
HATHERN HERALD

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SKETCHING HATHERN

The fascinating story of Alfred Warbis who sketched Hathern for the Loughborough Echo in the 1950s and 60s.

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FESTIVE WILDLIFE

Find out why some of our native plants and animals have become so strongly linked with the festive season.

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HATHERN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Fireworks, Music Festivals and Big Weeks- they are all down to the HVA. Find out how it all began.

SEASON'S GREETINGS!



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WELCOME TO THE WINTER EDITION OF THE HATHERN HERALD.

This time around we have some fantastically varied and interesting articles and features. There's the story of Alfred Warbis who went from working on the design of the famous Spitfire fighter plane from WW2 to having a regular feature in the Loughborough Echo illustrating local scenes and buildings in our area. Then there's our Nature Notes article that focuses on festive wildlife and poses the question as to why, although it is seen regularly all year round, the Robin is invariably associated with Christmas and especially greetings cards. The answer is surprising but perfectly logical!

Our regular look at Hathern's Community Library this time highlights the expert help and support it can give those who are interested in researching their family history. We also have the story of the Hathern Village Association who have worked incredibly hard over recent years to bring us some of the best community events and entertainment the village has seen. Don't forget they always need volunteers to help organise and put on these things – have a go it can be fun!

Meet the Neighbours features Sheelagh Stafford – raised and schooled in the village, Sheelagh has some memorable anecdotes from those carefree days. These were times when a pair of metal roller skates was every child's prized possession – and the racket they made was the scourge of local residents!

Finally we have an update on where the Parish Council is with taking over the public spaces on Daisy Bank, and congratulations all round to Hathern Together for their recent award for community engagement.

That's it for now – good reading.

SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM THE HATHERN HERALD EDITORIAL TEAM – ROY DANN, DAVE NEVILLE, MARTIN CLAYTON, DAVE CLEGGETT AND ELLA-MAE HUBBARD, AND A SPECIAL THANKS TO SEAN HALE AND LAURA BYRNE FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS.

HATHERN TOGETHER BEST IN LEICESTERSHIRE

Congratulation to the Hathern Together team who have won this year's Rural Achievement Award for Community Engagement in Leicestershire and Rutland. Hathern Together has been recognised by the Rural Community Council for its work bringing many of our voluntary groups together to put on the tremendous series of public events in Hathern during 2018 and then again this year. The award was collected by Jan Leivers and Gail Wooliscroft on behalf of Hathern Together at the ceremony in October.

Hathern Together is a community led initiative that comprises representatives from most of the community based organisations in the village who, supported by the Parish Council, help develop and co-ordinate a wide variety of exhibitions, talks, activities, and entertainment events over the year. Chairman, Martin Clayton said "This award is

a reflection of all the hard work put in by the volunteers in the many community groups that have contributed to the programme of events over the past couple of years – they all share this award".

By the way look out for the next Hathern Together brochure detailing the great series of events planned for the first half of next year – it should be distributed to all households in December.



UPDATE ON DAISY BANK

It's been rather slow progress with the intended adoption, by the Parish Council, of the open public spaces on the Daisy Bank development. The reason for that has been the requirement that these areas are finished to the standards directed by the original planning permission for the site. In a number of areas that standard has not yet been achieved by the developer - but we are getting there.

In April the developer finally came back on site to rectify the safety issues associated with the children's play area and, following inspection by Charnwood Borough Council (CBC), this area was re-opened in May.

There remain several other matters still to be resolved including the replacement of the large number of trees and shrubs that

suffered badly during the hot and dry summer of 2018. With the help and hard work of our Borough Councillor Keith Harris the Parish Council can now count on the support of CBC who has formally instructed the developer to resolve all these outstanding issues. Hopefully, over the winter, these problems should be rectified – and perhaps even by the time you read this some work should have started on the ground.

Once CBC is satisfied with the site, and to adhere to the agreement between themselves and the developer, a period of 12 months needs to elapse before CBC can finally sign off the development and the Parish Council can legally adopt the public spaces. That will mean that responsibility for maintaining these areas, including all the equipment and planting, will fall to the Parish Council who will endeavour to do a much better job than the developer!

