above ground. A second air shaft was installed at the opposite end. Two narrower metal pipes poked out from the roof, above the ground, for use with operational instruments to detect nuclear blasts and fallout. The air vents were covered with downward sloping louvres above ground and sliding metal shutters below ground to control airflow during radioactive contamination. Inside, the underground chamber measured 16 feet in length and 7.5 feet in width and height. Power was supplied from 12 volt batteries inside the post

with a petrol generator outside to charge them.

[At the same time, the government was advising ordinary citizens how to build fallout shelters at home with a wooden door and a mattress.]



The posts were staffed by Observer Corps volunteers. On 21st July 1961, the Leicester Evening Mail carried the following:

ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS

Vacancies occur at the Melbourne, Coleorton, Hathern and Rearsby posts of the Royal Observer Corps. This is a voluntary organisation which plays a major part in the defence of the country by reporting movements of aircraft when required by the Royal Air Force. The Corps is also a National Reporting Organisation in conjunction with Radioactive Fallout from Nuclear Weapons supplying information which is essential for the operation of the Armed Forces and Civil Defence. Men and Women between the ages of 15 and 55 years who are willing to give a little of their spare time in the National Interest should contact Observer Officer WCTaylor, 20 Clay Street, Wymeswold, Loughborough. Tel. Wymeswold 230 for further details. Duties are light and out of pocket expenses are paid. Uniform is provided on enrolment.

Shifts were generally worked by teams of two

or three. One local volunteer remembered underground conditions as gloomy, stuffy and damp.

Local posts were in telegraph, then radio contact with regional centres. This arrangement meant that reports could be coordinated and locations of explosions/ fallout triangulated.

The Hathern post was opened in 1960 and closed in 1991 along with any other surviving posts thankfully never having been used in earnest. When the Soviet Union broke up around 1990, the threat of war and a nuclear attack diminished. Defence spending was accordingly reduced.

Visitors to the site in the 1990’s and early 2000’s could still climb down and see the furniture and fittings – over time vandalised. Sometime later the bunker was filled with concrete and the hatch sealed – its final decommissioning..

So today, behind a wooden garden gate on Shepshed Road, hidden somewhere in the blackthorn thicket that has sprung up over the years, a hatch still protrudes above ground – a sentinel reminder of how close the Cold War came to this Hathern.

Graham Patient



SPECIAL FEATURE

TIME4 LEICESTERSHIRE

Time4Leicestershire is a free skills exchange initiative run by Leicestershire County Council, and it has just landed in Charnwood! Members can sign up to share their skills and can request skills they would like in return. 'Timebanking' differs from volunteering as it allows people to swap skills at a time that suits them, with no minimum commitment needed. For every hour of time somebody gives, they receive an hour's time credit that they can exchange for another skill.

How do I earn credits to start Timebanking?

Everyone who signs up automatically gets 5 credits to start them off. Some people's skills are likely to be more 'in demand' than others, so this gives everyone a chance to get started. We also have a community pot of credits that we can use - if you have an idea for a community Timebank project, get in touch and let's make it happen!

How do I find out what's on offer?

Time4Leicestershire is an online skills marketplace. You register on the relevant Timebank, on the platform - <https://Time4Leicestershire.org.uk> and then post offers or requests through your account. It's really simple to use, but we'll have regular pop-up hubs where you can drop in and get support with using the platform, ask questions, participate in taster sessions or just chat with other members.

What type of skills can I swap?

We're looking for people with all kinds of skills! From practical skills like DIY or crafts, to 'lend a hand' type skills of giving someone a lift, or walking a dog, or maybe you've got digital skills to share, or you could help someone explore potential new hobbies like languages or music? We're also looking for 'life skills' that you might not even consider valuable, but someone else might - ironing a shirt, paying a bill, or planning meals - all skills! If you've got an unusual interest, like bee-keeping, we're equally keen to hear from you. And if you're in a club or group, you can earn credits by bringing a potential new member found through the Timebank along with you, which benefits, you, the other member, and your group.

