
GLEN GRANT 1948

SINGLE CASK
SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT
SCOTCH WHISKY



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SINGLE CASK
SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY

by

Charles MacLean
MASTER OF THE QUAICH

Cask No. 1369, filled and bottled at 66 years old
by Gordon & MacPhail, Elgin, Scotland

Specially selected for



GLEN GRANT 1948

Vintage Cask

First published in Great Britain, May 2014
in an edition limited to 160 copies only

*by Gordon & MacPhail
and Wealth Solutions S.A.*

to accompany the Glen Grant 1948 Single Cask bottling

*Written by Charles MacLean
Designed by Jules Akel*

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F O R E W A R D

by Michael Urquhart

It gives me great pleasure to write the introduction to this special bottling of Glen Grant. Distilled on 10th April 1948, this Single Malt has been specially selected and bottled on 14th April 2014 for Wealth Solutions.

My family has been involved in Gordon & MacPhail since my Grandfather, John Urquhart, joined the two original partners, James Gordon and Alexander MacPhail, in its first year of trading in 1895 at the age of fourteen. John subsequently becoming senior partner in 1915 and was joined

by my father George, or Mr George as he was affectionately known in the business, in 1933. Together they developed and grew the business, particularly by filling new spirit from distilleries throughout Scotland into casks which they had selected to compliment the style of the spirit that over time would develop into a superb Single Malt Scotch Whisky.

On behalf of my family representing the third and fourth generation of the Urquhart family to be involved with the ownership and management of Gordon & MacPhail, I am

delighted to be able to write this introduction to our story and this wonderful Single Malt. Quietly maturing over the last sixty-six years in cask, the whisky displays subtle yet distinctive classic notes that reflect the quality of such a greatly aged Single Malt. Quality has, and continues to be, a corner stone in all we do and we take great pride in offering to discerning clients throughout the world a wide range of Single Malt spanning many decades.

We do hope you enjoy this delicious and unique bottling of Glen Grant distilled in 1948.





INTRODUCTION

by Wealth Solutions

We have flown thousands of kilometres to find this whisky for you. We have driven thousands of miles in Scotland and thousands of kilometres on the mainland; we have sat through dozens of meetings in Paris, Elgin and Warsaw to bring you this true gem; we have emailed hundreds of words; and hundreds of telephone calls have been made to make this product absolutely perfect for you. Was it worth it? Absolutely. Every second spent in preparing this product for you was an unforgettable

experience; today, we are sharing this experience with you.

We are really proud that we can offer you this unique bottle. This is truly wonderful whisky, which we are sure you will enjoy it just as we have enjoyed it. This is the taste you will never forget in your lifetime. Please find a good day, sit down with your friends, open the bottle and think about all the great things that have happened in the last 66 years in the world. And think that during all that time each and every one of those days made this whisky better and better. Please enjoy!

GLEN GRANT DISTILLERY

The First Century

In the Gaelic tongue, members of Clan Grant were known as Mac-na-Braiche, ‘the Children of the Malt’ and their homeland in what we now call Speyside was the leading district in Scotland for whisky distilling, both legal and illicit.

The founders of Glen Grant Distillery, John and James Grant, had the “reputation of being famous smugglers” [illicit distillers] but went legal when they leased Aberlour Distillery in 1833. Already they were drawing up plans for their own distillery, however, and when the lease expired in 1840 they

moved to the nearby village of Rothes and leased land from the Earl of Seafield upon which to build.

Trading as J. & J. Grant, they named their distillery ‘Glen Grant’; it was one of the largest in the Highlands, capable of distilling nearly 1,500 gallons of spirit a week [nearly 4,000 litres], or between 30 and 40,000 gallons a year [around 100,000 litres—which is what the smallest of contemporary distilleries produce!]





JOHN GRANT (1797–1864)

John, the elder brother, was managing partner. As a young man he worked on his father's farm at Inveravon, about eight miles from Rothes, and also established a business as a grain merchant, buying from local farmers and transporting the barley to the coast for shipment south by sea. In the 1820s he was also buying up most of the illicit whisky in the district, including that of George Smith of Glenlivet Distillery, which, though legally made, he also sold as 'smuggled', since that was what his customers preferred!

