

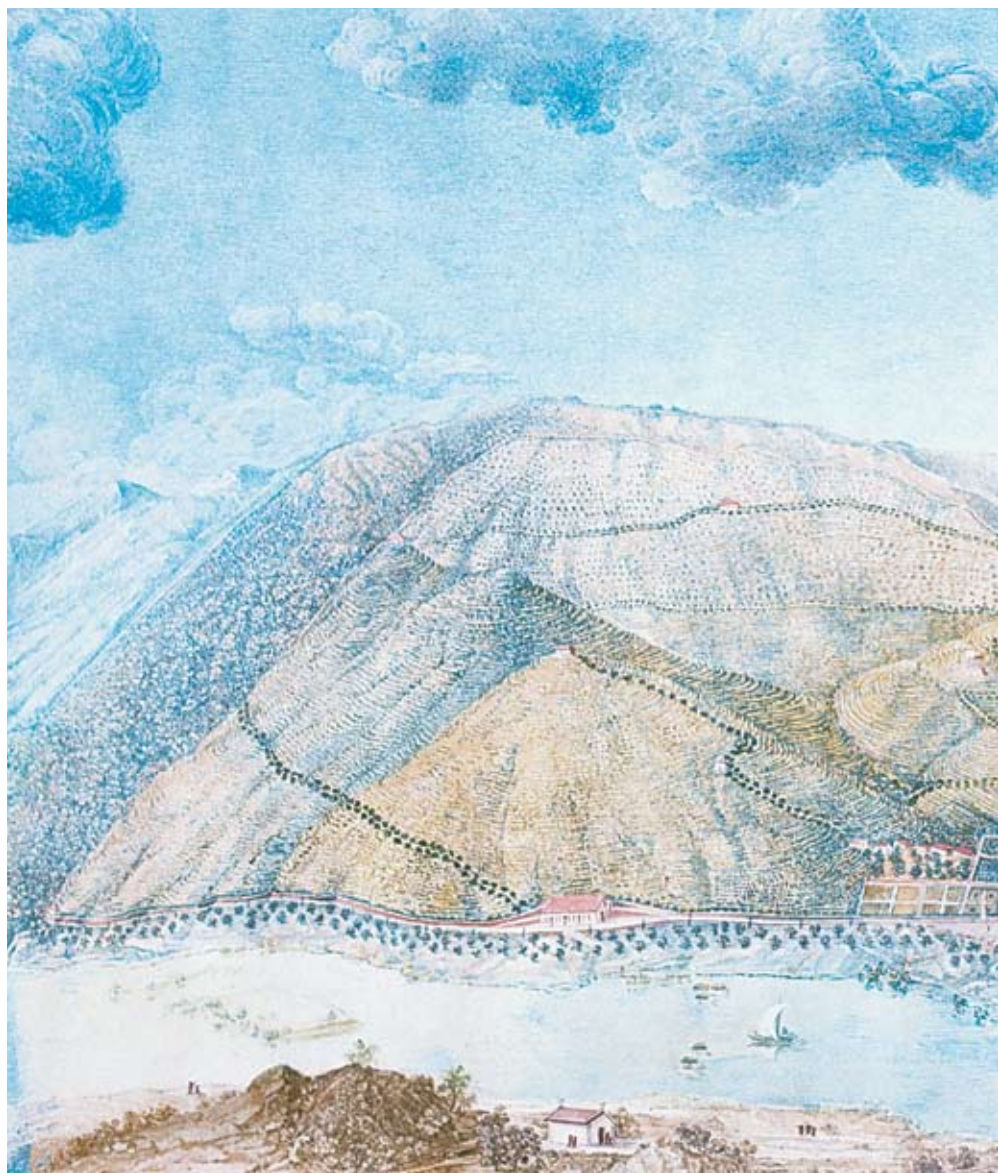
## QUINTA DO VESUVIO

by Michael Schuster

When António Bernardo Ferreira purchased the Quinta das Figueiras (as it was then known, for its abundance of fig trees) in 1823, both his vanity and his entrepreneurial ambition would have been excited at the splendor of its site, for a magnificent site it is, with its distinctive cluster of conical hills rising to more than 1,200ft (400m) above the River Douro. But as a grower and Port shipper (the family firm was founded in 1751), he must have sensed that along with the glorious location, the great variety of exposures and potential diversity of soils in those seven hills and seven valleys would likely make a wine as magnificent as the terrain it would be claimed from.

