

PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD

FINE ENGLISH WINE

www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk

Information and sales.

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NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2008

It seems a long time since I wrote a Priors Dean Newsletter, I hope nobody thought we had faded away, but the vineyard is certainly still in business. I was going to say it was flourishing, but the weather of last summer has put a damper (literally!) on that particular word. However we did manage to harvest a small crop, which is more than many English vineyards this year. More about that later.

Some of you know that just before Christmas last year my husband Neil Elkins died. Starting the vineyard was his idea, and he did all the preliminary research about the soil, and the right vines to plant, plus the trellising method, and anything else that was necessary. Then for the first few years he and I did all the hands on work, weed killing, pruning and spraying. He was immensely proud of the vineyard and its achievements especially when we started doing well in competitions. At the end he declined into Alzheimer's but he still liked to come down, look at the vines and see the view. His ashes have been scattered in the vineyard, at his request, and we have a memorial seat to be placed at the top of the vineyard, where we used to sit in the early days before we had the chalet and all its 'mod cons'.

The Harvest.

This is the second year we have had a poor summer. Last year the wet spring meant that the flowers did not set, but we did get 600 bottles. (We should average 2000). This year was even worse. The weather at flowering was not so bad, but the damp grey August meant that the grapes got a heavy dose of powdery mildew. Again the Bacchus vines failed to set; this variety can produce excellent wine, but has never done very well for us. The Madeleine Angevines looked good to start with, but in spite of all our efforts the weather finally won, and there was so little crop left we decided to abandon them to the birds. Luckily the Seyval grapes had done reasonably well, so on a lovely autumn day they went on the way to the winery. The best we can expect from this harvest is about 500 bottles, but on a year when much larger vineyards got nothing this represents a useful amount.

Competitions

Our main achievement this year was in the Wessex Area wine of the year competition. We entered three wines, and got two Silver medals. The judges made very favourable comments, for the 2005 Dry, on sale now, they said subtle, perfumed, watermelon, good length, ripe acidity, good balance and structure. The 2007 Dry was also received favourably. The comments were 'lightweight nose, lovely fresh palate, gooseberry, full mouth feel, refreshing acidity, balanced, long dry finish, nice wine' This wine is not yet for sale but these comments are very encouraging as our wines always improve with age. The 2006 Medium Dry was awarded Highly Commended, and among the comments were 'well made, apple nose, fresh palate'

Working Parties

The last few years have not been easy for me, brother Jim stepped in to hold the fort, but he has several other commitments taking over his time. So without help from vineyard friends we might not have been able to keep going. Many thanks to you all. We are not quite out of the wood yet. I am due to have a knee replacement after Christmas, which will keep me out of action for some while, and there is the pruning to be done. For those who don't know, volunteers meet on occasional Sunday mornings to help out for a few hours. No money is involved, but free bottles of Priors Dean wine are available, and you can have use of the vineyard whenever you want, say for family picnics or barbecues. The other alternative is to 'adopt a row' and look after it through the year, coming at any time. This got a bit disorganised last year, some adopted rows being pruned by mistake but we hope to do better this year. Please let me know if you want to continue with this, and which rows you would like to take on.

The first working parties for 2009 will be on Sunday 4th January, and Sunday 18th January. We start about 9.30 and go on until lunchtime. It is a help if you could let me know if you are coming, but otherwise just turn up. Bring secateurs if possible.

Bad News

The duty on wine that we pay to the government has been going up in leaps and bounds over the last few years. Last April it went up to approx. £1.46 per bottle. I thought that was bad enough, but in the recent Budget it was increased by 8%, making the duty on a bottle now £1.57! We held the price last year but we really can't do that any more. Our prices will have to increase in the New Year, but we will keep them at the previous rate until after Christmas. We feel very aggrieved that our small struggling industry, up against the English weather, should have to compensate for the errors of 'fat cat' bankers.

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.

Wines available from the vineyard

2005 Classic Dry. This is a light crisp dry white wine, which was awarded Highly Commended in this year's Wine of the Year competition, and a Silver Medal in the Wessex Area competition The latest example of our classic dry wine which has been such a favourite with our customers over the years.

2006 Medium Dry. New on the market this autumn. A light fragrant wine suitable for everyday drinking. Highly Commended Wessex Area competition 2008.

Both wines £7.00 per bottle. £80 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 available in the shops, but please note the price is not necessarily the same as ours. Also some have very limited stocks so best to check before making a special journey.

Blackmoor Farm Shop (Apple Shop)
Durleighmarsh Farm Shop
East Tisted Post Office Stores
FeedThyme Farm Shop, Froxfield
Hindhead Post Office Stores
Selborne Post Office Stores

Best wishes to you all

Pam

Jim's latest page turning thriller is now available. It is called 'Emily's Hour', a sequel to 'The Nemesis File', and is an exciting story set in the Surrey countryside with a dramatic ending. You can get it from One Tree Books in Petersfield, from Amazon, or direct from Jim at a discount. Tel. 01420 538688