



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Philip Watts

Age: 50s

Location: Barnsole Vineyards, Canterbury

Size: 7 acres

Type: Vineyard

Interviewed by: Rajindra Puri

Filmed by: Rajindra Puri

Date: 29, May 2015

Raj: Ok, I guess the first question just simply is to tell me about what you're doing, in a very general sense

Philip: Ok, my name is Philip Watts and my wife Sally and I purchased this vineyard 3 years ago, after having an experience of working in a vineyard in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand 20 years ago when we were living out in New Zealand for a while. We thought that the journey that I had embarked upon culminated in the realization that I'd found the source of the adventure, and that was, I wanted to be involved in wine making. And that vineyard experience in New Zealand led us to make the decision that we're going to come back to England, where our families are, and set up a vineyard and a winery just like the one we had experienced in Hawks bay, New Zealand, in England. Coincidentally we had acquired Sally's father's house in Ramsgate and then we used that as the base whilst we set up commercial lives in London, bought a property in Central London on the proceeds of the property I had before we left to live in New Zealand, and came down to Ramsgate at the weekends and started searching for land. 13 years ago, we were driving around the countryside looking for the appropriate site and stumbled upon this vineyard and within a week realized this was the 7 acre site that we thought was the perfect site, half of it planted with vines, half of it not planted with vines but grazed for horses, to actually expand into our aspiration to make English sparkling wine. And so in the ensuing 10 years we've slowly got the proprietors to contemplate selling to us, which eventually they did and, three years ago, we acquired a 100% interest in the land and the business.

Raj: So what's the nature of the operation - what exactly are you doing?



Philip: So, we are winemakers and the proposition is to grow grapes for still wine, which was predominantly what was being made when we had this idea to have a vineyard in England; hardly anybody was making English sparkling wine. So initially we were just interested in continuing to make the still wine that they had set up and was existing here which were Germanic varieties, used across the extremities of viticulture in northern Europe and continuing that business model, but just expanding it. In the ensuing 10 years, whilst we pursued the acquisition of the business, it became apparent that English sparkling wine was now established and was a growing center for better commercial returns on English wine so we adapted the business model to incorporate English sparkling wine. I studied at an academic resource called Plumpton agricultural college, part of Brighton University, to learn the technicalities of viticulture, the bit that happens in the vineyard and knowledge of the bit that happens in the winery, and we created a revised model which included sparkling wine. So the intention to plant further still varieties had morphed into planting for sparkling wine which is Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier varieties.

Raj: What were the original varieties you had here?

Philip: The original varieties here are Reichensteiner, which is a Riesling, Madeleine Angevine cross, Huxelrebe which the Germans who visit know very well - which is a Muscat and Chasselas cross and a more obscure variety that was found growing wild in Maturia (sp) about 40 years ago by a Hungarian viticulturalist called Rondo, which is a red. This viticulturalist thought if it can grow up here in Northern China in this cold, barren place, then it should grow reasonably well in Europe. So he brought it back and propagated it, named it Rondo, for I don't know why, and now it's growing quite widely in extremities, as far as Edinburgh in Scotland... Sweden, Denmark.

Raj: And it's a red you say?

Philip: It's a red. The other two varieties are white. We planted, we've planted, three further blocks in the field that was formally used for grazing, which are Chardonnay in one third, Pinot Noir second third and another variety which is reputed to be becoming the English version of Sauvignon Blanc which is called Bacchus which is an aromatic white variety for making still wine - It's too aromatic to make sparkling wine.

Raj: Right, too aromatic to make sparkling wine... I've seen Bacchus somewhere?

Philip: Chapel Down - they're the biggest exponent of it

Raj: Where does that come from actually, Bacchus?



Philip: Again, it's another cross, I think it's a Mandelin... [*Raj: An English cross?*] Well, these varieties are developed in the propagators in Northern Europe - Germany, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg - they have huge facilities out there and they're creating different varieties all of the time. They're trying to get the flavour profile of one grape, that won't grow in a region, by crossing it with a variety that is viable in a region, and they come up with a new variety. I think we stopped counting at 10,000 different varieties of grape around now and more varieties are being brought to the market all the time. Especially now we're getting disease resistant hybrid varieties which are being, I don't know how genetically modified they are, but they're certainly genetically predisposed to fend off some of the pathogens which we have to guard against. There's obviously some reluctance to adopt those varieties for ethical reasons and there's a reluctance to adopt them because we have to change the regulations of permitted varieties to enable us to plant those varieties.

Raj: There are regulations as to which varieties you can actually plant in the UK?

Philip: There are. For example, you can plant a disease resistant hybrid variety, there's one round called Phoenix, it ripens very well, it works very well in this country but the European competition does not allow us to enter these hybrid varieties into the competitions. There's only permitted varieties that you can actually promote that way. We have the European construct such as PDO, protected domain, PGI, and to acquire those credentials there can only be a certain number of varieties you can use, the others are excluded.

Raj: And the competition's really important?

Philip: Well, if you're going to gain traction in marketing terms, you have to have some resonance out there and the best way to do it is to win an award. And certainly the bigger awards, the Decanter and the international Wine Competition, IWC, people who win a gold, they have a queue of buyers at their stand that's following our, the buyers see that as a 'buy' signal, and that's the one's they pursue. And of course, that has a commercial return - there's an exponent of English Wine making called Campbell Valley near Wadey Bridge in Cornwall and when they win an award, the next thing they do is put a few quid on the price of their bottle. And people pay it. So being able to enter the competitions is kind of a key marketing tool and you're precluded from doing that with some of those hybrid varieties. The other thing is, is people are preconditioned to come in here with purchasing intention, so they will know Bacchus and they will know English sparkling wine. If you try to sell them something like, with the varieties we have called Richensteiner and Huxelrebe, which they're not familiar with, their inclination to buy is manifest, we see it, so therefore we don't put those varietal names on the labels for example. We just say it's a cross between Reisling and Madeline Ongarine which they understand reasonably and that's easier for them to countenance a purchase.



