

PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD

FINE ENGLISH WINE

www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk

Information and sales.

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NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2011

There's not a lot to report at the moment. Usually I can tell you about competition successes, but a consequence of the previous poor harvests, and last year we had no crop at all, meant that as we had so little available it did not seem worth the entry fees. The chief enemy to the vines is powdery mildew, and they need a spray every 10 days to keep this at bay. Once it has set in it is almost impossible to eradicate, and last year the main gasket on the tractor gave way at a critical time. As our tractor is definitely vintage, made in Eastern Europe circa 1950, spare parts are not available off the shelf. While it was off the road a mildew spell set in, finally the sprayer belts gave way. Although our machinery is old it is well suited to the job, but as with all old things, including the vineyard owner, bits wear out over the years and it needs the equivalent of hip and knee replacements.

This year's harvest

So far this looks promising. For once the machinery, tractor and sprayer, have kept going so we have been able to keep to the recommended spray programme. The vines have set a reasonable, if not heavy crop, and there is little sign of disease. However the berries are rather small, due we think to the lack of rain in July. They also seem a bit slow to ripen. In consequence we don't think we shall be picking before the beginning of October, with our second crop, the Seyvals, three weeks or so later. So all looks good at the moment, but disaster may yet strike, remember the pigeon invasion of 2005 when the crop was stripped in the week before the scheduled picking.

Grape picking

As usual we shall need pickers. It is impossible to give an exact date at this stage, but it is usually a mid-week morning. I am currently estimating the first week in October, but it could be earlier. We pay a small wage and finish with a ploughman's lunch. Please let me know if you are interested and I will be in touch nearer the time.

Wine making

We are currently negotiating with the new vineyard at Hattingley near Medstead. They are setting up a state of the art winery with experienced wine makers. However it may work out more expensive and there are one or two doubtful conditions. Our wine has been made at Stanlake Park near Reading since we started, and they have always treated us well, but it is a bit of a drag to take the grapes over to the winery at Twyford

So somewhere close would be an advantage. It will be nearer for us to go and discuss the potential product, and if we had an unexpectedly large crop we would be able to do two runs with the grapes, rather than overload the van, or leave some behind.

Sparkling wine

We have been asked if we will ever make a sparkling wine, and the answer is 'probably not'. Only one of our varieties – the Seyval Blanc – is really suitable, and the cost of making plus the fact that it takes longer to mature means that the increased cost is not really worth it. The many new vineyards that have been started have been planted with varieties, notably Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, especially to make 'fizz' but these grapes tend to be too acid for still wine in a normal English summer, though they are suitable for Sparkling, where a lot of the acidity is lost in the making. I also have a feeling that the market may soon be flooded with sparkling wine, and most people drink still wine with a meal anyway. Ripening grapes for red wine is also a bit dodgy, although some more suitable varieties are being produced. It is only really viable in a good year on a good site. There is always global warming of course, but we haven't seen a lot of that this summer!

Sales

We now have a few more stockists; they are mostly small shops, who do not hold much stock, so best to phone if you are making a journey. Unfortunately Blackmoor Farm shop is now only doing apple sales. The current list is as follows: Please note their prices are not necessarily the same as ours.

Cheriton Stores,	Liss Forest Post Office Stores
Durleighmarsh Farm Shop	OAM news, Chapel Street, Petersfield
East Tisted Post Office Stores	Rake Stores, Rake
Froxfield Stores	Rowswells. High Street, Petersfield
Harting Stores, South Harting	Selborne Post Office Stores

Wine is of course available direct from us. To make room in the store for this years harvest we have a big discount on the 2006 Medium Dry, now only £5.00 per bottle, £60 per case of 12 bottles. The Classic Dry 2009 is now available, £7.00 per bottle £82.00 per case. Local delivery free, minimum 6 bottles.

NB We shall have to increase the price again soon, apart from the £1.80 per bottle duty we have to pay the Customs and Excise all other costs are rising

And finally –

Many thanks to all who came to the work parties and dealt so brilliantly with the winter and summer pruning, we couldn't manage without you.

Jim's latest book 'Flanagan's Legacy' is now ready, and he has a book launch at One Tree Books, Petersfield on Wednesday 14 September evening from 6.30. All are welcome and Priors Dean wine is freely available.

Blackmoor Apple Day is on Sunday October 9th and as usual we will have a stall. Come and see us.

And don't forget to let me know if you are interested in grape picking. Reply by Email would be great if you have it.

Best wishes to all

Pam