

Ep 152: The English Wine Movement with Henry Jeffreys, author of Vines in a cold climate (Part 2)



Janina Doyle 00:00:08 Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just cannot get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So, stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving, wonderful world of wine and wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Hello, wine friends, are you ready for part two with Henry Jeffreys. So, we are continuing our conversation about his latest wine book *Vines in a Cold Climate*. And you will notice a protagonist in this episode, a name that continues to come up. In fact, he even got mentioned in part one and that is Peter Hall, who is one of England's wine pioneers.

And so, I have got my hands on a bottle of his sparkling wine. And so, if you give me a few moments before we start the chat with Henry, I am going to tell you about what is in my glass.

Janina Doyle 00:01:18 So, Peter Hall is the man behind the winery Breaky Bottom, which you can find in the South Downs in Sussex. And this winery, he started in 1974. And one of the grape varieties that was originally planted was Seyval Blanc. So, this was a time when Chardonnay and Pinot Noir was not a thing.

Now, for the first two decades, Peter was just making still wines out of Seyval Blanc and other grape varieties such as Muller-Thurgau. However, as he says it himself he felt that the variety of Seyval Blanc is such a clean and straightforward variety but with good acidity. So, he always assumed it would be quite nice with bubbles in.

So, when he began making traditional method sparkling wines, this was one that he began with, this has become a bit of a flagship, something that Peter is really known for. But he does also make traditional method sparkling wine from classic varieties as well.

What's really nice, every single cuvee is always named after somebody important in his life. So do look at the names and investigate for yourself. I today have the 2015 Seyval Blanc Brut and it is the Cuvée Jack Pike. Now this wine is in his memory because he helped plant the very first vineyard back in 1974. Also, I do love a wine that is numbered. I am drinking bottle number 1594 out of 6694. And I'm also gonna give them a round of applause because they are using hardly any foil on the top. You can see the cork. It's a very smart bottle and I love that they're not wasting materials.

Okay, I think it is time for me to open up this bottle of wine. Oh, there you go! Music to my ears. Is that not one of the best sounds in the world? So, this wine has had about four years on the lees. So that is the natural yeast that is in the bottle during the second fermentation that is going to impart those

bready toasty notes into the wine. So, I'm assuming there's going to be a little bit of richness but Seyval Blanc, I mean, it's not really a great variety that I know very well. I know it can have a bit of a citrusy element, it can be a little bit mineral.

Oh, wow! Okay. This is not what I expected. Oh, well, okay, this has this kind of nutty kind of waxy bruised apple vibe going on. But there's also like this kind of cinnamon spice going on. A bit of an oxidative character. So, wondering whether that is normal or if it's this bottle, but it's actually very attractive. Okay! There's this smoky mineral woody pine note. It's kind of very hard to describe, but it's very curious. Okay, this is really nice. This is not...Disclaimer. This is not my favourite style. But I like how unique this is. This is very textural on my tongue. It's like peach skins. It's a little bit furry with this really crisp green apple acidity, it's really crunchy, very, very fresh, as a sparkling wine, but then at the same time, flavour-wise you've got this kind of baked peach pie. There's that nutty oxidative character coming through, but it's not super strong. Really, this wine is very, very fresh. And then, at the finish, you've got this slightly uncooked sourdough kind of saltiness, and then loads of bruised apples. This is really, really interesting if you want to taste a wine with texture, but great brightness and flavours and aromas that I actually am not used to tasting in sparkling wine. This is a fab one to go for. And also, it's a great way to taste Seyval Blanc, which is officially the fifth most planted grape variety in England at the moment.

Now, if you're wondering how much this costs, you can get this for £36 a bottle. And guess what? It's all worked out rather perfectly. It's almost as if I set this up. But after talking with my sponsor, Wickhams Wine, they have this on their website. So, remember, if you use the code, EatSleep10, you're gonna get 10% off your first order. And this may be one of the bottles that you want to try. But for now, whatever English wine you have around, pour it and enjoy as we go across to the chat with Henry now.

Janina Doyle 00:6:33 I would love to talk about some of the things that I read in the book and I'd love you to elaborate on them a little bit more. So, Plumpton College, this is our only college in the UK, but it has built this incredible reputation. Now so many of our top winemakers have come through Plumpton College. It started as a chicken shed with just two rows of vines. And this is 1988. That's, for me, I think that's crazy.

