

Meon Matters

*News, Views & Comment
from East Meon*



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Winter 2023

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Editorial

Our wonderful volunteer editors were so gratified with the positive feedback we received on the Autumn issue. Privately, we were hopeful it would prove to be a cracker (right from that front cover) but it's reassuring you agreed. Thank you!

So let's see how we do with this Winter issue. It's certainly less messy - which is just as well as we are looking to entice you with Christmas Nibble recipes, washed down with a range of thoughtful wine recommendations to suit all tastes. Now I've got your attention!

And you may want to pull the cork before settling down to read the profile on our very own national treasure - Chris Hollis.

Sticking with the wine theme, we've also got a super report of the Court House Berrygarden grape harvest that so many of you got stuck into. As well as on the equally well attended Remembrance Sunday commemorations.

And it's a sure-fire bet that this wonderful community will continue to join in with the range of festivities offered in the run up to Christmas, from the School Fair to the Village Hall Gala before returning to the Court House for Carols. All these events and more are profiled in this issue.

All that remains for me to do on behalf of the editors and contributors is to wish you, our avid readers, footsore distributors and generous advertisers a very Happy Christmas.

Andy.

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Ancient or Modern?

Autumn is the time of the year when Lower Farm engages in another strand of our farming function. Obviously our main goals are livestock and arable farming tied in with care of the environment. However, a vital job is education. Individually we cannot afford expensive advertising or media campaigns to explain what we do and why we do it. However, lots of farmers do take time to open their farms up to all ages to showcase and explain food production and the environment to our present customers and the next generation of influencers.

Our little Pumpkin Patch experience in October highlighted to me how very young children are thrilled to get close to chickens and goats, sit on a static tractor and walk amongst a crop and understand how things grow. This helps to close the disconnect between farmer and consumer and helps people to understand where and how their food is grown, airmiles and that the real need to eat locally is vital.

Traditionally farmers have suffered from long standing stereotyping. Supposedly we are yokels more like Old Macdonald and are all too ready to say “get orf my land”! Whilst doing a farm tour recently I was asked by a 10 year old how often I had straw in my mouth! However, if we explain what we do and highlight that farming and food production is the biggest industry in the world, encompassing scientists, vets, food technicians, agronomists, and above all, point out that Agriculture is a high-tech industry that is a good career choice for the future, then in some way we will address the misconceptions of what we do!

George Atkinson,
Lower Farm

Left: image of old fashioned farming

Boost your mental and physical health with a visit to Queen Elizabeth Country Park

Queen Elizabeth Country Park was ablaze with autumn colour this year as the leaves turned from green into a myriad of shades of orange, first on the trees and then carpeting the ground. As we head into winter the park changes again and the majestic structure of the trees becomes more evident. There is no better time to take in nature than when the seasons move on. We have been going on regular strolls through the park, taking time to observe and listen to the forest, and feel that close connection to nature. We have learnt that rainy days can potentially reduce stress, stave off depression and boost our immune system, so don't let the weather put you off from joining us over winter!

January is usually the time for new resolutions for the year ahead, with those relating to health and wellbeing high up on the list for many. It would be easier to hibernate with the cold short dark days of winter, but this is when a bit of exercise in the outdoors can feel the most invigorating.

At Queen Elizabeth Country Park we are putting on a range of events focussing on physical and mental wellbeing in January to help local residents achieve their goals. Some of these will be free.



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We're starting off the month, once the excitement of New Year is over, with a women's Health and Wellbeing Day on Saturday 6 January 2024. Then continuing with regular morning fitness sessions open to all. Join us on Mondays for social bike rides, Tuesdays for a beginners' yoga session; there will be a gentle strength and conditioning class on Wednesdays and a chat and an easy stroll on Thursdays. Our regular activities will still be running, these include Saturday Park Run, electric mountain bike hire, volunteering sessions, wild-foraging courses and even laser tag. Or if you would like to start running with your dog, a local trainer will be running canicross sessions. For more details follow our social media pages or check out the 'what's on' page on our website.

This month-long celebration of health and wellbeing has been possible due to funding from the East Hampshire District Council Welfare Fund.

www.hants.gov.uk/qecp

Yvonne Thompson
T: 02392 595040



Queen Elizabeth Country Park

Yoga
Gentle movement
Workout
Nutrition for Women
Meditation
Low intensity training
Nutritious lunch
Mindful forest walk
Guided cold water plunge

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING DAY

SATURDAY 6 JANUARY 2024

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East Meon C.E. Primary School over Christmas!

Some events you are all invited to share with the village school this Christmas:

Saturday 9th December – Xmas Fayre at the Village Hall 10am – 2pm

Friday 15th December – Christmas Church Service at All Saints' 9.30am, all welcome!

We would also like to mention the new Headteacher, Cat Olver, will join the school from 1/1/2024 and is already working with school staff! Welcome to Cat and we look forward to meeting you next year!



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Remembrance Sunday 2023

A large crowd gathered in the church this year for the always stirring Remembrance Service.

Led by Fr Antony Forrest, we reflected on those the village lost in the two world wars – the names read out by Neal Croft with the HMS Mercury Bell being rung by Rowan Marchant from the village school, and a reading by Anthony Bird. In the pews sat the perspex silhouettes of the soldiers whose lives were taken – it is a stark reminder of the gaps left in their absence, even 100 years later.





Despite the grey drizzly weather even more villagers gathered at the War Memorial where the service continued and the wreaths of poppies were laid.

Thank you to courageous Orlando who played the Last Post on his trumpet, to all the servicemen and women who came to lay wreaths at the War Memorial, thanks to Susan Davenport (chair of the EMPC), and to Julian Marks who opened and closed with the poignant poems – For the Fallen and the Kohima Epitaph. It is impossible to not be moved by these words and this ceremony.

