

# Meon Matters

*News, Views & Comment  
from East Meon*




£1.00

Winter 2025

Issue Number 227

[meonmatters.com](http://meonmatters.com)




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It's that fabulous time of year when the season changes to winter in determined fashion and we are encouraged to slow down and enjoy the build up to Christmas and gatherings with family and friends.

But as you will see from this issue, East Meon isn't slowing down in the slightest. There are busy updates from our main institutions - being the Izaak, the church, the village hall and the parish council. Not to mention reports on the ever popular Harvest Supper, the highly moving Remembrance commemorations and an enormous Berrygarden grape harvest.

And up ahead we have the Court House carol service to tide us into Christmas and next year's Flower Festival for which work has already begun.

And if over Christmas you are in the company of particularly learned guests, this issue thoughtfully provides you with all the material necessary to debate the pros and cons of local government reform and river rights. Alternatively you can make a start on our wine recommendations.

We also have a timely piece on the trials and tribulations of our delivery drivers. I realise these services can be frustrating at times, but as one of my favourite journalists recently reminded me, today we all benefit from more consumer choice than the Sultan of Brunei enjoyed as recently as 1990. It's important amongst all the doom-mongering headlines to remind ourselves just how lucky we are, and doubly so in East Meon.

And in that spirit, all behalf of all the team at Meon Matters Towers, let me wish our loyal readers, energetic distributors and generous advertisers a wonderful Christmas.

**Next Issue**

Meon Matters publishes four times a year approximately at the start of April, July, October and December. Copy and advertising deadline for the April issue will be around 15th March. Contact us at [meonmatters@gmail.com](mailto:meonmatters@gmail.com)

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## The Court House

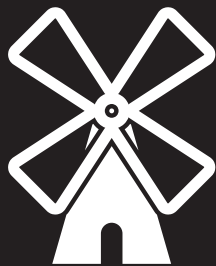
During village gardens open when I am sitting on duty by the barn entrance I have got used to new arrivals saying, "Excuse me, that building there, was it an abbey?" and I tell them that, no, it wasn't an abbey but that the door is open with a short history on a board inside. The building is in fact a manor house, built by William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, in 1396. The manor of East Meon, 19,000 acres, was the largest of the bishops' Hampshire possessions. Like all great lords the bishops moved between their properties, staying in each for a short time, enjoying the produce of the land and the pleasures of hunting and hawking. Sometimes they would bring guests with them. (In 1212 the then bishop had entertained here King John and his entourage in the original, smaller, house which the present one replaced.)

In the Middle Ages all houses other than the most humble had as their principal component a hall. The large hall here was a multi-purpose space designed for dining but capable of use for other purposes as well. The manor court, held regularly to apply the law and custom of the manor to the administration of the agricultural community, would have been held here, hence the name of the house, The Court House, which endures. In addition to the hall, and forming part of the surviving 1396 structure, is a service wing of buttery and pantry on the ground floor, with a great chamber above it.

By about 1500 the bishops had ceased to visit, and for the next 400 years the house led a quiet life as part of the 750 acres of Court Farm, which was occupied and worked by successive tenants. In the early 1600s a timber framed farmhouse wing containing small and cosy rooms was added to the house. And then in the late 1920s the house was sold separately from the land. It was bought for his own occupation by Percy Morley Horder, a distinguished architect of great sensitivity and a saviour of old buildings (most of the existing thatched buildings in East Meon survive because of him). Morley Horder restored the house and added a north wing in the Arts and Craft style, and he laid out the gardens in a form that substantially survives today.

So the present house is composed of three elements. As well as the large stone structure of 1396, which remarkably survives virtually unaltered, there is the old farmhouse wing, and Morley Horder's addition. All these elements continue in active domestic use, and, as in the 14th century, the hall is used additionally for a range of purposes, now including the annual dinner in November of the East Meon cricket club and the village carols shortly before Christmas, which many, perhaps most, of you reading this, will have come to. (Details below.)

George Bartlett



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## Court House Carols

The traditional Court House carols are on Saturday, 20th Dec at 7pm. A collection will be taken in aid of The Kings Arms charity in Petersfield <https://www.thekingsarms.org.uk/>.



The Kings Arms supports young people through inclusive programmes that build confidence, connection, and life skills. It creates a safe, welcoming space where every young person is seen, heard, and empowered to thrive.

When I dropped into the centre recently they were running a group for youngsters on a confidence-building programme and I was given details about the breadth of their work which includes: supporting young carers, after-school youth groups, mentoring, counselling, help with social skills and developing self-esteem....

As ever we will have the support of the Basingstoke brass band and we are delighted that the EM school choir will also be joining us to sing a Christmas piece.

As ever I would welcome contributions of mince pies in advance - for the refreshments afterwards.

Clare Bartlett



## All Saints' East Meon Christmas Services



Midnight Mass Service at 11.15pm on Wednesday 24th December  
Led by Father Tony Forrest

Christmas Morning Service at 8 am on Thursday 25th December  
Led by Father Tony Forrest

Christmas Day Family Service at 10.30am on Thursday 25th December  
Led by the Revd John Paul  
Children- please do bring a Christmas Present to show at this Service



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## Benefice Local Services This Christmas

### Saturday 20th

Court House Carols at starting at 7 pm

### Wednesday 24th Christmas Eve 4 pm

Langrish Scratch Nativity, the Christmas Story brought to life for all the family  
St John the Evangelist, Langrish

11.15pm Midnight Mass

All Saints' Church, East Meon

### Thursday 25th Christmas Day

8 am Holy Communion (BCP)

All Saints' Church, East Meon

9 am Christmas Communion

St John the Evangelist, Langrish

10.30 am East Meon Christmas Family Service

All Saints' Church, East Meon

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## Bringing in the grapes at East Meon Vineyard

In a happy contrast to last year, 2025 was a season of warmth and sunshine and it produced a good-sized crop of beautiful grapes. The juice analysis was excellent, and we can look forward to the wine, which is now being conditioned in oak barrels, giving - we hope - great pleasure in the 2030s.



## Harvest Supper 2025

What a night!

At some point around two weeks before the supper date it became apparent that we had – for only the second time in our eight year tenure – completely and utterly sold out of tickets. Completely. So with some last minute recipe modifications for our amazing team of cooks we scabbled together and made good, in fact, no, we made excellent.