Henry Jeffreys 00:7:07 Yeah. And I mentioned Chris Foss, and he was making wine in Bordeaux. And he came to England, I think his wife was English and was home sick. And he went to vineyards and said, "Can I work for you?" And first of all, they didn't really understand why he was French, rather than German. He wanted to be paid properly. And they were like, you know, we can give you some appallingly low salary. He was a professional. He'd be making wine in France. And then someone said to him, Plumpton College is thinking of starting a wine course. So, he has a teaching degree. And he went along and said, I'll do it. And they said, okay. I think that they gave him a tractor, some Demjohns and a chicken shed, a row of vines, and said, "Let's get on with it." And he says he found the whole thing really baffling, because he was working with all these obscure German varieties like Huxelrebe or Reichensteiner.

The climate, he wasn't used to it at all. And he was saying the acidity was just unbelievably high. And he said that, for the first few years, he just didn't really know what he was doing. But obviously, he was being modest because this turned into a very prestigious Wine School.

And if you go to any wine producer in England, there's probably not a single producer in England that doesn't have someone who trained at Plumpton working there, which just kind of shows how influential it is. Previously, if you're into wine, you'd have gone to Bordeaux or Montpellier or Roseworthy in

Australia, and you'd have probably stayed there. But now and then all the talent for England or anywhere else...

Janina Doyle 00:8:49 Is saying here.

Henry Jeffreys 00:5:25 Is staying here. Exactly. And it sucks in people like Liam Idzikowski at Danbury Ridge. He's from Ireland and you get people from Northern Europe and South Africa and stuff. So, you can't really overstate how important Plumpton are. And you go there now and it's all very high tech and they've got this winery that was opened by Jancis Robinson and laboratories and all this kind of stuff, but no, it's a far cry from the chicken shed.

Janina Doyle 00:9:19 And you know what, I was just at Gatwick South and I was very happy because I've been trying to fly from Gatwick South for a really long time because Vagabond has opened up its first English sparkling wine bar. So, have you been?

Henry Jeffrey 09:5:35 I haven't. No no, was I at Gatwick? I was at Gatwick South. I missed it.

Janina Doyle 00:9:45 Oh, okay. So, it's called South Downs. And you can't really miss it. It's literally opposite the Vagabond restaurant that they have. They're really cute, really classy, but it's lovely because I don't remember now, I could be making this up, maybe like 10 sparklings, 10 stills or so that are all by glass as well.

So, it's amazing. And actually, I tasted the Plumpton College, their own sparkling rosé, a non-vintage. And it's brilliant. It was lovely. It was really like strawberry coulis. It was a dry sparkling, but it had this real sweetness of fruit. It was really creamy. It was lovely. And so I just thought, you know, it's nice to be able to drink wines made from the students of Plumpton. That tells its own story, doesn't it? So, it was lovely.

Henry Jeffreys 00:10:28 They wine awards. They are commercial wines. Great stuff. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:10:33 Well, next time you go to Gatwick South, don't forget to go to South Downs.

Henry Jeffreys 00:10:37 I think I was on my way to Montpellier. But it was about six in the morning and I wasn't thinking about wine.

Janina Doyle 00:10:48 Listen, your palate would have been most open and ready to taste. Well, the next time. Though, we're talking about grape varieties, you just mentioned. Piwi varieties? Hybrids? We still have some old Germanic varieties that, I think, people are starting to focus on. Has there been any that you've tasted that probably most likely are in a still wine but you think could be a variety that, I don't know, pushes Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to the side? That has a future?

Henry Jeffreys 00:11:28 We'll start with Piwi's which are German varieties and the word is short for one of those very, very long German words that means, I think, it's like fungal resistant or something like that. So, I think Solaris is a Piwi. And I've had some quite nice ones. Bin 2 in Padstow. They make a very nice still Solaris, which is actually very orangey. Very nice. I had a red from Yotes Court, which is very near me in Kent.

Janina Doyle 00:11:57 Oh, I know what you're talking about! It begins with D, doesn't it?

Henry Jeffreys 00:12:00 Yes. A Divico, I think, it's called.

Janina Doyle 00:12:03 Yes. Oh, my God.

Henry Jeffreys 00:12:05 I must say I wasn't entirely convinced by that.

Janina Doyle 00:12:08 Not the price. I tasted it literally last week. And it was really interesting. It was very enjoyable and it had that depth of colour. The tannins were really good. But, I said, yeah, like it. For English wine, I'll spend £20 on a bottle. They looked at me and said, up. go up. I was like, what? £30? They were like, go up. They are selling it for about £50 a bottle.

Henry Jeffreys 00:13:36 That's a joke. I must say I didn't share your love for it. I thought it was a good colour. Nice tannins. I thought it tasted more like a sort of a dealcoholized wine. It tasted all wrong, kind of a bit woody, no fruit. I thought it was horrible.