JAMES GRANT (1801–1872)

It was James' business acumen which built the firm's reputation. He had been trained as a lawyer in Elgin and

Edinburgh and became a solicitor and banker in the former. It was said that he always carried a £100 bank note with him when transacting business—worth over £6,000 in today's money. Having concluded a deal he would produce the note in payment, and since nobody could give change for so large an amount, always got extended credit!

The 1840s was the first era of railway building in the U.K., and the Grant brothers were ahead of their time in recognising the significance of this.

The line to Aberdeen from Perth, connecting the former with Edinburgh, Glasgow and England was opened in 1848, but as early as 1844, Elgin town council received a petition from James Grant proposing a line from the sea-port of Lossiemouth to Elgin, and from Elgin to Rothes.

The councillors were enthusiastic and the Morayshire Railway Company was incorporated in 1846. In 1851 Mrs James Grant cut the first sod for the new line and nine months later the line between Lossiemouth and Elgin opened. One of the company's earliest locomotives was named Glen Grant, and in 1858 the line reached Rothes.

James' involvement in the railway gave him a taste for local politics. He stood for election to the council and within four years, in 1848, became Provost [i.e. Mayor] of Elgin, a position he held for the next fifteen years.

Meanwhile his distillery installed the first electric light generator in the north of Scotland and, in 1865, added two pairs of unique pot stills of different sizes. Alas, 'Glengrant', as John Grant was affectionately known by the local community,

died the year before. His obituary reads: "His word was as good as his bond: his judgement shrewd and sagacious; his views enlightened". As founder and Captain of the local militia company, he was buried with full military honours.

His brother James followed him to the grave in 1872, when a day of mourning was declared in Elgin and all business ceased. "Until within a year of his death, he never had any bodily ailment, and his mind was equally powerful... He was of a cheerful disposition, and a better chairman at a public meeting or social entertainment could rarely be found".

Ownership of the distillery passed to James' son, 'Young' James Grant—he was twenty-five—who now became 'Glengrant', but later was universally known as 'The Major', his rank in the local volunteer regiment. Three years later





James employed a highly talented young man, George Grant, as manager. Although only twenty-four, George had already managed Linkwood Distillery and now he set about applying science to distillation at Glen Grant.

Within ten years the distillery's capacity had risen to 234,000 gallons a year [607,250 litres]. It was being sold "...in England, Scotland and the Colonies, and commands a high price in the market, alike for use by itself [i.e. as a single malt] and for blending", according to Alfred Barnard in his monumental *The Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom* (1887).

In a promotional leaflet it was claimed:

The GLEN-GRANT WHISKEY has been celebrated for upwards of 30 years, in Scotland, England and the Colonies, as peculiarly adapted for family use. It is pure, mild and agreeable; the

essential oils and impurities, which render other Whiskies harsh and disagreeable, are, in the GLEN-GRANT WHISKEY, detected and separated from it in the process of manufacture.

Business was booming. The Major built a substantial mansion, Glen Grant House, adjacent to his distillery, and a magnificent woodland garden in the glen behind, with well-tended lawns, flowerbeds and orchards, employing fifteen gardeners to keep it in order. At the top of the garden he installed a 'rustic hut' overlooking a narrow ravine, where he secreted a small safe embedded in the rock-face, from which he would conjure a bottle of Glen Grant to entertain friends on summer evenings.

He was a keen sportsman and spent as much time as he could fishing for salmon in the River Spey and shooting

grouse—in full Highland dress!—in the surrounding hills. He also went after Big Game in India and Africa, and the walls of Glen Grant House were decorated with trophy heads, some of which are still to be seen in the distillery’s visitor centre.