Raj: Right, although the real connoisseur would probably wanna know, might want to know?

Philip: Yeah, most people who are really interested in wine would judge it on it's flavour, primarily, it's a ... flavour. Some people aren't looking for new experiences they're just looking replicate what they know.

Raj: So you've pretty much filled out your land?

Philip: Seven acres as it is, is a manageable bit for my wife and I...

Raj: Yea, do you have anyone who helps or is it the two of you?

Philip: We have casual helpers, interested amateurs, friends, for example you can see lots of pallets and bottles around here, we will be having friends and interested amateurs who are trying to get into the business, who are trying to bolster their CV, will be coming along and helping us on a purely casual basis. And likewise, at harvest, we have probably 20 friends, family, interested amateurs, local people who come in and give us a hand. They get a good lunch and as much wine as they can drink over lunch, and that's enough payment for them to be getting involved in something quite, I suppose they perceive as engaging and rewarding.

Raj: So you don't need to pay labour?

Philip: I'm a bit afraid of, intimidated by, the implication of employing people so the proposal is not to.

Raj: You're small enough you don't have to...

Philip: Exactly - we want to be small enough. We'll come round to what the commercial motives in doing this but it's not the money. We're not doing this because we wanna make more money, we're doing it because we wanna do it and to then start having to employ people and all of the attributes the business would have to acquire in terms of, we're not heated for example and you have to an environment where people work in an environment where they're, they have to be in a range of temperatures. We don't mind getting freezing cold but an employee might not like that. And lots of those kind of things and new regulations about paying people's pensions and all sorts of other things, we don't really wanna be engaging in that.

Raj: Well, fascinating. I used to spend summers in Alaska cleaning Salmon in a 40 degree Fahrenheit freezer [Philip: Wow, that is cold!] In full rain gear, cleaning fish all summer and no one ever told us about needing a warm environment.



Philip: Well, the regulations will be different there. In Europe there's obviously, everything here is controlled by Central Europe, UP legislation which we have to conform to.

Raj: Must be a real pain - I know friends of mine in France also, in Perpignan, just so limited and hampered by the AOC regulations...

Philip: Well luckily we're not constrained. In Champagne, you're told how far apart your vines have to be planted, how high the canopy should be, how many bunches should be on your plant, how you should treat the land, how you should grow your varieties, which are prescribed, and you cannot go outside of those varieties and they're even told when to pick them. So basically they're just husbanding a row of vines and everything is controlled by the AOC. In England, we're free to grow our canopy high, low, sideways, upside down and we can grow whatever varieties, within the constraints which I mentioned earlier, that we want, so we're much freer to express ourselves as viticulturalist and wine makers here than you would be in an AOC. That's not to say that they don't make good wine over there, the model has taken them several hundred years to get right so why deviate, that's what they would argue. We're free to try out something different.

Raj: Brilliant, Yea, in fact that's what we were interested in. I had a student doing research there about 10 years ago, when we had a couple of those really bad summers remember in 2003, 2005, serious drought and very, very hot. So we were interested in how the viticulturalists were dealing with drought, historically as well as the current drought. What kind of knowledge had they acquired and techniques and this is one of the things that came up is that it's very hard to be experimental because of all the restrictions so they, the environment is changing, this is why I'm interested in this whole problem, the environment is changing so you may have spent 200 years adapting to a particular kind of climate and now it's all shifting under your feet, what are you gonna do, how are you gonna deal with it and what kind of knowledge are you going to... I mean, we were looking for innovation, we were looking for experimentation as well as a deep understanding and therefore coping mechanisms that they had already tried over other instances.

Philip: Well, global warming is something we obviously need to consider. I was quite profoundly influenced by a lecture given by geologists from UCL London who said that the, who was talking about the weather cycles over geological times - of course we had an ice age here. Repeatedly the mean temperature in England was 2 degrees higher at 100 AD, 400 AD when the Romans were here and apparently, 2 [inaudible] mean lower when we had the medieval sag in the middle ages. So, things do oscillate. But what this geologist said, and after probably about an hour, it's the places where global warming is being felt most are the places in Africa,, where there



is population explosions, and the ability to sustain them is being diminished by global change and population growth and they're coming here. So that's gonna be the biggest threat that we've got. And we're starting to see that manifest itself in the Mediterranean right now aren't we. And that's gonna increase to population growth in developed parts of Europe and pressure on land. One of the, not hopes, but outcomes we're likely to see, is the increase in land prices for example, so when we decide to exit this business, which we will, this is not an indefinite tenure that we have here, the likelihood is that the pressure on land prices is gonna pay dividends for us.

Raj: That's for sure. I'll tell you what - Can I set up the camera? Now we're kind of warmed up.

Philip: So I've got my winemakers hat on - I do get berated by one of our customers when she comes in and I don't have my Chapeau don ma tete.

Raj: It looks great - I want to get one! My student who is actually Canadian, a young Canadian, who spent the summer in Perpignan interviewing grape growers and cycling round the countryside to visit them. He ended up becoming a sommelier. Went back to British Columbia and has invested in a small vineyard [Philip: Really? Oh dear, he's really been affected!] Well he already was a bit nuts about it when he came here but he was very young. He must of been 22, 23 to do a Masters and it was quite marvelous really...

Philip: Well it's interesting that people with the best intellects chose to get into something quite so dumb because there's no great future in this industry.

Raj: Ah, well hang onto that, I wanna hear more about that question. Love to hear more about that question because... he met a lot of young, sort of, what would you call them, winemakers in France, in Perpignan, who had, much like you, had been doing other things, had saved their money and were kind of following a dream of having their own vineyard and they, again, some of them had been to colleges like you and others had worked as volunteers etc and then were just asking around and getting help from various people. Ok, so, brilliant. So we're on. Alright - So what's the typical working day like for you?