HATHERN'S WICKED WALKERS

We have yet another new group formed in the village! Following April's highly successful sponsored walk for Hathern Community Library a number of those intrepid ramblers decided to set up a regular walking group that now goes under the working title of Wicked Walkers! The group organises circular walks on a roughly six weekly basis with walks already scheduled for next year on the 12th January, 16th February, and 29th March.

If you want to join the group for any of these walks then contact Gill Rocket at Hathern Community Library on 0116 3053605 for more information . All walks will be reasonably local (within an hour's car journey away), car sharing lifts can be organised, and (most importantly) a pub stop for light refreshment is usually on the agenda!

Of interest to longer distance walkers will be the new Cross Britain Way created to help raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support. The idea was to create a walking trail across the whole of the country that

would include less well-known areas of the English countryside, combine both England and Wales, and would embrace Britain's cultural and industrial heritage as well as the beauty of its scenery, and the range of its changing landscapes. Needless to say the walk includes a section that comes through Hathern.

The walk starts in Lincolnshire at Boston near The Wash and heads westwards across the middle of England eventually reaching the Snowdonia National Park and finishing in lovely coastal town of Barmouth.

For more information go to
www.macmillanway.org.



ALFRED WARBIS

SKETCHING HATHERN

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Loughborough Echo published drawings of local scenes and buildings under the heading "From an Artist's Sketchbook". They were the work of Alfred Thomas Warbis who contributed over 1200 sketches, including, as far as we know, thirteen from Hathern.

A Londoner, he showed considerable artistic flair when young and on leaving school, went into advertising and publicity. At one-time when he was out of a job he applied unsuccessfully for a job at GEC in London. Nonetheless, he went to their offices and sat working for three days at a desk before anyone realised he was there - he got the job as a result! He gained experience with several companies and later worked at the Supermarine company in Southampton, where he was a colleague of Spitfire designer, R J Mitchell. Mitchell asked him to make a drawing of a fighter plane and Alfred duly obliged. He noticed that Mitchell was holding the drawing upside down and pointed this out, but Mitchell continued his study. Could this have been the inspiration for the Spitfire's distinct wings? He moved to Loughborough in 1939 to become the publicity manager at Brush.

Alfred contributed to many journals and once had 30 drawings appearing in 30 different publications in the same week. During his long career he had over 5000 black and white sketches published. In 1949 he was a central figure in a worldwide art scandal. He entered several pictures for an exhibition in Loughborough and experts were persuaded that one entitled "Figure of

Eight, Skegness" signed "T. Warbis" represented the outstanding work of a modernist genius. The perpetrator then announced that it was a daub by his six-year-old son Thomas and that the family cat had finished it off by padding across it! Alfred hated modern art and was making a point that even a child could do it.

Apart from being excellent drawings, Alfred's works have great interest historically, often showing the extent to which places have changed over the last 60 years. In the Echo, each sketch was accompanied by an article about the building, its history, owners past and present, and location. Of the Hathern sketches, most such as the Church, the Cross, and Cross Street School are instantly recognisable. Alfred sketched the Anchor Inn in 1958. The building on the right was just about to be demolished to make way for the car park.



Dovecote Street

Of the thirteen sketches, two properties haven't survived. One was a house that stood east of the former police house in Wide Lane. Alfred sketched it only a few weeks before it was razed to the ground to be replaced by a new dwelling. Of considerable age, the beams can be seen at the end. Unfortunately, back then preservation of old buildings was not high on the agenda. The other lost building was the Rookery which stood to the east of the old Co-op Bakery in Wide Street. The Rookery was a purpose-built row of dwellings for framework knitting. The single

room on each third floor had the full width windows typical of the trade. The Rookery was demolished in the mid-sixties.

What changes will we see in Hathern in another 60 years? The sketches can be found via the Hathern History Society website – www.hathernhistory.co.uk, where old photos of the buildings can also be seen.

Alfred Warbis' sketches are reproduced by kind permission of the Loughborough Echo.