For up until Ferreira's involvement, neither Vesuvio, as the Quinta was to be renamed in 1830, nor its near neighbor Vargellas were planted to vines. This was mainly due to their inaccessibility. The River Douro's deep, profoundly gloomy granite gorge, the Cachão de Valeira, barely 20 miles (30km) from the Spanish border, had been an impasse of boulder-strewn rapids until cleared over the course of 12 years from 1780 to 1792; and as Vesuvio's early records show (the first date from 1565), land to the east of this transport barrier lived off livestock and grain rather than grapes.

Having acquired the property, Ferreira had the drive and the requisite wealth to match his ambitious plans, and the investment and energy he put into creating this great estate were breathtaking. Within two years he had 500 men working on the project, literally hewing the new terracing out of the schist hillsides by hand. Four years later, in 1827, the new winery, with its eight huge granite *lagares* (one is divided today, in effect making nine) was finished. A painting by António Joaquim de Sousa, from around 1830, shows all the current principal buildings in place: house and chapel, winery and staff quarters, as well as the vast expanse of hillsides terraced and planted. It was—and is—an achievement on an astonishing scale. The project was barely finished when Ferreira died in 1835, leaving the property to his son, António Bernardo Ferreira the



Quinta do Vesuvio, by António Joaquim de Sousa (watercolor, c.1830)

Second, who a year earlier had married his cousin Antónia Adelaide Ferreira.

António the Second survived his father by only ten years, but during that time the quinta's fame was reflected in the steamboat named after it, which was the principal transport between Porto and Lisbon from 1837 to 1859. And in 1839, a watermill was installed to power the millstones for making olive oil in a small, handsome lodge next to the main winery. The water supply comes from a stream high up in one of the hills and flows along 1.25 miles (2km) of granite channeling to reach the mill wheel. A fortuitous installation as it turned out, because in the wake of the twin scourges of oidium in the 1850s and phylloxera in

the 1870s, olive-oil production became the principal source of income.

Dona Antónia Adelaide Ferreira took over this vast estate, along with the family business, aged barely 34. Like her slightly older contemporary, Nicole Clicquot, she was a gifted, immensely capable businesswoman who continued to develop Vesuvio; changed the emphasis of the estate to olives, almonds, and oranges during the oidium and phylloxera epidemics; and managed to combine business and altruism by buying up numerous bankrupt Douro wine estates during these troubled times, enabling them to continue to run and to trade. When she died, she is reputed to have owned some 30 quintas! Typical of



her grand ideas to keep her Vesuvio staff in paid employment was the boundary project in the 1870s: 10 miles (16km) of dry stone wall, up to 6ft (2m) in height and 2ft (60cm) in width, substantial stretches of which still mark the estate limits today. Vesuvio became one of her principal residences, and it was after a visit there by her friend Baron Joseph James Forrester in 1861 that she famously survived him when their flat-bottomed *barco rabelo* foundered in the notorious Cachão de Valeira on the return journey to Pinhão.

In 1887, the railway from Oporto arrived at Vesuvio, as it did at neighboring Vargellas, and both quintas have their own halt, as befits their station, so to speak. At last the eastern reaches of the

Upper Douro were fully integrated within the greater region. And by the time of Dona Antónia's death, in 1896, the magnificent wine that Don António Bernardo Ferreira had envisaged three quarters of a century earlier had become a widely recognized reality, attested to by the fact that it was regularly sold under the estate's own name—very much a rarity at the time. But this glory was to be short-lived.