Philip: We start late, most of the bureaucracy is handled first thing in the morning at home, not here, we don't live on site, so tending to emails etc, etc, done in the morning, we arrive here at half 10 and the cycle of what we have to attend to is quite slow so, for example at the moment we are rubbing off the buds which appear on the graft of the American rootstock and the European top carries on. They spring lots of little shoots off the American rootstock so we have to go around and rub those off. We have got 7000 vines and that will take us about a month. So we're not



rushing to do anything. At the same time we're contemplating the bottling of last year's vintage which has now been in tank for 6 months, so we're slowly orienting the production facility to undertake the bottling. So, most of the time is a couple hours a day spending time at home looking at the paper work and then, in the field, doing manual labour, sometimes quite hard work, back breaking stuff.

Raj: How do you rub... Do you rub it with your hand or..?

Philip: Yes, there's different techniques - if you were automated you can actually put two circular brushes on the back of the tractor and they will actually spin around and hit the vine itself and take these things off. But we don't have the resources to pay for one, a tractor that can do that, or two the unit that actually does it, so we do it by hand. So that takes about a month for two of us, so that's probably 60 days work, although they're short days, you can't do that for many hours a day because you squat, pick off all the little leaves, you get up, you move 2 meters to the right, you squat, you pick off all of the bits, you get up, you move to the right. You do that for a few hours, you need a break.

Raj: My lower back is wincing in sympathy.

Philip: So, after several decades working in an office what we then do is, around 1.30, we sit down outside and we stop for lunch. And we always have a good lunch. Sally used to chef so we...[phone interrupts] we have a good lunch lasts half an hour, three quarters, something healthy. Part of this ethos is to be healthy, be active and eat healthily. Unfortunately that does involve drinking a glass of wine with our lunch. Then set about doing some more work for a couple of hours and then back home. That's our day, so for example, in the winter months the days are shorter - we arrive about the same time but the day finishes around about 4 when it starts to get dark. At that point we'd be winter pruning. The winter pruning took us 4 months, so for two of us that's basically 8 months work to prune the vineyard. All of that's done by hand. Again, you can automate that process, or part of that process but we don't have the resources at this particular business to do that so it's all done by hand. So that's 4 months work, we then go into, in the spring, it's fixing the trellising, looking after the boundaries, pruning back the windbreaks, looking after the soil, suppressing weeds and then it's looking after the vines as they start growing, thinking about the pathogens that were introduced to Europe by endermologist in years gone by so I'll be planning a spray program, so we're not organic here, we feared that we would lose our crop if we didn't use herbicides and fungicides. So we use herbicides to suppress weed growth and fungicides, before they even become manifest, we start spraying as a precautionary program against fungus which will appear later in the year.

Raj: Have you experimented with different kinds of herbicides and fungicides?



Philip: I'm relatively new to it so I'm adopting the principles that the former owners of the business had, so I'm using the same spray program that they had, but as chemicals are added to the list of options and others are withdrawn through losing their licenses then I have to adapt so I am actually, it's gradually diversifying the different compounds that I'm using in the vineyard. It's complicated. I and the former owner of the business who was with us with a two year handover period had a disagreement about how we should approach weed control which is a massive, time consuming issue here. Last year for example I spent 60 days hoeing thistles. I didn't want to do that this year so we bought a spraying device which is specifically spraying herbicides to suppress weed control. At the express, or vigorous assertion of the former owner because he didn't want a mechanical device which tills the soil, which I was advocating.

Raj: What was the reasoning behind that?

Philip: He was formerly a research scientist specializing in the development of heart drugs, so his understanding of these compounds at molecular level is unsurpassed, in my experience, so he has no fear. He calls it chemical warfare and that to him is his first recourse. To me, putting any compounds like that into nature doesn't sit comfortably, so I was thinking of a mechanical approach to suppressing weed control, he was thinking a chemical warfare. He won. So now we use more herbicides than we had done in years gone by. Fortunately around here we have no water courses, we have no other fruit or crops which go straight into the food chain so my uncomfortable feeling about these compounds is contained within our own area. We're not spilling compounds into water course for example and effecting aquatic life. But I do have a strong desire to behave with the probity that people expect and limit the amount of compounds that we're putting in the environment. I don't believe that being organic is sustainable in this particular geographical location and I don't think that being biodiverse has much credence in my judgment.

Raj: And is, I'm just curious about where your expertise comes from in terms of, was it something that was debated at Plumpton, is it?, [Philip: Plumpton agricultural college] Did they have a particular line on this?

Philip: No I think, their approach is quite pragmatic agricultural, herbicides, fungicides and pesticides, which we don't use, are the doctrine, are doctoring that people adopt and that's what you're taught. You don't enter into the field of being biodiverse. It comes up, being biodiverse or organic, comes up in a more casual way and, of course, the media information that we're absorbing through various channels has a bias towards organic and bio diverse growers so we pick up influences from that, from those mediums and that's really where we make our judgements. Technically, I'm not competent enough to know whether in being



biodiverse and creating a tea from different compounds, which you can use in place of a fungicide, whether or not that's going to work, but I fear it might be hoccum.

Raj: Well yeah, that's where all these kind of experimental things come in.

Philip: Yea, there's no doubt about it, we had a favourite champagne maker, Monseieur Duvel, or Duvel Petreu, Fleur de Rivier near Eprimet (sp) and he said, and I believe him, that he felt the hair on his hands, the back of his hands and the strength in his nails was that much stronger at the full moons, when the moon was full and that was when he was predisposed to pick his grapes because he felt that the influences might have been greater. And there's no doubt, obviously the moon moves the tide so those influences are there but whether or not it makes actually a practical difference - It might be better to leave them on the vine until the acid levels are right and not be driven by the cycles of the moon. So there are influences that we consider and discard.

Raj: Are there other, I don't know, I know Wingham fairly well and Goodenstone, I have friends who live there, I've never actually been in Staple [inaudible] before. Are there quite a few other vineyards here - do you have friends that are...

Philip: Interestingly, going back to 1993 when this vineyard was established, there was one larger vineyard, just a few hundred meters up the road, called Staple vineyard and that would have been trading probably for 20 years prior to that. And in this immediate vicinity, I'm talking 2 vineyards in Staple, 2 vineyards in Ash, literally you can see them over the hill there, 1 up the road, there was 13 vineyards in this immediate vicinity.

