

# PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD

## FINE ENGLISH WINE

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

### Information and sales.

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## **NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2013**

### **At last a better year!**

It didn't look too good to begin with, the spring was wet and cold, and we thought the vines were never going to flower. This usually starts in June and by mid July they should have finished. This year they just grew a few leaves and then stopped. However the sunshine came eventually and conditions were very good, bright and breezy. The vines have little caps over the flowers which have to come off before they can be pollinated. If the weather is dreary and damp at flowering time the caps remain stuck on and the result is no crop. And we have had plenty of experience of this over the years! With perfect conditions at flowering the vines set a really good crop, the only problem being it was all happening rather late.

The first picking was October and we managed to harvest over a tonne of grapes, and for once this included some of the Bacchus. This variety produces very good wine with an aromatic flavour, but has never done very well for us. We always have a little to blend with the vintage but this year it should give a real aroma to the wine. Our later variety, the Seyval Blanc, was more of a problem. All the vines were laden with beautiful bunches and we just waited for the sugar level to improve. Then it rained. The grapes swelled up with water and the existing sugar level got diluted. A period of sunshine would have sorted this but it never happened, only more rain. Eventually we gave up waiting, it was now November, and we didn't want to lose the crop. The picking day was fine and there were far more grapes than I had anticipated. Usually we finish in time for a relaxed lunch, this time we had to keep going into the afternoon. The van taking the crop to the winery began to get overloaded and we had to do a second run. The last time this happened we had to abandon some of the crop as the previous winery was too far away to do this, but with the change of winery to Hattingley Valley near Medstead, only half an hour away, we were able to get them all over. The result was nearly 2 tonnes, our best ever. Many thanks to all who helped through the year, it is largely because of your efforts that the crop was so successful.

### **The wine – a new venture**

Our wine maker, Emma, suggested that we should have two wines made from the 2014 crop. Firstly our usual blend of the three varieties – our 'Priors Dean Classic Dry'. Then because we had so many Seyval grapes, she suggested we use the surplus to make a sparkling wine. This variety is not one of the standard grapes used in Champagne but has made a very successful 'fizz' for other English Vineyards, winning several awards. However sparkling wine takes a lot longer to produce so it will not be ready until 2015, then you will be able to have Priors Dean Wine for all your celebrations. Meanwhile the 'Classic Dry' should be ready in June, which is just as well as our stocks are very low. The previous few years have been very bad, harvests varying from low to nil, so it is brilliant to have the prospect of a reasonably full store room.

## **Work parties**

As I said earlier it is due to our volunteers that we have had such a successful year. Now we would be very grateful for help with the pruning

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 5<sup>th</sup> and Sunday January 19<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.

## **A few personal items**

My old rough collie Shane finally had to be put to sleep last month and has joined the other dogs buried in the vineyard. There are now three collies and a spaniel there all of whom helped in the vineyard in their time even if it was only digging holes and hiding the balls of string. I now have a rescue border collie cross, Flint, but he has yet to go to the vineyard and learn his duties.

Last week Jim was involved in a car accident, his car broke down on the A3, after dark with no hard shoulder, and someone ran into the back of it. Luckily he escaped with only stiffness and bruises but the car is a write off. The driver was a Russian and Jim's previous car was damaged by a Lithuanian on a stolen Harley Davidson. Is Eastern Europe out to get him? However his current book, 'Song of Sussex' has been very successful, a change from his previous thrillers it is the life story of a composer with something in it for everyone, romance, sailing, flying, and of course music.

## **Wines for sale**

Our 2011 vintage, 'Beech Hanger Gold' has been highly praised. Entered for the UK vineyards Wine of the Year competition it gained a Bronze Award, an excellent result as there are a lot of large high powered vineyards in the field now, with extensive financial backing. We may be small, but we have an excellent site and our wines have won many awards over the years. Beech Hanger Gold is 'off-dry' just a bit sweeter than the Classic Dry which has been our standard wine since we started. There is still some of the 2009 Classic Dry available and both wines can be bought from us. Price £8.00 per bottle, £92.00 per case of 12 bottles. Local delivery free.

NB The price may be different in the shops.

## **Stockists**

Durleighmarsh Farm Shop, Rogate, Petersfield  
East Tisted Post Office Stores  
Selborne Post Office Stores

Wine available direct from the vineyard owners Tel. 01730 894147

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