Graham□s 1952 Diamond Jubilee Port

4 May 2012 by Jancis Robinson

£275

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Okay, £275 a bottle is no giveaway, but have you seen what other 60-year-old wines cost? And, as someone who has tasted a range of 1952s recently, not least at this birthday dinner for Nick, I can assure you that this old wood aged port offers far more and more obvious pleasure than many. (In fact I was quite surprised to see that there are about two dozen tasting notes on 1952s in our collection of more than 68,000 tasting notes.)

This very special single-harvest port is effectively a very old tawny, from six pipes of superior wine that have been gathering metaphorical dust and sensory lustre in Graham's lodge in Vila Nova de Gaia. They were harvested at a time when the port trade was on its knees. Times were tough in the UK, the main market for Graham's owners, the Symington family. British cities were still ravaged by war damage. Strict food rationing was in place. It's a wonder us babies of the early 1950s survived at all… And according to Johnny Symington, 'there was such a slump that we didn't even bother to bottle it [this wine] at the time'. They certainly didn't make the connection between this delicious wine and the coronation of the young Queen Elizabeth.

So who would have thought it would have come in so handy for celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee? I wonder who had the brilliant idea of making this special release to coincide with the Jubilee, and to make a donation to the charity set up to commemorate the event, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Trust?

But, perhaps of more interest is how does it taste? I absolutely love this style of port, a long aged colheita (the sort of thing that houses like Niepoort have specialised in), when it's good and this one is very, very good. The fumes from a wine like this perfume an entire room. Here are just some of the aromas I noted when I first tasted it 10 days ago and when I smelt it again yesterday chez Berry Bros, who are the exclusive retailers of it in the UK (It can also be bought in Portugal): Walnuts, dried citrus peel, prunes, an edge of parmesan. With such a long time spent in cask (six in all, if I understood correctly), it is of course pale tawny with pale greenish rim and is rancio-issimo, but it is incredibly heady and rich without any sort of meagre skinniness. And of course the great advantage it has as a celebratory bottle for a 60th anniversary is that, unlike a 1952 bordeaux or burgundy, for example, it can be enjoyed over several days.

Berrys are selling single bottles in their smart box and official royal approval for £275 apiece. It is also available in a special wooden case of three bottles at £795 and, for really large parties, in a 450 cl jeroboam at £1,800.

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