

NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2019

Brilliant news

Our Seyval 2013 Sparkling wine has achieved a Bronze award in this year's National competition, Wine GB Wine of the Year. This is a terrific achievement as the standard is very high. As you will have seen English sparkling wine is now renowned as some of the best in the world, even acknowledged by the French. Many thanks to Emma our winemaker at Hattingley Valley and to all who helped throughout that year. It is ideal for weddings and that special occasion, and makes an excellent Christmas present. Our price is £25.00 per single bottle. Case of 12 bottles £276.00
Discount for larger quantities.

Last year's vintage now a trophy winner.

For once the English summer in 2018 was kind to us. June flowering time is always critical but this year warm wind and sunshine ensured a good set. Then almost continuous good weather through to autumn kept things going and the grapes finished with very good sugars and flavour. We called the wine 'Summer Hills' with a picture of the vineyard on the label to show the vines and the beautiful scenery.

The Wessex area Wine of the year competition is held in November each year and as usual I entered. I have just had the result.

Summer Hills has been awarded a silver medal and also the John Youles Trophy for the best still wine from a small vineyard under 2ha.

. The price from us is £9.50 per bottle with a discount for 6 or more bottles NB this price may be different at other stockists.

Not such good news.

2019 started well, with sunshine and a good fruit set. Then the weather suddenly turned very sultry and humid, this is ideal for powdery mildew which has always been a problem for us, and our earlier varieties succumbed. The Seyval grapes are resistant and looked like producing a good crop, but then the weather brought another blow. After months of dry weather there was continuous rain and the grapes swelled up and started to split. We might have salvaged some, but arranging grape picking takes time, and the pheasants had already found them. In fact the swollen grapes would not have been very good quality anyway. We were not the only vineyard to be affected; quite a few in Hampshire had no crop, including Beaulieu.

Events

We often have parties visiting the vineyard; they look round, have a glass of wine and admire the view. This year we had something different. Each year the diocese has a retreat pre ordination of vicars. Usually they spend a day during the week to visit something outside such as a historic church. This year Peter Sutton, our vicar thought it might be a good idea to have a service and lunch at Priors Dean vineyard.

As usual with party visits the weather is a bit of a gamble, but this time it was really good, beautiful sunshine and the vines looking their best. There were 15 curates, 3 leaders and the Bishop of Portsmouth who held a short service. The ladies of Priors Dean put on a magnificent spread and of course there was Priors Dean wine. The visit was a great success and I am very grateful to everyone who helped as for once I had practically nothing to do!

Other news.

Jim has had his hip operation and is progressing slowly. However Stephen has not been so lucky. His operation was cancelled on the day due to a mix up about blood tests, but he was never put back on the waiting list and eventually had to start all over again, and still has not got it done. This has been good news for me as he has been able to help at all the shows and with the work parties.

I seem to have avoided any major illnesses this year but old age is definitely with me and I am very grateful to all who have helped, either in the vineyard or manning the stall at shows.

I have just lost my dear collie Flint to old age and a nose tumour. He joins the other dogs (three collies and a Springer spaniel) who have all 'helped' in the vineyard in the past 30 years. Flint had a slightly different role as he featured on a previous wine label, 'Flint Hill Dry' and will be on the next wine to be released in the New Year, 'Flint Hill Sunset'.

The future

This is a bit uncertain. As some of you know, old age and chest infections have made it difficult for me to do anything in the vineyard. I can just about get there but that finishes it for me for the morning. The hill is just too steep. Without our volunteers the vineyard would not have been able to keep going these last few years. I am still able to do the paper work, stick labels on bottles etc. but even lifting boxes is an effort.

We shall keep going at least for next year but I am not sure how much longer. Stephen has taken over a lot of the organization but his health is uncertain also.

Work parties

As already mentioned the vineyard could not keep going without the volunteers to do the pruning, summer and winter. Luckily all who come seem to enjoy themselves and it is certainly a lovely place to work. We start about 9.30 and finish lunch time with a break for coffee and chat. All are welcome provided you can manage the muddy walk down, and back! And the vines are on a steep hill of course. The first dates for next year are January 5th and January 19th. It is a help if you let me know in advance but you can just turn up. Bring secateurs if possible. These dates may change if bad weather is forecast. . 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.

And finally

Don't forget what an excellent present Priors Dean wine makes. English wine has a very good name now, and people are very interested in it and keen to try it. And of course our competition results prove it is of very good quality. See our website for stockists or it can be ordered from Liss, local delivery free, minimum 6 bottles.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all

Pam