Other wreath layers:

Sub Lt Noah Mumtaz

PCSO Almera Toogood - on behalf of the police

Rob Mocatta on behalf of Hampshire County Council and EHDC

Lennie Rich & Elliott Brand – from EM CE Primary School

Susan Davenport

The sombre occasion ended on a lighter note down at the village hall where plates of refreshing nibbles were passed around, cheering the village up after deep reflection of the past.

CdeL

Swifts: spectacular visitors to East Meon that need our help

The skies of East Meon are now quiet. Nearly all the Swifts who hurtle overhead in early summer, thrilling and exhilarating us with their speed and screams, leave the UK in early August. It will be May before they return from Africa.

Swifts are supreme flyers, perfectly adapted to a life in the air. They sleep, feed and mate on the wing. They only land to breed. When a Swift chick fledges, it will spend the next three to four years in constant flight. Swifts do not land on the ground or perch on buildings, trees or cables. They have tiny feet, with sharp claws that are perfect for clinging to vertical surfaces, but unsuitable for perching.

Swifts eat flying insects. These insects are most numerous between May and August. That determines how long Swifts can spend in the UK as they need huge numbers of these insects to feed their chicks. Unlike Swallows and House Martins who eat a wider variety of insects and can therefore have two or three broods of chicks during the summer, Swifts have a single brood.

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2000 years ago, Swifts nested in holes in trees or in cliffs. Now that is rare. Swifts are entirely dependent on buildings for nest sites. They look for small gaps high up where they can access a flat space to nest, such as under tiles or eaves. The nest is invisible from outside. Modern building techniques mean that houses built in the last 30 or so years rarely have any gaps, so most Swifts nest in older buildings. Thousands of nest sites are lost each year when buildings are demolished, or renovated, or when plastic soffits and fascias are installed. Swifts are faithful to their nest site, so once a pair find a site, they will return to it every year. If they return and find their nest site has been destroyed or is inaccessible, they may not breed that year unless a new nest site is available nearby.

Swifts are in catastrophic decline. Since 1994 their population has declined by 62% in the UK and by 70% in the South East, including Hampshire. Loss of nest sites is the major contributor. Declines in insects may also play a part. House Sparrows and Starlings are also experiencing steep declines. They too rely on buildings for nest sites.

Preserving existing nest sites and providing new nest sites is crucial to prevent Swifts becoming extinct in the UK. Thousands of new nest sites are needed to halt the decline. Hampshire Swifts is a charity set up in 2016 with the aim of stopping the decline of this special bird and increasing their numbers. We give advice on all matters related to Swifts. We supply and install swift boxes - £40 for a single box, £75 for a double box. We advise on creating permanent homes for Swifts using Swift bricks. We work to persuade local councils and developers to help Swifts by installing Swift bricks in new buildings.

How can you help Swifts? Preserve existing nest sites, put up nest boxes, encourage your neighbours to put up nest boxes, record where they are nesting on the Hampshire Swifts survey website (<https://www.hampshireswifts.co.uk/swift-survey>), and write to your local councillors about the importance of making the installation of Swift bricks in new developments a condition of planning approval.

Swifts are amazing and beautiful birds. The sound and sight of them racing, screaming over our rooftops is exhilarating and an essential part of summer. Let's make sure that continues.

Catharine Gale, Trustee of Hampshire Swifts

<https://www.hampshireswifts.co.uk/>

If you're interested in having swift boxes on your house,
email us info@hampshireswifts.co.uk.

An East Meon Swift Box

There's not much that beats sitting in your garden (or allotment) on a warm summer evening with a well-earned glass of wine whilst looking skywards at the swifts darting and screeching over the rooftops.

Swifts are slowly losing all their natural habitat so three years ago I decided to make a couple of boxes which I fitted under the soffits of our house.

Swifts nest in colonies - with many pairs nesting close together - so the first thing was to attract them to the boxes. This was done by playing a swift CD (not Taylor) of their screeching close to the boxes. By late June I had a few birds checking out the boxes by bashing against them. This is called 'banging' and is carried out by two-year-old birds looking for a place to nest for the next year. Swifts use the same nest across the entirety of their life.

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Now that some birds had shown an interest in one of the boxes, I changed it to one with a fitted camera with a feed relayed to a spare T.V indoors.

Last year, I spotted the first swifts in the air on May 10th. On May 11th a swift entered the box and was joined by another just three days later. A nest was built, made of feathers, grass, paper and various other materials which could be caught in flight. The birds would then use their saliva to adhere this to the nest. By late May two eggs had been laid with one being discarded.

On June 20th the egg hatched which each bird took turns to feed. All food is caught whilst flying as these birds never land to feed. The young bird fledged on August 2nd.

This year, the birds arrived in the box earlier (April 20th). Three eggs were laid, all of which hatched, with the young departing on July 16th and 17th.

I have made a further three boxes this year with two of them already receiving the attention of some 'bangers' as I no longer need to play a CD to attract them.

Fitting a box is very simple: you don't need a camera; you just need to make sure it's in the right position then sit back and watch them (with your glass of wine of course).

Dave Wyatt.



East Meon Grape Harvest

Not everyone knows that East Meon has its own vineyard, producing the highly rated East Meon Berrygarden sparkling wine. It was planted in 2006 by George and Clare Bartlett, the owners of The Court House. It is quite small, producing about 2,000 bottles a year, focused on quality, and relies on villagers to pick the grapes. This year the harvest was brought forward to October 8th, as the warm days of late September and early October had accelerated ripening, and the possibility of rot was growing. Around 40 turned out on a lovely autumn day to spend a couple of hours harvesting, with an age range of over 75 years between oldest and youngest. They were treated to a rather lovely picnic lunch.

George Bartlett said of the harvest that “the yield was a little over 2 tonnes. The juice analysis shows near-perfect readings for sugar and acidity, and this confirms how right we were to bring forward the harvest by a week. The grapes were taken to our new winemakers, Itasca, at Crondall near Alton (all previous vintages having been made for us at Wiston Estate Winery).