After Dona Antónia's demise, ownership of Vesuvio became more and more dispersed under the Napoleonic code of inheritance. Subsequently, although the winery remained active throughout the 20th century, the wines were rarely sold under the estate label but instead were blended with large Ferreira

brands or sold to other producers. The more divided the ownership of the property became, the more difficult it was to obtain the investment to drive it forward, because this had to come from the individual shareholders and not from Ferreira. Thus Vesuvio became ever more divorced from the operational side of the business and gradually lapsed into a developmental limbo, exacerbated by the 40 years or so of stagnation in the Port trade following World War I.

If the name and the imposing presence of the quinta retained their majesty, the wines, as the current Vesuvio monograph tells us, "became increasingly anonymous and slowly slid into relative obscurity"—an obscurity that continued for most of the 20th century.

(review)



## Renaissance

In 1987, the company of AA Ferreira SA, still owned by Dona Antónia's descendants, was sold to Sogrape, of Mateus Rosé fame, Portugal's largest wine-producing company. Vesuvio itself, however, remained in the family's hands but without the guaranteed market for its wines that Ferreira, now part of Sogrape, had so long provided. This false security had effectively hidden from the numerous family shareholders what had been both a lack of direction for the estate and, more significantly, a serious dearth of investment. A long-term want of maintenance and replanting in the vineyards meant that, although wine quality was good, the very low yields were completely uneconomical. And without the "protection" of the Ferreira company, it must rapidly have become clear to the owners that they were presiding over an asset that, however prestigious in name, was in effect decreasing in value. Consequently, in 1988, a year after the sale of Ferreira to Sogrape, and 165 years after Don António Bernardo's purchase, Vesuvio itself came on to the open market again.

The sale was handled by a bank, and sealed bids were invited. But the three highest bidders put in such close offers that they were invited to bid against each other again. In contention, it appears, were first Ferreira itself, now effectively Sogrape; second, the then owners of Quinta do Noval, the Van Zeller family; and finally the Symington Group. The winning bid was around the equivalent of £1 million at the time. As so often with real estate, the Symingtons can look back on it now and feel it was a good deal—in retrospect. For as Dominic Symington told me, "At the time, we had to swallow very hard!"

Of course they were buying a property that was both a Douro and a national emblem, but the underlying thinking was first and foremost pragmatic. The driving factor behind the purchase was that it would be a great source of high-quality wine to supply brands within the group: Graham, Dow,

Warre, and so on. Its emblematic quality was relatively peripheral, and as Dominic pointed out, "to some extent we were buying a pig in a poke, because there *could* have been many grape varieties planted in less-than-ideal locations. But *if* they were well placed, then the project could progress rapidly." As it turned out, although the vineyards were in a state of relative neglect, not only were there large plantings of vines that were approaching 20 years of age and therefore just coming into their prime, but many plots had also been planted to single varieties, a rare advantage then. And these vineyards are all in the top-rated "A" category.

The buildings on the property—the lodge (winery), the house, and the workers' accommodation—had not seen much recent maintenance, but neither were they in a bad state of repair, and the vineyard was clearly the priority to start making their new investment earn its keep. There was a considerable amount of renovation required in existing vineyards—retrellising in particular—and the Symingtons immediately instigated a substantial replanting program involving the building of extensive and costly new *patamares* terracing in very difficult terrain. By 2003, they had doubled the size of the vineyard they had purchased, which now stands at 141ha (345 acres) under vine, 30ha (73.5 acres) of which are devoted to new plantings of Touriga Nacional, the lowest yielding but most noble of the Port grapes. Today the vineyard has as its principal grape varieties 34 percent Touriga Nacional, 20 percent Tinta Barroca, 18.5 percent Touriga Franca, and 17.5 percent Tinta Roriz.

