

RATHFINNY



For Immediate Release

Rathfinny Wine Estate opens historic Cellar Door and Heritage Centre

Rathfinny Wine Estate in East Sussex, which is taking on the French at producing world-class sparkling wine, has, fittingly, opened its new Cellar Door and Heritage Centre in the historic Alfriston Gun Room which once housed a cannon used to defend Britain's shores from Napoleon.

Rathfinny, which is based at a 600 acre estate in the Cuckmere Valley, will eventually produce around 1 million bottles of sparkling wine a year at a time when demand for English wine is growing faster than the supply.

The Gun Room, which is set in the historic village, was used to store Alfriston's 24 pound cannon in 1864 which was under the control of the Alfriston detachment of the 3rd Sussex Volunteer Artillery.

In his history of Alfriston, historian R M Boyd writes of the Gun Room: "The building was given this name during the Napoleonic Wars when it was the storage place for a huge gun. This weapon was apparently taken from here at frequent intervals, and to make sure it was in working order and to give the team target practice, it was hauled to a chalk pit above the village and then fired across country to Windmill (Windover) Hill over the other side of the river. We are told the noise was deafening!"

It is thought that the Gun Room also served a military purpose during World War One, where it may have housed small guns and rifles but will now, as the Heritage Centre be a source of historical information. There will be a permanent display from the Alfriston and Cuckmere Valley Historical Society containing information not only about Alfriston, the Cuckmere Valley and the building itself, but of the English winemaking industry too.

It will also serve as the Cellar Door for Rathfinny, providing information about the Wine Estate and, once the wine becomes available, it will be a place where

the public can taste the wines on offer. Rathfinny have sourced a range of wine related products with a local and English flavour and have worked with local designers such as Alison Milner to produce an exclusive range, all of which will be on sale at the Cellar Door.

The first 50 acres (20 hectares) of vines at Rathfinny were planted in 2012 and a further 50 acres (20 hectares) went under vine earlier this year.

Mark Driver, co-founder of Rathfinny with his wife Sarah said: "Like the huge cannon once stored in the Gun Room, we are hoping that our sparkling wine, the first bottles of which should be available in early 2017, will make a big noise locally, and around the world.

"For our Cellar Door and local base, we chose a building with an amazingly colourful history and a legacy that is firmly entrenched within Alfriston life, as we hope that Rathfinny will be. We are looking forward to welcoming guests to the Gun Room and to opening our brand new, state of the art winery in spring 2014."

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About Rathfinny

Rathfinny is England's newest and largest vineyard.

The first 50 acres of vines were planted in April 2012, with the second planting of 50 acres in April 2013. First wines will be available to purchase in early 2017. By 2020, Rathfinny will produce about 1 million bottles of high-quality, bottle fermented, sparkling wine a year.

The soil at Rathfinny is almost identical to that in the Champagne region and the climate is perfectly suited for producing high-quality sparkling wines. Rathfinny aims to eventually sell up to 50 per cent of its production to key overseas markets in Europe, Asia and North America.

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