

Mercure Hotels, Hotel Du Vin Bristol – the interest in stocking a large regional selection of Yearlstone/Devon wines is reaching out to places it never reached before!

It's great to report that the Yearlstone Devon Wine Week sales drive ( well done Rose ) has added quite a few new local names to our list – the Culm Valley Inn, Thornes Farm Shop, Le Bistro, the Jack Russell Inn to name a few.

Who knows, perhaps even the new managers of Bickleigh's own Trout Inn ( whenever they appear ) might even one day offer a wine or two from their own village. No, of course, how silly of me – we'll be selling to Timbuktu first.

Here at the winery the bottle-athon is almost over. About 50,000 bottles have rolled off the line so far and the full 2010 wine range of 4 dry whites, a rose, red and two fizzes is officially launched this week for the sixth Devon Wine Week. For those interested in what's on, just visit [www.englishwineproducers.com](http://www.englishwineproducers.com) for a pretty comprehensive list.

As viewers of BBC's Spotlight know, the vineyard is looking promising. The potential crop is big, and we are at least a fortnight ahead of normal. My early warning system for flowering time ( OK, it's just a red vine on the wall in the cafe courtyard) has amazed us all by starting to flower in the middle of May. Add on 3–4 weeks for the more exposed setting of the vineyard itself, and we could be off to the races somewhere around the middle of June. That would be more normal for the Loire than for Devon. As regular readers know we have pretty close ties with Pebblebed Wines at Topsham. They have just planted the Dragons Den vineyard, and poor old Geoff has been hand watering the baby vines ( 3500 of them ) by hand from a water bowser. I bet he's regretting not putting down the black plastic mulch first – big mistake in my view...sorry Geoff.

The vine world e mail has been buzzing with that very politically correct topic – sustainability. One contributor urged the Royal Family to make their new vineyard at Windsor Great Park organic. Another ( who should know better ) claimed English wines are inherently unsustainable as our costs are higher, and our crops lighter. But surely this is missing the point. Every one who drinks a bottle of Yearlstone wine is drinking something which has not travelled very long distances by truck, ship or plane. A very high proportion of our inputs are local – from the timber posts from Portsmouth Arms Sawmills to the recycled grape pulp compost. And anyway sustaining the environment, while welcome in itself, is not the biggest challenge facing the 500+ English Vineyards. For most of them the biggest step forward to sustainability is being able to give up the day job, and then, hopefully, give jobs to others. It's not easy turning a profit in a vineyard anywhere in the world – it can be done, and it can be done here, but I worry that focusing too much attention too early on “ sustainability” is not improving the chances of survival for some of the new entrants. Rant over. Hope you can join in the Wine Week – visit a Devon vineyard, try a glass at one of the many restaurants and cafes taking part – and, if it rains, it's good news!