The buildings were renovated rather than altered. At the time of purchase, the large, 40-roomed house was "habitable" but had only one bathroom, so adding a couple of extra bathrooms was an early priority. Other than this, repairs to the buildings were left until 1994/95. But in 2000, a major structural change was made to the house, when the current beautiful terrace and dining room, which look directly over the river, were installed where the estate offices used to be. Apart from a new roof, a small stainless-steel blending facility, and the ability to cool the must with portable stainless-steel

radiators, the lodge remains pretty much as it has been since it was built in 1827, with its monumental, 24-pipe, side-by-side granite *lagares*, its now steel-hard original oak beams, and its line of huge old chestnut tuns, each designed to take the fill of a *lagar* plus brandy—a unique and stirring sight to see. In 1827, there was attention to both monumental and mundane detail: Each *lagar* has its own open urinal built into the wall, along with a more private facility, behind doors, for weightier matters!

## A magical place

From the start, the Symingtons' aim has been to restore the estate to its former glory while maintaining its traditional character. Apart from the new terrace and dining room, dwellings on the estate—both the large house itself and the workers' accommodation—were mostly given a lick of paint on the outside and made comfortable within, but without any additional concession to luxury.

The large 19th-century granite house, with its attached chapel, is impressive to view from the river, but as an "estate mansion" it appears slightly odd in many ways, at least for us today. Originally, it would have looked solidly comfortable and well placed, built, as it is, right into the granite hillside; but now its style appears cramped by the proximity of the railway-line banking, built much later, immediately behind it. Its axis also seems eccentric, with the front entrance courtyard facing east, and thus a veritable solar oven for much of the year. Remember, there was no shaded terrace refuge in the original building. Nor is there a grand entrance to the grand house. There is a magnificent palm tree in the small courtyard at the top of the front steps, but the entrance is a simple, single door leading into a plain study. All of this surely reflects its original role as a working location—a large estate manager's office—rather than the visitors' destination it is today.

The house now has accommodation for 16, with five bathrooms. Its central wooden staircase and gallery are unadorned, and its two meeting places are similarly simple. For the bone-chilling bitterness of winter there is a fireplace in the large sitting room, but

The entrance and courtyard of the house face east, catching the full strength of the midday sun, while the elegant simplicity of the design reflects its origins as a working estate office

for most of the year there is now the new wood-ceilinged terrace, facing north, protected from the sun and looking across the rear courtyard immediately on to the Douro. Alone, or in company, this is now the heart of the house.

There were vines below the house up until the early '70s, but the great dams that were installed then both raised and placated the Douro. Prior to that, there would be snow-melt torrents in spring, while at the height of summer, the water might be so scant you could wade across to the Quinta da Senhora da Ribeira opposite. Now the river is deep and slow, almost motionless all year round, and when the weather is kind—which it mainly is—it is millpond calm.

On the terrace in the September chill before breakfast, as sunrise fires the house and the lower vineyards, a whisper of a breeze ruffles the river surface, and then forktailed housemartins swoop and dive over the Douro, glinting as their wings catch the sun, breaking the water into concentric motion as they brush its surface for insects. It is silent, except for the occasional snatch of conversation—but not, as you first think, voices from the house's early risers. Such is the transparent stillness, you have become an innocent eavesdropper, catching echoes from grape pickers on the opposite bank!

While I am there, however, it is too soon to pick at Vesuvio. In the crystalline early-morning light, the vineyards are empty, and the new *patamares* plantings are thick, undulating ribbons, dark harvest green against the pale schist hillside, their meanderingly beautiful, improbable curves obeying the demands of both drainage and contour. Everywhere are dotted the pale blue-green puffs of olive trees. It is very still, and occasionally you catch a whiff of resin, of gum cistus.