Itasca is a state-of-the-art, environmentally conscious winery with a growing reputation, and we have great hopes for the wine that will be produced there for us. The Operations Manager, whom many of you in East Meon will know, is Katrina Smith, who imparts to the business her enthusiasm, efficiency and great knowledge of wine”.



“Following fermentation the wine will be brought on in oak barrels which we have had imported from Burgundy. This will enable the wine to breathe and develop complex flavours, and, having already been used for three Burgundy vintages, the barrels will not impart the unwelcome flavour of new oak. After bottling next year the wine will be given at least three years on its lees to enable further development before disgorgement, and we can look forward to enjoying it from 2028 onwards.”

I asked George whether the present East Meon vineyard represents the revival of an ancient tradition of wine production in the village. In Freddie Standfield’s *A history of East Meon* it is noted that the estate accounts for 1207-08 record the sale in that year of “four tuns of wine...the equivalent of 6,000 bottles”. George thinks it unlikely that this was the produce of grapes grown in East Meon. “The reference in 1207-8 to the sale of wine from the manor is, as far as I am aware, the only such reference in the pipe rolls. If there had been a vineyard producing wine at about that time on any scale one would have expected to find other mentions. Almost certainly the four tuns were what was left over from purchases made for the bishop, Peter des Roches, for his own visits to East Meon. The wine would have been imported through Southampton (or some lesser port), probably from Bordeaux. Like any other great lord, the bishop regularly stayed for a few days at each of his major manors together with a substantial retinue. Four tuns is quite a lot of wine, but the bishop may have been hoping to entertain King John, a mate of his, at the Court House, as he later did in April or May 1212.”

But, George points out, reference in the manorial accounts for 1307 to work being done to a vineyard shows that there was undoubtedly a vineyard in East Meon 700 years ago, so the present vineyard is certainly a revival.

I wonder what will they be saying about East Meon Berrygarden in 700 years’ time.

Andrew Hughes

Pictures Credit
Laura Croft



QUICK & EASY FESTIVE DECORATIONS

How did that happen? Christmas does sneak up rather slyly.

I'm going to give you some decorative tips which won't break the bank, are fun and are as sustainable as possible!

Firstly, look to the natural landscape for inspiration, forage on a walk, explore your garden, and have a rummage in the shed/attic/garage. You will be surprised what decorative promise everyday mundane objects possess.

Christmas Tree

It's all about fun and putting everything including the kitchen sink on it. Sentimental bits and bobs and quirky keepsakes make the tree so heart-warming. Funny baubles from over the years (my tip: buy a new bauble each year) and multi-coloured bows (use wired ribbon) will add a luscious scoop.



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Old tree-treasures evoke childhood memories and deliver a bit of nostalgia so dig out your ancient tinsel, big boiled-sweet-coloured lights and even the poor old neglected angel.

If you insist on going tasteful try thousands of white lights (go for “warm”) and nothing else. This will give an enchanting look, wonderful at night.

Here’s a long-lasting-tree tip.... Saw off a couple of inches of the trunk, hose him down, and leave him in a nice deep bucket of water overnight. That big long drink will pay dividends.

Don’t forget to regularly top up the tree stand, they’re thirsty chaps!

The big debate: Real versus fake - both have their sustainable pros and cons - so above all... have fun!

With a big serving of Christmas kitsch everything is forgivable when adorned on your tree.

Wreath

A very personal decoration and the first nod to Christmas your guests see. For homemade fun, arm yourself with a trug and gather lots of dried seed heads, hydrangea heads and crispy bracken.

Dig out an old pot of white paint, spread out some newspaper and daub on some paint. Leave to dry. Buy a ready-made blue pine base from the garden centre and simply wire your white dried treasures on for a super-simple frosty look.

Wreaths don’t have to be serious - my favourite homemade wreath was covered in swathes of sprouts, onions and white roses! It made everyone smile.

No time to make a wreath? Create a simple decoration embracing the meaning of greenery: cut boughs of Rosemary (remembrance), Bay (triumph) and trails of Ivy (fidelity). Tie with a rustic raffia bow, ribbon or length of fabric and hang upside down for a rather smart and understated greeting.

Staircases & Mantelpieces

These focal points are crying out for big wooshy festive statements. Cut down boughs of evergreen... Yew, Pine, Conifer, Larch and cable-tie them together in a sweeping fashion (you need twice as much greenery as you think you do!). Once you have your boughs secured, nestle bare twigs and berried holly and secure with more cable ties. The mixture of hardy greenery gives a lovely contrasting effect. Leave the boughs in buckets of water for a good drink overnight before using them. If they go a little dry over the festive period don't worry, it lends a rather charming Miss Havesham effect! "There is no true beauty, without decay" (from the brilliant film "Withnail & I").

Tablescaping

This involves turning your festive dining table into a cornucopia of decorative treats. Very indulgent, it can be as busy or as pared-back as you like.

Look for fun objects around the house - chintzy figurines, candlesticks etc and pop those along the empty table first. Snake them along the middle... and then add the rest of your "ingredients". For example, an ivy trail twining around the objects. Then nestle in heavy groups (gives more impact) of clementines, red apples, cones, cinnamon sticks, pomegranates, grapes and nuts. You could pop in some battery operated lights and left over baubles, anything that takes your fancy!

If you want flowers too, buy little bedding plants (such as hellebores), replant in old terracotta pots and squeeze onto the table amongst the other treasures. (Bonus! You can plant them in the garden afterwards.)

Tumblers of cut narcissus or amaryllis heads add more impact - just remember, more is more!

Please avoid out of season cut flowers which have been flown around the world. Peonies at Christmas are wrong (!) and remember that glitter is not our friend (glitter is banned in the EU) - for the sake of our oceans, please try to avoid, if you can.



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Gilvered Cones

My parting gift and favourite: pop pine cones into a paper bag, flick in silver and gold paint and shake the bag for about 20 seconds. You end up with divine cones dusted in “gilver”. These last for years and go anywhere, giving a frosty magic when they catch the light.

Happy decorating and have a very Happy Christmas!

Paul H.