Emma Ward



Swap skills, not money

Myra joins Time4Leicestershire and lists the skills she can offer and those she needs



Dave, a Timebank member contacts Myra and asks for help gardening



Myra spends two hours clearing leaves in Dave's garden and earns 2 Timebank credits



Dave walks the dogs for Mollie and earns a Timebank credit



Anne takes George to town so that he can do some shopping and earns 2 Timebank credits



Anne spends her credits on cookery lessons from Dave



George reads to Elsie and earns a Timebank credit



Give one hour, get one hour

www.time4leicestershire.org.uk

time4leicestershire@leics.gov.uk



SCAN ME



COMMUNITY MATTERS
**HATHERN
 COMMUNITY
 LIBRARY**

After a chilly start to the year we're looking forward to Spring, and busily planning for our next events – we'll be involved in Hathern Open Gardens this year as well as participating in Big Week and all of the other usual village events like the scarecrow and Christmas tree festivals. But while we wait for the weather to catch up with us, we've got some cosy indoor events planned, like Darwin Day, and some crafting sessions with Harsha, as well as the regular Reading Group, Craft & Chat and All Join In sessions for the little ones. Our 8th (yes, 8th!!!) Birthday Party event is coming up in March as well, which we're very excited about. If you're a dab hand in the kitchen, why not make us a delicious cake to sell, or if you've got some unwanted Christmas gifts left over, we could use prizes for the tombola! Proceeds from this year's birthday party will go to a local food bank and homeless charity.



VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Do you want to learn a new skill or share those you already have? Want to try your hand at something new? We'd love your help! We're looking for volunteers to man the library on Wednesday mornings and Tuesday afternoons. We're also looking for new trustees, specifically with experience in project management or grant applications, but all skills welcome! If you, or someone you know would like to volunteer with us, please get in contact - hatherncommunitylibrary@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

**2ND MARCH, 1PM-3PM
 EXPLODING BOX CARD.**

Join us for a lovely afternoon of card making. During this class you will learn to make an exploding box card. Lift the lid to reveal the beautiful handmade gift card box. Fill it with photographs, sweets and treats! £15 per person. Materials and refreshments included.

If you are interested in this craft workshop, please email Harsha to book a place.

Email: harsha@IndiaInspiredCrafts.com



**SATURDAY 3RD MARCH, 1PM-3PM
 HCL 8TH BIRTHDAY PARTY!**

Games and craft activities for children, a second-hand book stall and Refreshments and delicious home-made cakes. Please come along and help us to celebrate! All proceeds will be donated to a local charity.

LOTTERY

Hathern Community Library Lottery is based on the National Lottery and pays out each week on the Bonus Ball. Each ticket, from 1 to 59, costs £2 and 50% of the proceeds goes to the winner, 50% being retained by the library. In the event of no one having the winning ticket, the prize is rolled over to the following week, for one lucky person! If you would like to support us by buying a ticket (or two!) every now and again - or even better by bagging yourself a permanent number - you can contact us through our Facebook page, or by email (janesorby@btinternet.com). The list of current lottery numbers that aren't subscribed to are 16, 33, and 41. The average weekly prize is over £50!!! Payment can be made through PayPal, bank transfer or cash.

OPENING HOURS

- Tues 14:00 - 18:00
- Weds 10:00 - 12:30
- Thurs 14:00 - 18:00
- Fri 10:00 - 12:30
- Sat 10:00 - 12:00

CONTACT THE LIBRARY

<https://hatherncommunitylibrary.org/>
 Tel. 0116 3053605
www.Hatherncommunitylibrary.org
hatherncommunitylibrary@gmail.com
[@hathernlibrary](https://twitter.com/hathernlibrary)

Hathern's BIG week

BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER



1 - 8 JUNE 2024