



Thousands of visitors join in the spectacle of the Wintershall Nativity each Christmas. Please check websites for times on performances and opening. wintershall.org.uk/nativity-play - Credit: Wintershall Nativity

county people

Lord-Lieutenant's life: Christmas is all around

With Michael More-Molyneux, the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey

Michael More-Molyneux

As I wrote last month, many of us will be looking forward to a less restricted Christmas than last year, and to enjoying a mix of traditional and more original, seasonal entertainment. I also promised that in the months ahead I will shine a light on our county's arts and culture – and now is the time to start.

Joining Mary, Joseph and the donkey for that walk up the hill at Wintershall near Bramley – playing one's part in the re-enactment of the nativity – is an unforgettable way to celebrate the Christmas story. For those who don't know, the first Wintershall Nativity was staged in a barn on the Estate in 1989 and now welcomes families and groups from across Surrey and beyond for this pre-Christmas open-air performance.

'Pantomime is back!' Last year, the response to that would have been: 'Oh no it isn't!' But thankfully in 2021 we can respond: 'Oh yes it is!' Many will have their own favourite venue, but if you are still looking for options, almost the entire Pantomime gamut is on offer across Surrey. The Harlequin in Redhill is showing *Aladdin*; there's *Beauty and the Beast* at the Epsom Playhouse; and *Jack and the Beanstalk* at Dorking Halls. *Snow White* appears at the New Victoria in Woking, while *Dick Whittington* returns to Guildford's Yvonne Arnaud. All these theatres have had such a difficult 18 months: forced to close for much of that time, we should applaud them for managing to stay in business at all... and support.

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'Oh yes it is!'

Here's a taste of other imaginative seasonal events across the county: the illuminated Christmas Glow at RHS Wisley; *Snowsaurus* at Painshill; and wreath making at Watts Gallery. For horse racing enthusiasts, there are meetings at Kempton Park, Lingfield Park and Sandown Park during December. And for a wildlife Christmas experience, at the British Wildlife Centre near Lingfield you can spot red squirrels, Scottish wildcats, otters, red deer and polecats. Charity fairs are a great source for your Christmas gifts. And please remember the high quality food available from our own Surrey Hills producers and farm shops.

At this time of celebration for so many, we remember those who are unable to give presents to their children around the Christmas tree, or to share festive food. I know that all the Surrey food banks, who continue to support so many post pandemic, will welcome your

donations at this time.

May I wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and may 2022 be less challenging than 2021 for us all.

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