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FESTIVE BREWS

With the Festive Season fast approaching, here is a selection of wines from local retailers that should bring joy and happiness to all those imbibing!

Hidalgo Manzanilla Pasada Pastrana Sherry

£16.99 - Majestic

The sixth generation of this family now manage the winery founded in 1792. This is very much a family-run business, specializing in creating a very limited amount of high quality Sherry. They create only 2,000 cases of this exceptional dry Manzanilla Sherry every year. Match it with olives, saucisson, sardines, anchovies, tomato-based tapas, light pasta dishes and you have a perfect marriage.

Cave de Lugny Crémant de Bourgogne Blanc de Blancs NV

£11.99 - Waitrose

Produced using exactly the same process as Champagne, this is a great value sparkling wine. With Christmas and New Year just around the corner, then it hits the fizz brief to perfection. 100% Chardonnay from one of the larger wineries in Southern Burgundy. Crisp, light, with a smidgeon of toast of the nose, it is immensely quaffable. Everyone will love this excellent wine and much, much, much better than inexpensive Champagne.

Vasse Felix Classic Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2022

£12.50 - Tesco

If you enjoy the refreshing style of Sauvignon Blanc, then the Semillon in this Western Australian white blend adds a level of depth, concentration and length. Crisp, zesty flavours of apples and pears, good structure and definitely full-bodied; it will work well with fish pie, creamy cheeses, kedgeree, and Singapore noodles.

Louis Jadot Macon Aze 2022

£15.99 - Waitrose

Classic White Burgundy from this domaine established in 1859: lemon flavours and a touch of brioche on the nose; medium-bodied with medium acidity balanced alongside green apple and pear components. Smoked salmon, mackerel pâté, prawn risotto, lobster bisque will all sit very well with this impeccably made wine.

D'arenberg The Footbolt Shiraz 2017

£12.50 - Tesco

Think steak and kidney, sausage cassoulet, beef Wellington, rich cottage pies, warming winter stews. Based in South Australia, D'arenberg has a strong international following and makes superlative wines. This rich, dark, almost flamboyant creation from McLaren Vale is a powerful concoction of expressive red fruit. Might be good to decant an hour before drinking. This winery was founded in 1881 - old for Australia.

M&S Clocktower Pinot Noir 2020

£14.75 - Ocado

The Pinot Noir grape is the bedrock of Red Burgundy, and has been planted extensively around New World wine regions over the last 40 or more years. This wine comes from the Marlborough wine region in New Zealand. Flavours of cherries and strawberries on the nose, with a rich full-bodied palate that works to perfection with turkey, chicken, pork. For Christmas lunch, it is the obvious choice.

Stock levels of all wines vary enormously over the pre-Christmas period at the retailers listed above. If a wine shows 'out of stock' one week on the website, it may very easily be back in stock the following week, as well as it probably sitting on the shelves locally in Petersfield.

David Parkinson



Christmassy Nibbles!

Christmas tree pastries makes 14

Ingredients:

- 250g plain flour
 - Sea salt
 - 250g butter
 - 150ml Cold water
- (Ready roll pastry works well too)
- 100g green pesto
 - 50g finely grated parmesan cheese



1. Start by soaking your cocktail sticks.(this prevents them from burning in the oven)
2. To make the rough puff pastry, sift the flour and salt into a large bowl. Cube the butter and add that to the bowl too. Rub together the flour and butter loosely. You should still see some bits of butter.
3. In the bowl make a small well in the middle of your butter and flour and pour in about two thirds of the cold water. Mix until a firm dough is formed, add more water if necessary.
4. Cover and leave to rest in the fridge for 20 minutes
5. On a floured surface gently knead the dough and form into a rectangle.
6. Roll out in one direction until the width has tripled and fold the top third down half way and the bottom third on top of that. Turn the dough 90 degrees and repeat.
7. Cover and rest in the fridge for 20 minutes.
8. Preheat oven to 180 degrees(fan oven)
9. Roll the dough out into a (25cm x 35cm) rectangle and spread with your pesto in an even layer over the bottom half of the rectangle on the longer side, then sprinkle with your grated parmesan cheese.
10. Fold the top half of the pastry over and cut into inch wide strips.
11. Then fold each strip with the stripe of green pesto facing up starting smaller at the top and getting wider to create a triangle shape.
12. Secure with a cocktail stick and bake for 15 minutes
13. For an extra touch you could cut out small triangles of Parmesan(or any other cheese you like) to go on top like a Christmas tree

Mozzarella Stuffed crispy olives

Ingredients:

- 100g Large pitted olives
- 1 ball Mozzarella
- Bread crumbs
- 1 egg(whisked)
- 20g flour
- 1 tsp salt

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees (fan oven)
2. Start by cutting your mozzarella into slices and then small enough rectangles to fit inside your olives and stuff these inside your olives.
3. Next roll each olive in flour, then your whisked egg and finally in bread crumbs.
4. Optionally these can be shallow fried in a pan over a medium heat until crisp or drizzled with oil baked in the oven for 20 minutes.



Matilda Threadingham.

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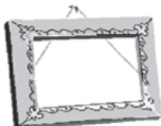
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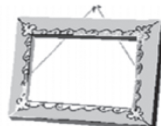
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East Meon Cricket Club

Another fine season of cricket finished at the end of September for East Meon Cricket Club.

25 matches played, 14 wins, 7 losses and 4 draws with a further 4 matches lost to the weather. (As usual) the batting was led by the Atkinsons with Ollie leading the way with 711 runs followed by James (656) and Will (470); the bowling was led by Josh Edney, 24 wickets, with James (23) and Will (20) not far behind.

James Redmayne had a fine debut season with 311 runs without being dismissed – with two hundreds and a fifty; Wayne Harfield played regularly picking up wickets at key times and Max and Charlie Dutton also made fine starts to their club careers.

