

PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD

FINE ENGLISH WINE

www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk

Information and sales.

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In spite of doom and gloom in the media about the constant rain ruining the crop we have not done too badly. Flowering is always a difficult time for vines, their flowers are covered by a little cap, which has to come off before they can be fertilised. If this gets too damp the cap sticks on and eventually the flowers just wither away. Luckily being up high we get a lot of breeze, which helps to dry things between the showers, and we have had a reasonable fruit set, but the Seyvals, the later variety, which usually produce masses of grapes for the second picking, have suffered from the wet, and there will not be so many this year. The other varieties are also down. Another problem is that in most years the vines flower and set within a week, but this year the flowering dragged on for a long time. This makes it difficult to predict the date of harvest, but certainly it is not going to be early – unless of course we get five weeks continuous hot sun from now on.

Grape picking

As I have mentioned, this is very difficult to predict this year. My guess is that the first pick will be round about the beginning of October, and the second three weeks later, but it could be any week this autumn. There is always a problem that some bunches always set and ripen before others so we have to choose the moment when the majority are ready, and as this time they set over a long period this is going to be more difficult than usual. It would be helpful if people could let me know if they are going to be available – E-mail preferred, and then wait for the call! If you have not been before it takes place in the morning and is open to all ages, as long as you can cope with the steep slope. It is usually a fun morning, which everyone seems to enjoy, and we finish with a ploughman's lunch. We pay a small wage. Please let me know if you are interested and would like further information.

Volunteer working parties

We should be tackling the summer pruning and thinning, this involves sorting out the vines that have wound themselves round each other and cutting back leaves and side shoots so the grapes can see the sun, and the air can circulate and take the mildew away. I was worried that the foot and mouth would spread and the lane be closed, but it does seem now that is not going to happen. We will therefore have working parties on Sundays - 26th August and 9th September starting about 9.30. Again these are enjoyable mornings, no money is paid but bottles of Priors Dean wine are available. Dogs and children welcome. Bring secateurs.

The wine

We entered the 2005 Vintage for the annual UK Vineyards Wine of the Year Competition, and it was given Highly Commended, an award for wines the judges said they would be happy to see on sale and recommend to consumers. 60 wines were entered in the Dry category, and only half received an award. The judges' verdict on ours was 'Delicate floral character, balanced, neutral'. This maintains our record of getting an award for every wine entered over the years. We only get one wine made each year, a blend of our three varieties and now have three Highly Commended, five Bronze medals, and one Silver.

2005 was the year the pigeons descended on the crop and got most of the grapes but what was left has produced a very acceptable wine made in our classic style, light and dry. For those of you waiting for our popular Medium Dry, the 2006 vintage has yet to be collected from the winery but should be available for Christmas, although it will not be at its best for a year or so

There has been much in the media about high alcoholic wine; New World reds particularly mentioned, and certainly you need to watch your limit when you drink them. We are not allowed by the EC to produce wine of more than 11.5% so an Australian Red at 16% can contain almost half as much alcohol again as ours. So for easy drinking without a hangover stick to English - especially Priors Dean!

Incidentally 'British' wine has very little connection with these shores being made of cheap imported grape juice. It can be very nasty and not to be confused with 'English' wine made from grapes grown and vinified here.

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The duty on wine went up again in March and we now pay approx. £1.33 per bottle to Customs and Excise, an increase of about 4p per bottle – similar to the total amount paid in France. The actual sum demanded is £1.7799 per litre, which means use of a calculator

every month. Do they take these numbers out of a hat? Anyway we have been forced to increase prices.

The current vintage on sale is the 2003. This was awarded a Bronze Medal in the UK Vineyards Wine of the Year competition, and a Silver Medal in the Wessex area competition. It is off-dry, which gives it a bit more sweetness than our classic dry of other years.

Our current stockists are:

Blackmoor Farm Shop (Apple Shop)

Froxfield Stores

Durleighmarsh Farm Shop

The General Wine Company

Liphook

East Tisted Post Office Stores

The Haslemere Cellar

It is available direct from us, local delivery free for 6 bottles or more. You can get the 2005 from us if you would like to try it, but it is not in the shops yet.

Date for your diary.

Jim's latest book 'Magdalena's redemption' is to be published this autumn. It is another gripping mystery set locally. The book will be launched at the One Tree Bookshop in Petersfield in the evening of September 26th. All are invited. There will be refreshments including Priors Dean wine.

Shows

As usual we shall be at Alresford show on Saturday September 1st. and Blackmoor Apple day on Sunday October 14th. Come and see us.

Best wishes to all
Pam and Jim