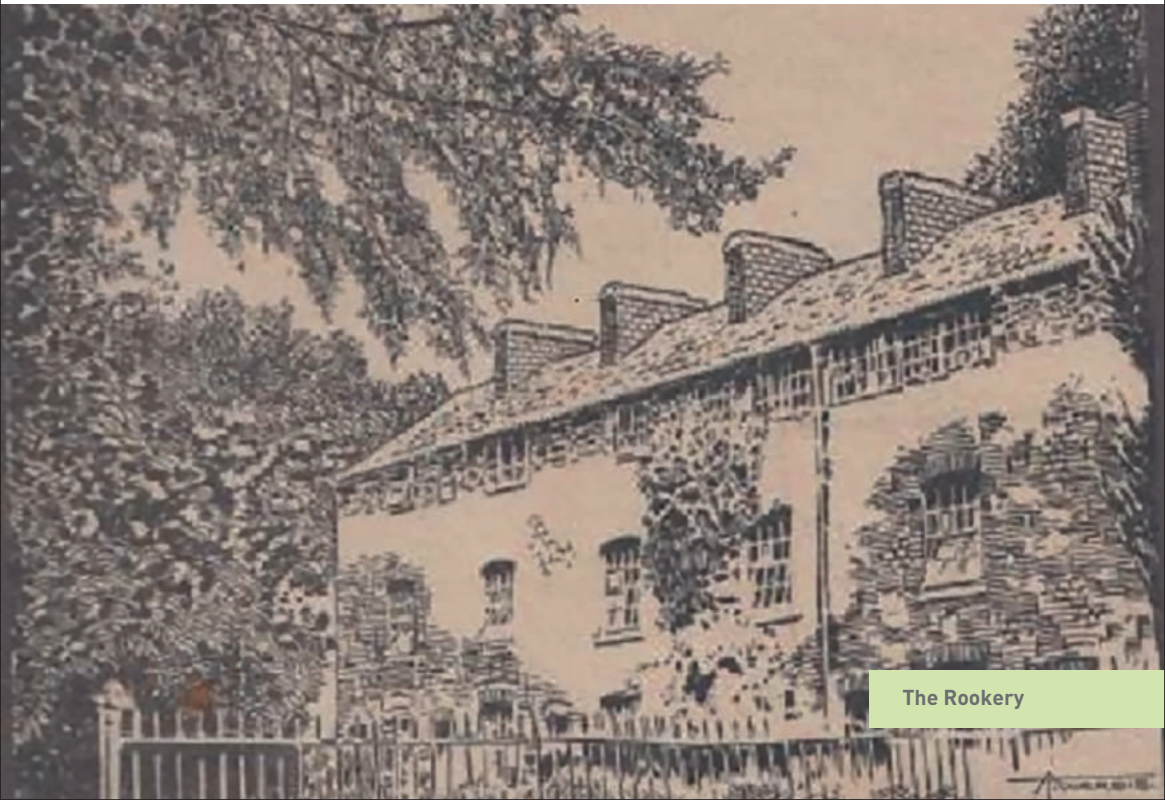
The Anchor



House next to the Police House



Manor House



The Rookery

FAMILY HISTORY SUPPORT

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Family history support at Hathern Community Library

Researching your family tree is fascinating, but it can be daunting to start! It's certainly not as difficult as it used to be and involves a lot less travel! And the good news is that Hathern Community Library is here to help you start the (metaphorical) journey.

You can spend as much or as little time investigating as you want, and it is always possible to get stuck. Ask for help, but be aware that some stories are going to stay hidden, and records are being found, transcribed and updated all the time.

What can the library do to help you if you want to find out more about your family history?

HCL can offer access to services and support. There are a variety of resources available through the library such as Ancestry and Find My Past, for which you would need a subscription if you were to do this privately.

Linda Wigley, one of the library volunteers, leads up the Family History support and, along with some of the other volunteers, has a lot of experience using these systems to help you get started on the process. You will need to make an appointment with Linda, when the library is open – she'll lead you through an initial discussion, help you make your first searches, explaining the systems that are available through the library and providing an introduction to other services more widely available.

What do you need to do to prepare?

Write down everything you know about your parents, grandparents, great grandparents

– as much as you know to give the search somewhere to start and to make the support available as effective as possible. Talk to your family, but beware of your assumptions – when you start investigating you might find out that things are not as you thought. You also need to remember that names, spellings etc. can change, even within living memory, and where records have been transcribed (for example), there may be even more errors.