### Here are the magic ingredients of Harvest Supper:

94 Meoners sat down in the VH;

30 chefs (all Leith trained obviously);

12 large bags of potatoes & 12 bags of peas – cleared the supermarket shelves;

600 individual items of crockery washed by hand (x2 pairs of marigolds);

25 tea towels ;

8 pints of double cream;

80 dahlia stems;

54 bottles of wine (you thirsty lot!);

16 chicken pies;

2-tables heaving with incredible puddings!

It was a very special supper this year. It's hard to name all the reasons why, but I suspect it's something to do with everyone knowing everyone - it's not that usual to go to a party with 100 people where you essentially know EVERYONE!

The quality of the food year on year seems to get better and better – and the generosity of the chefs this year was doubled not only for the time they gave but because they also bought their own ingredients.

Not being professional event organisers or caterers it's quite intimidating to know that 100 people need feeding, but somehow each year the people are fed and watered, and with much jollity.

Special thanks this year to Helen G for the beautiful dahlias and another round of applause to Sue C for her brilliant raffle. Not only did we seat the most ever yet, we were also delighted to raise nearly £2k – another record for our team. Thank you to everyone for all your help on what was an exceptional night.

CdeL & EG.



### Diabetes and Me - A Brave Personal Journey

Like many people I chose my parents wrong. From a baby I was a very chunky child, put on amphetamines aged 12 to reduce my weight. After that a lifetime of yo-yo dieting, medications, a lifetime of misery. Addicted to carbs and chocolate. Type 2 diabetes was the inevitable consequence. After 13 years of diabetes medication my fortune changed. I was transferred to an enlightened GP who gave me an ultimatum..... Go on to insulin, but that would put my weight up even more, or go LOW CARB. Within three months my weight had dropped and far from needing insulin, I was able to come off all my diabetic meds and attain remission. I have kept myself in remission now for seven and a half years. My enthusiasm for this truly life changing way forwards has brought me to where I am now.

I now volunteer with an NHS Health and Wellbeing coach to run four Zoom courses a week on a low carb lifestyle. We work with 15 surgeries in southern Hampshire, and about 500 patients a year attend a 7 week course on Zoom. We create communities, using WhatsApp as well as face to face, offering guidance, encouragement, shoulders to cry on, with joyful health results shouted from the rooftops. With the support of their healthcare professionals, our participants are able to lower their medication for diabetes, blood pressure etc, and they achieve some incredible results.



These changes can happen very quickly when they stop eating ultra processed foods and eat real food, healthy fats and proteins and avoid the “beige carbs” and sugar. This has to become a lifestyle choice, not a temporary thing as there is no cure for these metabolic disorders. If they focus on eating the right foods a sustainable remission is totally achievable, even for participants in wheelchairs who cannot exercise at all. As patients we all need help to educate ourselves in the healthier options.

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Unfortunately it is a postcode lottery as to what guidance is offered. Nutrition is largely ignored in medical training but the potential savings for the NHS drugs bill, and costs of ongoing treatments for poorly controlled conditions, could be the salvation of the NHS if lifestyle changes are used. I am no longer suffering from atrial fibrillation, sleep apnea, uncontrolled type 2 diabetes, or uncontrolled weight. My kidneys are no longer at risk, my eyesight not at risk, my circulation in my legs safe. I will not risk losing my toes or feet.

Marjorie Greenwood

[mgreenwood@btinternet.com](mailto:mgreenwood@btinternet.com)

## Delivery Us from Evri

As Christmas approaches East Meon can anticipate parcel delivery chaos, based on recent 'Help me find my parcel' messages on the local Facebook pages.

A few local examples of local residents' posts.

Hello everyone. I received a letter to my address. I don't know who's given the details from my address to receive a card. But it's not correct. Please contact me to have the letter.

It's happened to me now . Can anyone shed light on where this might be in the village? It's definitely not my house! Thank you

Evri are the most unreliable company for parcel deliveries I've ever known there's got to be some official body people can go to...

It's getting ridiculous. They sent me a photo for proof of delivery the other day - it clearly said "2" in the label, and "1" in the gate they lent it against

Has anyone received an Amazon delivery for me this evening? Says handed to resident but definitely wasn't handed to us, I've checked by our gate etc - nothing

I really dont understand how people get paid to deliver ?? Does anyone recognise Address please

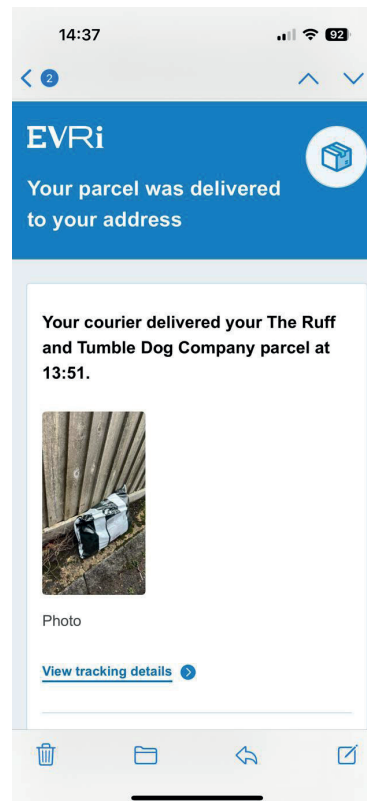
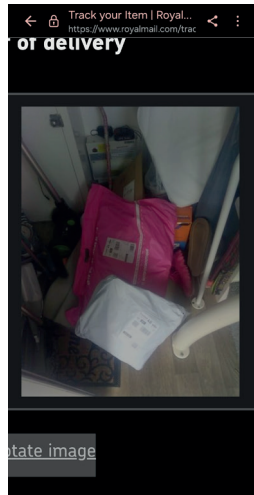
Can anyone help me locate my parcel please

Hey, I had a parcel delivered today. Anyone know where this is?? 4,

Does anyone know who this is? Amazon have delivered this rather large parcel to the wrong house

### What's going on?

Start with the fact that we have all moved to online shopping. Delivery as a business is struggling to meet the demand.