Janina Doyle 00:12:53 I didn't think it was horrible at all. But they had put it in a decanter. And I wonder as well whether there is a bit more of an evolution compared to when you tasted it. If I had the choice to drink that, or Pinot Noir, I would always drink Pinot Noir. But I thought it was definitely interesting. It was very drinkable and very fruit driven. Interesting. Anyway, but yeah, they kept saying this, "We make about," I don't know, "500 bottles. That's why it's £50."

Henry Jeffreys 00:13:22 Even if you do quite like it, it's very basic. If it wasn't from England, it would be like an eight pound wine. And if it was from England, it would be like a 14 pound wine.

Janina Doyle 00:13:33 I think that's fair. The reason I went with 20 is because again, English wine, especially the stills, they're not cheap.

Henry Jeffreys 00:13:343 If you think about what you can get from, like, Balfours 2022 Pinot Noir is just so ripe and delicious. You know, it isn't cheap. What is it? £30-35? You spend a lot of money but it's so delicious and ripe but just you, it tastes like a really good wine. And I just don't quite know why you would muck about with something else when you can already make nice Pinot Noir in England. I'm not convinced. There needs to be progress.

Janina Doyle 00:14:15 No, but you're right. Like, you talk about, I love this. You abbreviate when you're writing tasting notes for wines. It might be GFE (Good for England), rather than it's actually good on the world scene. And certainly, like some of our Pinot Noirs out of England, and of course Luke's Pinot Noir from Balfour is one of those, it's not just good for England, it's not just GFE. It's actually a Pinot Noir that can actually be tasted and enjoyed amongst the Pinot Noirs of the world. Yeah, I'll be honest, I can't see that Piwi growing. It's definitely interesting but it's not gonna grow, is it?

Janina Doyle 00:14:53 No, well, you never know. It's work in progress and in a few years time, they might have worked out exactly what to do with it. And I think the fungal thing is really useful because it is really hard to grow grapes in England and if they can get a much better yield on it or use little or no fungicide, then it might have a future. I won't write it off.

Janina Doyle 00:15:16 What do you think about Cabernet Noir? I mean, Blackbook have actually...

Henry Jeffreys 00:15:19 I haven't tried that yet.

Janina Doyle 00:15:22 Okay. I have tried one. Well, I don't know how regularly Sergio from Blackbook has done it. But I tried one vintage and this is several years ago. And it was I think, at a time when probably before his prices went up, it was about £18 a bottle. Did it rock my world? No. But I

thought it's pretty interesting. It had some structure. Again, it was definitely better than – what was the great variety from Yotes, again?

Henry Jeffreys 00:15:45 Divico.

Janina Doyle 00:15:46 Divico. It was definitely way better in my opinion than Divico and of course the pricing was appropriate as apposed to the Yotes Court one. The problem is and I think you touch on this, or I don't know if you do touch on this in the book, I've just imagined it but a lot of the names are quite weird like Souvignier gris. When someone sees something like Souvignier gris and things like that, I'm not sure whether...

Henry Jeffreys 00:16:32 And also that's the problem with a lot of the old German varieties. These are ones that were made at Geisenheim by crossing Riesling with something or other to make them ripen earlier or be more fungal resistant or more high yielding.

And they have names like Huxelrebe, Reichensteiner, Schoenberger, all these kinds of things. And they just don't sound like Pinot Noir or Chardonnay. They're not brand names. Whereas there are a couple of German varieties that do work really well and it's partly to do with how the wines taste, but also the names.

So, Bacchus, that's a German variety. And Ortega is another German variety and they both thrive in England. After a long time of being a bit of a Bacchus sceptic, because people were making it in that huge green asparagus sort of style, and now people are being a bit more restrained using oak using different yeast strains and people like Flint in Norfolk are making these very elegant sort of peachy, almost sort of Sancerre-esque wines out of Bacchus, which I just think a wonderful.

And then Ortega, which is a speciality of Biddenden in Kent, I think has a huge future. I think Biddenden, obviously, makes a very good one. Westwell, who I've mentioned before, they make a sort of Albariño style one, which in 2022, a warm vintage was wonderful. My wife who is Californian and very sceptical about English wine loves Westwell Ortega, it was sort of the wine of the summer.

So, I think those kinds of slightly forgotten German varieties could have a really good future because they do get higher yields than with the difficult French varieties. So, yeah, I think there might be a kind of German variety renaissance at some point.

Janina Doyle 00:18:09 This is the second wine that you tasted at the South Downs bar. So this is literally only a few weeks ago, it was the mix up volume four. And it is made from Muller-Thurgau and Reichensteiner.