NEW WEBSITE!

The HCL website has been overhauled – if you haven't checked it out in a while then now is a good time! We'd love to hear your feedback!



SOCKTOBER FEST KNOCK YOUR SOCKS OFF!

Socketober fest saw library goes celebrating all things socks! Puppets were made, games were played, plays were acted out! Look out for our seasonal events, which take place throughout the year!



OUR FESTIVE WILDLIFE

As we head towards the end of the year, I'm guessing most of you have started to plan for Christmas. It started me thinking about the plants and birds that are associated with Christmas and wondering why some of our native species have become symbols of our festivities.

It appears that a lot of this goes back to fertility symbols used by the Pagans. So, for example the Celtic druids regarded anything growing on oak trees as sacred and, when mistletoe was found, it was highly celebrated. The druids believed mistletoe had all sorts of magical properties and considered it to be an effective fertility treatment. It's this link with fertility that provides us with the reason we kiss under the mistletoe. Many such Pagan traditions were assimilated into Christian traditions and thus the link by association with this time of year.

As you wander around the village you will be able to spot quite a lot of mistletoe which stands out as patches of green among the deciduous trees that have lost their leaves. It is described as a small semi-parasitic evergreen shrub which forms large spherical balls in the tops of trees. Being semi-parasitic means that although it has the ability to produce its own food by photosynthesis, once it matures the roots penetrate the bark and start to take water and nutrients from the tree.

It is spread by the birds that feed on its berries such as blackcaps and mistle thrushes. Having eaten the white flesh of the mistletoe berry, the birds wipe their beaks on twigs



and branches, leaving behind the seed. If the seed is deposited and manages to take hold, a mistletoe plant might germinate on the branch. It was in fact its taste for the berries of this plant that led to the mistle thrush being originally known as the mistletoe thrush in a very early listing of birds that was undertaken in 1661.

In recent years, mistletoe's range in the UK has begun to expand, particularly into eastern areas of England. This is thought to be due in part to an influx of continental blackcaps from Germany that have started





overwintering in Britain, with many thousands now spending their winters here. It seems that blackcaps are more efficient at spreading mistletoe seeds than other birds that feed on the berries.

Other plants that are closely associated with Christmas are of course the holly and the ivy. Once again, the association goes back to pagan origins where they were considered sacred plants. The Druids believed the holly was a male plant and ivy a female plant and it was this fertility myth that was carried forward and once again resulted in the symbol of holly and ivy being assimilated into our own traditions.

The holly's lovely red berries also provide an excellent source of food for our winter birds. We have a holly tree growing at the bottom of our garden and I've often seen birds fighting over the rights to the berries. The mistle thrush is well known for protecting its own source of food by aggressively seeing off other birds trying to pinch any of the berries it feels it owns. It is believed that successfully preserving the supply of food is what gives the bird its head start in the breeding season. According to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), birds that guard berries produce bigger and earlier clutches than those that do not.

Everyone will be familiar with the image of the robin on Christmas cards, usually perched on a garden fork or a holly branch. Apparently, this dates back to when Victorian Christmas cards were being delivered by postmen wearing red tunics known as "robins". A great marketing idea was spotted, and the tradition still runs strong. It's ironic that robins are associated with Christmas peace and goodwill as they are an aggressive species quite capable of killing another of its kind in defence of its territory.

Having spoken about birds that feed on berries at some length, may I take the opportunity to remind you to keep your bird tables and feeders well stocked over the Winter and also provide a source of drinking water. Birds use a significant amount of energy during the colder months and rely on us to give them a little help in order for them to cope. If you haven't already done so, give your bird tables and feeders a wash with some mild disinfectant (around 5%) in order to reduce the number of harmful bacteria that can infect our wild birds.

I hope you get plenty of our feathered friends visiting your gardens this Winter.

Happy wildlife watching!

Sean Hale

SHEELAGH STAFFORD

Say 'Hello!' to Sheelagh Stafford (nee 'Rocket' Walker), our Autumn Edition choice of village residents.