Highlights from the season included an away win vs Vagabonds with an Atkinson-less team, where victory was snatched from the jaws of defeat and Chris Moor won his cap after 17 years of playing for the club with four catches and a stumping behind the wicket; James Redmayne's debut innings - 151 not out vs Royal Kings back in May, Rupert's 5-8 vs Shirrel Heath in June and the president's match in July where 11 Bartletts fought for a draw against East Meon.



But the real tale of the season was the cumulative failure of the batting, Atkinsons & Redmayne aside, the rest of the team struggled all season – none more so than the first match of the season v Petersfield when despite James Atkinsons 94, East Meon were all out for 121 chasing 150 to win. In fact 22 players failed to pass 30 this season with only 7 players getting past 35.

Winter nets and practice start in January so if you fancy a go, get in touch and come along.

captain@eastmeoncricketclub.org.uk

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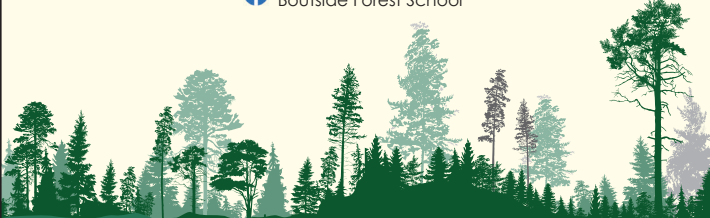
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Chris Hollis 15 Minutes of Fame

Meon Matters likes to get to know its readers and for this edition we had a little Q&A with someone whose face you might recognise... He's often on the mic at various events and not infrequently on our tellies, and currently he's super-busy kicking up some dust in a pair of spangly platforms in the West End doing MammaMia. Thanks so much Chris for answering our questions!

How long ago did you come to EM and what attracted you to the village?

We rented the Gallianos' house on the High Street for a few years and fell in love with the village. Later we were lucky to buy land and build the house where we've now been for ten years. Fantastic countryside, a cricket club, a thriving community, a vineyard, a beautiful church, lots of friends - and two pubs: what's not to like?!

Where you are now?

We're below Rookham Hill, behind a tall hedge that we planted, with lots of wildlife for company: red kites, deer, hare, owls and pheasants flying high over "Pylon Drive". There used to be chicken sheds. Now we keep a few ex-battery hens, and the place smells much better!

Did you always play cricket and how was it to join the village team?

I've always loved my cricket. The club is mixed, sociable and great fun. I can be at an amazing ground in a few minutes and, later, home for the rest of Sunday evening.

How did you get into acting?

I acted at school and then at St Andrews University. We had a visiting professional actor/director who inspired a whole generation – including a certain Lucy Stewart-Roberts who went into stage management and producing.

What has been your best role?

I loved playing Malvolio in last year's Petersfield Shakespeare Festival. Probably the best play I've done was "Les Liaisons Dangereuses" for the RSC; nine months in the West End followed by a world tour in Europe, USA and Japan.

What has been your least favourite role?

A "book signing" tour around UK shops dressed as Sonic the Hedgehog; a giant blue costume, with 8-foot-high spikes - not great in your average Waterstones. I spent all day sweating, knocking books off shelves and terrifying small children. I "signed" 2 copies...

Who is the most remarkable actor you have worked with?

I was in “Frankenstein” with Robert de Niro, but his monster was so “method” you didn’t go anywhere near him! My favourite actor was the brilliant Richard Briers. I worked with him at Chichester in 1986 and when we were both in Kenneth Branagh’s “Twelfth Night” he invited me to share his dressing room. Great actor, wonderful company.

Has living in the countryside influenced how you direct plays for PSF?

Definitely. I’ve always loved acting in open-air plays, from school productions to Regent’s Park. So, to get involved with PSF first at Bedales and now at Wylds Farm is a natural progression. I don’t think I could have directed Shakespeare plays without having been in many of them as an actor.

If you wrote a drama set in East Meon what would it be about? Who would take the lead roles?!

It’s no coincidence that a “Midsomer Murders” was filmed here a few years ago, so probably a murder-mystery: dark secrets lurking under innocent rural lives! Lead roles? I’d be completely open to bribes...

Should we reintroduce the East Meon Talent Show?

Er, of course. Start practising, Meoners!

Meon Matters & Chris Hollis

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Christmas and the East Meon Choir

The East Meon and Langrish choir was founded by Chris Cobleby in 1986. Chris was choirmaster for more than 30 years and I took over in the autumn of 2020 after the covid interruption. We sing at the church services at East Meon and Langrish, once a month at each church, plus festival services at Christmas and Easter. As well as an anthem, we sit with and sing with the congregation to support the singing of the hymns. The repertoire ranges through easier pieces of renaissance polyphony to pieces by contemporary composers, from Tallis, Purcell, Elgar, Mendelssohn, Harris, to Howard Goodall's Psalm 23 from the Vicar of Dibley. We do not dress up... yet.

At full strength we can be 25, and I would welcome anybody who would like to join us, especially if you are a tenor or a bass. There is no audition, but being able to sing in tune is helpful and reading music is an advantage, but not essential; half the choir does not read music. Choir practice is at 7.00pm every Wednesday in the church hall.

I can be contacted on 07891 638844 or l_c_seymour@yahoo.co.uk
Leo Seymour – Choirmaster

Christmas services with the choir:

Sunday 3rd December - East Meon - 10.30 Advent Processional Service

Sunday 17th December - Langrish - 18.00 A service of lessons and carols

Saturday 23rd December - 19.00 Carols at the Court House

Sunday 24th December - East Meon - 23.15 Midnight Mass

Monday 25th December - East Meon - 10.30 Christmas Day Service

Our Christmas POP-UP Choir meeting is on Dec 19th - at the Izaak Walton – all are welcome!

**Please do join us for one of our
Christmas Services at**

All Saints' Church East Meon
Midnight Service at 11.15pm
on Sunday 24th December
Led by Tony Forrest

Christmas Morning Service
at 8.00am on Monday 25th December
Led by Canon Terry Louden

Christmas Day Family Service
at 10.30am on Monday 25th December
Led by Father Tony Forrest

Children, please do bring a Christmas Present
to show at this Service

Happy Christmas!