But the nice thing about the Blackbook wines is they have really cool labels, they're really catchy. I think they call for a younger audience because they look really attractive, just the bottle alone. And then that's a really interesting way to be able to get people to try these slightly more unusual varieties or ones that people wouldn't normally go to.

And Sergio is just such a great winemaker that he seems to just really get it right with these slightly different varieties. That wine was just so textural. It was so interesting. I think it had this kind of ginger root edge, but it was one of those wines that is not about the aromatics, the opposite of Bacchus, it's much more about you know, take your time, sit with it, see how it changes as it warms up a little bit, but it was a fantastic wine. So, for me, it gives me faith that it's good enough, but it's just whether consumers would get behind it.

Henry Jeffreys 00:19:21 I agree. I think the mix up is wonderful. I tried the 2021 Vintage, a difficult vintage. And you're right. It's fruity, it's dry, and he does a lovely textural thing. There's that sort of creaminess to it. And I think that's the way to sell them is with these funky labels and you know, don't say try and get people to pronounce Reichensteiner or Muller-Thurgau. Just be like, "This is the name of the label. You'll love it."

I think that's a challenge. It's to get because England does these Germanic blends really, really well but it's just trying to persuade customers who are brought up on Pinot Grigio or Chardonnay to just ignore the grape variety and just go for the label.

Janina Doyle 00:20:04 Again, if you think about so many fantastic wines from around the world, many of them are blends. There are some really interesting wines coming out of Italy. There are places that have Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Viognier blends, whatever. There's some really interesting, and it's not that the grape variety is irrelevant. It's like, "Hey, this is a great wine. Give it a go."

So, yeah, well, we'll see. And you talk about those fun labels. Tim Wildman's old vine, like the Pet-Nat. I mean, The Lost in a Field. The minute I tasted that years ago, I was like, it tastes like a Solero Lolly like, tropical mango yumminess. It was just fun. It's approachable. It was interesting. And his labels just catch you. So, I think he's really started a bit of a kind of like England's version of cult following. Think I'm a bit ahead of the game. We're probably not quite there. But I think if there was a cult wine, I mean, he might be up there towards the top of the list. I don't know what you think.

Henry Jeffreys 00:21:06 Yeah, I've never tried his wine. I spoke to him for the book but I still haven't got round to trying them.

Janina Doyle 00:21:14 Oh, my God! I don't actually know if he does more than one. As far as I'm concerned. The only one I've ever tried is one called Lost in the Field. It's a Pet-Nat. And it's orange coloured. Orange-Pinky coloured and just has really beautiful fruit. It's a massive mix of loads of different grape varieties. Lots.

He's got that very, very cool project which is to get people to come and help rescue old vineyards, ones that have super, super old vines, of course, most likely Germanic and they come and help in the vineyard and then they can eat and camp in that vineyard overnight. So, be part of the project and really get involved and be part of nature. I need to get him on the podcast at some point in time.

Henry Jeffreys 00:21:55 He's a really interesting man. Pretty interesting man. So, we're talking about England's cult wine, I would say, it's Charlie Herring. He's another Tim, Tim Phillips. He makes wine in a walled garden in Hampshire.

He's apparently the only person who's ever made a successful dry Riesling, though when I visited him, it had all sold out. I'd say he is about as close as you'll get to a cult wine. They sell out instantly. He could double his prices and then still sell out.

He's such an interesting man because he's this amazing mixture of being a daredevil. He rode the Isle of Man TT on his Ducati but he's also an accountant as well. So, he's like a kind of maverick accountant. So, he takes these huge risks. He ploughs his own furrow, but he makes sure everything is really carefully costed as well, so that he has a sustainable business. Brilliant. Really interesting, man.

Janina Doyle 00:23:52 Am I right in thinking because I know you do mention him in the book that that walled garden where he has been able to successfully ripe a Riesling. Was this also the same garden or something that they grew a pineapple in? Am I making this up?

Henry Jeffreys 00:23:06 I don't know if it was were they... There is that famous Hothouse pineapple, isn't there? I don't think it's the same place. That's exactly what the garden was for. It was for Victorian times. It was lined up to get the evening sun. And it's where they would grow peaches and lemons and oranges, so that the people in the big house, this is before supermarkets and stuff, obviously before you got fruit shipped in from South Africa.

This is so that the rich people in the house could have lemons and oranges and stuff. And then, he was derelict and he bought it for, well, I think originally the owner wanted a million pounds for it, but he ended up getting it for £80,000. Cleared it all out. He planted Chardonnay, Sauvignon, see he's an accountant, so he's good at that. He planted Chardonnay, Riesling, and Sauvignon Blanc, and makes these incredible, tiny quantities of organic wine in his walled garden and he told me he could charge four times what he does for them, but they will just sell out instantly. So, he is England's cult producer.

