

Welcome to...



# St Martin's Vineyard & Winery



Self-Guided Tour

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- Please note we are a working vineyard so please do take care around the site.
- The ground is uneven in places and there are stone steps to access some fields. We will highlight these and signpost alternative routes where appropriate.
- Dogs are very welcome; please clean up after them and keep them on a lead at all times. We have two cats who call the vineyard their home!
- There is plenty of space to spread out here on the vineyard but we do ask that you observe the most up-to-date COVID recommendations regarding social distancing and hygiene.



*Simon*



*Arty*

## First Steps...

The 'Next Steps' boxes will guide you through the tour of the vineyard - each Vine Stop has a corresponding sign in the fields to let you know you've found the right place! We will direct you towards Vine Stop 1 upon arrival.



# Vine Stop 1 – Daisy Field

## Where it all began...



This field was the first to be planted back in 1996 by Val and Graham Thomas with their son James who now runs a vineyard in Australia!

The site was previously a flower farm run by Derek Perkins whose father-in-law began working the fields in the 20's. Flower growing was a key industry on Scilly beginning in 1879 when an enterprising islander impressed the traders at Covent Garden market with a box of wild narcissi. The islands offer an ideal climate for early flowers in the UK thanks to the mild winters and springs. Sadly the growth of overseas production through the 20th century resulted in a significant decline in the flower industry here, but flower growing still represents an important part of the island economy today.

The first vines were **Reichensteiner** which are still going strong today! This is a white-wine grape which is widely planted in Germany where it originated, and also in the wine growing regions of England and New Zealand. This variety is part of our St Martin's Reserve blend this year.



The first vines being planted as the bulbs were removed in 1996 - see if you can stand in the same spot at the right hand side of this field and see how the view has changed!

### Next Steps...

Walk along the base of this field to your right to reach East Field



## Vine Stop 2 – East Field

### The first polytunnel...



The first thing you will notice in this field is the polytunnel which runs along the hedge-line. This structure protects the vines within and provides a more 'Mediterranean' climate, giving them a real boost throughout the summer and especially when it comes to ripening in September. The tunnels also protect against the wind which can be a problem in the fields – even our tall evergreen hedges can't stop the wind finding its way through and this can cause damage, especially at sensitive stages such as leaf or bud burst.

The vines in the tunnels were the second to be planted – they began growing in the open and developed deep roots before the tunnel was erected so they need no additional irrigation through the year. The vines inside the tunnel here are mostly Siegerrebe and **Madeleine Angevine** which is an early-ripening white grape from the Loire Valley region of France.

If you take a walk to the top of this field, you will see our potato patch and Hugel mound. Beyond this in the wilder reaches is a small elm copse which is carpeted with bluebells, red campion & foxgloves in the spring!

*All of last year's vine prunings were buried in the Hugel mound which returns the organic material to the soil. In the first year, the decay of the wood uses nitrogen but from the second year and for many years after that, it will slowly release nutrients and make excellent nutritious soil for vegetables.*



### Next Steps...

Retrace your steps and continue beyond Stop 1 along the base of the field to find Stop 3.



## Vine Stop 3 – Well Field

### The well/borehole...



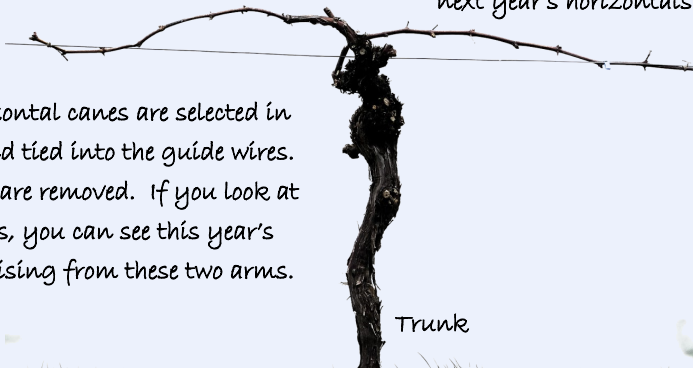
This field is named for the bore hole – the pump and filtration system for which are housed in the green wooden shed you can see along the field edge. This is where all of our water for the vineyard comes from, but of course our wine is produced from nothing but the pressed grapes!

