

# **PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD**

## **FINE ENGLISH WINE**

[www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk](http://www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk)

Information and sales.

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## **NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2012**

### **A bad year for vines**

You all know about it, rain, rain, rain. The first setback was at flowering time. The weather was cold at the normal time, late June, so everything was late. By the time the flowering started the rains had set in and the sodden flowers had a job to pollinate. The Bacchus vines set no grapes at all, the Madeleine Angevines did manage some, but the wet weather had encouraged them to produce enormous long shoots which wound themselves round everything and in spite of our spraying mildew set in. We usually sort them out in August, but with hindsight we should have started earlier this year. Anyway there were so few grapes at picking time it was not worth the harvest.

I had hopes for the Seyval Blanc. For a long time they didn't start to flower, but I went up one day and found it in full swing. It looked like we would have a worthwhile crop. But the summer was against us. The Seyvals are a late ripening variety anyway, and they need autumn sunshine to get ripe enough for wine. Every time I tested them it was to find the sugar reading was very low. We hung on hoping for the Indian summer which never came, eventually we left them for the pigeons. We could have made wine by adding a lot of sugar, but the result would have been a very bland uninteresting drink, not the usual fresh and fruity wine we normally produce.

It is not really a consolation but all vineyards were hit by the weather. Most of the small vineyards abandoned the crop as we did; the larger ones reported only 25% of normal. Even those making 'fizz' struggled. They can cope with high acid but still need some sugar in the grapes. It is all a bit disheartening after all the work but there is always hope for next year.

### **Our new wine**

The 2011 grapes went to our new winery at Hattingley Valley Vineyard near Medstead. It was really good being able to go somewhere near to taste the vintage as it progressed during the year. They have state of the art equipment but unfortunately a

filter machine developed teething troubles and getting the new parts proved difficult. In consequence it was not bottled until October. The wine is supposed to rest for up to 100 days after bottling due to something called 'bottle shock' but we took a chance and entered it for the Wessex Area competition in November. Even with it not being ready we still got a Bronze award, particularly pleasing as the Judges were marking very hard.

We are calling the 2011 wine 'Beech Hanger Gold' to reflect the local area. Nick Holmes has designed a beautiful new label with a view from the vineyard, and as soon as this is received the wine can go on sale, certainly before Christmas. It is 'off-dry', slightly sweeter than our classic dry. The experts at the winery thought highly of it, saying it was very aromatic, and the Wessex judges' comments were very favourable.

From us it will cost the same as the 2009 vintage - £7.50 per bottle, £86.00 per case of 12 bottles.

## **Wine labelling**

Ever since we produced our first vintage – in 1992 good heavens! - we have been subject to the whims of Europe. To start with English wine could only be labelled as 'Table Wine'. There was some rather doubtful stuff produced in those days, so to indicate the more desirable you could get it tested and use a sticker 'Seal of Quality'. Needless to say our wines got this. Then Europe agreed to English wines having a quality wine scheme, similar to 'Appellation controlee' in France. However the grape 'Seyval Blanc' a hybrid widely grown in England, including by us, was deemed unacceptable by the French. They had a point as in the French climate it produces quantities of a bland inferior wine, whereas in England where it has to struggle it makes more effort and produces an excellent dry white wine. It nearly always produces a worthwhile crop, although it is a late ripener which is a disadvantage in a year such as we have just had. However a second qualification, Regional wine, was introduced, although theoretically lower it was subject to the same tests as the Quality wine, and Seyvals were eligible. We soldiered along with this for some while, all our wines getting the required certification, until recently when the rules changed again.

This is the label I have been struggling with. The basic category is 'Varietal wine' but the label can only have limited information and it is forbidden to use the word 'English'. This would have saved us the expense of sending it for certification as 'Regional Wine' where it has to go to a recognised lab for analysis and then be tasted by a panel of experts. However as it was a new wine from a new winery, we thought it worthwhile giving it a good start in life, and of course it passed, and we can now proudly call it 'English Wine'. Then all the other information has to follow certain rules such as minimum size of lettering. I think I have got it right, although it is unlikely to be seen in Brussels. Finally I had to cope with the printers and be bemused by terms such as 'bleed' and 'crop marks' plus letters such as CMYK. (I am still not sure what that means!) It has all been sorted now, and the labels will be with us shortly, ready for me to stick on.

## **Working parties**

The help during the year from the volunteers has been invaluable and we cannot thank you enough for all the work, both in winter and summer. Next year has got to be

better so we shall be starting pruning in the New Year and anyone who can come would be very welcome indeed.

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 first working parties for 2013 will be on **Sunday January 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday January 20<sup>th</sup>**.

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. Of course this depends on the weather as the road to the farm can be impossible if there is any snow. Please phone for information if any doubt.

## **Sales**

Wines available from us are our two award winning wines, the 2009 Classic Dry, and the new 2011 Off-dry. Both cost £7.50 per bottle. £86.00 per case of 12 bottles. Local delivery free, minimum 6 bottles. We have sold out of the 2006 Medium Dry but a few bottles may be available in the shops.

Independent Stores stocking the wine are as follows:

Durleighmarsh Farm Shop; East Tisted Stores; Rake Stores; Froxfield stores; The Queen's Deli, Selborne; Selborne Post Office Stores. Please note their prices may not necessarily be the same as ours.

## **Christmas gifts**

Obviously Priors Dean wine makes a brilliant present, it is especially good to take as a gift when visiting, it is something different and you know it is good quality. It is great as an aperitif and with fish.

Jim's thrillers are also in demand, many set locally and often with a sailing background, ideal to give to someone interested in boats. They are available from One Tree Books in Petersfield, or direct from Jim at a discount. Tel. 01420 538688; Email - jamesmorley5@googlemail.com.

***A merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year to  
you all***

***Pam and Jim***