Janina Doyle 00:24:09 Okay, well, now I'm gonna have to try and get my hands on one of them. And everyone else, race for it.

Henry Jeffreys 00:24:14 Yeah, well, the labels called Charlie Herring, which is his kind of brand name because he used to make wines in South Africa. But the winemaker is called Tim Phillips..

Janina Doyle 00:24:24 Okay, there you go, everybody, but you might not get it but keep your eyes open. If you ever find one, grab it. He's doing that organically. And actually, you've done a whole chapter on organic wine growing in England, which I thought was really fascinating because it really opened up my mind.

I'll be honest, I'm a bit like, ugh, yeah, organics and principle works but in England, too hard. And then actually, you talk about so many different producers who are actually doing great things and getting really good results because they're getting the soil in balance, and then not struggling with things like botrytis and fungus. And it's actually working. So, what was your take on all that? You've written a whole chapter.

Henry Jeffreys 00:25:13 Well, yeah, I think I was very lucky in the chapter in that I don't have any axe to grind. I think a lot of people who write about sustainability, they either come down very hard on one side, or they come down very hard on the other. I don't really care so I was very curious about how it would work.

And a lot of people who are sort of organic friendly, would then say, copper sulphate, which is what is generally used as a fungicide is so poisonous that they would much rather use synthetic fungicide. So, I'm thinking about Flint in Norfolk or Westwell in Kent, they'd rather use a synthetic fungicide and not be organic than use copper sulphate and be organic. So, I thought that was really interesting.

And then there are some people who are fully organic, who don't use any synthetic fungicides, people like Davenport in Kent and Sussex, or Harrow & Hope in Buckinghamshire, and they seem to be getting tremendous results, good yields, that kind of stuff.

I didn't really come to any firm conclusions. I was just interested in how many different ways there are to farm and how people approach things in a different way. But I think it is very hard to do it organically.

I mean, if I was growing grapes, I don't think I'd try just because of that dampness we were talking about. And Taittinger, who grow organically in their vineyards in Champagne, don't do it in Kent because it's too damp, and they're not ready to do it at the moment.

So, there's lots of ways of doing things. And then there was the whole sort of regenerative viticulture thing, which was about soil health, and how, in the end, perhaps it doesn't really matter whether you're organic or not, what really matters is the health of the soil. So, you need to be careful about what you put into it, whether that's copper sulphate, or whether that's fungicide or herbicide or that kind of stuff.

So, it was a real quite a learning experience. And something that I just realised that coming down really hard on one, you're saying, I'm organic, therefore I'm doing it right, or you're wrong, because you're not organic, was really the wrong way to look at it. And it's really the philosophy behind it, I think matters more than whether you fill in the, you know, your biodynamic or your organic, which are sort of labels, really.

Janina Doyle 00:27:45 Precisely, I have to say of all of the chapters, but this might be because I'm already in the English Wine Industry, so part of it I already knew. But this chapter, I just found really fascinating because I think you used all your knowledge from speaking to so many different winemakers and brought it together to create another question. There is no answer, is there?

And I think you mentioned Tim Phillips actually really says, no, you know what, it can be cheaper to be organic if you're a smaller winery. Again, it depends on the size, let alone your objective. My takeaway was how fascinating it was that apparently, by being organic that the leaves can get more, I think you said leathery, and that the skins can be thicker. So, actually, again, the fungus problem can be solved in certain places by being organic. Everybody, read the chapter and then have your own conclusion, but I just think quite clearly lies out really easily more questions and this understanding that there is no right answer, there is no one way to do things, right?

Henry Jeffreys 00:28:52 Thank you for that because it was definitely the hardest chapter to write because I just spoke to so many people just trying to organise all the information that I had was really hard. And I kind of finished the chapter sort of almost as confused as when I started. I just thought, actually that's not a bad thing because as I just said, it shows there isn't a simple answer. And to try and pretend that there is would be wrong.

Janina Doyle 00:29:18 Well, there you go. I as a person in the wine industry, who is aware what organics is, and which wineries use organics, I bloody love that chapter because it just opened up my eyes a little bit more and I felt like I really learned something. So, thanks for doing that for us.

Henry Jeffreys 00:29:33 Well, I certainly learned something about it as well because I didn't know anything about it when I started.

Janina Doyle 00:29:36 Well, there you go. Everyone, read the organic chapter. So, I want to touch on. I love it as well, your insights what you've been able to get. I learned that in the conversations we've had of how we brand English sparkling, what would we call it? And of course, I always heard that there was Britannia or Britannique that did these kind of words and nothing ever stuck. But you had people coming together saying let's call it Fred?