After lunch, the lodge is the place to visit, the still empty *lagares* granite cool in the sticky still heat of the afternoon. Granite is a leitmotiv here, that pale gray, dappled, adamantine stone—Douro bedrock. But the granite is not local; it comes from the head of the valley, toward Spain. Every massive slab had to be hauled to Vesuvio on bullock carts. And when you survey the sheer size and extent of the granite structures, you understand the numbers that were

involved in building this estate. Next to the lodge is the olive-oil factory and store, that savior of the bottom line in the late 19th century, part of which is now a small blending facility. Olive oil was last produced commercially in the 1960s, since which time the rooms have been dark, the water wheel still, the drive belts slack, and the Heath Robinson machinery rusting slowly. Lifeless, you would think. Until you feel a brush, a rush of freshness, and glimpse a flash of luminosity. Bats! Silently fluttering past, inches from your face, then caught momentarily in a shaft of wall-crack sunlight. This soundless darkness is a perfect dwelling for them: dozens, you realize, as your eyes get accustomed to the gloom, hanging from rafters and roof slats.

The evening peace on the terrace is accompanied by large, smoky candles, citronella-scented to keep the insects at bay. Sitting in the candlelight, long after dinner, we regularly hear the background plop of yet another barbel breaking the Douro's surface. Riverlife, it seems, is never sated. Nor, for that matter, is the gecko on the long, concave, wood-paneled ceiling. We have been entranced watching him making occasional sallies at a giant moth, practically his own size. Moth and gecko are unaccountably drawn back to each other across the evening. The municipal street lamp, frustratingly close to the house, is the only light pollution after sunset. But get away from its ghostly glare and there is a magnificently luminous black night, teeming with stars.

Vesuvio is a magical spot. It is remote, beautiful, a place of utter tranquillity. And in their current guise, going back barely 15 years, the wines have become one of my favorite Ports. All the more so for having seen, sensed, absorbed its origin.

### A most complete Vintage Port

This is not the place to go into great detail about the making of Vesuvio. It is, in any case, unremarkable, in the sense that it is absolutely traditional. The wine's quality potential lies first in the literally multifaceted terroir, and then in the selection of fruit that goes to make up the final blend. To allow the vineyard its full expression requires year-round

good husbandry and then a sensitive palate in the winery and blending room. Responsible for both viticulture and winemaking is Peter Symington, with his son Charles continuing his father's expertise and taking on an increasing degree of responsibility. Peter was given a completely free hand when feeling his way in making the first vintage Vesuvio under the Symington mantle: "We could have ended up with 500 cases, or with 5,000," he said. "The grapes were picked according to their maturation cycle and varietal blocks, then vinified in a standard, traditional manner in order to see which parcels produced what quality opportunities for blending Vesuvio itself. Each year, there is the complete 'history' of picking dates, fermentation progress, and resultant wine, which enables us to adapt in subsequent vintages, according to our quality requirements." Today, the production of Vesuvio is typically between 1,000 and 3,000 cases—well under 10 percent of the estate's total output.

My notes record the results. The first two vintages, 1989 and 1990, now taste very much of "work in progress," with Peter Symington commenting that the maturing of neither had been helped by having to spend the first couple of years aging in the Douro, with ineffective air conditioning. Bottling and aging on the property was a single-quinta legal requirement at the time, but one that was subsequently relaxed. 1991 begins to show the potential of the vineyard, but it is from the great declared year of 1994 that we see Vesuvio become a genuine, classic Vintage Port, rather than the lighter, earlier-maturing style that is the image of much single-quinta wine. Here is a Port with the proportions and aging potential equal to the Douro's greatest wines. That said, its typical charge of fruit and the finesse of its texture also seem to make it accessible earlier than many of its peers.

But Vesuvio doesn't need a declared vintage in order to be up with the quality of the best. With rare exceptions such as 1993 and 2002, when the wine quality was simply not up to the requisite

Top: The early-morning sun highlights the multifaceted vineyards; bottom: Each of the large chestnut tuns in the lodge is capable of holding the contents of one of the granite *lagares*



standard, the wine is made every year. Year in, year out, the quality remains remarkably consistent, but as with any fine Bordeaux château or Burgundy cru, the character of the year is reflected in the wine. Thus 1995 is a very masculine, muscular expression of the terroir, a long-term prospect, while 1996 is all delicacy and scent, an earlier-drinking, much more feminine performance—but at a similar quality level. And that, of course, is part of the nature of a fine terroir: Its variety is one of the reasons we enjoy it. I asked for the Dow, Graham, and Warre 2000s to be included in the vertical tasting, in order to illuminate Vesuvio's different style, and to benchmark its quality. It more than holds its own in the quality stakes, as you can see.