On one of his hunting trips to West Africa in 1894, Major Grant found a young Matabele boy abandoned beside the road—his parents had been killed in a tribal feud and after a fruitless search for relatives to look after him, the Major resolved to take him back to Scotland. He was christened ‘Biawa Makalaga’, since he had been found ‘by the wayside’ in Makalaga Province, and after attending the village school in Rothes, became the Major’s valet and loyal servant—and also a keen follower of Rothes Football Club,

for which he once played. He died in 1972, universally loved by the local community.

Major Grant had long preceded him to ‘the other place’. He died in May 1931, leaving instructions that Biawa should always have a room in Glen Grant House, coal for his fire from the distillery and a meal each day at the local hotel. Eccentric to the last, the Major required that all the distillery workers should not dress up for his funeral, but wear their working clothes. Embarrassed, many went out and bought new working clothes for the occasion!

The next ‘Glengrant’ was also a Major—Douglas Mackessack, James Grant’s grandson. He had joined the business only two years before his grandfather died, and although he had no previous experience of distilling

immediately set about expanding the market for Glen Grant as a single malt, building strong relationships with wine merchants throughout the U.K. In this he was a pioneer: very little malt whisky was bottled as ‘single’ in those days, 99.99% of the make going into blended Scotch.

He incorporated the business as a limited company—J. & J. Grant, Glen Grant, Ltd.—expanded production and began to bottle at 12 years old, as well as the more usual 4 years. On the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, he joined his regiment, the Seaforth Highlanders, narrowly escaping death the following year at St Valery, where he was captured and spent the rest of the war as a PoW.

Barley for distilling was rationed on the outbreak of

war, and distilling ceased altogether between 1942 and 1944 and then resumed at a much reduced level. It was essential to increase stock, but the Labour government elected in 1945 ignored Winston Churchill’s famous memo—“On no account reduce the barley for whisky”—and adopted the slogan “Food Before Whisky”. Barley was allocated to distillers only on the understanding that three-quarters of the whisky made would be sold in export markets.

During the season 1946/47, 9.1 million gallons of whisky was distilled throughout Scotland: in 1938/39 it had been 38 million gallons. At the same time, stocks of whisky in bond had fallen from 144 million gallons to 84 million gallons, while demand, both at home and abroad, had never been stronger: the very fact that Scotch was scarce added to its desirability.



In May 1947 a deal was struck between the Scotch Whisky Association and the Minister for Food for the immediate release of 50,000 tons of cereals, to be followed by a further 75,000 tons if the harvest was good, on condition that distillers accept filling orders only from companies which would distribute 75% mature stock in export markets (especially hard currency markets). In 1948 releases to the home market were cut to 20% of pre-war level. Restrictions on grain supply were only removed in 1950, and constraints on exports remained in place until 1954.

To add insult to injury, the British government annually increased duty: in 1939 the price of a bottle of standard blended Scotch was 12/6d [62.5p]; by 1948 it was 35/- [£1.75]

of which 24/3d was tax. These high taxes in the home market made it essential to find overseas outlets, and in this Glen Grant was singularly successful.

In 1959 Major Mackessack was joined by his son-in-law, Hugh Mitcalfe, who was appointed marketing director, and soon after this the company was approached by an Italian gentleman who wanted to distribute Glen Grant in Italy. Armando Giovinetti was given fifty cases to start him off; by 1970 he was selling 60,000 cases a year—the first single malt to take off in an export market.

GORDON & MACPHAIL

A Family Business Since 1895

On 24th May 1895, the *Elgin Courant* reported the opening of “...a Family Grocers, Tea, Wine & Spirit Merchants”. The founders of the firm were James Gordon and John Alexander MacPhail, and from the outset (as the newspaper reported) the stock was “personally selected”, with a view to providing “a superior article at a popular price” and giving “the utmost satisfaction”.

Among the new shop’s first employees was John Urquhart, a lad of fourteen who was to serve his apprenticeship under the

partners. He was an able learner, and before long was helping James Gordon to select and buy casks of malt whisky from local distilleries, as well as assisting with the creation of house blends for the firm’s customers around the north of Scotland. When John Alexander MacPhail retired in March 1915, Urquhart became a partner in the business, and when James Gordon died suddenly only two weeks later, senior partner.