Then move on to underpaid and undertrained delivery workers, given 50 parcels to deliver locally with limited allowance for learning the routes and houses and an expectation that they can get them safely to us at three minutes a parcel. Evri drivers get paid between 50p and £1.20 per parcel, on average, with the exact amount varying based on factors like location and delivery type. Google says 'Parcel drivers in the UK can earn between approximately £12.50 and £18 per hour, with some sources citing an average of around £23,362 per year'.

Published research says we aren't the only ones suffering.

- Ofcom (2024): Its annual report found that 67% of UK parcel recipients had a delivery issue in the previous six months across all companies, with Amazon being among the better performers for customer service.

- Citizens Advice (2024): A report revealed that nearly 15 million UK online shoppers (36%) had a delivery problem in the last month with any provider. Common issues included late arrivals and parcels left in insecure locations.

Evri predicted it would lose 8 million parcels in 2025 (of 700m delivered) which is about a 1.2% failure rate, or 22,000 parcels per day.

Presumably the delivery companies (and the shops that employ them) find it acceptable to accept this refund those prepared to complain.

We hope Santa stays with the reindeer and does rather better. Good luck.

Andrew Hughes

## Remembrance Day in East Meon

*“Today we remember the yesterdays of many good people, who made great sacrifices, so that with God’s help we shall have a tomorrow to which we may look forward”*

Remembrance Sunday is arguably the most poignant day in the East Meon calendar. The familiar pattern of a crisp November morning, marked by the Church bells tolling a little earlier, once again drew our community together in shared reflection.

The day followed its customary, respectful format, beginning with a packed and moving service at the Church. The preparations were meticulous, reflecting everyone’s keenness for the proceedings to flow flawlessly.

The service included a procession of wreaths to the altar. This act of homage included serving members of the Armed Forces, representatives from the Parish and District Councils, our dedicated Police Community Support Officer, and, importantly, three Year 6 students from East Meon School who represented the future generation carrying the flame of remembrance.

Following the service, a large congregation gathered at the War Memorial. The atmosphere shaped by the two minutes of silence, heads bowed in memory of the fallen. Broken by the solemn words of the Kohima Epitaph:

*“When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.”*

After the official ceremony, the community was invited to the Village Hall. Here, amidst the warmth and refreshments, there was a quiet opportunity to contemplate the awful impact reflected in the roll call of names on the War Memorial.

It was also a time for positive reunion, an invitation to “pull up a bollard or sandbag,” to catch up with neighbours not seen for a while, and reaffirm the strength and spirit of East Meon. The village continues to honour the sacrifice of those who gave their lives, ensuring their memory is an enduring part of our community fabric.

John Macnaughton



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## Should the River Meon have Rights?

Over half of monitored English water bodies fail to meet 'Good Ecological Status.' Despite billions spent on regulation, investment and restoration, there is no one body responsible for our rivers: the Environment Agency, Ofwat, water companies, councils, and catchment partnerships each hold partial responsibility. The result is diffused accountability and slow response when water quality or flows degrade. Despite their importance, many rivers today are polluted, over-extracted, and ecologically degraded. Traditional environmental laws often fail to protect them adequately, focusing more on human interests than the health of the river itself. What if the River Meon was considered a subject of care, not just an object of management? This is the core principle of a growing, global movement called 'Rights of the River'.

The South Downs National Park has 113,000 inhabitants, yet its rivers and aquifers provide water to over 1.2 million people. With the push to increase development both inside and around the National Park, this pressure on our water courses will only increase.

Globally there are only about 200 chalk streams, such as the River Meon, with the vast majority of them located in southern and eastern England. Chalk streams are rare and precious habitats. Earlier this year, the government abandoned plans to implement the Chalk Stream Recovery Pack (a targeted, evidence-based programme designed specifically to restore these rivers), bringing the need to protect our chalk streams into even sharper focus.



Across the UK, local councils are beginning to adopt Rights of River Charters—documents that recognize a river’s right to flow freely, remain clean, and support native wildlife. Lewes District Council in East Sussex, working with the Love Our Ouse group, led the way earlier this year by formally acknowledging the rights of the River Ouse. Since then, other councils have followed suit, including Southampton and Test Valley, who recognized the River Test and River Itchen as having ‘intrinsic rights’. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (in whose area are springs of River Loddon and River Test, plus tributaries of the Itchen and Kennet) is also embarking of a River Rights journey.

In 2017, New Zealand made headlines by granting rights to the Whanganui River. Since then, countries like Colombia, Spain, Bangladesh, and Ecuador have followed suit, and demonstrated that a Rights of Rivers approach accelerates restoration, investment, and civic pride.

‘Rights of Rivers’ charters or declarations (already used for 12 rivers in the UK) are locally led, non-statutory frameworks that express shared duties among people, councils and businesses. They do not require full legal personhood, but they:

- Establish a moral and policy baseline irrespective of politics;
- Provide a base for planning, enforcement and community action.

So how can we use this to protect and restore the River Meon? Find out more about the Rights of Rivers online, for example at [www.loveourouse.org](http://www.loveourouse.org) and [www.riverrights.org](http://www.riverrights.org). The Environmental Law Foundation suggests that communities along the length of a river might: 1. ‘Spend time with your river’. Clean-up events can bring together river communities. Citizen Science (including testing river water quality, which is done in East Meon by the Nature Group) collects data to identify sources of river pollutants. 2. Set up or join grassroots community organisations. Create inclusive networks of residents, community groups, recreational users, landowners and farmers. These groups can engage with local councils, environmental organisations and regulators to drive local Rights of Rivers efforts (for example “Love Our Ouse”). 3. Understand the ecological needs of the river: its ecology and protected species, its water quality and the main sources of pollutants as well as the residents and users of the river. This will help everyone understand the problems that our precious river faces.