Born along Pasture Lane and raised in the village, it is no surprise that Sheelagh has many fond memories of her early childhood growing up with her village friends; the cows walking down Pasture Lane to the fields and then back again to Jackson's Farm where she and other village youngsters would watch as the cows were milked by hand, their patience rewarded with a glass of warm milk straight from the cow; kids stick-flicking cow-muck at each other; her sister Val and brother Mick and his pet Jackdaw 'Jackie'; all the free-running village dogs sat outside their house when their own dog was 'in season'; Yarker Hunt and the Sweet Shop; Coronation Tea Party in The Charity Rooms just off The Green; on rainy days Mum teaching the young Sheelagh how to play whist; and then playing whist in the Village Hall aged 13; when a little bit older playing darts for 'The Ladies Team' at The Three Crowns; Sheelagh still playing whist to this day! - and you Dear Reader - you will be no doubt pleased to learn that Sheelagh has given up the muck-flicking!

As a young girl attending the village school, at lunchtimes Sheelagh found it was quicker and easier to climb over the wall surrounding the playground than going through the normal gate, as home was just down the road to Pasture Lane. It took several warnings from teachers to use the correct gate in and out of the school before a ruler across the hand made the lesson stick. When school was over it was time for play. Most kids had a pair of roller skates; not the

whizzy in-line nylon and ceramic speedsters of today. Oh no - back in those days the old skates were heavy-duty engineering - a rigid steel platform sitting on sturdy metal castors with ball-bearing races! The noise they made as they hurtled along the village streets was enough to alert the unwary pedestrian of imminent danger; thankfully, collisions were rare. The fastest and best noise-creating route was the one zooming past the Village Shop and then to race around the corner into 'The Green', with the accompanying metal-screaming din echoing off the walls of the adjacent houses. Those front rooms which were so close to the footpath bore the brunt of the awful noise and the occupants were quick to voice their annoyance! Needless to say, that's like waving a red flag to a bull to kids of a certain age, so they would deliberately go around the circuit again and try to increase the decibel levels even more. And they did - until one occupant took revenge by emptying a bucket of water over Sheelagh's head! That certainly quietened things down for a while! As Sheelagh says 'It could have been a whole lot worse - those houses didn't yet have flushing toilets!' Think on that for a bit.

After several years Sheelagh acquired her long-standing nickname 'Rocket Walker' - nothing to do with her roller skating exploits, more to do with 'Rocket', the name of the beautiful grey horse she was being taught to ride on by Elizabeth Ward. That nickname and love of horses has stuck to this day.

Leaving Limehurst School, Sheelagh began her working life on the shop floor of the British Shoe Corporation in Shepshed. As with many teenagers, removing themselves from the prison-like shackles of duvet-world

requires considerable effort, and many times, late getting up, she would have to run, in her stiletto heels, up Narrow Lane only to see the Shephed bus disappearing up the hill, so she was thankful when aged 18 she passed her driving test and got her first car. Much easier now to get to work on time! After several years Sheelagh married and now living in Shephed, continued working at British Shoe until it finally closed in 1983. The marriage didn't work out, so Sheelagh and daughter returned to Hathern. After a short redundancy period Sheelagh volunteered to work for 'Age Concern', which eventually led to her being offered the role of 'Day Care Organiser for Leicestershire and Rutland' – which meant planning residential day-care events to enhance and stimulate the lives of the elderly and infirm. Now re-married and living in Loughborough, Sheelagh managed two day-care centres, one in Castle Donington and the other in Loughborough. This management role she continued until her retirement. Unfortunately widowed after only 5 years, once again Sheelagh returned to her childhood roots and came home to Hathern.

Sheelagh's empathy and care for others still continues in her retirement – she is an active member of the Pentecostal Church in Loughborough, where she is involved in providing rehabilitative care in the community. She is still going to whist drives after all these years, though tinged with regret that she has to go to Belton or Sutton Bonington to play, as there doesn't seem to be the desire for whist drives in Hathern. She and her friends of old continue to socialise together, meeting over coffee for gossip up-dates or going to the movies – period drama being a joint favourite genre. Walking around the village with her rescue dog Sam gives Sheelagh a continual up-to-date and feedback on what is happening with old friends and village life in general.