It will take time for Vesuvio's current Ports to make the mark that they deserve to. After all, it is only since 1994 that the wines have really got into their stride, and none of them has yet reached its plateau of maturity. Their fully mature bouquets and mellowed textures are exciting, tantalizing prospects. The estate monograph describes the wines as “very concentrated and powerful,” which is not quite how I see them. If there is power, then it is well hidden, discreet, for they are not “strong” wines. But there is plenty to stir the senses at *mezzoforte* rather than *forte*: an abundance of ripe fruit, great fragrance, an impression of plenitude, of completeness without force; a caressing fineness of tannin texture; and an overall sensation of effortlessness. In other words, the expression of a greater terroir interpreted by a talented winemaker—a most complete Port. If I need a stylistic parallel, then I am reminded of Margaux rather than Latour, though either will serve as a quality comparison. And as if to support this impression, it is interesting to note that although the proportion of Touriga Franca planted in the whole vineyard is only 18.5 percent, its percentage in Vesuvio itself is almost always at least twice that—44 percent in the 2000 and 2003, for example. Touriga Franca makes wines of fragrance and perfume above all.

Great wines are the expression of a potential within the land—possibilities, in Vesuvio's case, written into its Cambrian bedrock 500 million years past. Barely two centuries ago, it took one

man's act of imagination, wealth, and phenomenal creative energy to begin to give voice to those letters latent in the schist. A voice that then became muffled in decline for most of the 20th century; a manuscript lost, its talents once again hidden, unexpressed. Barely two decades ago, history will record, another family mirrored that first act, put back into those seven hills the imagination, energy, and investment that brought the magnificent script to life again.

The Symingtons feel they are the custodians of a national monument at Vesuvio, a slice of a glorious past. Indeed, in many respects, the estate resembles an immense museum, with its ancient terraces, old *lagares*, and traditional practices. But it is a working museum. And the working evidence, of both wine and fabric, suggests that this particular monument is once again in very safe custodial hands. ■

#### QUINTA DO VESUVIO 1989–2005



A tasting at the Quinta with Peter Symington, September 8, 2007

#### 1989 Vesuvio (3,150\* cases)

Mature ruby color; light, sweet, very dried-figs nose, a touch raisiny; medium-full, moderately concentrated wine, with a very light tannin; sweet, dried fig and caramel-tinged raisiny flavor, attractive, but all up-front, without much complexity or follow-through; medium length, and finishing overall a bit hollow, especially at this level. First vintage—getting to know! Slightly dry-edged and a little coarse in comparison with the later vintages. Similar level to the 1990, but with a little more richness. Slightly “hot year” character, too. Absolutely ready, may keep, but won't improve; just starting to dry out? Drink to 2010. **15+**

#### 1990 Vesuvio (3,250 cases)

Mature mid-ruby; light, soft, peppery nose with very modest fruit; a moderately

concentrated, fluid, medium-weight wine with barely any tannin left; soft, medium-sweet, lighter style of Port, with a gentle fruit core and modest complexity and length. Overall, a little thin; you can feel the limited flesh and fruit already retreating from what tannic frame there is. Not much to this, and it has matured very quickly. Drink up. **15**

#### 1991 Vesuvio (1,800 cases)

Dark red; light, sweet, early maturity to smell, dried figs, minerals, pepper, cold tea; well-balanced, mature middleweight Port, fine textured and with a light, mostly absorbed tannin; medium-sweet, moderately concentrated, ripe, and softly fruity wine, with nice length across the palate and with a good, light, scented aftertaste. Fleshy charm, complete in a lighter single-quinta style, but still some way from the potential of the best of Vesuvio. Ready. Don't push its drinking window if you have it; likely to dry out soonish. Now–2012. **16**