Steve Ridgeon

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## East Meon Primary School Autumn News

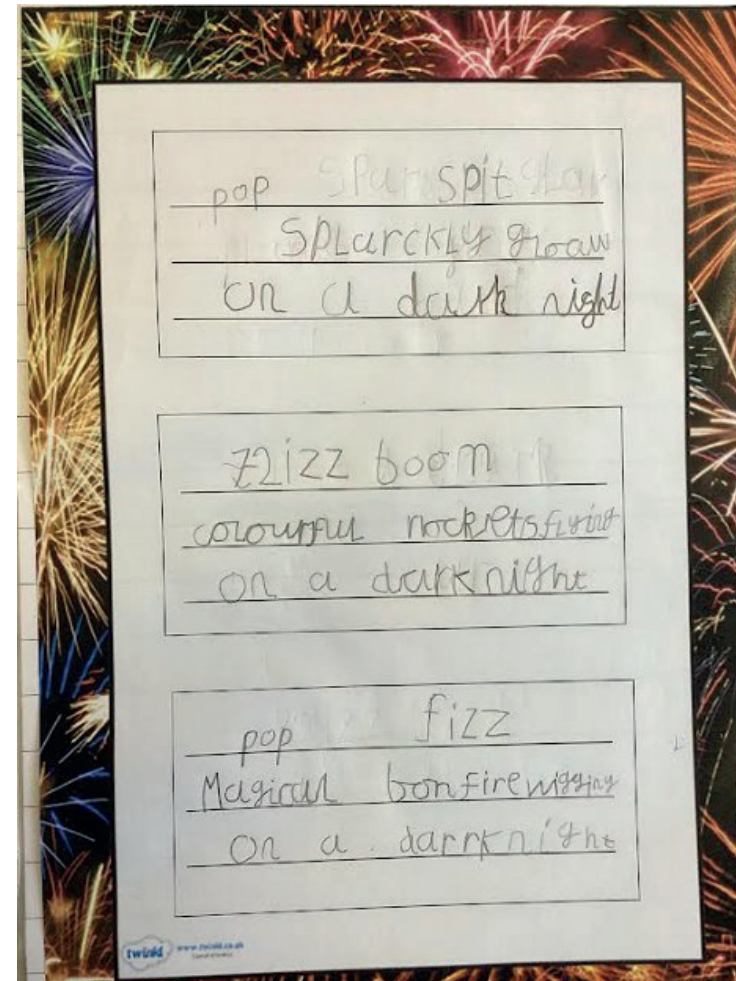
### Discoverers Class

Discoverers have enjoyed starting school and settling into their new learning environment. We spent the first half term getting to know each other and finding out about our interests and families. We thought we would share some photos to show you how much fun we have at school!



### Adventurers Class

Adventurers Class have been working hard on adjectives. They had to create a poem using noun phrases, including an adjective, noun and verb. They also had to choose a repeating line for the end of each verse. We based our poems around bonfire night. This poem is written by Avery, Year 1.



### Explorers Class

During our topic on Robots, Explorers Class had lots of fun designing and creating our own robots as part of our Design and Technology lessons. The children chose a purpose or job for their robot that would make it helpful to its owner and then drew a design that suited the task it needed to perform. The children also learnt about electricity and how a simple circuit works. The Explorers then used this knowledge to make their own simple circuits using LED lights, copper strips, and a coin battery to give their robots flashing, light-up eyes. Here are some quotes from the children about this topic:

*“Making robots was fun. I used washing-liquid bottles for his body and head and toilet rolls for his arms. I liked making the lights flash for his eyes. My robot was to help with the cleaning.”*

*“We could use anything we wanted from the recycling to make our robot. My favourite part was putting on the circuit for the flashing eyes. It was tricky to get my eyes in the right place but it was still a lot of fun!”*



### Voyagers Class

Hattie and I have been chosen to be JRSO, (Junior Road Safety Officers) and we went to our first training about two months ago. We will be trying to improve safety around the school on the roads. We would like to make sure that the crossing places are safe for everyone.

Logan

Logan and I have been chosen for the role of Junior Road Safety Officer, or JRSO for short. It is our responsibility to ensure that every child and adult in school knows the rules of the road for when they are walking, riding their bike or driving a car. We have recently completed our training, which included learning some interesting facts and videos about road safety. It was really fun!

Hattie

### **Thank You East Meon**

A quick thank you to all in the village who contributed to the Amazon Wishlist this year. The school is so grateful and we just wanted to thank all who have made a contribution. Photo below of sea creatures who help children with emotional regulation difficulties to feel calmer through play.





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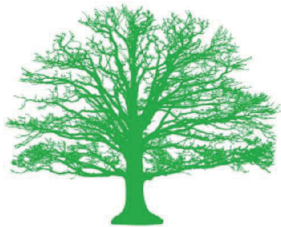
## Devolution and Local Government reform – what does it mean for East Meon?

*NB. Devolution plans were delayed after this article was written*

There are different ways of looking at local government in England. Most of us involved at District and Parish level see it as part of locally shaped place making, trying to improve the areas in which we all live and work. Central government sees it differently – local government is for delivering nationally mandated public services like Social Services (adults and children), Education, Special Educational Needs, Homeless prevention and Housing/ Planning. Many of these are demand led, and County Councils like Hampshire have found themselves squeezed by higher demand for these services, which they cannot influence, and less money from central government to deliver these services.

The result is that the provision of all other services worsens because of this funding squeeze. At the same time Local government has a responsibility for championing local economic growth, a role that has been underplayed. These competing demands explain much of the background to both Devolution and Local Government Reform (LGR), and the tension between the different branches of local government.

As a quick reminder, we have four layers of local government in East Meon. The parish council is responsible for footpaths, leisure facilities and allotments. East Hants District Council is responsible for waste collection, licensing, running elections, offstreet car parks, collecting council tax and housing. It also deals with planning in other parts of East Hampshire whilst here we have the South Downs National Park as the planning authority – even if some of the detailed planning work is done by EHDC officers on behalf of SDNP. We do not pay council tax to the SDNP, which is centrally funded. Hampshire County Council's main responsibilities are for highways, waste disposal, Education, Adult social services, Children's social services and public health. On top of this we pay part of our council tax to the Police and Crime Commissioner (i.e. Hampshire Police Force) and the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority.



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This complex background helps explain the thinking behind both devolution and local government reorganization – it is easy to see that we have a complex structure with a potential for duplication. We know now that there will be an election in May 2026 for a Hampshire Mayor, covering the area of Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight. This area has a combined population of 2 million people and a GVA (Gross Value Added, similar to GDP) of £70bn. Useful comparisons are Wales

with a population of 3.1m and GVA of £75bn, and Greater Manchester with 2.9m population and £46bn GVA. We live in a very large, economically important region. The Mayor will have responsibility for Local Transport, Adult Skills, local growth and housing & regeneration -none of these are the major demand led services delivered by the existing levels of local government, but all are part of the “championing local growth” that I mentioned above. The functions of both the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Fire Authority will be transferred to the new Mayor.

