

PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD

FINE ENGLISH WINE

www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk

Information and sales.

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NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2009

First a bit of good news. After two years of very poor harvests it looks as though we could have a good crop this year. One of the critical times for vines is at flowering, they need fine weather then or the fruit does not set. Last year there was continual rain all spring, but this year the flowering coincided with the burst of hot weather we had (remember that!) and the grapes have set very well so there is potential for a good crop. Of course there is a long way to go yet, and some of the many diseases may set in, but so far all is looking good. They could of course do with a bit more sunshine, but perhaps we will have a beautiful hot autumn when this really matters.

Last year

Last year's crop was one of the lowest we have had – about 500 bottles- but at least we had some. Many vineyards had none at all and there were desperate pleas from some of them wanting to buy grapes. A lot of new vineyards have started up recently, mainly to produce sparkling wine, and found they have lashed out on all the equipment for winemaking and then had nothing to make it with. Many of these new vineyards seem to have been set up in the grounds of old manor houses with no expense spared. I went to a meeting at one with beautiful grounds and an impressive locked entrance gate. When I commented on the beautifully tidy vineyard with not a weed in sight, the owner told me that the gardeners (note the plural) had just been over it. I thought of us oldies plodding up and down our slope with a knapsack sprayer or scythe, and was very envious, but on reflection wonder if they have the satisfaction we get from working with the vines, and I am sure no-one has as lovely a setting as we have. I have been asked if we will ever produce a 'fizz' but unfortunately we are really too small. The winery is set up to process a much larger quantity than we can provide. However our site is ideal for producing our classic dry white wine which has earned so many awards and compliments over the years.

Competitions

As usual we entered wine for the National Competition, and our Priors Dean Classic Dry White 2007 gained Highly Commended. This means we have got an award for every year we have entered, showing terrific consistency. This wine also got Silver in the Wessex area Competition, and the Judges comments were 'lightweight nose, lovely fresh palate, gooseberry, full mouth feel, refreshing acidity, balanced, long dry finish, nice wine' The wine will be on sale shortly.

Wine for sale

We have just a small amount left of the 2005 Classic Dry, Silver Medal winner in the Wessex area Wine of the Year Competition and also the 2006 Medium Dry, a light fragrant wine suitable for everyday drinking, and awarded Highly Commended in the Wessex Competition. Also available direct from us, contact me for prices and delivery.

Help wanted

I had a second knee replacement in January - many thanks to all who sent good wishes - I knew from the previous one that knees take a long time to mend, but this one seems to have been taking for ever. The basic operation seems OK but I keep damaging other soft tissues which means I am still limping round. Doing too much too soon I suppose. I have been able to do some summer pruning on the vines, but there is still a lot to do. The branches and leaves are very thick this year so the grapes need exposing to sun and air. In consequence we badly need help to get it all done before disease sets in. 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. We will therefore have working parties on Sundays – **August 16th and 30th** to start with. Our volunteers were brilliant at helping with the winter pruning, now we would be grateful for a bit more of your time. For those who don't know, volunteers meet on occasional Sunday mornings to help out for a few hours. No money is paid, 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.

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. Dogs and children welcome

Grape picking

It is always difficult to predict when the harvest will be; so much can happen weather wise. The earliest would be the last week of September, for the first pick, and another some time in October. Please let me know if you are interested. Newcomers are welcome, it is usually on a midweek morning, a ploughman's lunch is provided and we pay a small wage.

Key holders

There have been a lot of break-ins round Priors Dean, and Mr and Mrs Fair at Keyham Farm are anxious when they see strange cars parked in the entrance. It would be helpful if you leave a note in your car to say where you are. 'Visiting vineyard' seems appropriate. This doesn't apply for working party days or grape picking, as they know about these in advance.

Stockists

Blackmoor Farm Shop (Apple Shop)

Durleighmarsh Farm Shop

East Tisted Stores

Feedthyme Farm Shop, Froxfield

For a pub lunch with your glass of Priors Dean, try The Harrow at Steep, and a comparative newcomer to us, The Thomas Lord at West Meon. Both sell excellent, locally sourced food.

Shows

As usual we shall be at Alresford Show on Saturday September 5th. and Blackmoor Apple Day on Sunday October 11th.

Come and see us.

Best wishes

Pam and Jim

Fingers crossed please for an Indian summer!