
GLEN GRANT 1950

SINGLE CASK
SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT
SCOTCH WHISKY



GLEN GRANT 1950

SINGLE CASK
SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY

by

Charles MacLean
MASTER OF THE QUAICH

Cask No.2747, filled 1950 and bottled at 65 Years Old at 59.3%Vol
by Gordon & MacPhail, Elgin, Scotland

Specially selected for



FOREWORD

by Ewen Macintosh

As Chief Operating Officer for Gordon & MacPhail, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this exceptional bottling of Glen Grant Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky. This rare cask has been selected and bottled exclusively for Wealth Solutions.

Our company was founded in 1895 by James Gordon and John MacPhail. John Urquhart joined the business in the first year of trading and, by 1915, he was the senior partner. Today, Gordon & MacPhail is still owned by the Urquhart family,

with currently five members of the fourth generation working within the business.

The Urquhart family has pioneered the development of Single Malt Scotch Whisky throughout the company's long history. From the outset it was always the policy to send casks to distilleries throughout Scotland, fill them with new make spirit and mature them either at the distillery or in our bonded warehouses in Elgin. The Urquharts build a profound understanding for matching a particular style

INTRODUCTION

of whisky to a particular type of cask. They also took a long term view; maturing whisky for many years, when in the past, it was common to bottle at much younger ages. As a result of these practices, passed down through generations, Gordon & MacPhail is today recognised at the World's Leading Malt Whisky Specialist.

On the 14th October 1950 a Sherry Butt was filled at Glen Grant Distillery—one of many casks filled by Gordon & MacPhail that year. The Sherry Butts were pinpointed as casks to be left for longer maturation. Indeed, this cask has passed through three generations of the Urquhart family, before finally being selected and bottled on its sixty-fifth birthday. I hope you enjoy this unique whisky and its fine sherry aged character.

INTRODUCTION

by Wealth Solutions

Every whisky has its own story. It begins in the sun, wind and rain. Develops in crystal water, bright fire and red copper. The next step is a marriage to the wood. This relationship builds energy, character and charisma, creates the spirit's profile. Finally, the whisky gives happiness to people and lends class to the special events in our life. Every chapter of this story is important, but only a few stories are truly unique. Our mission is to find amazing beverages with unique stories to tell.

Thanks to Michel Urquhart and Ewen Mackintosh, we can tell you another amazing story. The warehouses of Gordon & MacPhail are a veritable ark of rare spirits. This Glen Grant is one of them. It was distilled in 1950 and spent eighteen years at the distillery before being moved into Gordon & MacPhail's own maturation warehouse, where it has waited many, many years for us and for you.

This venerable spirit is sixty-five years old. How many whiskies of that age do you know? Not many! Only a handful

INTRODUCTION

of whiskies have survived so long. More important, it has a uniquely opulent flavour profile and an extremely long finish. But this beauty has something more: its unusually high strength (59.3% ABV) is really rare for a whisky of this age. So old yet so strong! Only the right combination of temperature and humidity could make this utterly glorious spirit what it is.

This is only one of the unique chapters in the story of Glen Grant 1950. We are really grateful that you decided to write with us the last chapter of the tale. We hope it will be an exciting adventure for you, as it was for us.

Sláinte!

GLEN GRANT DISTILLERY

The First Century

In the Gaelic language, members of Clan Grant were known as *Mac-na-Braiche*, ‘the Children of the Malt’ and their homeland in Strathspey—now generally known as Speyside—was the leading district for (illicit) distilling. Today, half of the malt whisky distilleries are located there.

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 Rothies, 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 railway line from the seaport of Lossiemouth to Elgin, and from Elgin to Rothies.

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
(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.*



John Urquhart developed the whisky broking business begun by 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



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

in London and France. He was followed by David in 1972 and Michael in 1981. 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 — the fourth generation — now work in the family business.

Perhaps the most important skill handed down from generation to generation is Gordon & MacPhail's philosophy in cask selection and just how important this is in the maturation the finest 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 1950 for a staggering sixty-five 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 transport casks were made from American oak; since then the majority have been European (mainly Spanish) oak casks. The former were preferred: in 1948 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 was made from American White Oak, and is likely to have been first used to transport sherry to the U.K. For the first twenty years of its maturation the cask lay at Glen Grant Distillery, then it was moved to Gordon & MacPhail’s bonded warehouse in Elgin.

It will have been filled with around 500 litres of spirit in 1950, and in the course of sixty-five years the volume of liquid has reduced to a mere 154 litres. The rest has been enjoyed by the angels!

As well as losing volume, one would expect the strength to decline significantly, so it is surprising that the whisky is at 59.3% ABV, which is most unusual in a malt whisky of such advanced age. What is more, the cask was filled with spirit at 63.5%, so after sixty-five years the whisky has lost only 4.2% ABV, suggesting that the atmosphere in the bonded warehouses was uncommonly warm and dry. Higher strength concentrates flavour and develops richness, and this is apparent in the whisky’s flavour profile.