Henry Jeffreys 00:30:01 That was Antony Rose, I think, came up with Fred.

Janina Doyle 00:30:07 Why Fred?

Henry Jeffreys 00:30:08 Oh, I can't remember. It was like fermentation, remuage, something else, and disgorgment.

Janina Doyle 00:30:14 Okay. Can you imagine ordering a glass of Fred?

Henry Jeffreys 00:30:19 Yeah. So, that was a funny one. Malcolm Gluck, I think as a joke, said it should be called a Pippa after Pippa Middleton. This was around the time everyone was obsessed with Pippa Middleton, which I assume was a joke, but may not have been.

Janina Doyle 00:30:35 It didn't work. It didn't stick.

Henry Jeffreys 00:30:37 Yeah. It's a really tough one because as we said, you want people to be aware of the difference between a champagne method one and a Prosecco method one. Well, that's a Prosecco and it says Champagne on the label, which would obviously be the easiest way to do it. So, if someone could come up with a name, that would be great.

So, we're talking about what do you call an English champagne style wine? And I think that's part of the reason why Mark Driver came up with his Sussex PDO, like Appellation Contrôlée for Sussex, which, you know, as people have pointed out, doesn't make a lot of sense, because Sussex really isn't that different to Hampshire or Kent. But I think it's a way of defining his wine and saying only champagne method wines could be called Sussex. I think, in some ways, it's very clever. I don't think it'll take off though, but you can see what he's trying to do.

Janina Doyle 00:31:33 I mean, we quite clearly, again, when we talk about marketing, there's lots of challenges isn't there? But I think, actually what's been really useful over the last few years and of course, with the lockdowns, people not necessarily being able to leave the country, what really helped, I think, was from a tourist point of view, that people had to go places in England because they couldn't leave. And certainly, I know from working for Balfour Winery and speaking to others, gosh, the amount of visitors that many wineries got just went through the roof.

And so, once you've visited a winery, oh my god, you become an honorary brand ambassador anyway, don't you know it's such a, "The wine never tastes as good as in that moment when you drink it in the vineyard." That's just the rules for everything. Every winery in the world, right?

Henry Jeffreys 00:32:14 Yeah, of course. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:32:15 And actually, I mean, you touch on quite a few different places that people can go and visit. Did you have any that you just thought, oh, God, yeah, this is an amazing place to come down to? Or is there any way you could stay overnight that you would recommend to somebody. Maybe somebody from America who's listening who's going to come to England, they might have just one place that they can go to? There's something that comes to your mind straightaway.

Henry Jeffreys 00:32:43 Not really. I don't really know about staying the night because I've never stayed the night in an English vineyard because I live in southeast England. I mean, the one that is just the most extraordinary is Breaky Bottom, Peter Hall's vineyard, because you're not particularly far from Brighton, but it feels like you're in the middle of nowhere, and you drive for two miles down this track and then you're in this perfect little lost valley.

It feels like you're cut off from, not just the 20th century or 21st century, but the modern age, and you've got this beautiful, tiny little valley with a cottage at the bottom. And then vines growing up the steep hillsides. And it's just I think one of the most beautiful places in England and one of the most beautiful vineyards I've ever been to.

And what's so wonderful about it is it's not set up for tourism at all. You have to email Peter Hall. And if he's got time to show you around, and you better buy a case, otherwise you'll be in trouble. But there's nowhere else like it in the world. So, I would say I'm afraid you'll have to take a risk and go to, drop Peter Hall a line, and see if he's got the time to show you around.

Janina Doyle 00:33:546 No, well, I love it. I love the fact that I thought you were gonna go with some of the bigger ones but I appreciate that because people can contact me and I can give them loads or lists of places where they could stay or visit. But I like that you've personally from your experiences, and based on visiting lots of vineyards and wineries in England, that actually that's one that people should try and get to.

So, no, that's a much better answer than actually I was expecting. So, you pass the test because other people could quickly Google hotel wineries stays, right, and see.

Henry Jeffreys 00:34:28 I'm not trying to be rude to English vineyard, most of whom do the tourism thing really well, but a lot of the big ones do it in quite a similar sort of way. So, you've got this sort of thing overlooking the vines and it's all very elegant and tasteful and stuff like that. But if you visit a lot of wineries like I do, they can all sort of merge into each other a little bit.

So, I think wine writers are always after something a little bit different to what members of the public are after. Public is looking for a good time, something beautiful, whereas wine writers are often looking for something a bit strange, a bit unusual. So, the ones that appeal to us aren't necessarily the ones that will appeal to members of the public.