Which brings us nicely back full circle, with a smidgen of philosophy thrown in; it really doesn't matter whatever lessons life throw at us, wherever our careers take us, coming

home to our childhood village is like being enveloped in the biggest comfort blanket imaginable.

So, after all this time, what does Sheelagh miss from her early village days? Hedgerows and wildlife, especially the lack of birds, is the emphatic response. That, and, in her own words, 'Freedom to roam, without fear'. And we can all read into that what we will.

Her wishes for the village? Quite simple; Sheelagh just wishes that people would pick up their own litter! That's not asking for too much is it!

So, if you see Sheelagh walking around the village with her dog Sam, please give her a wave and 'Hello Sheelagh!' You will get a wave back for sure!



HATHERN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

This year has most certainly been a tough one for Hathern Village Association (HVA) and its band of volunteers – you only need to have to have been to one of their three main events to see that.

June saw Hathern's Big Week return to the Park for another year, with the majority of the events held under a literal black cloud. Despite the weather, the village came together and enjoyed a fabulous week, concluding with an indoor Proms in the Park (well, it was still on the park at least!)

But it was in August where the main bad luck hit the group. Wicked Hathern Fest faced a new nemesis in the form of dangerously high winds that resulted in unavoidable delays and cancellations. As a consequence attendance was down and the group lost £37,000 from the event. Finally, despite the poor weather again, the team managed to get through November's Bonfire Night event unscathed, if not a little muddy!

With the generous goodwill of local suppliers and those contributing to crowd-funding, the HVA move in 2020 on an even-level. No cash balance, but no debts either. Phew!

But where did it all begin? The HVA was the brainchild of Benjamin Hardy back in 2011, who recognised the opportunity in the village to run bigger scale events. At the time, many clubs held their own, smaller events throughout the village – successfully too, it must be said – but there was no infrastructure for larger crowds.

This changed for the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton that year, when the newly formed team, with the help of Keith and Sue at Cross Street Stores amongst others, held a party on the Cross Street School site – a whole day of picnics, music, races and entertainment!

For most people, this would have been enough – but the itch hadn't been scratched for the newly formed team. A Bonfire Night followed in the same year, held at Hathern Nurseries. The following year, the same venue would play host to the original Hathern Fest – a lorry trailer stage and a mixture of bands playing for free with a modest crowd of around 600 people.

The primary focus of the HVA has always been to organise and run community events in the village, and not to fund raise. The numerous donations that have been given out over the years by the group are simply an additional benefit of successful events. And it was in 2012 that the first donations were able to be made including Pasture Lane Players, and Hathern Parish Church as part of the Louvre



Replacement Programme. In that year alone, well over £1000 was donated back in to village causes.

As the events became more successful, the scale increased – Wicked Hathern Fest and Wicked Hathern Bonfire & Fireworks found a new home at Dishley Grange Farm, where it has remained ever since with support from the Gilby family. With much larger events, however, come extra challenges and last year alone, Wicked Hathern Fest cost over £97,000 to put on.

Despite the increased cost, excess funds have continued to be donated where possible and in 2017 and 2018, donations were made to recognise the importance of the volunteers at Hathern Community Library. Not just for what they do there, but what they were contributing to village events with the HVA.

A staple part of HVA's calendar has been the June Carnival & It's a Knockout – a resurrection of an event from TV if you can remember that far! This received a shakeup in 2017 when HVA introduced The Big Week – a series of events in Hathern Park, hosting multiple community groups. The Big Week (now nine days long!) sees contributions from the HVA, Hathern Youth Club, Hathern Praise Group, Hathern Community Library, Hathern History Society, Hathern WI, Hathern Primary School, Hathern Brownies & Guides,



Pastures New Playgroup, and Hathern Band, amongst no doubt countless others! These events have been a real success story for all groups in Hathern.

Throughout all this, it's easy to forget that every single member of the HVA team are volunteers – a fact that perhaps only became apparently to the majority outside of the village when the crowd-funding appeal began in August of this year. The Committee (pictured) hosts an AGM each February and are always happy to answer questions. Likewise, if you feel you could volunteer at an event, or even on the committee, Ben Hardy is always happy to answer your questions!

Subscribe to the Hathern Together website www.hathernonline.co.uk to keep track of HVA's next events, including their AGM.





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