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1. Glastonbury Festivals Ltd Objectives

The company came into being primarily to promote, organise and execute the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts. It was formally registered on 6th August 1992 (Registration number 273866), although festivals had been held at Worthy Farm for a number of years, the first one being in 1970.

The Festival aims to encourage and stimulate youth culture from around the world in all its forms, including pop music, dance music, jazz, folk music, fringe theatre, drama, mime, circus, cinema, poetry and all the creative forms of art and design, including painting, sculpture and textile art.

A large area of the Festival (the “Green” area) is set aside for complementary and alternative medicine, demonstrations and displays of environmentally-friendly technologies and techniques, various forms of religious expression, and a forum for debating environmental, social and moral issues.

The Festival organises market places, which sell an enormous range of wares, and which place particular emphasis on offering high quality prepared food and hand-made goods, including clothes and jewellery.

The company makes films and recordings of the event that are sold all over the world.

In addition to all this, the company actively pursues the objective of making a profit, and in so doing, is able not only to make improvements to the site, but also to distribute large amounts of money to Greenpeace, Oxfam, Water Aid and other humanitarian causes, which enhance the fabric of our society. In the running of the event the Festival deliberately employs the services of these organisations, increasing the amounts they can raise towards their objectives.

The company also runs other events, away from Worthy Farm: an annual fund raising pop concert for Pilton Village in September, and a “Musical Extravaganza” in Glastonbury Abbey in August.

Mindful of the disruption and anxiety caused locally by the Festival, the company vigorously pursues a policy of support to local economy, schools and social institutions.

In working towards the preceding company objectives, the Festival will ensure that the safety of the public, performers, staff and contractors is central to both the planning and the running of the event. The company will adhere to Local Authority Environmental Health, and Health and Safety licence requirements, and work closely with Emergency Services and Government Agencies.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

The Glastonbury Festival takes place on Worthy Farm, Pilton in Somerset.

Somerset is predominantly rural county in the West Country. It is situated between the counties of Avon, Wiltshire, Devon and Dorset.

Geologically, Somerset is extremely diverse, with the Mendip Hills limestone plateau to the North, leading into the marshy areas of the Somerset Levels, which lie below sea level. The Quantock Hills stretch across the south west of the county and are formed from red sandstone. These join with Exmoor National Park in West Somerset. The western edge of the county is coastline, which changes from long, sandy beaches in the north to rugged cliffs and pebbled coves adjoining Devon.

Somerset is well-placed for communications, with the M5 motorway passing through the county, which links the Midlands to the West Country. The railway network connects many rural areas of Somerset to main lines. There are frequent direct services to London, the North of England and Scotland, which stop at the larger stations of the county.

Many parts of Somerset do not benefit from these communication networks, however, as they are still only surrounded by country lanes.

The town that is linked to the Festival, Glastonbury is actually the centre of many myths and legends. As such, it has attracted a strong element of the alternative culture, the forerunner of this being the hippy culture, which first affected Britain in the late sixties. This presence has been attributed to the strong association that Glastonbury has with the Arthurian Legends, and the site of the first Christian church.

King Arthur and his wife are supposedly buried in the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, which was once a very powerful religious establishment. The 'Chalice Well' in the town is thought to produce water with healing properties and has been mentioned in Malory's "Morte d'Arthur".

Looming over the town, in fact the source of much of Glastonbury's legend is the "Tor". This is a conical shaped, ridged hill, which rises over 500 feet out of the Levels surrounding Glastonbury. On the top of the Tor is St Michael's Tower. The Tor is supposed to be the "Isle of Avalon" in Arthurian legend; indeed its mystique is almost tangible when seeing the Tor rising out from the mists that cover the Levels.

The mythology of Glastonbury is well marketed. Many of its High Street shops are "New Age" type establishments, being given names such as "Gothic Image".

The site of the Festival is actually closer to the town of Shepton Mallet than Glastonbury. Michael Eavis chose Glastonbury because it has been a place of pilgrimage for thousands of years and Worthy Farm was one of the Glastonbury Abbey Farms together with Glastonbury's long running history of mystique and intrigue.

Archaeological digs have suggested that there were regular midsummer festivals in the Lake Village near Glastonbury as early as 500BC. Beads and other artifacts have been found at sites which are only free of flood water at the height of summer. Glastonbury, traditionally the site of the Isle of Avalon (Celtic for Place of Blessed Souls), attracted the earliest Christians to build their first church there. This no doubt led King Arthur and his queen to be buried there – though some say this is an invention by medieval monks hoping to add to their power and wealth through the pilgrimage trade.

In later years, some of the country's leading artists, including George Bernard Shaw and Rutland Boughton, were involved in a radical annual arts festival, which ran for twelve years between 1914 – 1926. Whether or not there is any real link – other than a romantic one – between our festival and the ones that preceded it, will have to be left to the historians to decide.

Michael Eavis is the driving force behind the Glastonbury Festival – the biggest event of its type in Europe. In 1894 Michael's great great grandfather, Joseph, with his wife Mary, moved to Worthy Farm. They ran a dairy herd, as their son did after them, and then his son, Michael's father, also called Joseph.

Michael was educated at Wells Cathedral School but left at 15 to join the Union Castle Shipping Line as a trainee midshipman. For 4 years he plied the routes between Britain, Kenya and South Africa. He had every intention of making his life at sea, but after his father's premature death as the eldest of 5 children, he returned to run the farm. In the early days, as well as working the farm, Michael had a day job working in the Somerset coalfields.

Michael was smitten with the idea of an alternative to the daily routine of farming, after visiting the Bath Blues Festival in the summer of 1970. He and his late wife Jean, walked through one of the numerous holes in the fence to discover hundreds of thousands of strange and interesting people, the like of which he had never encountered before. This awesome sight inspired him to reach for the telephone the very next day, with the idea that he could do the same kind of thing, but better, by combining the pop festival culture with the more traditional fairs and harvest festival. He also felt that he had the ideal site, with a beautiful valley that extends towards the Tor at Glastonbury.

September 19th 1970 was the first event with a handful of pop and folk stars including Mark Bolan and Quintessence and a lorry load of makeshift scaffolding for a stage. Admission to the first festival was only £1 for the weekend and included free milk.

Although the first event was autumnal, it then moved to the summer solstice as an appropriate time for the Festival. Subsequently due to the pressures from exam takers everywhere it slipped to the last weekend in June (from 1992) which has now become the Glastonbury Weekend – the weekend after the summer solstice.