CHURCH REPORT

“We can only succeed with the fullest possible support from our wonderful community” (Church Report, Autumn Edition, Meon Matters). At the time the Report was written, the new Church Wardens, Stuart Martin and Emma Bird, and members of the PCC (both new and more seasoned hands) had no idea of the strength and support that was to come forward from our local community, including all our wonderful volunteers. It has been truly heartening and helped us all enormously. It has been an extremely busy few months, sometimes challenging, but it does feel that after over two years in vacancy, important wheels at Diocese level are beginning to turn.

We have been informed by our Archdeacon, Kathryn Percival, that the Bishop of Portsmouth has initiated a process (by way of Bishop’s nomination) which we hope will result in the appointment of a new Priest in Charge for the upper Meon Benefice. At the time of writing we do not know who the nominated candidate is, but the nominee is visiting the Benefice at the end of November. A day has been planned during which they will visit all four parishes, to meet all the PCCs, see the schools and hopefully get a general feel of the whole Benefice. The candidate will then be interviewed by representatives from each Parish. We very much hope and pray that the process will result in a new Priest being appointed to the Upper Meon Benefice.

In the meantime All Saints’ continues to thrive. We have recently enjoyed the wonderful celebration of Harvest Festival, at which there was a great turnout. The Church was spectacularly decorated by our fabulous flower ladies, with wonderful contributions from both East Meon School and the village playgroup. The size of some of the pumpkins was unbelievable, we could hardly lift them! We also enjoyed a fabulous and well attended annual Harvest Supper in the Village Hall which raised over £1000 for the Church. As always, a big thankyou to all who organised this very successful event.

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We then had the beautiful All Souls' service, held on the evening of Storm Cieran. It is always a special service and despite the dreadful weather conditions, many braved the elements and came to pray for and remember those who they loved.

We also had a fantastic number attend for the Remembrance Service on November 12th, both in The Church and by the War Memorial. Many played a huge part in bringing it all together – so a big thank you to all of you. A special thank you goes to our young bell ringer who did a great job with The HMS Mercury Bell and to Orlando who played a beautiful Last Post and Reveille on his trumpet at the War Memorial. A great East Meon gathering in the village hall followed – always good to see everybody, and thank you to all who provided the delicious eats and to our proficient Barman!

The East Meon school continues to be an important part of our community and Church. They are performing their Nativity Play in the Church this year for the first time in a while. It is vital that we work with the school to attract the younger generation into the church. We do already have an inspirational and dedicated congregation but we do need to bring in more young people. They are the future and with the decreasing number of clergy and with parishes and benefices being integrated into larger units all the time – unless East Meon can show that it does have an emerging younger congregation, we cannot guarantee our future in its present guise.

You may have noticed a few, small improvements in the church. There are more in the pipeline. The current heating system is to be cranked up for another year or two, while we look at a replacement system. Updated church leaflets are being printed, new altar cloths purchased, important textiles restored - even the windows are getting a clean for the first time in years. We also have some major issues to address in terms of maintaining the fabric of the Church. We shall need support and involvement from the whole community to enable us to ensure All Saints' continues to contribute to the life of not only current but future members of our community, and be enjoyed by all.

So we should all look forward with excitement. New chapters are going to be opening, vacancies are hopefully going to be filled, we have a diverse and enthusiastic PCC and, most importantly, Christmas is just around the corner. Advent is upon us, decorations are to be dusted off, trees are to be decorated and the birth of Christ to be celebrated. We have a busy Christmas programme ahead.

We always like to hear your views and ideas, and even criticisms, so please do always get in touch with us over any matter (beneficeuppermeon@gmail.com). We know there is a lot for us to do, but we are doing our best to address the challenges - Rome was not built in a day.

We look forward to seeing you over Christmas time and please make a note of the important festivals and services listed below. EVERYONE is welcome to each one and the more children who come the better.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas

Emma and Stuart
Churchwardens



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Court House Carols

Saturday 23rd December, 7-8pm
Charity collection for Save the Children
Court House Punch and mince pies after the carols!



Contributions for mince pies very much appreciated in advance please and thank you!



A message from Sarah Powell – Chair of the East Meon PTA and Leader of the East Meon Food Bank:

We have seen a decline in people using the foodbank and that's brilliant news as hopefully people are starting to get back on their feet again. With this in mind, we have decided to stop the food bank's regular deliveries this week with clearing all remaining stock and ceasing any further food donations. All who were receiving weekly food are now no longer needing our help. We won't disappear completely as we would still like to support and become a crisis bank. This means we can still support families / people on a short term and urgent basis whilst they are sorting out more regular help. Please feel free pass on our details to anyone who may be in crisis and could benefit from our support. We want to ensure we still extend our support across the benefice.

We thank everyone who has been involved in helping some vulnerable people over the last 2 years, mainly struggles from the backlash of covid.

Sarah Powell
eastmeonfoodbank@gmail.com



East Meon Garden Club

The Garden Club is in the process of creating an exciting programme for 2024 which will be published shortly in the New Year.

Our Autumn Season started strongly with Chris Brooker giving us a fascinating talk on Trees and Climate Change. After a short but an intense course in how trees transpire and affect our climate, we were introduced to the reasons why some trees are better suited to dry conditions than others in a way that those of us without a chemistry qualification to their name began to understand! We discovered much about which trees would be resilient in the future. However, the English Oak still reigned supreme although other broad leaved deciduous trees made a big difference too.

For some time now the Garden Club has been worried about visitor numbers to the summer garden outings so members were sent out a questionnaire to ask for their preferences and opinions. 17 people kindly replied and as a result it was confirmed that the majority were keen for there to be 3 garden outings per year within approximately 45 minutes to an hour of East Meon. Most people were prepared to pay between £12 and £15 per head. Accessibility did not seem to be an issue.