What we don't know is how much power (and money) will be devolved by central government to the Mayor over time. We live in a very centralized state, but areas like Wales, Scotland, etc. have had considerably more powers (and arguably much more funding, both directly through tax and indirectly through transfer) devolved to them than we have in England. I don't think that we will notice the Mayor to begin with as the local transport projects are probably going to be concentrated on the main cities. Other Hampshire residents will notice when the Mayor embarks on regional housing as this will probably mean the creation of several new towns elsewhere in Hampshire. As we are in the SDNP, I think we can realistically assume that this will not affect us directly.

The Mayor will be able to charge a precept (i.e. be funded by council taxpayers) but exactly which functions of local government will be taken from the existing authorities is not clear – and will be the subject of different political views. Over time the Mayor would hope to have the public profile of Sadiq Khan or Andy Burnham. If central government devolves more power and funding to the Mayor, then the post will become more important to residents.

Local Government reorganization is less certain, particularly about the boundaries of the new unitary councils. There is a range of different proposals from the various districts, cities and Hampshire County Council. The latter, which delivers the bulk of demand led services for the government has focused on the most sustainable financial model and has proposed a split into three mainland unitaries and the IOW. The bulk of the districts along with Portsmouth and Southampton have proposed four mainland unitaries and the IOW – with a focus on “localism” (however that is defined). For the councillors, and the officers, it will make a difference about which geographic model is chosen, but the impact on residents will be longer term.

Irrespective of the geography proposed, residents will notice several changes eventually. The main services of the district (planning, waste collection, leisure services) won't be affected. East Meon school and TPS won't be affected short term, and roads' maintenance is unlikely to change much. Other County services (Adult social services, Children's services, SEN provision, waste disposal, country parks, libraries) won't change either. However, what will change over time is likely to be Council Tax – this may not go up initially, but unless central government provides more funding centrally for these services, then they can only come from Council tax. Decision making may be more remote – but for most people locally, it makes little difference that the decision is made in Winchester or Basingstoke.

One of the largest uncertainties is about the future of the parish council’s responsibilities. There is a great deal of promises of “localism” in the white paper, and a commitment to “rewire the relationship with town/parish councils”, but this phrase is very wooly. It may be that town councils expand to include the parishes around them, but I can’t see what this achieves. It is worth noting that Petersfield residents already pay more council tax for their town council than their district council. I can’t see East Meon parish council taking on any of the services currently delivered by either the District or the County Council. If there is a plan, it is well disguised.

Overall, these changes are intended to empower local communities and move resources away from Whitehall. Whether this happens will depend on funding, and I’m sceptical that central government will move the funding decisions to regions like Hampshire unless they become much braver. The current government has deferred decisions on social care and SEN funding, so the recent history is one of promise, but limited delivery.

Rob Mocatta  
 East Hampshire District Councillor for Buriton and East Meon,  
 Hampshire County Councillor for Petersfield Butser

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### Parish Council Update – November 2025

Wishing all residents of East Meon a merry Christmas from your Parish Council. The Parish Council held its meeting on 17 November in the Village Hall at 6.30 pm. Everyone from the village is welcome to attend these meetings. Agendas are posted on the village noticeboard and on our website. Our next meeting will be held on January 26th in the Village Hall at 6.30 pm All villagers are very welcome.

#### River Meon project

We were pleased to receive an introduction from the Environment Agency and the Wild Trout Trust about a new potential flow-splitter at The Cross. This would bring benefits to the health of our river and its wildlife. The team plan to hold a village meeting to explain the scheme in more detail, so please watch this space for the date.

#### Finger-posts repainting

With funds now approved, in spring the village's metal direction signs (the so-called 'finger-posts') will be repainted. Some are very old, and we hope the craftsmanship will give them a fresh-looking renewal across the village.

#### CIL funds and projects

The Parish Council is responsible for spending the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds. These come as direct benefits from local development. Our CIL Projects Working Group met this month and is looking at upgrading the playgrounds. We'll share more details and be seeking ideas in the coming months.

#### Roads & traffic

As always, potholes and traffic flow, especially during road closures, are under regular review. We are pleased that plans are underway for village-calming measures and curb protection on the more heavily-affected roads to restrict large vehicles and safeguard our verges.

#### Kissing gates on footpaths

A very welcome outcome this month: the District Council has agreed to fund three new kissing gates around the village footpaths. We will choose locations of greatest need, for example where stiles are broken or missing.

#### Bench at the All Sports Court

It was suggested to the PC that having a bench at the All Sports Court would be popular, we agreed and thought perhaps as a dedicated memorial or donation bench benefiting the community might be a good approach? If you'd like to learn more, or have suggestions, please get in touch.

Thank you for your interest and for everyone's ongoing contributions to village life. Wishing you a wonderful Christmas.

Trudie Lang and all the councillors.

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## Izaak Revival

Given the importance of the Izaak Walton to the entire community, it's not surprising there was standing room only as the village turned out in numbers to hear the thoughts and advice of seasoned publican Simon Maynard on one option for the future reopening of the Izaak, that being as a Community Benefit Society - effectively a community financed buyout that oversees the running of the pub.

A CBS is a not-for-profit entity that raises money from the community (plus grants and loans where available) to negotiate a leasehold or freehold interest in the Izaak from Wellington.

Simon has been involved in numerous pub projects, often in a turnaround role, and most recently at the Bluebell in Cocking. Cards on the table, he's has a family on the way so would like to settle down in a village like East Meon in a more permanent operational role. Thanks go to the Parish Council for bringing Simon's interest in a CBS to our attention.

Should the CBS option gain traction, there are various operating models from relying on volunteers (which Simon advised against) or employing a professional manager, through to more autonomous arrangements involving subletting to a landlord or pub team on a rental or commission basis.

Simon recognised the Izaak needs significant refurbishment, but that the often rumoured £100k for the kitchen was in his opinion wide of the mark.

Simon acknowledged the amount of upfront work, the many unknowns, including the approach of the current freeholder of the Izaak . If we're interested in exploring the CBS option further, he suggested we set up a steering committee which he would happily assist but not join given his ultimate interest as a potential operator.