Raj: When was that 93?

Philip: 1993. And there was a Canterbury collective, primarily on the east side of Canterbury, a Canterbury collective of 13 vineyards.

Raj: 30? Three, zero?

Philip: 13 Thirteen. I'm told that 12 of those closed as a direct consequence of the liberalization of the EU boundaries in 95 when people were able to bring as much wine in from the other European countries, I think it was formally restricted to 2 litres or something like that. So with the tax burden that we have to carry in English viticulture, we are the highest taxed wine making nation in Europe, then the viability of competing on price is just not there. So we are starting at a £2.50 or 3 euro cost disadvantage per bottle against France and so people go there to buy their wine. and 12 of those vineyards subsequently closed. Now that might be, probably, a sweeping statement and that's one opinion of one person, or two people. More likely



the case is that vineyards are started by somebody who gets seduced into the idea that it might be a gentle way to wind out their latter few decades, only to find that the family that he's brought up have been properly educated and are in careers, often with mortgages and families, cannot afford to work with no income so the vineyard dies with the fool that starts it.

Raj: That's interesting. Well, so since then, you lost 12 vineyards in the area but new people have moved in and you have a few that are... Are you involved, not necessarily involved in a cooperative production, but are you cooperating or exchanging information?

Philip: Well, there's yea - the mechanism by which we interact is the South East Vineyard Association, which covers the south east of England. There's quite a strong social ethos in there. Probably the most interesting thing since I started training 8 years ago at Plumpton is a very rapid proliferation in vineyards around the south east of England specifically. And a rapidly growing market, so where there was probably 450 vineyards in England when I started this pursuit, 15, 18 years go, those vineyards were generally 7, 12 sometimes 25 acres with the odd big one, such as Denbighs at 250 acres. Now typically there's 650 vineyards and unusually we're at 7 acres, more typically they're at 25 - 60 sometimes 400-600 acres now. So Rafini Estate has been started by a hedge fund manager called Mark Driver. I think he's starting at 650 acres from scratch. So the capacity to produce wine in England is growing from 2 and half million bottles of still wine, typically 20 years ago, to now probably 1 million bottles of still wine but 5, possibly 8 million bottles of sparkling wine in the next two to three years. So the capacity has grown four fold since I had this idea. So in terms of quantifying that in market penetration, two and a half million bottles was about half of 1% of the wine consumed in England, which is typically 400 million bottles of wine. 2 and half million bottles was consumed primarily by people locally, now the volume of wine is grown to five, maybe 8 million bottles in the next two years, so we're up to about 2% of the volume of wine consumed in the UK. I see if we can grow that to 4% then we're all gonna be very, we'll all be sitting pretty. And that's viable. If the constraints of tax are suppressed the exchequer realised that the English were making more Sparkling wine, so the amount of duty leveled on a bottle wine at £2.17p was increased specifically for sparkling wine by another £1 and 10 pence. So of course, if you're paying, if you're obliged to pay VAT or charge VAT on your product, you're charging £3.30 duty and then they're putting 20% tax on their own tax. So the baseline price of a bottle of sparkling wine is quite high, generally the cost of a bottle of prosecco in your supermarket, and that is just the tax that we have to pay. That suppresses the growth of the income, the growth of the industry. I would advocate that if you're looking at 2 - 5 million bottles of wine £2 a bottle in duty, drop it and then the proliferation of vineyards, proliferation of people going bicycling around the countryside doing vineyard tours and lots of people put to work looking after the



vines, it's labour, as we've discussed already, a labour intensive pursuit. Work for everybody, probably a good thing for the economy and importing less and producing more. It's not gonna happen.

Raj: Not gonna happen... I didn't realise it was that high, that's really quite extraordinary. [Philip: Ridiculous Extraordinary!] What about the beer, just off on a slight tangent, cos we have this whole microbrewery trend now, are they taxed similarly or not?

Philip: No, they're not. What happened about 23 years ago, this is my understanding of the situation so it would have to be verified by someone who probably knows better, 23 years ago German beer makers, of which there's about 100,000 small breweries in Germany, lobbied the European Union to get a dispensation on duty for small brewers. It took 15 years for the UK government to adopt that directive. Under duress they were encouraged to adopt it and about 7 years ago they did, so small beer brewers have a dispensation on the duty that they have to pay on beer, which gives them a 38p per pint cost advantage over a larger brewer, such as our regional brewer Shepherd Neame. So there's been a proliferation of microbreweries in response to that change in the tax structure. That explosion of microbreweries has led to an explosion in another manifestation which is completely tax driven which is the micro pub. Here we are 2015 there's reputed to be 100 micro pubs in this immediate vicinity of North Kent. Interestingly, at the same time, 6 pubs within 5 miles circumference of this, radius of this vineyard, closed last year. One of them, fortunately the closest one to us, has reopened, but 5 pubs remain closed whilst there's been an explosion of microbreweries and micro pubs in the region.

Raj: So micro pubs, just because they're smaller they're able to survive?

Philip: Well they have a lower overhead because, obviously they're not running a large, of course we come back to the tax burden - the business rates on a pub are quite high so if you have a much smaller, more contained space, then your business rates are much lower which means that you've got the margin to survive. Pubs haven't. They're taxed. Comes down to governance.

Raj: hold onto that thought, that's an important point. We were talking a little bit about your seasonal calendar and we got to the pesticides and that part of the early spring I suppose.

Philip: Yep, that's when we start the program for Spring against the fungicides which are gonna impact up at harvest.