The two rows of vines closest to the borehole are Orion, followed by three rows of Seyval and finally two rows of **Rondo** which is one of our red-wine grapes. This variety was developed in the Czech republic and is an interspecific variety meaning that as well as the typical wine grape vine *Vitis vinifera*, there are other species in its heritage. In this case, it is the Amur grape native to the Asian continent which gives this variety excellent resistance against downy mildew which can be a real problem in a damp summer.

## The Double Guyot Training System

Two spurs closest to the trunk are pruned back to just two buds - these will form next year's horizontal canes

Two horizontal canes are selected in spring and tied into the guide wires. All others are removed. If you look at the vines, you can see this year's growth arising from these two arms.



### Next Steps...

Continue along the back of the winery and up to the top of the field towards the second polytunnel





## Vine Stop 4 – Winery Field

### Apples Trees and Vines...



Both this field and Well Field have apple trees planted along their eastern edges. Local varieties such as Tregonna King and Scilly Pearl were chosen, and the fruit is pressed for apple juice in the autumn. If you would like to sample the juice, we do have bottles for sale at the end of the tour.

You will notice in this field and others, we have mown paths through long grass but allowed some of the margins to remain uncut – this is to provide as much variety of habitat for wildlife as possible within the vineyard.

The ‘Top Tunnel’ is open for you to explore inside – this is entirely planted with the **Siegenerbe** variety. This translates literally as ‘Victory Vine’ in Germany where the variety originates and the grapes produce an interesting aromatic wine similar to a Gewürztraminer which is one of its parent varieties. The other parent is Madeleine Angevine which you saw growing in the first polytunnel at Vine Stop 2. Siegerrebe makes an excellent blend but also stands well on its own as a single-variety wine.

Vine flowers are wind-pollinated so don't have much need for the butterflies and bees, but the apple trees here are excellent for early season pollinators—they are filled with blossom and bumblebees in the spring!



**Next Steps...** Take care walking up the stone steps to the next field - if you find this difficult, return to the visitor centre and we can direct you on an alternative route



## Vine Stop 5 – Escallonia

### The higher fields...



After walking past the little orchard (where we hope to have chickens soon) you will reach the first of the upper fields. As you make your way up to the top through small plantings of Chardonnay and Schönburger vines, take a moment to notice the different species in the wind breaks. The hedges – known as ‘fence’ in Scilly – were originally to shelter the flower bulbs but they do a great job of looking after our vines too! Various species have been tried across Scilly over the years, but these species have proved their resilience against salt spray and wind to earn their place in the Islands’ landscape.

### Hedge Species



*Euonymus japonicus* is a native of Japan and is mostly found in the upper reaches of the vineyard



*Pittosporum crassifolium* is the most common species in our hedges – these hardy evergreens from New Zealand have distinctive grey-green leaves

Elm is a native which grows well on Scilly & spreads by suckering—it pops up all around the vineyard! Including the evergreen windbreaks!



*Escallonia macrantha* has glossy dark-green leaves and magenta bell-shaped flowers – it was introduced from Chile and is a big hit with the butterflies!



### Next Steps...

Make your way to the top for the view – if the hill looks a little much, lift the rope and skip this bit!





## Vine Stop 6 – Top Field

### Views to the Eastern Isles...

These small top fields are planted with Rondo (to the right) and Orion (to the left). Looking back down the slope you will see a field with four rows of vines – these are Orion which is our most widely planted variety on the vineyard.

The top of the vineyard has commanding views out over Higher Town Bay – you can see St Mary's to the right and a number of the Eastern Isles. These are uninhabited islands which are important habitats for seals and nesting seabirds. If you head left towards English Island and Brandy Point when you leave the vineyard, you can see many more islands in the group!