Tom Tyrwhitt-Drake was the first to express his interest in being involved and should be the point of contact for any villagers keen to join such a steering committee.

So much to ponder.

But at least Steve Howard was able to establish that shareholders in a CBS can still be banned from the pub.....which didn't seem to be the answer he was looking for?

Andy Hales

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## Mast Years and Propagation.

There is a natural pause in Nature Group activity at this time of year. The toads, newts and butterflies are (hopefully) safely tucked up for the winter and our hedges and trees have shed their summer finery, leaf buds ready and waiting for the spring. But the group is not entirely sleeping: there has been a little more hedge-planting at the bottom of the Green and our amphibious members have been monitoring river fly populations up and downstream of the East Meon sewage works (a key indicator of river health).

It's been a plentiful year for fruit - a so-called "mast" year. Once every 5-10 years, trees will over-produce fruit to overwhelm the appetites of predator populations whose numbers are limited by the normal levels of fruit crop. In these mast years there is a much higher chance of seeds not being eaten and growing into trees. This year trees were heavy with hawthorn, sloe and crabapple, while there were enormous numbers of seeds on our larger trees - after the almost total absence last year.



Walking round and round the cricket pitch (as is the fate of those walking pheasant-hungry dogs), I was also struck by how different are the seeds of our major trees. Large acorns and conkers, smaller beech nuts and tiny seeds of ash and sycamore. And yet the final trees are of similar size. Why the difference?

Simplistically, the trees have different propagation strategies. Ash and sycamore rely on "helicopter" wings to carry their necessarily small seeds far from the parent tree and they saturate the surrounding ground. The small seeds might only succeed in ideal growing conditions but they have strength in numbers. The oak and chestnut have fewer seeds that are far too large for any feasible wing to distribute them. They

plummet to the ground and rely on squirrel or birds to bury them as winter food-store - distributing them in the process. Many will get eaten but, especially in mast years, those that are not will often be far from the parent tree and have large reserves of energy that allow them to survive and grow in more demanding conditions.

The natural world is firmly baked into our imminent Christmas celebrations and the festival has long been heavy with superstitions about the plants and animals around us. These have been adapted with each new era, Christians willingly adapting pagan myths, pagans having themselves adapted pre-pagan myths.

As the sun left us, taking its warmth and light, and as the plants and animals descended into sleep or death, plants that kept their leaves were seen as offering reassurance of a return of life and were brought in to decorate houses. But beware how you do this. Cut down a holly tree and misfortune will follow. Bring prickly-leaved holly into the house and the man of the house will “rule” that year; bring smooth leafed holly and the woman will “rule”. They should all be removed by twelfth night; but they should be burnt rather than thrown out to avoid bad luck and goblins.

Keep your Yule log burning throughout the 12 days of Christmas and you will enjoy prosperity. Kissing under the mistletoe, hung as a token of fertility and love at the entrance to your house, is a well established tradition but you must remove one berry for each kiss taken - no more berries, no more kisses. Choose carefully. And young maidens should beware of visiting pig pens on Christmas Eve: if the first to grunt is an old hog, she will marry an old man, a piglet and she will marry a young man. In need of a second opinion? - she should place a piece of mistletoe under her pillow and she will dream of her future husband.

There is a paradox about Christmas in the natural world as in our own lives. A time of feasting and merriment is also a time when food for many is scarce. Many of the berries and nuts have already been eaten, food is often inaccessible below icy ground. And all this at a time when extreme cold can make survival problematic. The food provided at bird feeders and to other wild life can be critical for survival, particularly if you have maintained feeders through the warmer months. It is important that you do what you can to help our wildlife survive the hard winter months. But be sure to clean your feeders regularly to help avoid the spread of bird flu and other diseases that have killed so many of our wild birds.

Jonathan Iremonger

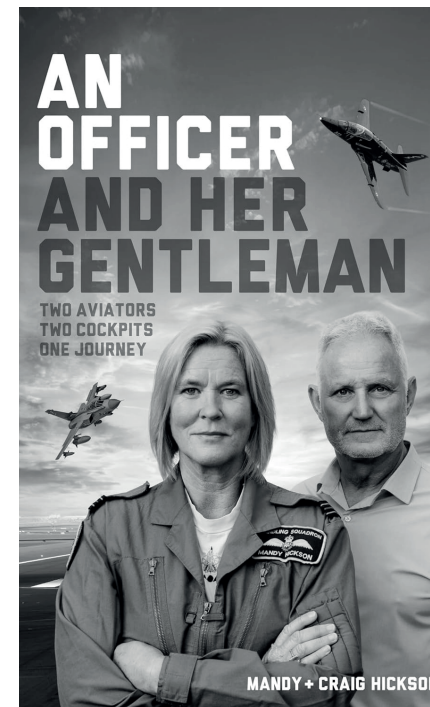
## Book Launch - An evening with Mandy & Craig Hickson

The Long Barn at Meon Springs, Whitewool Farm, East Meon will welcome Mandy and Craig to start our series of book launch events at the farm on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Two wings, one mission: Frontline pioneer female RAF fast jet pilot and Royal Navy helicopter pilot join forces in a memoir “An Officer and her Gentleman”

Husband and wife team, Craig and Mandy Hickson have written an inspiring memoir charting their experience as aviators in the military and beyond. A follow-up to Mandy’s first book, ‘An officer, not a Gentleman’, the biography explores key themes of resilience, teamwork and breaking barriers.

Mandy Hickson said: “My passion is to inspire the next generation to believe that there are no limits when you work hard and follow your dreams. Having shared my story in my first book, this was a logical next step. Craig’s story deserves to be told. He has been my wingman and inspiration.”



Craig Hickson said: “I am incredibly proud of Mandy, she has achieved what many could only dream of, and it has been through hard work, grit and passion. I had to break my own barriers, and it has been cathartic to document my journey. My wish is that people can see that there are paths for all of us if we are willing to dig in and accept support from great people.”