Flower gardens, trees and a garden with both flowers and vegetables were of principle interest. The majority were keen to continue visits in the afternoons, to car share (where possible) and to enjoy the chance to catch up after a garden visit over tea and cake!

Wonderfully, members have come up with a long list of gardens they want to visit for the first time or once again. West Dean headed the list, closely followed by Upton Grey. As both are quite far away, one of those will be chosen next year along with two more local options.

Thanks to those who participated in the survey and we look forward to welcoming as many of our members as possible, old and new, to all our events next year.

The East Meon Garden Club meets in the Village Hall on the first Monday of the month from September to April (except for January) and organises Open Gardens, the Annual Show and three garden visits during the summer.

Nicky Staveley.



Introducing... TWiG

The East Meon Nature Group's Tree Working Group

TWiG is proud to be **working with the Parish Council and the Community** to explore and identify how the Village of East Meon and its Parish can

- make its contribution to combatting climate change
- help secure the future of our community and natural environment, its amenity, wildlife and fauna, in the face of a rapidly warming climate.

TWiG is seeking to achieve this through community and environmentally sensitive **hedge and tree planting initiatives**. We are busy formulating proposals but these will **need community help** to succeed.

If you would like to volunteer or provide your support

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Harvest Supper

7 October 2023

As always Emma and I had the last minute scrambles putting the Harvest Supper together – 2 weeks before the event only 30 tickets had sold and we were scratching our heads wondering if we should cancel... 6 days before the event Janet from the shop handed over a fat envelope stuffed with cash and my inbox was heaving with requests for tickets.

East Meon, you are last minute chancers! Luckily we could accommodate everyone and in the end we had 76 sitting in the hall for Chicken Pie and a range of scrumptious puddings.

Thank-yous go out to all the amazing pie- and pudding- makers – honestly, it couldn't happen without your time and goodwill to boil chickens which really is a fowl task (excuse the pun) or whip up a batch of nuclear sized meringues... I know that the diners really look forward to the puddings and this year they did not disappoint! You're all marvellous.

A special thank you goes out to Sue Croft who put together a really successful raffle and raised a whopping £400 for the church! Well done Sue!

It's impossible to know how thirsty you'll all be by dinner time and this year you were a bit thirstier than normal (it had been a very sunny Saturday after-all) but we ended up with the perfect amount of plonk thanks to Richard Gaisford for buying just the right amount, and thanks so much to Julian and Trudie who sold you your bottles from behind the safety of their trestle table.

Finally thank you to you all for coming! I say this every year, but it's a special night bringing the village together for good chats and delicious food in an increasingly hospitable village hall.

Nature Group

Wet, Wet, Wet (and Warm, Warm, Warm)

You don't need the East Meon Nature Group to tell you that the climate around the world is doing some very strange things. After the very hot dry spell that affected Southern England in May and June, we've had one of the wettest spells on record. By October, the rainfall in East Meon had exceeded the annual average and we've had another 5 inches over the last month. That may suit fungi, creatures living in our ponds and, of course, ducks. But there are many insects and plants that will not survive the very wet conditions. This is global warming and the responsibility sits at the door of mankind across the globe. Whatever we are doing to adopt a more Green lifestyle it is too little and too slow.

All of this was brought home dramatically in a conversation I had recently with Father Christmas. He was not keen to add to my worries but he had decided he could no longer afford to pull his punches. Most crucially, he has had to abandon his home at the North Pole; the ice is too thin and will no longer support his warehouses and the homes that he and his elves have lived in for so many centuries. Many of these are now sitting at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean. He has moved his operation to the South Pole but he is not sure this is a long term solution. The Antarctic ice cap there is shrinking fast, parts of it are collapsing and rising sea levels will soon be lapping at his door.

Nor is this the only change he is having to consider. The disappearing ice caps and the warm winters around the world are calling into question his fleet of reindeer sledges. I understand he is currently in discussion with Elon Musk about a drone-based delivery system. This would be a measure of last resort: who wants to see their presents delivered by a drone, what would happen



to all the carrots put out for the reindeer, and who wants to put the whole Christmas thing in the hands of Elon Musk and say goodbye to the smiling old bloke with white hair and beard.

Need I say more about why we need to do more on climate change NOW.

And the Nature Group? We are looking at laying freezer elements in the recently vacated football pitch so that it can be flooded and frozen to allow Father Christmas to land his sleigh there on Christmas night.

Beyond that, our Tree Working Group (TWiG) has started planning for further tree and natural hedge plantings. The aim is to provide welcome shade for villagers in the hotter summers expected in the future whilst choosing plants that will support our wildlife. For example, our native ash supports over a 1000 species of insects and fungi, 100 of which will only live on ash trees; but its future is uncertain due to ash die back. The challenge is to identify beneficial tree types that will survive the mix of extended periods of drought and heavier rain brought on by climate change. Meanwhile, we continue to maintain the nature hedges and fruit trees that we planted last year, with the support of so many wonderful volunteers. We are also maintaining the wild flower area by the pavilion on Workhouse Lane.

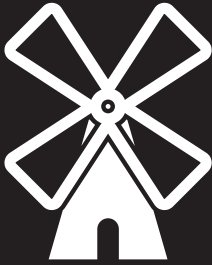
Just over the horizon, in the early spring of next year, is the annual migration of toads and newts to the pond on Coombe Road. We will be organising our annual toad patrol to help our little amphibian friends across the road towards the pond where the boys and girls get together. I understand the dating website is already open (<http://frogmatchmaker.com>), so, if you'd like to join us in chaperoning the little creatures do get in touch via the East Meon Nature Group website.

No frog kissing required.

Otherwise, the message is now a well-worn record. It's the time of year when you're putting your gardens to bed or planning for next year. If you've got space for a pond - the bigger the better - that's great for wildlife in periods of drought. If you can wild a bit of your lawn, that helps too. And, if you're planting, then try to choose those plants with bee stickers on them which will help the pollen eaters. As ever, we welcome volunteers who can be a force-multiplier for our work. Just get in touch.

