

April 2009

ASPARAGUS SEASON OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES IN EVESHAM ON ST GEORGE'S DAY

A host of British traditions - Morris Dancers, the world's only fortune-telling asparamancer, a convoy of Morgan cars and an asparagus address by Trevor Harrison who plays roguish Eddie Grundy on BBC Radio 4's The Archers – will herald the official launch of the English asparagus season on St George's Day at The Great English Asparagus Run.

The launch takes place in Worcestershire's Vale of Evesham, the home of English asparagus, renowned for being the tastiest in the world and also the largest supplier of the crop within Europe. Not only is asparagus important to the region's growers, it also attracts huge numbers of tourists throughout the season and scores of regional businesses become involved. Everyone is welcome to attend and it's completely free of charge.

A '100' round of Birlingham Nursery's finest asparagus spears - the first pick of the season - will be 'blessed' by Worcestershire's Lord Lieutenant, Michael Brinton, before being taken by the Morgan car convoy to Stratford upon Avon in neighbouring Warwickshire. Its arrival will be the first event in a series to mark Shakespeare's birthday which also falls on 23rd April.

Additional events happening in Abbey Park on 23rd April, Evesham, include:

- 13 runners carrying aspara-torches accompany the convoy to Stratford
- Avonbank Brass Band playing a medley of patriotic tunes including Elgar
- Award-winning Abbey Butchers of Pershore will be sampling the UK's official asparagus sausage – The Vale Porker

- Wayside Farm Shop in Wickhamford will be sampling their asparagus jam on asparagus and parmesan scones
- Spot Loggins' Supernatural Dairies have created asparagus ice cream.
- Gus the living Asparagus Man

Commenting on the event, organiser and tourism officer for the area, Angela Tidmarsh, said:

"We're inviting everyone to join us from 8am on 23rd April to enjoy the proceedings and support their local community. It is an event that makes everyone feel patriotic and proud to be British as well as the start of an exciting time for an area which suffered badly in the floods of 2007.

We're hoping that as Guinness is to St Patrick's Day so asparagus will become to St George's Day".

Celebrations continue throughout the asparagus season, which ends on Midsummer's Day in June.

- 13th May onwards - Asparabus Coach Tours which enable people to see asparagus being grown, taste different varieties and products, unearth the myths and legends as well as visit the only asparagus exhibition in the world. Booking is advised on 01386 792206
- Sunday 24th May - The world-famous Asparagus Auction at The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, the UK's oldest inn now owned by the National Trust
- Monday 25th May - Asparagus Festival Day also at The Fleece featuring rustic craft demonstrations, Elizabethan & Jacobean masque music and entertainers, vintage tractors, penny arcade and fairground organ, Hook Norton Brewery's dray horses

ENDS

For further information and images, please contact Sara Stewart on 07833 467774. To find out more about the Festival, visit www.britishasparagusfestival.org

Destination Worcestershire is the official public/private partnership promoting the county of Worcestershire as a tourist destination. For more information including What's On, Where to Stay, and places to visit go to : www.visitworcestershire.org .