Great Ganinick (right) in the foreground  
with Little Ganinick (left) behind



Little Ganilly in the  
foreground with the  
Arthur's in the  
background



Ragged Island

St Mary's



### Next Steps...

Head back down and bear right towards the field  
on the western boundary of the vineyard





## Vine Stop 7 – Trefoil

### Wildflowers and Orion...



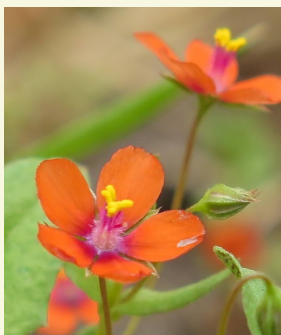
This field is planted with the **Orion** variety of vine. This is the most widely planted in the vineyard and often produces our highest volume of single-variety wine in a given year. Orion is another variety of German origin created by crossing the Optima variety with a hybrid grape variety. Like the Rondo it is an interspecific variety which confers good disease and fungal resistance.

As you walk down the hill, look carefully and you will notice some of the low growing arable wildflowers which thrive on the vineyard!

### Vineyard Wildflowers



Common centaury—this pretty pink member of the gentian family loves the sandy soils on the western side of the vineyard



Scarlet Pimpernel—the flower rather than the folk hero! This low-growing species favours sparser ground—look out for the rare blue variety!



Hairy bird's foot trefoil - this is a rare species on the mainland with a localised distribution, but the habitat between the vines seem to suit it well

#### Next Steps...

Head back down the hill and bear left through a gap in the hedge to arrive at our largest fields



## Vine Stop 8 – West Field

### Seyval and sunshine...



The extensive plantings in this field are mostly **Seyval Blanc** although there are several rows of Reichensteiner towards the boundary. Like Orion and Rondo, it is another inter-specific variety with two American vine species in its parentage – *Vitis aestivalis* and *V. rupestris*. The incorporation of genes from these two species makes it one of the most robust and reliable varieties for the English climate, but excludes it from use in the production of ‘quality’ wine due to the presence of non-*Vinifera* genes. This is arguably more to do with politics than quality – choosing vines suited to the conditions is what has made a vineyard possible here on St Martin’s, and we make a delicious single -variety Seyval wine each year which you can try at the end of the tour!

## Protecting the Harvest



You might have noticed the coils of ropes around the fields - these are used in the autumn to weigh down the edges of the nets which are stretched over the vines to protect the ripening grapes from the birds. We have an incredible songbird population here, but they make formidable competition when it comes to the harvest! The ropes are actually from the Scillonian - when they are retired from active use, they are repurposed here!

**Next Steps...** Head left through the gap in the hedge and into the next field



## Vine Stop 9 – The Prison

### The largest field on the vineyard...



The name of this field goes all the way back to the time when the site was a flower farm. It is an affectionate reference to how deceptively large this field is – with a total of 281 vines it will be a long time before you get out regardless of the job you're here to do!

The right hand side of the field as you look from the top is planted with the **Regent** variety – these vines begin in the open and continue under the polytunnel so you can see the effect that the protection has on their growth and development! Regent is a dark-skinned inter-specific variety which we often use in a blend to make a light, fruit-driven rosé. The remainder of the field is planted up with Orion, with the exception of a single row of younger Schönberger. This variety is planted in small numbers around the vineyard, but always performs well so would be a good candidate for more planting!



*On the farthest edge of this field, you can see the winery - this is where the grapes go after harvest to be processed, fermented and bottled ready for sale from the cellar door. You can find out more about our wine making processes in the following pages but unfortunately the winery is not included as part of the tour this season. You can see the thick stone walls which provide stable temperatures, important both for fermentation and for storing the wine to develop and mature in the bottle.*

#### Next Steps...

Feel free to explore this field, then return to West Field, head down the hill and turn left back towards the entrance for the wine tasting!



# The Vineyard Year

## From bud burst to harvest...

### Spring

The leaves burst from the buds around April and soon afterwards we begin 'bud rubbing' which involves removing downward facing and superfluous bud shoots to focus the growth on the key shoots. We also remove stray water shoots from the trunk and start to tuck the

fruiting shoots into the guide wires.