Janina Doyle 00:35:09 Yeah. Well, the point is you described it beautifully. And I think we all with the busyness of life could do with going to a place where we can switch off and feel like we're in the middle of nowhere, right?

Henry Jeffreys 00:35:22 Yeah, exactly.

Janina Doyle 00:35:24 I love that. I love that a lot. So, I will slowly start summing this up. But I just feel we've mentioned lots of key players, important people in the industry that people might want to google and investigate more, because there's loads of stories, but I want to touch on one or two more.

Bob Lindo, I think you talk about which is absolutely brilliant, from Camel Valley, down in Cornwall. I did not know about him camping outside Gatwick during the Olympics of 2012 because he was campaigning against the fact that they were advertising champagne and not English sparkling wine. I had no idea about that. So, I loved that. Was that something that he told you about?

Henry Jeffreys 00:36:08 That was one from, I thought, I heard from Oz Clarke. I think Bob told me it as well but I initially found it in Oz Clarke's book. And Bob has just been a brilliant publicist for English wine. And I think it helps that he's in Cornwall, and one of his first customers was Rick Stein. Do you know?

Janina Doyle 00:36:26 Yes, the fish.

Henry Jeffreys 00:36:27 Exactly. And so, Rick Stein has featured Bob in his programmes and stuff. And Bob is just a natural showman. He's a salesman, and a great winemaker as well. Because he's been doing it since the 80s, kind of pre Nyetimber. And so, before you had to do things to get himself noticed. And he's always been very, very good at that.

Janina Doyle 00:36:51 Yeah. Well, I just thought that was absolutely brilliant, and goes to show the personalities that we have in the English wine industry.

Henry Jeffreys 00:37:00 And I think winemakers around the world, as I'm sure you know, always tend to be opinionated and full of interesting things to say. You don't ever meet a dull winemaker. And then I think that goes double for England because I think you still have to be a bit eccentric to make wine in England.

It's so bloody difficult. The weather is still very, very hard to predict. Like, we don't even know if we're going to have a good vintage this year. It's still up in the air. So, I think English winemakers are some of the most bloody minded, difficult, opinionated, fractious, fascinating people in the world as I learned from researching the book,

Janina Doyle 00:37:43 Honestly, you're so right. I mean, if things are easy, it's not worth doing, isn't it?

Henry Jeffreys 00:37:46 Exactly. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:37:47 You point on the fact just for people listening, just to give some context, like, "We don't know if we're going to have a good vintage this year." Last year, down at Balfour Winery, I can comment we started picking on the 13th of September last year. Now granted, it was actually a little bit earlier than normal. But that's what we had.

Right now, I was going to do a special harvest day with some press. And I'm having to change the date because I was going to do the 29th, the idea of them picking grapes not for the whole morning, for perhaps 20 minutes, then coming in tasting some of the actual pressed juice of that moment.

I spoke to our winemaker and he's like, "I don't think we'll even have grapes to pick." We need we're probably going to need to be looking at the first week of October. Fingers crossed that the weather holds and we don't have any surprises. But like, yeah, for vintage to vintage, it's so crazy. And now it's just that waiting game of please ripen, please ripen. We're not there yet.

Henry Jeffreys 00:38:50 In 2021 in Essex, they were picking on bonfire night.

Janina Doyle 00:38:54 Oh, my God!

Henry Jeffreys 00:38:55 We got some really nice Pinot Noir, but it was down to the wire whether there were going to be a ripen it and they did but it was touch and go.

Janina Doyle 00:39:04 But now you talk about Essex and I think that's a nice place just to finish off. We've mentioned Kent and Sussex, which we should because actually the majority of the vineyards are found there and then obviously scooping around.

But Essex, more, more plantings are happening. Essex it's a very exciting place. Crouch Valley specifically, it's like this little microclimate that everyone is getting very excited about. And you write in your book that John Atkinson, who's a master of wine and very involved in the English wine industry. He

thinks that we have our very own Petrus in our Essex soils, which is very exciting and I hope people listening maybe their ears perk up and go, okay, hang on. So, what are your thoughts after having a little chat with him?

Henry Jeffreys 00:39:50 I mean, I only understand about half of what John Atkinson says. Most goes over my head because he gets very, very into different types of clay and I can't follow most of what he says.

But I can follow his enthusiasm. And I can taste the wines which he's the consultant at Danbury Ridge, and the quality is just off the scale. So, even easily 2021 wine, which was a very difficult vintage, most people didn't make particularly good red wines, if they made any red wines at all, Danbury Ridge, just tasted them out of the barrel and they were so ripe, so good.