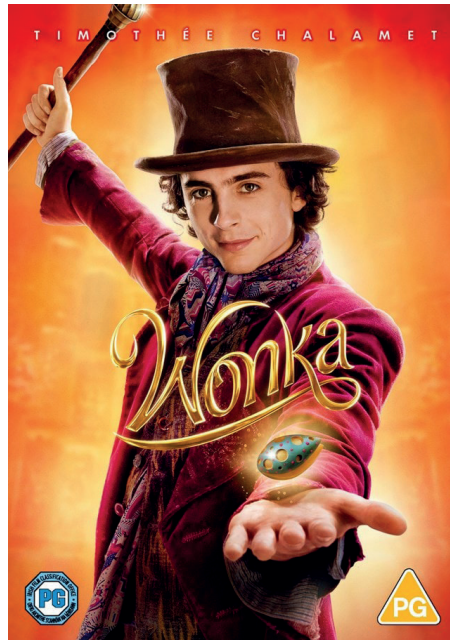
Mandy & Craig will share some of their stories and there will be an opportunity for questions. There will be books on sale and signings by the couple.

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026, Doors & Bar open from 19:00, talk commences 19:30. Entry Tickets £15. Entry Ticket + Pre signed Hardback copy of An Officer and her Gentleman £40. Booking link - <https://www.meonsprings.com/events>

## MOVIOLA - FILMS FOR THE NEW YEAR

We're looking forward to offering you a whole new batch of films for 2026, starting with the delightful and colourful family film **WONKA** on **2<sup>nd</sup> January**. Come and discover how the young Willy Wonka (Timothée Chalamet) became the world-famous chocolatier.

On **30<sup>th</sup> January** we'll transport you to a remote island off the coast of Scotland (or possibly Wales) for a quirky British comedy, **THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND**, starring Cary Mulligan.



And to cheer us up through the winter, another vibrant comedy on **27<sup>th</sup> February** - **THE ROSES**, with the dynamic pairing of Olivia Colman and Benedict Cumberbatch. It's described as "*a smart, wild, entertaining mix of droll British humour and glossy Hollywood film-making.*"

We'll be showing the much vaunted **THE CHORAL** on **27<sup>th</sup> March**, a tale of art blooming in adversity, in which Ralph Fiennes heads the cast in an Alan Bennett/Nicholas Hytner collaboration.

On **24<sup>th</sup> April** the season is rounded off with **NUREMBERG**, a powerful and thought-provoking historical drama with a towering performance from Russell Crowe as Hermann Göring.

## EXCITING FUTURE PLANS

As well as the usual Moviola fare, East Meon Cinema is hoping to broaden its range of screenings to include theatre, opera and ballet, so keep an eye out for details of some new and exciting entertainment. We're working hard to get everything in place and will let you know more soon. If you'd like to be added to the mailing list to receive updates, please email [eastmeonmoviola@outlook.com](mailto:eastmeonmoviola@outlook.com)

### You may not realise how lucky we are...

Thanks to a package of technical upgrades at the Village Hall, film-goers should notice improvements this winter. The parish council has used civil investment levy funds to enable the purchase of new audio equipment. The system is designed to provide hi-fidelity audio for parties, presentations, stage productions, bands and films. In film mode, the system supports Dolby Atmos digital surround sound to deliver the film soundtrack the way the director intended.

To complement this, and thanks to a generous private donor, the projection equipment has also been upgraded with a laser projector of double the light intensity. In addition, the screen has been lifted to improve sight lines for all, especially when showing films with sub-titles.

We hope you'll agree these upgrades really deliver a cinema experience, and all without leaving the village!

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## Village Hall Annual Report

A big thank you to everyone who came to the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November held, of course, in the village Hall.

The most enormous thanks to everyone who contributes to and uses the East Meon Village Hall.

What is the hall for? It's set out by the object of the East Meon Village Hall Charity - No. 226,855 which you can see mounted in a picture frame in the hall entrance lobby.

*The object of the Charity shall be the provision and maintenance of a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of East Meon without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, including use for meetings, lectures and classes, and for other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation, with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.*

Sandy Lague, our Treasurer, prepared the Treasurer's Report which with the Chair's Review and the annual accounts are submitted to the Charity Commission. After a few challenging years, the hall's finances have shown a strong recovery, helped by increased bookings, successful fundraising, and careful cost management. We finished the financial year with a healthy surplus, strengthening our reserves and putting us in a good position for the year ahead. At the end of the financial year, the hall's accounts were in a strong position, with healthy reserves and no outstanding debts. We have maintained a solid balance across our main and reserve accounts, ensuring that we can meet both day-to-day commitments and future investment needs.

Matt Millward looks after our technology, leading the way towards better systems that deliver more for villagers. Matt has lent the hall his own (fabulous) sound equipment for a long time and we realised it was about time the hall should have its own kit. This year we bought better sound gear, not only to improve the experience for Moviola (it's easier to hear the dialogue), but to attract new audiences from the village and new revenues too. The Parish Council enabled this with an allocation of CIL funds which is hugely appreciated.

Emily Rich is our Hall Manager and has continued to win new business with the added challenge of moving to a new booking system - Lemon Booking. She has been at the centre of transferring from our current system - conceived, developed and maintained by our previous chair George Thompson.

The hall continues to host the nursery, the community café, Moviola cinema as well as the history group, Garden Club, Remembrance Sunday, harvest supper, parties and much more!

We have new hires in the small hall (redecorated in October) with the Pop-Up Choir, two art groups and Ear Care Micro-suction. Upstairs, the hall continues to host church administration for the Upper Meon Benefice.

Gemma Griffiths continues to work her Caretaker magic keeping up the hall to the condition that the building allows. We welcomed a new Karcher floor scrubber (at a heavily discounted price) after the NuMatic finally succumbed.

**Moviola** goes from strength to strength, thank you Team Hollis, with growing numbers and wonderful movies. We are working towards showing National Theatre, Covent Garden and other shows in the hall now that we have the qualifying sound and screen.

The **Community Café** continues to be a big contributor to the hall's finances, with a loyal following, hardly surprising given the always fabulous cakes! Thank you Diana, Connie and team so much and for the extra tasks taken on.

**The Village Nursery** and Pre-School (run by Jo Baker) had a good start to the year and improved as the year progressed. East Meon School and The Village Nursery work together well for a smooth transition for the children and parents. So far the school has received approaching 40 children as the result of them working together as nursery leavers become school joiners.

This year the **May Fair** (thank you Doug Craig for stepping into the breach!) and the **Great East Meon Boat Race** (thank you David Lewin for leading yet another great event) were held on different weekends. Huge efforts were put in by lots of villagers. As always, each year we look to see where we can improve for next year. There is always the need for ideas, innovation and the volunteers to make the May Fair happen.