### Summer

Flower burst starts in May for early species such as the Rondo and Regent, but can be early July for varieties such as the Seyval. We will be busy thinning the canopy to maintain air flow and minimise the risk of fungal infections, especially in damp weather. The vines are wind pollinated and soon begin to form tiny grapes!



### Autumn

As we move into Autumn, more canopy management is required to remove leaves and allow

light to reach the ripening grapes. As the sugar levels begin to rise, they become irresistible to the birds so we net all of the vines before harvest to protect the crop. Around 100 days after flower set, the grapes are ready to be picked!



### Winter

In the winter we prune the previous season's growth right back to the trunks with the exception of two fruiting arms and two spurs - take a look at the Training Method details at Vine Stop 3 for more details on the training system.



# Wine Production

## From Vine to Wine...

When Val and Graham Thomas picked the first harvest in 2000, they produced just 147 bottles. Initially the grapes were sent over to a winery on the mainland to be processed, but as the yields increased the winery was converted to allow the wine production to be carried out on site and this building is where St Martin's wine has been made ever since.

Typically, grapes are fermented as individual varieties in the autumn – in some cases this could be 1,000 litres of a widely-planted vine such as Orion, whilst other varieties will only ever produce 50-100 litres – luckily we have a range of fermentation vessels to suit every run!

After harvest, the grapes are taken down to our winery and tipped into the hopper of the crusher/de-stalker. They pass between a pair of rollers which splits the skins before moving on into a chamber which pulls the grapes from the stalks. From here they might first be fermented on the skins in the case of a red or rosé, or otherwise transferred straight into the hydropress which ensures gentle but effective extraction of the juice which flows out.

The juice is allowed to settle for a day or two and then racked off the sediment before yeast is added and fermentation is allowed to proceed. We check for sugar levels, acidity and flavour throughout the process, making adjustments where necessary, until fermentation is complete at which point we rack again to take the young wine off the dead yeast cells. The wine then spends the winter developing in one of the tanks until spring, usually around Easter, when we taste the single varieties and decide whether each will be a varietal wine such as our Orion and Seyval, or a blend such as the St Martin's Reserve. Filtering, bottling and corking is the final step before the wines are stacked in our bonded store. Here they will develop and mature before being be capped, labelled and sold & enjoyed!





# Our Approach

## Organic Production and Sustainability...

Since its creation, the vineyard has been managed with awareness and sensitivity towards the special environment here on St Martin's, with minimal inputs and lots of space for wildlife.

In 2020 we are taking the next step and moving to organic production. The organic conversion period for perennial crops such as vines is three years, so it will be a little while until you see the Organic certification stamped on one of our bottles!

Vines in the wild thrive in woodland, winding their way around trees from the shady under-canopy to reach the light – so it's unlikely that a few dandelions would present much competition! However the vegetation beneath the vines does affect the sunlight reaching the grapes and the humidity levels, so some management is required. We achieve this through a high grass-cut and strimming as needed rather than herbicide applications.

The soils here are sandy and free draining which suits the vines, but it does mean we need to boost nutrient levels in the soil on a regular basis to make sure they have sufficient minerals such as magnesium. One major source is seaweed which washes up in winter storms and is used to fertilise the vines. We also produce compost which is directly applied as a mulch and feed at the bases of the vines.

We will soon be powered by Scilly sunshine (just like the vines!) – we hope to have solar panels installed on the tractor shed by the end of the year to generate energy for the shop and winery.



We hope you enjoyed your visit to  
St Martin's Vineyard & Winery



**St Martin's Orion**



**St Martin's Reserve**



**St Martin's Rosé**

These wines and more are available to purchase here at our special  
Cellar Door prices, or via mail order at our online store:  
[www.stmartinsvineyard.co.uk/shop](http://www.stmartinsvineyard.co.uk/shop)

We have a special visitor's discount code - enter the code **TOUR** at checkout  
to get 10% off your order when you get back home!

# Vine Leaves

Our seven main varieties...



Siegerrebe



Regent



Rondo



Madeleine  
Angevine



Reichensteiner



Orion



Seyval Blanc

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