

As the Duke of Medina Sidonia might have put it, this is real Spanish Armada weather. But that dreadful year of storms back can't have been caused by man-made climate change.
Unless it was the bonfires.

Fortunately vines can withstand the gales better than Spanish sailing ships. Even the expensive kilometres of trellising systems, standing as they do on a steep south facing slope right into the Atlantic gales coming up the Exe Valley, can cope with almost anything.
Hardly a timber has shifted.

It's just as unpleasant for the humble vineyard worker in 2014 as in 1588 in the teeth a howler. For one thing the barrow full of prunings is no sooner half-full than it's upturned in the mud. There have been happier winter pruning seasons than this one.

Yet amazingly the 3 hectares are getting organised and ready for the grand re-opening of the vineyard and Deli Shack Cafe on April 4.

In the meantime it's been heart-warming to see how many of the new vineyards in Devon are throwing themselves into the cause with a new impetus to launch a county-wide group (something the team at Yearlstone has tried hard to promote over the last decade with Devon Wine Week).

Several are joining in the usual joint vine order from Germany – with Pinot Noir for sparkling wine favourite once again, reflecting the national trend. I think English vinegrowers have been doing their bit to revive the Eurozone in the last few years – placing orders for hundreds of thousands of new plantings.

It's also decision time for the wine competitions and which to choose for a crack at more glory with our Vintage Brut 2010's -the white and our hot tip , the new Pinot Noir rose.

The annual English fizz vs Champagne London tasting takes place in March. Definitely taking part in that.

But then we have the big ones. The International Wine Challenge, Decanter magazine, and the Lyons International all coming up in April/May. We've won medals at all of those except the IWC, which we have never yet entered. It costs a small fortune to enter but it's worth it to fly the flag of Exe Valley wine (and sometimes it does land a big commercial order too!).

Hope to see you some of you after April 4 – the new wines of 2013 (and there are plenty of them) won't quite be ready then, but due for release sometime in May