#### 1992 Vesuvio (2,000 cases)

*NB: This is a December 2005 note, since there was no 1992 at this 2007 tasting.*

Dark, brick-rimmed red; fresh and peppery to smell, not that “sweet”—more cold tea and minerals; moderately concentrated, light to middleweight Port, still with a firm tannin, fairly austere as yet, with a dry, chewy texture and a flavor center lacking the ripe core of the 1991. Something a bit “stolid” about this; relatively simple and yet with considerable musculature, and also finishing a bit short. Low-yield sinew... but fruit ripeness? Needs a few years... 2010–20. **15.5**

#### 1994 Vesuvio (3,000 cases)

Narrow-rimmed black-red; a dense, rich, persistent blend of fruit and minerals, a very classy early bouquet; perfectly balanced, concentrated middleweight Port, with a frame of very fine-textured, velvety tannin; deep, sweet, rich, and generous to taste, with great complexity and a mouth-filling scent and spiciness; a wonderfully enveloping flavor, exceptional refinement and remarkable, scented length. Discreet, understated power allied to the absolutely effortless harmony and feeling of completeness that is the hallmark of truly great wines. A glorious Vintage Port of outstanding quality. 2012–30+. **19.5**

#### 1995 Vesuvio (3,100 cases)

Narrow-rimmed black-red; a dense, undeveloped nose, with a sweet, slightly raisiny fruit at its core, but classic youthful Vintage Port pepperness, too; concentrated middleweight wine, with firm, dry-textured, drought-year tannins; very full, very sweet, and rich, long, complex, and juicy across the palate, with plenty of matter allied to the characteristic Vesuvio elegance, and with a powerful, sweet-fruited persistence; still backward and tannic at 12 years, but velvety



The headstone commemorating the winery's foundation year, since when very little has changed

richness to come. A wine of considerable scope, and of a declared-vintage quality—remarkable, in fact, for a non-declared year. Will never have the absolute harmony and supremely effortless quality of the 1994, or the feminine, perfumed refinement of the 1996, but as a more masculine expression of the property, long-term satisfaction seems guaranteed. Still fairly massive, and probably best once it reaches 20. 2015–30. **18**

**1996 Vesuvio** (3,800 cases)

Dark red, paling brick rim; scented, peppery nose with a fine blackberry fruit emerging; very nicely balanced middleweight Port, with a lovely delicate fruit within a light, fine-grained tannin; very sweet and very pure in flavor, and with good, light length. Not big or fleshy, but long, subtle, and complex, with excellent, scented-fruit persistence. Less “fleshy charm” than the 1999, but a more tightly knit complexity. Particularly good considering it was such an abundant year—but harvest conditions were perfect. Sweet, linear, long, and so fragrant. Similar to 1998 in scope and complexity, but with noticeably smaller forces. Now to 2025. **17.5**

**1997 Vesuvio** (3,000 cases)

Very dark, brick-rimmed red; fine, persistent, classic mineral and pepper nose, with abundant underlying fruit; well-balanced middleweight wine of moderate concentration and very refined tannin; sweet, savory, subtly complex flavor, long across the palate, particularly elegant presence and proportions, and with a long, delicate fruit and aroma finish; a lovely, classy, harmonious middleweight Port. Tannin still a little dry, therefore at best from 15 years of age. 2012–25. **17/17.5**

**1998 Vesuvio** (2,800 cases)

Narrow brick-rimmed black-red; a dense, perfumed nose, if the fruit is still a little raw, but promising a fine bouquet; an excellent balance of fresh and succulent fruit within a fine, firm tannic frame; deep, sweet, complex flavor of ripe black fruit and minerals. Long, elegant, even palate with a racy complexity

and mouth-filling scent behind the fairly muscular structure, and with a long, violet-scented finish. A dense yet harmonious Vesuvio, with tannins that are very fine but still very present. Ideally leave for eight to ten years. 2015–30. **17+**