The **Hall OverHaul** continues to be developed, changing ideas on paper is much cheaper than rebuilding, and you can see the updated plans in the Small Hall. Villagers ideas that shape the future of the hall are vital. Consultation will continue. We need to hear from everyone on everything from layout to colour schemes. The Hall Overhaul Fund remains a dedicated pool of money set aside for ongoing improvements, and we continue to manage it prudently to ensure long-term benefits for the community.

The **Management Committee** has grown with the arrival of Chris Beard, Doug Craig, Jo Baker, Julian Marks and Steven Jenkins which brings our strength up to eight plus our Hall Manager Emily Rich and Caretaker Gemma Griffiths. Many hands make for much lighter work, more enjoyment and a very much better village hall. As Chair David Pepper and Treasurer Sandy Lague resigned at this AGM, the need for fresh faces and energy continues. We need all the excellent energy & ideas from the village that the hall could and should have. If you haven't already, do step forward to help the hall like so many did back in 1974 when the hall was first completed. Specifically, the hall needs willing hands to help in:

- Fund raising
  - Marketing
  - Communications
  - The website
  - Events
  - Maintenance
  - IT
  - Marquees & Gazebos
- and
- The Hall OverHaul

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David Pepper, Chair

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## Christmas Recipes

If you are heading over to the Court House for Carols on the 20th, Clare would be very grateful for mince pie donations – so why not try the recipe below for some homemade beauties?

Classic Mince Pies - Makes 12 mince pies

### Ingredients

#### For the filling

1 x 400g jar good-quality shop-bought mincemeat  
Zest of 1 orange  
50g chopped dried apricots or dried cranberries  
1 tbsp brandy or rum (optional)

#### For the pastry

225g plain flour  
125g cold unsalted butter, cubed  
25g caster sugar  
Pinch of salt  
1 egg yolk  
2–3 tbsp cold water

#### To finish

1 egg, beaten (for glaze)  
Icing sugar for sprinkling

#### Method

##### 1. Prepare the filling

Tip the mincemeat into a bowl and loosen it slightly with a spoon. Stir in the orange zest, chopped apricots or cranberries, and the optional brandy or rum. Mix until evenly combined. Ideally leave in a cool spot overnight for the flavours to deepen, but this is not necessary.

##### 2. Make the pastry

Rub the flour and cold butter together with your fingertips until you have fine crumbs. Add the sugar and salt. Mix in the egg yolk and enough cold water to bring the dough together. Shape into a sausage, wrap in cling film, and chill for 20–30 minutes.

##### 3. Assemble

Heat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan). Butter a 12-hole tart tin. Roll the pastry to the thickness of a pound coin. Cut 12 larger rounds for the bases and 12 smaller rounds or stars for the lids. Press the bases into the buttered tin.

#### 4. Fill

Spoon the mincemeat into each pastry case, filling them generously. Add the lids and gently seal the edges, or place a star on top.

#### 5. Bake

Brush the tops with beaten egg, and bake for 18–22 minutes until golden.

#### 6. Serve

Let the pies cool slightly before removing from the tin. Dust with icing sugar for a festive look and serve warm or at room temperature.

#### Notes

- For a standard 12-hole tart tin, use a 9–10cm cutter for the bases. This gives a snug fit and creates pies roughly 5.5–6cm across once baked.
- For the lids, use a 7–8cm round cutter or a star cutter of similar width.
- Adding fresh orange zest brightens the flavour of jarred mincemeat without changing its texture.
- Apricots add mellow sweetness whereas cranberries add tartness - both work well.
- A dash of alcohol deepens the flavour but is optional if you prefer a lighter taste.



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## What to drink this December

Katrina Cran-Crombie

Head of Wine Operations at Hambledon Vineyard

The month of December is packed with multiple reasons to celebrate. Friends and families coming together, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve - for some of us it's also a time to reflect on 2025's personal and professional achievements. What better way to enjoy all of these landmarks then with a glass of wine in hand. Below you'll find a few festive recommendations to suit every budget. Cheers!

### Sparkling wine

#### Good:

**Bouvet Ladubay Saumur Brut,**

**£9.50 per bottle when you mix six at Majestic.**

Made in the same way as Champagne, this dry Crémant sparkling from the Loire Valley is produced from a blend of Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay grapes. It's a fresh, crisp fizz with a touch of bread dough character that's a great crowd pleaser, also reflecting fantastic value for money.

#### Better:

**Veuve Monsigny Brut Champagne, £15.49 per bottle at Aldi.**

Supermarkets have some cracking Champagne offers at this time of year. This bubbly is extraordinary value from the region with some of the hall-mark toasty flavours you can expect along with a fresh zippy finish.

#### Best:

**Hambledon Blanc de Blancs, £53 per bottle,  
buy direct from the Hambledon Vineyard shop.**

This traditional method locally produced sparkling wine is a real gem, with balance, purity and elegance interwoven with complex apple, candied citrus and brioche flavours. If you want to splash out and treat yourself to an award winning fizz over the Christmas period, this is a must.

AOB (Any other bottles) - see following page

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**Red:****Cune Rioja Crianza, £10.50 per bottle when you mix six at Majestic**

Rioja is an incredibly versatile wine making region which is most famous for red wine production. Choosing a Crianza style means there has been some ageing in oak barrels and bottle, with all maturation taking place at the winery, meaning it's ready to drink as soon as it hits the shops! With smooth supple tannins, a hint of sweet spice and plush black fruit flavours, it can pair well with white and red meat as well as most cheeses. If you're after a fruitier style, look for the word "joven" and if you prefer a more savoury, developed style look for "Reserva" or "Gran Reserva".

**Sweet:****Graham's LBV Port, £16.99 General Wine Company**

Nothing says Christmas like a bottle of Port paired with a Christmas cake or a slab of stilton. The General Wine Company in Petersfield and Liphook have a fantastic selection of fortified wines starting from just £10 per bottle. A firm favourite for me is Graham's Late Bottled Vintage at £16.99 per bottle. It has the hallmark fruity characters of a Ruby Port but with greater structure and depth. Top tip: if you prefer nuttier, more candied flavours, choose a Tawny port.

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