Raj: At harvest.. So that's early spring, that



Philip: Early spring, so at the moment, after the bud rubbing process comes to an end, the next bit will be bottling and what is happening, the proposition here is to grow the vines, make the wine, bottle it, cellar it and sell it, all from here. That's the only way we can get a margin on our wine and so 98% of the product that we manufacture here is sold directly from the winery, from the winery door. And so this time of the year, probably of the two of us, Sally and I, one of us is full time sales and as Sally mentioned a moment ago we actually charge £5 per person to do a wine tour here where we talk about the history of English wine, from the time that humans walked out of the Rift Valley, through to 5000 BC in Georgia in the Korkasses making wine, to when the Romans arrived with vines, just up the way at Richborough, in 44AD to viticulture in England and what we're going, what we're making now and where the market is going in the next 5 years. So we give people that little insight into what English wine is about and we charge £5 per person for that. And then we give them a tasting and, more often than not, they go away with a few bottles of wine.

Raj: Brilliant. And so, in terms of taking care of the vines, once you've done the rubbing of the buds, you then can leave them for a while?

Philip: We're tending the vines now, what will happen now is, the little shoots will come up, what we'll do is, we have a trunk and we have a crown, and out of that crown we have 2 canes, and then on each of those 2 canes, we count 8 nodes, like knuckles on your finger, and we cut it and we bend it in the winter, in our winter pruning, and one on the other side, 8 nodes, cut it and bend it. This is a classic French way of training a vine, or trellising a vine, called double Giot, invented by a man called Monsieur Giot (sp), a French man of course, and we use his system. Out of each of those 8 nodes, on either side, will spring a little shoot and each one of those 16 shoots will appear a little flower, which will then release pollen in early June. The vineyard will be wind pollinated. If we get good wind pollination, we get good fruit set, we get 16 bunches of grapes per plant. As the plant grows, the flowers will slowly swell, get heavier, flop over and turn into bunches of grapes. We will be tending to all vines. We have 2 wires and the objective is to train the canes, as they grow, up through the wires, for the simple reason is, we have to drive the tractor up and down the rows to spray the fungicides to stop us getting a rot on the fruit before we harvest. So we're keeping the canopy orderly so that we can actually work in the vineyard and that will be occupying our time 100% up until the point where we start thinking about harvest. Naturally, a vine will grow up a tree as a climber and the grapes, as they develop, will be green and they will climb up and get to the top of the canopy, get the best light, and when the fruit starts rising around the seeds, in the bunches of grapes, to attract the birds, to get the little dinosaurs to eat the pips and spread them over the countryside, the fruit will change colour and go red - it's a signal to the birds that the sugars have risen, they can see them in the canopy because they now stand out as red. At that point, which is called Veraison in France,



as you may know, we will put a net over the front vineyard to stop those pesky little dinosaurs doing what nature intended, and that's stealing our fruit. So it will take us a week to stitch a series of nets together over the 3 and half acres at the front. That guarantees us no dinosaur predation and then at the back we will put in a program of flying a hawk, a plastic hawk called a scarum which actually does something which I hadn't actually thought might happen. But in flying this fake hawk above the vineyard the thrushes and the blackbirds disappear quite rapidly but what also happens is the local buzzards appear and they take interest in what this fake bird is doing. And we also have what I think is a Harris hawk who comes by and patrols everyday. They're not here when that fake hawk isn't flying. They just manifest when it is, which is an interesting...

Raj: Is it like a plastic kite or something?

Philip: Yea, it's about a meter wide and it flies on a 20 meter pole with a 15 meter string and it takes 4 mile per hour wind speeds and it'll hover like that, flutter, and occasionally as the wind drops it will swoop, and then as the wind builds it will fly up again, and it will flutter and as the wind drops it will swoop. And it does this continually. What I'll do in the back 3 acres is I'll move it to a different point in the vineyard every morning and that scares the birds away.

Raj: Really, I've never seen that before.

Philip: It's becoming quite common and there's different designs around but this one seems to be working quite well, so I'm sticking with it. If that works again this year, we didn't get any particular predation of the fruit, last year in the back vineyard. If it works again as well this year we'll probably dispense with the nets. The nets was something which small vineyards were doing quite widely, going back 20 years because we had a lot more starlings then, and you probably remember the pictures of the starling murmuring, or mummering around the piers off the coast. You don't see that now. In fact we watch at the end of every season for flocks of starlings - we sometimes 20, sometimes see 10 sitting on wires but haven't seen a big flock of starlings round here in the last few years.

Raj: Wow, Any idea why that might be?

Philip: I don't know why.

Raj: The other thing you didn't mention , I was curious about is fertilizer. Because you're doing all that spraying but do you also have to...

Philip: Well, that's an interesting subject, no we don't use, we do sometimes use a folio feed which, as we go around the vineyard spraying the fungicide over the leaves, we spray compounds which have sulfur in which sit on the leaf and act as a



protectant and copper, which again sits on the leaves and acts as a protectant, called Bordeaux mixture in France, as you may know. We actually mix in a little bit of foliar feed, which would be potassium and magnesium if we see any deficiency manifesting itself in the foliage itself, otherwise the only other compost or fertilizer we have used is the discarded grape skins and pips from the winemaking process. We used to take around the back of the barn, make a large pile of, let it decompose over the winter and then spread that out onto the weaker parts of the vineyard in the spring. Because of the changes in temperature, I hear reported that we've had the 6 warmest years in the last decade, on record from [inaudible] but there are invasive species, specifically one that appeared last autumn which is a large threat to the soft fruit farmers of the south east of England and England which is called Spotted Wing Drosophila. That fly actually appeared locally in the cherry fruit, as you may know, very big concern to them because they're actually selling the fruit as a product. For us not so much of a concern, so we get a maggot in a grape it just goes into the press, we separate the juice and the maggot goes out with the skins. But what they are known to do is, over winter in piles of discarded grape skins. So our ability to store and compost those grape skins, now, we're gonna have to find a way of blocking the spotted wing Drosophila overwintering in it. That probably means burying or composting in sealed containers, but it's now not good policy to spread that out across the vineyard. Specifically because of that fly that's now appeared.

Raj: Do other people use other kinds of like manure, or fertilizers?

