

Fine Wine Storage Nirvana

Written by Brand King

"If Elysium can be contemplated on earth, the claims of Fonthill will be irresistible."

This quote from a 19th Century sales register, perhaps best captures Fonthill's standing in the upper echelons of great English estates.

Now, in conjunction with fine wine storage leaders EHD London, Fonthill Estate Vaults is proud to bring all the sophistication, exclusivity and elegance of privileged living to the wine game. Warehousing will never be the same again.

For nearly five centuries Fonthill Estate has been the home of some of Britain's wealthiest and most privileged folk, from Sir John Marvyn (sheriff of Wiltshire) and Lord Cottington (Chancellor of the Exchequer for Charles the 1st), to Alderman William Beckford (Lord Mayor of London) and Richard Grosvenor (2nd Marquess of Westminster).

By 1829 most of the estate had come into the possession of entrepreneur and burgeoning politician James Morrison (MP for St Ives, amongst others). With a taste for property, Morrison and his heirs spent the next 180 years acquiring much of the surrounding land - expanding, renovating and rebuilding many of the homes constructed to the architectural whims of the times by their esteemed forebears. By 2009 the estate had grown from the original 1200 acres that James Morrison had acquired, to over 9000.

In 2013, Lord Margadale, the fifth heir (and third Morrison Lord) expanded the property further to include 24 decommissioned ammunition bunkers, previously owned by the Ministry of Defence at neighbouring Chilmark. Whilst the bunkers and associated buildings had a distinctive military quality, they were nothing that couldn't be improved with a Lord's touch. With weather strengthened interiors, landscaped gardens, a splash of local art and noticeable, if deftly placed, high end security, the site has been brought up to a standard agreeable even to Lord Margadale's own sheep, which keep the lawns in check four times a year.

The bunkers, with a year round ambient temperature of between 10 and 15 degrees Celsius, have been cleaned, painted, removed of unexploded ordnance and modified for the arrival of some of the world's finest wines. Lord Margadale himself will be storing much of his own collection at the site.

With EHD at the forefront of fine wine storage, thanks primarily to their renowned Locke King Vaults facility in Surrey, the union with Fonthill Estate was a natural one.

"The overwhelming success of our subterranean tunnels at Brooklands convinced me there was a market for elite wine storage," says EHD London/Fonthill Estate Vaults Managing Director, Michael Phelps. "I was certain that we had the expertise and experience to manage it; all we needed was the perfect site. When I saw what Lord Margadale had done with the Chilmark bunkers at Fonthill, it was as if the stars had aligned."

Prior to 1936, Chilmark Quarry's contribution to Britain's cultural and historical landscape came through providing some of the packing rock around nearby Stonehenge, as well as the limestone for Salisbury Cathedral. With war looming, however, the site was purchased by the RAF and developed into a storage facility for munitions. As the conflict expanded, more space was needed. The MOD dug into the hillside next to the quarry and built 24 bombproof bunkers.

It is these bunkers which EHD have developed into Fonthill Estate Vaults, thereby completing the circle and returning the once innocent Chilmark hillside to Elysium.