In parallel with the grocery side of the enterprise, John Urquhart developed the whisky broking business begun by



John Urquhart
(1880–1956)
*He joined the firm within
months of its commencing
business, aged fourteen,
and on the death of the
founders in 1915
became senior partner.*



James Gordon, and in particular began to specialise in single malt whiskies—bottling under license for famous distilleries such as Macallan, The Glenlivet, Glen Grant, Linkwood and Mortlach. As part of this business he also selected and filled his own casks—almost always American oak, ex-sherry casks—at these and other distilleries, and matured his whiskies for much longer than was customary at the time.

In 1933, John Urquhart was joined by his son, George, and daughter, Betty, and by another son, Gordon, in 1950. By this time the family firm offered the largest range of bottled malt whiskies in the world. Most makes were unavailable elsewhere, since very few distillery owners bottled their own malts as singles—Glen Grant was an exception. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Gordon & MacPhail single

handedly kept the amber lamp of aged malt whisky burning during the post-war decades!

In the 1960s George Urquhart took the unprecedented step of launching a range of single malts from different distilleries under the brand name ‘Connoisseurs Choice’, and offered the range for sale in the rapidly expanding Italian, French, American and Dutch markets. This move built the foundations for the significant interest in malt whisky in these countries that remains to this day.

Just as his father had introduced him into the firm, so George brought in his own children. The oldest, Ian, joined in 1967, after having been trained in the wine and spirit trade in London and France. He was followed by David in 1972 and Michael in 1981. The former had studied business in Aberdeen;



George Urquhart
(1919–2001)
*“Single Malt Whisky would
simply not be available
today were it not for the
work of George Urquhart.
When others knew nothing
of malt whisky, he was
one of a handful of people
who understood this great
Scottish contribution to
the pleasures of food and
drink”*
Michael Jackson, 2001

Michael is a qualified Chartered Accountant. George's daughter, Rosemary joined in 1990, after raising her family.

The family partnership became a limited company in the late 1970s, but ownership and management remained with the family, as it does to this day. George Urquhart died in 2001, five years before his grandsons Stephen Rankin and Neil Urquhart were appointed Associate Directors. They became full Directors in 2010.

John Urquhart learned about whisky from James Gordon, and George Urquhart learned from his father—by the end of his life he was universally recognised as one of the most knowledgeable people in the entire Scotch whisky trade. He passed on his skills and experience in selecting and evaluating whiskies to his sons and daughter. Their children,

Stuart, Richard, Laura and Jenny as well as Stephen and Neil—the fourth generation—are now also working in the family business. They might be said to have whisky in the blood!

Perhaps the most important skill handed down from generation to generation is cask selection. George was one of the first to realise just how important maturation is to the creation of fine malt whisky, and to realise the truth in the old saying: “the wood makes the whisky”.





THE WOOD

Makes the Whisky

The casks in which whisky matures have a profound effect upon the flavour of the mature product. Indeed, of all the many and diverse influences upon flavour—from the raw materials to each stage in the production process—the casks play the leading role. After all, while it takes less than a week to make the spirit, it cannot even be called whisky until it has matured for three years, and in most cases lies to the wood for ten or more years—and in the case of this Glen Grant 1948 for a staggering 66 years!

By law, the wood must be oak. Two kinds of oak are used in Scotland, European oak and American oak. In the vast majority of cases, the oak casks will have been seasoned with either American whiskey (typically for two or three years) or Oloroso sherry (typically for eighteen months to two years).

American oak, ex-Bourbon barrels began to be used only after 1946 and now make up 90% of the casks imported by the Scotch whisky industry. Ex-sherry butts have a much longer history: since the mid-nineteenth century, they have

been esteemed by whisky-makers, arriving in the U.K. from Spain, transporting sherry in bulk for bottling here.