Philip: Yeah, a lot of people use a lot of things. Some they have some sort of symbiotic relationships with other farmers who want to get rid of manure for example, so they allow them to spread on their vineyards. Some other vineyards have this policy that they'll plant cress under their vines and encourage sheep to come in and fertilize and crop - so people have different approaches. Reputedly, a vine has to struggle to make the best wine so, in our lands, specifically grade a arable, which has got a good coverage of high grade loam over it, we don't really have any nutritional problems with the vines, in fact, quite the opposite, it's probably too rich a soil so we get rather more vigor than we probably need and therefore we don't need to fertilize or add any additional encouraging elements to the soil.

Raj: That's very interesting and lucky you have good soils.

Philip: So what we do do is, when we're ordering our vines, we chose a root stock which has been developed from the American rootstocks, which are tolerant to Velotsara (sp) and we look at the varieties, we contemplate the varieties which might be being sold and saleable in 5 to 10 years, that's our kind of time frame we're thinking about, so for example we made the decision to plant Bacchus a couple of years ago, 3 years ago, because our perception is that is going to become the English



version of Sauvignon Blanc so therefore we chose to plant that variety, then we had to think about what rootstock are we going to put that on, and the rootstock available to us and what is the pH, what is the acidity, what is the water level in the vineyard, so we pick a rootstock which is compatible with our soil type and then we choose the vigor of the root stock. So we can say that we want a lower vigor at one end of the vineyard and a higher vigor at the opposite end of the vineyard- the one with the higher vigor will ripen one week before the one with less vigor, so therefore we can schedule our production, it's all not going to ripen at the same time, so the choice of the rootstock is the actually the thing that probably gets the best outcome, not having to compensate with fertilizer later.

Raj: Brilliant, wow, and are the Americans developing all these different kinds of rootstocks?

Philip: Well they'll have their own development programs but these ones are driven by European propagators in again, Germany, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, places like that.

Raj: So, they've brought the root stock back and they're now propagating...

Philip: Well this has been going on for, well, since Phylloxera became prevalent across the world in 1870, these root stocks have been developed since then. There's hundreds and hundreds of them now to choose from.

Raj: And so it's alright, they're not subject.. they're still resistant to the Phylloxera?

Philip: They're still resistant. I'm not quite sure what would happen if Phylloxera manifested itself, I dare say it would have a devisory impact on what would happen but they are tolerant, whether or not they would actually be as good, I don't know, or as productive.

Raj: Ok, right, so any other uses to the land - I mean you talked about honey, is there anything else you do?

Philip: No, we keep bees purely because we want to give something back and they're pollinators, but they don't pollinate the vines. Interestingly, maybe in times gone by, vines were wind pollinated because you get a very subtle aroma from the flowers when they've released their pollen and I can't think why a plant would create an aroma or a scent if they weren't trying to attract an insect. But they're wind pollinators so maybe it's maybe just a legacy of times gone by. But we keep bees, otherwise it's pretty much a monoculture. We have windbreaks, obviously we get birds nesting in there and when we're pruning them we carefully navigate around the birds nests, we try to do our best. We have foxes and badgers in the area and so



we let them live without any encumbrance, we don't fix the holes that they put in the hedge so they can navigate around the vineyard at will. We have hares which are wonderful. They don't tend to eat any of the fruit, they seem to nibble the weeds as they come up. Other than that it's a 7 acre monoculture - Just vines.

Raj: And then you do the tours and then sell the wine directly here. Are you selling in shops?

Philip: There are a couple of places where we want to be seen, for example, the Good's Shed, selling organic products just outside of Canterbury West station. We want to be represented there so we deal with the wine merchant, lovely chap called Clive Barlow, who's got a stall selling wine there, and one other wine merchant who sells wine to some good restaurants such as Deesons in Canterbury. We want to be there so we work with that wine merchant but no, other than that we don't encourage wine merchants, we sell directly to the public. For us, the fun part is seeing people's enjoyment of the product we've created, that's really the part that we enjoy the most about that whole process.

Raj: Great, so, I suppose you've had the vineyard for 3 years but you've been sort of involved with it, trying to convince the proprietors to sell, [Philip: 10 years prior to that] 10 years prior to that and before that you were involved in New Zealand working in vineyards etc. How long were you in New Zealand?

Philip: Only, we were there for 6 months but only working on the vineyard for a week, so, but it was that experience in that week which [*Raj: Very impressionable! A week, that's what inspired you*] Well luckily, I suppose something that I don't often hear spoken about, but I have benefited from the increase in the property prices over the last 20, 30 years. So our first trip around the world, well Sally's done several, but my first trip around the world was funded by the rise in the property that we had at the time, so we used some of that equity to fund a one way trip to the other side of the world, and spent a year and a half pottering around and seeing what was good. I had to ski indefinitely at that time, had to get that out of my system but we then came back to England, chose to live in the heart of central London and bought a modestly priced apartment at the time and then set about crafting a route into a payable job, in commerce, did quite well at that, both of us did all right, but what we didn't expect was the astronomical rise in the value of the property we'd bought. And having made some money in commerce and bought a second house, that has actually, the increase in that property price in central London, now we liquidated that asset, gives us the choice to do exactly what we want. And therefore, we got some money to expand this business, whether this business ever makes any money or not doesn't actually matter now, but it would be nice, so that's really the commercial driver of it, is to have a little bit of fun along the way.



Raj: That's fantastic and it's so lucky that you managed to catch that wave, twice.

Philip: Luck... Well we get a lot of people coming in here, we get a lot of people new to the area, people who've moved to Deal or Sandwich, funnily enough people don't seem to be moving to Canterbury but I think it's a lovely place to live, and they often have done that, exactly, what they call downsizing; they've got these valuable assets, asset rich, cash poor, cashed it in, buy somewhere nice by the seaside and set about enjoying life.

Raj: But do you know much about the people who owned this place before you [Philip: John and Adam Daniel-Evitch] Do you know much about how they were coping or how their business went?