TASTING NOTES

Charles MacLean

APPEARANCE: Natural amber. Drawn from a first-fill, American oak ex-sherry butt. Good beading and slow-running legs, indicating rich, creamy texture.

AROMA: Rich and highly aromatic: floral (potpourri, hand cream) and fruity (ripe peach), with almond paste, sandalwood and scented wax.

Some alcohol prickle at natural strength, but not as much as might be expected at this high strength; slightly nose drying, reminiscent of hot sandy dunes on a tropical beach.

A drop of water removes the prickle and reveals layers of perfumed, floral and woody scents, and later a suggestion of caramel.

TASTE: The texture is lightly oily at natural strength; the taste sweet, hot, spicy and tannic; the finish long and warming, mouth-drying, with an aftertaste of perfume then sandalwood. A drop of water sweetens the taste and increases the peppery spice across the tongue. The finish remains long and the aftertaste fragrant.

COMMENT: A superb malt whisky: elegant, distinguished and aristocratic—truly, a noble spirit. It is also remarkably lively for its age: the whisky's unusually high strength after such a long period of maturation has retained vitality as well as adding depth and complexity. I think it benefits from just a teaspoon of water, which opens it and makes it easier to taste. But that it a matter of personal choice.



TASTING NOTES

Ewen Macintosh

AROMA: A rich, complex nose with many layers of aromas. The sherry influence dominates initially with sweet, floral notes. Fresh fruit elements—green apples and pears are also evident in the background. Hints of polished oak, laced with menthol and nutty, marzipan/almond notes. Some traces of treacle toffees and dark chocolate also present.

PALATE: At full strength, the whisky is warming but does not burn. A little water does help to open up the flavours. The first taste yields the sherry notes, complimented by

charred oak and black pepper elements. There are spices evident with hints of liquorice and aniseed. A delicate note of wood smoke slowly emerges.

COMMENT: This is a Single Malt to savour. From the sixty-five years in cask, it has a depth and complexity that evolves and changes in the glass, delivering subtle changes with each sip. Enjoy.



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

In 2012, Wealth Solutions had the exclusive privilege to introduce the Glenfarclas 1953 whisky cask no.1674. After

fifty-eight years of maturation in an oak sherry cask, its taste is exquisite. This whisky has a natural colour and is non-filtered. The cask was selected by a panel including George Grant, successor of Glenfarclas, and Serge Valentin—one of the most important whisky reviewers in the world. The cask yielded four-hundred numbered bottles.

In February 2013, Wealth Solutions and Number One Drinks Company represented by Marcin Miller, introduced an exceptional forty-eight-year-old Japanese whisky from the

WEALTH SOLUTIONS

legendary Karuizawa Distillery. Cask #3603, filled on 1st September 1964, is one of the oldest Japanese single malt whiskies in history. Only one-hundred and forty-three numbered bottles of this whisky were put on sale.

In May 2014, Wealth Solutions, thanks to its partnership with Gordon & MacPhail, was proud to present one of the world's oldest whiskies to the public. The beverage was produced in 1948 within the walls of the Glen Grant distillery, then matured in a sherry cask no.1369 and bottled after sixty-six years.

In June 2014 Wealth Solutions and the Tiffon Cognac House introduced a limited edition of L'esprit de Tiffon cognac. This fully pre-phylloxera beverage was created from distillates from Sverre Braastad's private cellar, where the oldest cognac dates back to 1805. Just one-hundred and fifty numbered and

engraved decanters of this exceptional cognac were produced. Its world premiere took place in Jabłonna palace in Poland, where Napoleon Bonaparte met Maria Walewska, his Polish mistress.

In September 2015 the Bache-Gabrielsen cognac house and Wealth Solutions launched a limited edition of Le Sein de Dieu cognac, made of extremely old distillates from the private paradis (cellar) of Thomas Bache-Gabrielsen. This totally pre-phylloxera beverage, with the oldest component dating back to 1790, allows us to taste a liquor which nowadays cannot be produced. Only one-hundred and fifty numbered decanters was released for sale. The world premiere of this extremely rare spirit took place in Prymasowski Palace in Warsaw.

All listed special releases were specially created for the clients of the Wealth Solutions company.

G L E N G R A N T 1 9 5 0

Limited edition

1950 Vintage Single Cask

After eighteen years of maturation at Glen Grant Distillery,
Cask No.2747 was transferred to Gordon & MacPhail's bonded warehouse in Elgin,
on 20th January, 1969

It was bottled on 14th October 2015 at the natural cask strength of 59.3% ABV,
without colour adjustment or chill-filtration,
yielding 218 70cl decanters

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

.....

The signatures below guarantee the authenticity of the Glen Grant 1950 65 year old Cask No.2747, which was bottled in Elgin
under the supervision of Gordon & MacPhail Ltd.

Ewen Macintosh
Director, Gordon & MacPhail Ltd

Charles MacLean
Author