And it wasn't just them. Lyme Bay who are based in Devon, but they make their still wines from Essex fruit. Their 2021 Pinot Noir was just big and ripe, almost sort of Sonoma or something. So, Essex is just for people like me who love English wine, I love English sparkling wine. I love the still wines in a good year.

In Essex, they can do it every year. They can get those flavours, they can get the skins ripe enough to make red wine every year. So, it's very, very exciting. And you know, the wines are expensive but...

Janina Doyle 00:41:07 ...Worth it.

Henry Jeffreys 00:41:08 But I think they're worth it. Yeah, exactly. I mean, it's sort of 30 quid a bottle. But if you think about what you pay for a top Californian, or not the top Californian Pinot Noir, just a California Pinot Noir. It's about the same. I just think Essex is so exciting. And I recommend people tracking down some Essex's Chardonnay or Pinot Noir because I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Janina Doyle 00:41:34 Nor do I. And so, to conclude, Henry, after all of this research, what is the direction for English wine?

Henry Jeffreys 00:41:43 Well, I think it's Chardonnay. I think Chardonnay is the future. I think Kent and Essex make fantastic Chardonnay. I think that we'll be able to do it at more reasonable prices in the future. It'll never be cheap, but it'll compete head on with Chablis, Burgundy.

Rosé. I think, we'll see an awful lot more of English Rosé, which is getting better and better the whole time. Everyone's Rosé, they're not an afterthought anymore. I think before people put in grapes that weren't ripe enough, they were grassy. They're not anymore. They're really good. So, I think sparkling wine is getting better the whole time but already there. Then Rosé and Chardonnay, I think those are the two that we'll be seeing a lot more of.

Janina Doyle 00:42:28 Amazing. Thank you. Everybody. Well, I'm going to leave the link in the show notes of where you can purchase this book. And I listened to it as an audiobook. So for those of you guys too busy, it's always time in the car or when you're cleaning. This is a fantastic book. I really enjoyed it. And it's read by you!

Henry Jeffreys 00:42:47 I know! I know! Yeah! I hope people like the sound of my voice because they are stuck with me for 300 pages.

Janina Doyle 00:42:54 Well, if they've got to the end of this podcast, I think that you're safe.

Henry Jeffreys 00:42:58 I hope people enjoy it. Let me know whether you enjoy it. And let me know if I've got anything wrong as well. I just had an email from someone making wine in the Cotswold to point out a couple of things I've got wrong.

Janina Doyle 00:43:09 There's always going to be one bit and bobs. You're fine. I loved it. So thank you so much for just touching on a little bit more and going in a bit more depth about this book. And there's so much more in this book that we could have done. So, just like I'm looking forward to your book two, the part two, we'll have to do the podcast, part three and four, when when that comes out, won't we?

Henry Jeffreys 00:43:30 I'd love to be on again. Thank you for having me.

Janina Doyle 00:43:32 Lovely! Thank you so much. And I'll see you soon.

Henry Jeffreys 00:43:34 Okay.

Janina Doyle 00:43:37 Take care. Bye!

Janina Doyle 00:43:42 If you are after a copy of Vines in a Cold Climate, I shall leave a link below in the show notes. But of course, you can just find it on Amazon. Also, if you want to get in contact with Henry, I mean, one of the easiest ways will be on Instagram. So @henrygjefferys

Again, I'll leave that down in the show notes. And as always, I will leave us with a wine quote and seeing as this was an episode on beautiful writing, I have found a quote from Natalie Goldberg who is an American author and speaker. And she said:

“Wine may be bottled poetry, but writing is the uncorking of the soul.”

Now, as I let you ponder on those beautiful words, I want to tell you who's coming on next week. I am talking with WSET Wine Educator, Sam Povey. And we will be talking about DRC (Domaine de la Romanee-Conti), which is one of the most prestigious estates in the world.

This is taking us to Burgundy and we're going to be talking about Sam's challenge to himself to start with a bottle of supermarket red wine and trade it all the way up to one of the most expensive bottles in the world.

So, we're going to be talking about many wines he has been trading on the way. You didn't want to miss this episode. He's a fantastic speaker, a fantastic educator, of course. And granted, we can't all get our hands on one of these bottles of DRC, but some of the other wines that we mention in next week's episode, you can and you may feel inspired.

So, that is it for today. If you're enjoying the episodes, you know what to do, do leave a review or some stars, share with your wine loving friends. And I'll see you back here next week where hopefully some can inspire you with some new wines you might not have heard of before. So, until next week, wine friends, cheers to you!