Philip: Yea, I think their aspirations were met with the establishment of the business. Adam was an accountant working in London, Dr John was a research scientist working at the drug research site down the road there, Fisa and Dr John had done ok, had a good pension, and decided that he wanted to explore his viticultural aspirations, setting up this vineyard and his brother agreed to go with him. They both lived in Ash, still do, are both reasonably fit and well in their early 70s but they found that the actual amount of manpower required, as we referred to earlier, bud rubbing for example, and some of the harder physical work that we have to do, digging posts out when they snap for example, all those sorts of things were getting beyond them and as they were getting a bit more tired it became a bit more of a burden. They had actually had raspberries when they first planted here they had an income source, a route to market with that, and then they had the viticulture which takes several years to produce an income from, but that got too much for them, too much of a burden, so they grubbed that up, as did the extra planting at the back they formally had, they grubbed that up too and gradually downsized the bit they felt they could manage.

Raj: And they had horses grazing?

Philip: They had horses grazing at the back, on the land at the back

Raj: So somebody else's horses or theirs

Philip: It was just land rented out to somebody else to graze their horses.

Raj: And do you know what was there before them, I mean what was on this piece of land?

Philip: Yea, the lady that they bought it from still lives in the village, it was potatoes and probably crops in rotation, it really was a potato field and, actually getting a postcode is still challenges people now - it doesn't tend to come up on maps because



it was just part of the bigger field that surrounds us. So, interesting for me, being somebody who comes from the city, parachuting in, into this environment, is an insight in how the community knits together; the lady who owned the land was born in the cottage just up the hill, 200 meters to our left, she's 80 odd now, she was born in that cottage and she's moved slightly down the hill and now lives in a cottage 200 meters on our right, and she sold this part of this land off, I guess because of changes in the family, maybe a death, or I don't know, sold off various parcels of land. So this land was sold off as one parcel by her family and it probably belonged to Barnsolve farm, just 100 meters to our right at one point, that is now a private residence with no land attached to it. But I'm guessing that all of the land around what is called Barnsole farm belonged to the farm. Some of it has been developed, which is in, more centrally to the village, some of it has been sold off to Dave, our neighbor, the land which surrounds us on 2 sides, probably 300 acres, I believe is actually owned by the church in Canterbury and it's leased to an eponymously named Will Smith who's a large commercial farmer and he's planting crops there on rotation on a large scale. The land to the North there is owned and farmed by Humphrey Holme on the farm up the way there. The lands just over there, further to the south is owned by our neighbors who use it for recreational purposes, they have their own horses, grow the odd crop themselves, keep a few chickens, small holding you could say, and just a little bit further to the right there's a guy there who's got 25 acres and he's just decided that he's gonna plant a wood, which he did. 25 years ago he acquired that land, I don't know who from, and he wanted to plant a wood and so that wood is now 25 years old and he just likes having it. But the interesting part about it is the established and vested interests of the families of the area, we've grown to know the Smiths, Will Smith, who farms out there and we've grown to know the Lasletts (sp) who farm around Ash and in the region and various other farming families up at Somerfield who've been here for generations and we have grown to appreciate the interdependence of all of these vested interests and how we have to, the tenure that we have here, has to take into account their sensibilities, and conversely, they take into account our sensibilities. And the protocols around how we interact are all something that we've had to learn.

Raj: What are some of the examples of these interdependencies that you mention?

Philip: Well, for example, our neighbor Dave, if we're doing something, we're digging a hole, we have running across the land here, we have quite a lot of what was built in, I reckon the late 40s, early 50s, a lot of nuclear bunkers, hardened nuclear shelters which are several stories going underground. And running to them are hardened electrical cables which are buried 2 meters under our ground, and so we have concrete markers to show the point where they enter our land and exit our land and, obviously if they ever needed to be maintained, they would ask to come and dig them up. So when we decided to plant vines in the field that was used for grazing, the hardened electrical cables are supposed to be 2 meters deep, but we got



an agricultural tractor in, which has got a tooth called a ripper, to rip up the ground to about 2 feet down. We have to contemplate that the guys that were burying this cable, might have been Friday afternoon, they might have been wanting to get down the Dog and Duck for a half and they might not have dug the trench as deep as it should have done. So we decided to excavate to see if we could ensure that the cable was indeed more than 2 foot deep. So we started digging a hole - Dave notices some activity on his boundary, so he comes over and asks 'what you doing there then?' and we said 'we're digging a hole to find out whether the electrical cable is deeper than 2 and a half foot deep' That's the kind of thing he's interested to know what we're doing so we explain what we're doing. So he asks what we're spraying, we're interested in when our neighbors spray, sometimes they use contractual sprayers and they come in and spray on a day which is a little too windy than they should be spraying and we get a little bit of drift over here. So we need to know what they're doing and what they're spraying and they would typically come over and ask us what we're doing. We are responsible for the boundary, so he will ask us if we will look after the boundary and we will conversely expect him to look after the boundary on his side, so the boundaries are maintained by both parties. Those are the kind of interactions that we have.

Raj: That sounds very good, everyone's very... You said it was kind of a different culture you encountered here... What are some of the nice things that come to mind immediately when you think what's the difference between life in the city and out here, in terms of social interactions?

Philip: Probably I'm better able to articulate what it was like in Central London. We lived in a house in a row of Georgian houses, built in 1730, absolutely beautiful, there was 10 or 12 of them in the row of these terraced houses and we just had an apartment in one of them. We knew our upstairs neighbor and we knew maybe one neighbor to our left who lived in one of the other apartments. All of the other houses were owned by rich individuals, most likely from overseas, and were used 2 weeks of the year while it was too hot in Abu Dhabi so they'd bring the whole family over, rather than putting them up at the Dorchester, they have their house and they occupy, they were maintained by whoever. But they really weren't, so there were no neighbors and there was no community. We didn't really know who else lived further up the street and there was a lot of churn with the people that lived there so there wasn't really a community, it was very transitory. And we were probably examples of that ourselves; moved in 17 years ago, moved out 17 years later. Here much more established, we all try to use each others businesses. So, our first point, if we need a bag of fertilizer, is to go to the Rose shop. We wouldn't go to B&Q, might save a quid but we wouldn't do that, we'd use the local people. And that social interaction - we know the names, first names of all the people here, in the immediate vicinity. Probably half the people in the village know us by our first names and we know quite a few people in the village and that was just, you just



don't get that in central London. You don't know the people 2 doors down. And that is kind of a support mechanism and we are, we will, and are able to help where we can and I'm sure they would reciprocate had we the need and we see this as part of the community infrastructure and a community resource so we encourage them hopefully to partake in it. For example we have a family who's granny has got a big birthday this weekend and we're lending our outdoors, it's gonna be a lovely warm day on Sunday, and they're bringing 30 people down for a picnic. And they'll enjoy a little of our wine and bring their own picnic along and use this as a nice environment for them to spread out. And that's a little bit about how we give back to the community and I'm sure we'd get the same sort of good will in return.

