

PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD

FINE ENGLISH WINE

www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk

Information and sales.

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NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2005

Another award

In the last newsletter I reported that we had been awarded a Bronze Medal in the National Competition – UK vineyards Wine of the Year – for our 2003 Dry White. We entered the same wine this autumn for the Wessex Area Competition and got a Silver. In fact no Gold medals were awarded, and only three Silver Medals. The cup winner had to be chosen from these three, but we were pipped at the post by a vineyard from Wiltshire. I gather it was a pretty close thing, and as this wine is still improving we may do even better next year – if there is enough left to enter that is!

The Year in the Vineyard

Not the best of years but a great improvement on the one before. Last year we were very despondent, personal circumstances and the weather had meant we had not been able to keep up with the work and the crop failed. However my rather depressing newsletter that autumn seemed to touch a lot of people, and we had many offers of help and support. We had not realised how much the vineyard and its wine meant to everyone locally, and this was a great incentive to us to keep going. And our volunteer helpers did brilliantly. The winter pruning was done in good time, and the very important summer pruning and sorting out of the shoots kept the vines in good order. Volunteers had the choice of adopting a row and/or coming to a working party and the vineyard looked very well all summer.

The vines set a good crop, but then troubles began to strike. Our vintage tractor, which has been so reliable all these years, blew a head gasket. Because it is so old no spares were available off the shelf and a new one had to be custom made. This meant we missed some vital sprays and powdery mildew jumped in. This could have been a complete disaster, but the hard work put in by our volunteers in sorting out the shoots and letting air into the canopy paid off, and although we lost some fruit mostly from under the trees where the air cannot circulate, we managed to harvest a reasonable amount.

The Seyval grapes, our second crop, are mildew resistant and looked really good all through September. We usually pick them around the first week in November, as they are slow ripeners. When I rang the winery to give them advance notice of the date, Vince, our winemaker, asked if we had trouble with birds. "Oh no" I said, "We never have a bird problem". "A lot of people have this year," he said. Jim and I rushed up to the vineyard and had a good look round, and although some grapes had gone we felt there was no panic and another week would get the grapes nicely ripe. Accordingly I set the date, and notified the troops. Unfortunately the word got round among the pigeon population, and over the weekend they descended in their hordes and gobbled two thirds of the crop. Our pickers were able to harvest what was left in an hour (usually it takes all morning). Luckily it was a lovely day and we could sit in the sun and admire the view, but it was a big disappointment after all the hard work. Still we shall at least get a vintage this year, even if reduced, and this is better than last year.

Working parties

We hope to start working parties again in January – the first one being Sunday January 8th for pruning. Weather permitting of course. If you haven't been before and would like to help do come along. We just meet for the morning – about 9.30, and finish about lunchtime with a break for coffee. I expect we will have another meeting later on in the month, but I haven't fixed a date yet.

The vines have lost their leaves, so those of you that have adopted a row can start pruning any time now. If anyone can't manage to come this year just let me know so I can reallocate your row.

Sales

We are starting our Christmas wine deliveries now, so if you have not yet contacted us we are ready and waiting for your call. Remember what an excellent gift Priors Dean wine makes, and ideal as an aperitif in the festive season.

The current wines available are:

2001 Dry. A light dry white wine awarded 'Highly Commended' in the UKVA Wine of the Year competition 2003

. £5.00 per bottle £60.00 per case of 12 bottles

2002 Medium Dry. Bronze Medal UKVA competition 2003. Gold Medal Wessex Area Wine of the Year 2004

£6.00 per bottle. £72.00 per case of 12 bottles

2003 Dry. Bronze Medal UKVA competition 2005. The judges verdict was "Delicate, light, neutral, balanced". Silver Medal Wessex Area Wine of the Year competition 2005.

£6.00 per bottle. £70 00 per case of 12 bottles

Delivery is free locally (within about 20 miles) of 6 bottles or more, and we can deliver smaller quantities locally for a small charge. For anything further afield we can arrange carriage at cost. Please contact me for details.

The wine is also available in the shops: Blackmoor Apple Shop, East Tisted Stores and Froxfield Stores, but please note the price is not necessarily the same as ours.

And finally...

Very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to you all and especially to all of you who have given us such support during the past year.

Pam, Neil and Jim