

Averys Pioneer Range Shiraz 2005 Yarra Valley

17 Mar 2009 by Jancis Robinson

£6.67 from [Averys](#) until the end of March.

John Avery MW is one of the great characters of the British wine trade. His father Ronald Avery was even more of a character. Purple pagers can read an article about him by the late Edmund Penning- Rowsell in their online *Oxford Companion to Wine* [here](#). The family firm is Averys of Bristol which was first taken over in the late 1980s by a subsidiary of direct sellers Pieroth and now belongs (like so much else) to the Laithwaites of Direct Wines and the Sunday Times Wine Club.

Like his father before him, John is notoriously late for meetings and engagements. But in at least one respect he was very early. On his long summer vacation in the US in 1964 he travelled to the US and, at the tender age of 22, became thoroughly enthused by the quality of the California wines he encountered. He persuaded Ronald to import the wines of Beaulieu (BV) and subsequently introduced the wines of Sterling, Heitz and Ridge to the UK.

The next year he went to Australia for the first time, a time when most British wine merchants hardly knew where it was. This resulted in Averys being the first UK company to import Penfolds Grange, placing an order for a cool 10 dozen bottles of the 1960 vintage. The picture shows the young John Avery in 1966 with his first shipment from Australia. In 1975 Averys imported Tyrrell's Vat 47, one of Australia's very first Chardonnays. In 1978 they imported the first New Zealand wines into the UK – a 1974 Nobile Cabernet Sauvignon.

I always call Geoffrey Roberts of the eponymous [Geoffrey Roberts Award](#) (entries for 2009's £3,000 travel grant close two weeks today) the pioneer importer of New World wines since he was a specialist, had a very wide portfolio and was extremely well organised, raising their profile considerably. But John Avery had trod that path beforehand, even if less concentratedly, with Averys' New World wines getting slightly lost among their glamorous array of classic European wines.

To celebrate this glorious track record, Averys have launched Averys Pioneer Range with the excellent **Averys Pioneer Range Shiraz 2005 Yarra Valley** which they are selling at the reduced price of £6.67 instead of the regular price of £8.99 until the end of the month. In the accompanying literature John Avery is quoted as saying 'Every now and then I discover small parcels of wine that stand out from the crowd and remind me why I found these wines so thrilling in the early days'.



I am a horrible old cynic. I suspect that the story is a little less romantic than John stumbling across this wine on this travels. The 'virtual winery', as James Halliday puts it, Cheviot Bridge supplied this wine and are part of the same investment group as bought the Long Flat brand from Tyrrell's. But that hardly matters. Australia is awash with bargains and we should be grateful that Averys have managed to acquire this one, described on the back label thus: 'Produced from a single vineyard situated near the township of Yarra Glen. Made by one of the Yarra's most respected winemakers.' Webber? Carson? Sexton?

Whoever made it and found it surplus to requirements, it's an excellent example of Yarra Valley's earthy but delicate rendition of Shiraz, the more transparent, less alcoholic style that is currently in vogue with so many Australian wine writers. I found this wine delightfully fresh on the nose but sweet, spicy and winning on the palate with good balance. It's already delicious and only 13.5% alcohol. I would happily drink it, with or without food, at any point over the next two years. It is excellent value at £6.67 – and not a bad buy at its regular price of £8.99.

Yarra Valley was of course one of the wine regions worst hit by the recent bushfires, and you can read more about the [bushfires](#) and the [Yarra Valley's wines](#).

My apologies to those outside the UK who do not have a stockist of this wine in their own country. I suggest you put pressure on your local wine importers to seek out similar bargains. They should not be too difficult to find in Australia at the moment.

£6.67 from [Averys](#)