Raj: Are there important social events that occur during the year where everyone gets together and...

Philip: There are, unfortunately for us, the busiest time for us is in the summer, where for example we have the Staple fair which is our community fair. We would like to actually partake in that particular thing, this year we have a coach party of 50 arriving on the same afternoon, so we're looking after that coach party instead of appearing with a stall at the local fair. In years to come, yes definitely. We want to be, we want our wine to be served in the local pub, the one community resource outside of this particular place. We want to have a stand at that staple fair so visitors to the village will see the range of products that are produced in our little village and that is one way we are going to do it. There are, a little bit further afield, Deal has a very good food and wine show so does, obviously, Broadstairs has got quite a highly regarded food and wine show and one in Sandwich as well on a slightly smaller scale. We do propose that when we have our marketing resources available, which we haven't got round to yet, a developed website and other printed materials, we will be exhibiting there. But it is strongly pervading the ethos of this business, I like to think, is actually being in the community and giving something back to the community.

Raj: That's great. So what do you think about the future? You said, obviously you're not going to be, there's a limit for you and to how long you're going to be involved. But how do you see the future of your farm developing, or the vineyard developing?

Philip: The commercial proposition is to try to develop a higher quality customer experience, so the capital that's being generated through the sale of the wine is going to go into building a better quality visitor center. So then we enter into the realms of planning which is something that we're going to have to do at some point in time. We're looking at what resources are available through grant funding for this particular part of Kent, which there are some, North Kent Development Fund was one. So we'll scope the market to see what resources are available to help us expand this business. We'd still want to keep it constrained to 7 acres because that's enough



for 2 of us to manage. But we want to increase the volume of the wine, increase the quality of the wine, increase the sales price of the wine, probably always have a budget proposition and then have a more upmarket proposition which will be the English Sparkling wine, classic blend, which we'll probably sell for £25 per bottle. And probably make it into a sensible commercial proposition which somebody might want to acquire in 10-15 years time when we've done our time. So after that, it really depends on where the English Wine Market goes, we're in the right end of the curve, fortuitously, we took this decision at the point where English sparkling wine was coming to the market. There's a good chance that the envisaged, maximum output of 8 million will grow and it's likely that this will become an attractive proposition to somebody who wants to do exactly what we did which is downsize and acquire a manageable business with perhaps better attributes than what there was when we arrived here in 2012. So we'll sell it on and we will then go off and enjoy ourselves in, probably somewhere warmer, still keep our foothold in Ramsgate where we have a lovely house, but go off traveling again and this is likely to remain a vineyard, I think, for the foreseeable decades. One of the problems with this particular site is acquiring further land to develop the business because we're constrained by those parties around us who have strong ties to the land that they're on. It's unlikely that an area of land is gonna become available which will make this truly a proper concern. So, sensibly speaking, if this was going to be bought by somebody who was gonna want to keep a family and earn a living, it would need to be 25 acres. You have to have all the attributes that we have now, tractors, equipment and winery but you can actually get a sensible commercial return on 25 acres, or more. But there isn't really the blocks of land available in this particular vicinity to enable that to come about so it's likely to remain a small vineyard.

Raj: So it might not be contiguous but you could perhaps get some land somewhere nearby, it wouldn't be worth....?

Philip: it's complexities, getting your sprayer from A to B, there are some of the bigger vineyards, Knighton borough, has got a patchwork of vineyards all over Sussex, and they manage but they're 200 acres and they've got serious resources available to them. To go pottering up and down these lanes with bucket fulls of this or the other it's not really viable. And of course, anybody who was gonna want to acquire land adjacent to this and make the current owner an offer, they're going to obviously want what they might call a marriage value, which is a premium to sell it, if they ever did. And it's unlikely that the church, which has probably owned that land out to the east there, to the north, since 700AD, it's unlikely that they're going to want to dispose of any part of that in the near future.

Raj: They do lease it out, so you could perhaps lease it...



Philip: Perhaps, and if you get a long enough lease, you'd probably want 25 or 50 years lease but they might do that, they might do that. Hadn't contemplated that. But strongly in my intention is to keep this to a manageable size and make it a pleasure to do it as opposed to a burden. Definitely don't want it to be a burden.

Raj: Well I envy you. I'm so happy that you've found this place and making it a going concern, enjoying it.

Philip: Oh you couldn't make it up! Well when we left New Zealand saying we want a 7 acre site with a winery, driving past that fence one day and said 'we found our 7 acre site but with half of it not planted' and with 2 guys that looked like they might wanna sell in the near future. You couldn't make it up! So in every other piece of land that we saw and we made offers on we always said 'well that's not quite as good as Barnsole' or 'that hasn't got that like Barnsole has' or everything was benchmarked on this and this was really the one we wanted, the best one for... and then it came up. Happy days!

Raj: That's amazing, very good luck! Well, thanks so much, is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

Philip: No

Raj: I think we've got fantastic, great story and really interesting, and I was just gonna ask you if you wouldn't mind, if you could show me a little bit about the vineyard if you've got the time, I've a few questions to ask you - I've always wondered about the roses at the end of the rows...

Philip: Ok, yes, 17th century endermologists we can blame for that...

Raj: Ok, why don't we just go outside, and I'll just turn this off...