Until about 1960 most of these casks were made from American oak; since then the majority have been European (mainly Spanish) oak casks. The former were preferred: in 1948, the year this Glen Grant was distilled, Manuel Gonzalez Gordon, the head of the great sherry House, Gonzalez Byass, commented: “In recent years some Spanish oak has been used [for shipping sherry], due principally to the difficulties of obtaining American timber”.

The cask which has matured this whisky is a butt and will have been filled with around 500 litres of spirit in 1948, at 111° Proof (63.5% Alcohol by Volume). It is made from American White Oak, and is likely to have been first used

to transport sherry to the United Kingdom from Spain. For the first twenty years of its maturation the cask lay at Glen Grant Distillery in Rothes, then it was moved to Gordon & MacPhail’s own bonded warehouse in Elgin. In the course of 66 years the volume of liquid has reduced to a mere 115 litres. The rest has been enjoyed by the angels!



TASTING NOTES

Charles MacLean

APPEARANCE: Bright gold. Drawn from a first-fill, American oak ex-sherry butt.

AROMA: A mild nosefeel, and glorious floral top notes: rose petals and clover flowers, scented soap, almond oil. Creamy—both scented face-cream and crème anglaise (possibly surrounding a rum baba!). A sweet base note reminiscent of spun honey, crystalline sugar or golden syrup. Over time waxy notes evolve (scented candles), with fleeting ash in the background.

TASTE: A light texture: smooth and fresh. The taste is not

as sweet as expected. Centre palate and quite tannic/mouth drying, with considerable spice and a trace of sandalwood. A long, rounded, mentholated finish (cloves), and a mouth-cooling, scented aftertaste.

COMMENT: Delicate and feminine, yet profound and deep. Such scents and flavours can only be achieved by long maturation in the right cask, yet neither the aroma nor the taste have been adversely influenced by wood. The only wood-note I could discern is pleasant scented sandalwood on the palate. The best single descriptor that comes to mind is ‘exquisite’.





TASTING NOTES

Michael Urquhart

AROMA: fruit, peaches, wine gums, fruit salad, fresh, floral, spice, rich, sweet yet vibrant. Add a touch of water and the fruit notes become more fresh and vibrant.

PALATE: Chilli spice, warming, sherry, fruit, dark chocolate, green apples. With water the chilli spice starts to fade slightly and that lovely light fruit and sweetness continues. Spice lingers on with a hint of fruit but you don't feel the alcohol.

COMMENT: What a beautiful vibrant whisky. This 1948 Glen Grant is incredibly youthful and fresh with lots of depth and character.

WEALTH SOLUTIONS

Company profile

Wealth Solutions was established in 2007 with a mission to provide unique products for Polish collectors. The company was created by real enthusiasts of exceptional goods such as fine Bordeaux wines, top quality whisky, and art.

Today, we are sharing our passion with our customers—a passion for beauty, excellence and uniqueness. Our products are a tribute to human masterpieces.

Over the past 7 years, more than 7,000 clients have trusted Wealth Solutions by purchasing top quality collectibles and using the company's expertise.

In 2012, after launching the 1953 Glenfarclas on the Polish market, Wealth Solutions introduced the exceptional 48-year-old Japanese whisky from the legendary Karuizawa Distillery, and now we are delighted to offer you this extraordinary 66-year-old Glen Grant 1948.

G L E N G R A N T 1 9 4 8

Limited edition

1948 Vitage Single Cask

After twenty years of maturation at Glen Grant Distillery,
cask 1369 was transferred to Gordon & MacPhail's bonded warehouse in Elgin,
on 27th March, 1968

It was bottled on 14th April 2014 at the natural cask strength of 46.6%ABV,
without colour adjustment or chill-filtration,
yielding 160 70cl decanters

Each bottle is accompanied by this book, of which this is number

.....

The signatures below guarantee the authenticity of the Glen Grant 1948, cask number 1369,
which was bottled in Elgin under the supervision of Gordon & MacPhail

Michael Urquhart
Director, Gordon & MacPhail Ltd

Charles MacLean
Author