Jonathan Iremonger

www.eastmeonnature.com



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And what variety we have on offer: to extend the Christmas festivities, the autumn season's sure-fire hit, Barbie, is still to come on 29th December; the New Year kicks off with Ken Loach's powerful and beautiful The Old Oak, then in February Glenda Jackson and Michael Caine join forces in The Great Escaper - an emotional drama about a WWII veteran. On Good Friday we present The Miracle Club with Maggie Smith, and round off in April with the spectacular Napoleon. We hope there will be something for everyone to enjoy. Add a glass of wine (or two), possibly a Jude's ice cream? Now that's entertainment...!

Friday 29th December

BARBIE

(Cert 12A, 114 mins)

Be there, be pink, be happy!



Friday 26th January

THE OLD OAK

(Cert 15, 113 mins)

This is Ken Loach's last film and it's a beautiful reminder of what a community is and can be



Friday 23rd February

THE GREAT ESCAPER

(Cert 12A, 96 mins)

Bernie Jordan (Michael Caine) sneaks out from his care home and goes on one last big adventure to cross the Channel, while reminiscing about his wartime experiences.



Friday 29th March
THE MIRACLE CLUB
(Cert 12A, 90 mins)

It's 1967 and four ladies from Dublin win a trip to Lourdes allowing them to head off on a witty and slightly rebellious journey of freedom and discovery.



Friday 26th April
NAPOLEON
(Cert 15, 158 mins)

A dynamic action epic that details the chequered rise and fall of the iconic French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Stunning film-making by the legendary Ridley Scott – perfect for the big screen.



- All films will be screened in East Meon Village Hall
- The doors and bar open at 7pm
- At 7.30pm the programme begins with shorts and trailers
- Then a brief interval for refills and ice creams
- The feature film starts around 7.50pm

Tickets are £6.50 each and can be bought:

- in person at East Meon Village Shop (cash or cheque, no booking fee)
- online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/east-meon-cinema (small booking fee applies)
- on the door on the night (subject to availability, card, cash or cheque)
- email Lucy Hollis at eastmeonmoviola@outlook.com to reserve for collection and payment on the night
- the seating is not allocated

Looking forward to seeing you there!

The East Meon Cinema Team

Parish Council Report

Here's an early Christmas present..... there's just one Parish Council meeting to cover in this issue. So, we will keep it punchy!

Just like the record number of residents who attended our open forum. Okay, not many, but we will take quality over quantity anytime. For the Council it's reassuring to find common ground on many of East Meon's challenges and opportunities. So, it's no great surprise the open forum jump-started a number of items already on our agenda.

Starting with Penny Mile drainage and the attendant sewerage problems. The developers are acutely aware we are making a video record of apparent drainage deficiencies, and we have already written to SDNPA expressing our early concerns. But we do need to wait for the full drainage works to be completed and plumbed-in before taking matters any further. We are also onto HCC regarding possible narrowing of this section of Coombe Road. And then there's the knock-on effects on sewerage discharge. The promised inspection of the Workhouse Lane drain has still to happen - not helped by personnel changes at Southern Water. But that has not deterred us, nor indeed Mike Critchley who is reporting outflows to Southern Water daily, if not twice-daily.

Since our last report, we've also received a setback with the football pitch. Out of the blue, Harvest FC received an unrefusable offer of a vacant pitch much closer to Portsmouth. They leave with our best wishes for their continuing success, having worked so willingly alongside us on pitch maintenance and a multitude of repairs to the Pavilion. Undeterred and unbowed, Charles Ritchie has searched with all the determination of Alex Ferguson to find a replacement football team. Let's not jinx negotiations by saying any more at this stage.

On footpaths, we are pressing on with widening of The Green footpath that so many of you are in favour of, we are continuing to fight for the protection of our BOATs from unwanted motorised leisure vehicles, and we have just received our latest footpath and BOATs condition report from our dedicated warden, Brian Biggs.

Our other highly valuable warden, our trees supremo John Mackinlay is sadly retiring. You need to look no further than the wonderful autumn canopy our trees are displaying right now to see how effective John's stewardship has been. Aware that tree wardens don't grow on trees, and that height is an obvious advantage, we have reached out to Richard Dampney who has graciously and excitedly accepted the role. Thank you, John and Richard.

We should add that we are also on the look-out for a Recycling Czar to encourage us to recycle as effectively and effortlessly as Hambledon, which is now out-recycling HCC. If you might be interested, please do get in touch.

Our highly active Nature Group continues to be....highly active. Four of its members are now trained in Riverfly monitoring which is a vital indicator of river health. TWIG hedgerow maintenance and tree planting, and toad patrols, will all restart over the winter, for which old-hands and fresh-faced volunteers are most welcome.

On 'tech' matters, we are investigating new and cheaper booking software for the recently refurbished and increasingly popular All Sports court, we are about to implement a Council wide WhatsApp group, and through Rob Mocatta we are urging caution to Ofcom over planned cuts in analogue landline services from the end of 2025.

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markwyattqpd@gmail.com

There can be no doubt that East Meon does commemorations extremely well, and this year's Remembrance Service and Laying of Wreaths was certainly no exception. Huge thanks goes to the many people (of all ages) who more than played, blowed, rung and/or poured their part to ensure the morning ran as smoothly and respectfully as it did. In a similar vein, we are just starting to draw-up plans to join in with the Nation's commemorations for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day on 6 June 2024. You will also be pleased to learn that our King Charles III Coronation plaque is in its final stages of engraving.

With all that is going on and our many swings and roundabouts, it is remarkable that financially we are on top of our 2023/24 budget and we are confidently putting forward a 6% increase in our Parish Precept for 2024/25, which represents an annual increase of no more than £3.30 per Band D household.

So let's end on that high note, and wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

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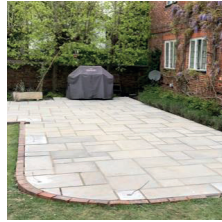
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