

Ham Street Wines

Self-Guided Tour

Hamstreet · Kent · England

HAM STREET WINES

5 X

4 X

VINEYARD

2 X

3 X

1 X

WINERY

6 X



Welcome to Ham Street Wines

Welcome to Ham Street Wines, the project of Lucie and Jules. It all started with a bit of a quarter-life crisis — a common millennial bug. They loved wine, being outdoors and nature, and had a creeping suspicion that the corporate life they had started might not be forever.

The idea of 'the good life' — running a vineyard, living seasonally and farming with nature — appealed to them. They first looked across Europe, but soon realised that England was becoming one of the world's most exciting emerging wine regions. So they started looking closer to home...

With no background in farming or viticulture, but jobs that at least meant they could work out the finances, they went down the rabbit hole: volunteering at vineyards, reading obsessively and speaking to experts across the industry. They could pursue the dream — but only on a small scale, and only by selling up in London and putting everything into the new venture.

Luck struck when, while volunteering at a local vineyard, they were pointed towards this site — amazingly, it was even listed on Rightmove. One thing led to another and, in early 2018, they took on four hectares of prime vineyard land just outside Hamstreet, Kent.

— Head up into the vineyard and into the alleyway between the two blocks of vines. Walk all the way to the far end.

The Vineyard

Walking into the central alley gives you an amazing view of the site: vines stretching behind you towards ancient woodland, and ahead towards the Romney Marsh, with views all the way to Dungeness on the coast.

This is a hotspot for vineyards — the sunniest part of the UK, relatively dry compared to western Britain, and surprisingly warm. We are almost in France, after all.

Site selection is critical in the UK to minimise frost risk, reduce disease pressure and help ripen grapes successfully. This site slopes gently to the south-east, lies close to sea level and benefits from a healthy breeze. Cold air drains away, reducing frost risk, while airflow keeps humidity down and the vines healthy.

Vineyard soils are not just about chalk. Many great wine regions — including parts of Champagne — are planted on clay soils like those at Ham Street. Here, the vineyard sits on heavy clay with topsoils of clay, silt and loam. These soils are fertile, hold moisture well and retain heat, helping the vines stay healthy and the grapes ripen fully.

In 2019, 16,000 vines were planted across 10 acres, including Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Bacchus and Pinot Gris. Additional plantings include hybrid vines, apple trees for cider, perry pears, cherries, plums and cobnuts.

— *Now head back towards the woodland and pause beside a row of vines.*

The Season

Look down the rows and observe the vines. How do they look? What can you see?

The season begins in January with pruning — cutting back the previous year's growth and setting the potential crop for the coming vintage. It is the vineyard's most important task: meticulous, skilled and painstaking winter work. Once pruning is complete, cuttings are removed and mulched, and the vines are tied down ahead of budburst in March and April.

As the vines spring to life in April and May, attention shifts to removing unwanted shoots, adjusting wires to support the vines, and applying early composts and treatments.

From June onwards, the season becomes all-consuming. Vines need tucking in, leaf plucking to improve airflow and sunlight exposure, bunch thinning to fine-tune crop levels, topping, mowing and spraying. Long days matched by even longer to-do lists.

In August, veraison begins — the moment when grapes change colour. Green berries slowly turn deep blue-black or golden, depending on the variety. The bunches swell and ripen, and there is little left to do except monitor the fruit and wait.

September and October bring harvest: the culmination of a year's work, weather and decisions. If you visit during this period, you may see the team hand-picking grapes alongside volunteers, friends and family.

— *Now head towards the large oak tree and follow the edge of the woodland uphill.*

The Soil Beneath Your Feet

Did you know that a teaspoon of healthy soil can contain up to one billion bacteria and kilometres of fungal networks? Everything here begins with living soil.

A healthy, biologically active soil allows vines to access nutrients, resist pests and disease more effectively, and reach their full potential. The aim here is to bring some of the complexity and resilience of the forest ecosystem into the vineyard itself.

After planting, Lucie and Jules initially followed conventional advice involving heavy tillage and chemical inputs. But after digging a soil pit and learning more about regenerative agriculture, they were shocked by what they found: compacted, lifeless soil with few worms and little biological activity.

Despite warnings from almost everyone they spoke to, they decided to convert to organic farming. They planted diverse cover crops with more than 17 species, applied composts and compost teas, and focused on rebuilding soil health.

The changes came gradually but clearly. Worms returned. Soil structure improved. The earth developed the rich smell of living biology again. Above ground, the cover crops encouraged biodiversity — filling the vineyard with insects, birds and plant life.

Building healthy soil is a long-term process, measured in years and decades.

— *Continue uphill to the corner of the vineyard — and watch out for the beehives.*

Biodynamics and Modern Techniques

After beginning organic conversion and becoming certified organic in 2022, Ham Street achieved full biodynamic certification in 2024.

Biodynamics treats the farm as a single living organism, aiming to recycle nutrients and build resilience through biodiversity. Plants such as dandelion, nettle, valerian and horsetail are brewed into teas and preparations for the vines because of their medicinal and nutritional qualities.

The biodynamic preparations — including horn manure and horn silica — alongside composts and cover crops, are used to stimulate soil life and improve the health of the vineyard ecosystem.

Biodynamics also encourages growers to work with lunar cycles and seasonal rhythms. Much of the philosophy centres around timing and observation — modern viticulture increasingly supports the idea that timing greatly affects the effectiveness of vineyard treatments.

Alongside these traditional ideas, Ham Street also embraces modern techniques. Sap analysis allows Lucie and Jules to monitor vine nutrition in detail and respond precisely to what the plants actually need, rather than relying on standard high-input fertiliser programmes.

The broader aim: combine the best of regenerative, organic and biodynamic farming with the most useful modern science.

— *Now make your way back downhill towards the winery.*

The Winery

The winery building beside the vineyard was completed in time to process the 2023 vintage on site.

It is powered entirely by solar energy, while rainwater collected from the roof is reused around the farm. Waste is kept to a minimum — even bottles are collected and reused where possible.

This low-energy approach shapes the winemaking itself. Grapes are pressed gently using a traditional wooden basket press, while wines are moved carefully by gravity or gas rather than heavy pumping systems.

Winemaking follows a low-intervention, biodynamic philosophy. Fermentations rely on native yeasts naturally present on the grapes, and wines are moved and bottled according to the lunar calendar.

The wines are made naturally, with minimal additions and little or no filtration or fining. But for Lucie and Jules, natural wine starts in the vineyard. Farming with healthy soils, biodiversity and ecological balance produces fruit with greater complexity, texture and character.

In the winery, they produce small, experimental and expressive wines using old barrels, amphorae and fibreglass vessels — wines that reflect the site, the season and the personality of Ham Street itself.

Now for the best part — the tasting. Head back to the winery, ask for a glass, and enjoy.