

ROBIN HUTSON, FOUNDER OF THE PIG HOTELS, CREATES HIS FIRST UK VINEYARD

The village of Madehurst has seen its first vineyard planted this season. This passion project was the brainchild of Robin Hutson, Chairman of THE PIGs and wine enthusiast who has long hankered after making wine in the UK, Madehurst Lodge (soon to be THE PIG-in the South Downs) presenting the perfect opportunity.

The two-acre South West facing field directly in front of what will become the main restaurant of the hotel is perfect land for vines to grow. Previously used for grazing alpacas, this is where the team is now creating the group's first vineyard. The free draining chalky subsoil with silt and clay, together with the elevation and orientation, offers excellent conditions for planting the varietal vines of Champagne and Burgundy.

Robin and co have received encouragement and guidance from many of their UK wine maker friends, in particular Ian Kellett from Hambleton Vineyard in Hampshire and Charles Simpson from Simpsons Wine Estate in Kent, with the vineyard works carried out by one of England's most experienced specialist contractors – James Dodson of Sussex based Vine Works.

The Pigs' own team of kitchen gardeners, headed up by Ollie Hutson and Alex Coutts, together with input from the wine team in particular Luke from The Pig at Bridge Place, are all involved in nurturing the vines and eventually creating the wines - a really exciting team project.

4,000 vines have now been planted; Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier together with a small quantity of a secret experimental variety. If all goes according to plan the vineyard could yield up to 4,000 bottles of sparkling wine or 6,000 bottles of still wine. The wine team is remaining tight lipped for the moment about what styles they are hoping to make.

This is a long term project with the first harvest unlikely before 2022. Robin says "I can't wait to taste that first glass, albeit a couple of years away yet. The investment further endorses our complete commitment to home grown, to local produce and to local contractors. We will post regular updates from the vineyard as we progress. Wish us luck!"

The Pig in the South Downs is due to open early summer 2021.

Notes to Editors

THE PIG group is a personal collection of small lifestyle restaurants with rooms where the focus is on authenticity and informality of design, food and service. There are currently six PIG hotels; THE PIG, THE PIG-near Bath, THE PIG-on the beach; THE PIG-at Combe, THE PIG-in the wall and THE PIG-at Bridge Place. With an obsessive commitment to home grown and local produce, THE PIG celebrates the seasons and uses only the best, freshest and most authentic foods and ingredients. It is all about the kitchen gardens, they are the beating heart of the operation. Everything is driven by the kitchen gardener/forager and chef. They grow and source the food and the chef then creates the menu; uncomplicated and simple kitchen garden food, true to the micro seasons with the emphasis squarely on fresh, clean flavours. What cannot be grown in THE PIG's kitchen garden is sourced within a 25-mile radius of each hotel. There are no 'cookie-cutter roll-outs'; each hotel has its own personality and sense of self. Every property comes with laid-back warm service and a genuine commitment to environmental and social responsibility. THE PIG hotels aim to deliver an outstanding experience for every guest; a 'wow' moment that surprises and delights for a price that won't break the bank. Home grown in every way – breaking the mould of designed hotels by working with what it has and recognising what is good about that. Designed in the style that has become THE PIG's signature, each hotel has a garden restaurant and bedrooms with a touch of luxury and bags of homely charm plus Potting Shed massage treatment rooms in or near the kitchen gardens.

THE PIG-in the South Downs will open in Spring 2021. THE PIG-at Harlyn Bay will open later this year.