**1999 Vesuvio** (2,000 cases)

Deep, inky, narrow-rimmed purple; an undeveloped nose, but full of ripe blackberry promise; well-constituted wine, a rich, ample, concentrated medium-weight, with very fine-textured tannins; full of a splendid blackberry-sweet fruit, both more opulent and less tannic than the 1998. Glowingly ripe, juicy, and buxom, with a nice mid-palate complexity and good length. Enormous fleshy charm, if not the density and completeness of a great year, but therefore accessible relatively early, easily from its tenth birthday. Most seductive! 2009–25. **16.5+**

**2000 Vesuvio** (2,500 cases)

Inky, narrow-rimmed black-red; a dense nose, rich in fruit extract, lightly peppery, faintly minerally. Rich, ample, dense, and fleshy—a beautifully balanced, rich middleweight with a very refined but still firm tannin. Deep, sweet, and fleshy within the tannic frame, but also close-grained and complex; long in the mouth, with a superb supporting fruit behind the structure, followed by great persistence of aftertaste. A more refined version of 1995, with more elegance and finesse to a similar structure, but without the absolute class of the 1994. A very fine, long-term Vesuvio. 2020–40. **18.5**

**2000 Dow**

Youthful black-purple; dense, closed nose—the most closed of these four 2000s to smell, but ripe black fruit behind and persistent, too. Rich, concentrated, tannic middleweight; at the moment, the muscle dominates the flesh and the fruit. Rich and concentrated and linear; long and fine in the mouth, very long, sweet, and scented to finish. A little less sweet than the Vesuvio, and less fleshy, but very harmonious. A lovely 2000 in prospect. Glorious Dow! 2020–40. **18+**

**2000 Warre**

Youthful black-purple; sweet, refined, and complex nose, more open at this stage than the Dow; lovely, rich, middleweight balance, with very fine tannin and a distinctive youthful fire in its belly; rich, sweet, juicy, close-knit, complex, and long; still very young, but classic Warre, with superb prospects. Needs at least 10–12 years more. Ideally 2020–40. **18.5**

**2000 Graham**

Youthful black-purple; youthful, yes, but richly sweet and peppery, an immediate sense of abundance! Rich, sensuously balanced wine with very fine tannins; very sweet and very juicy—all within a notable finesse of texture; already a most seductive wine: rich, long,

elegant, and even, with a “fat” that is unusual for Graham, an exceptional juice and succulence, a lovely overall harmony, and superb, scented length. A quite exceptional Graham. 2020–40. **19+**

**2001 Vesuvio** (2,000 cases)

Inky purple; dense, minerally, refined nose; elegant, middleweight wine with a fine tannin; aroma rather than fruit-rich, but attractively balanced and with good length. Similar in style to the '98, but without quite its projection of flavors; classic in the best sense, and likely to be solid and long-lasting. Not the purity of a really fine vintage—perfect fruit marred by rain at vintage. That said, this is very good. 2015–30+. **17**

**2003 Vesuvio** (2,500 cases)

Inky purple; rich and sweet and opulent to smell, if still backward and peppery, too; rich, generous, and relatively powerful Vesuvio, finely tannic, well balanced. Very rich and very sweet, but still characteristically graceful and scented; long and refined across the palate, slightly “hot” in the nature of the vintage, but with fine, fragrantly sweet length. A fine, large-scale Vesuvio, similar in quality to the 2000, but some way from the 1994. Likely to be accessible early because of its richness, as well as its fine tannins. 2018–35+. **18**

**2004 Vesuvio** (1,100 cases)

Inky purple; youthful nose, quite fruity, yet complex and subtle; nicely balanced, moderately concentrated wine, with a very fine, dry tannin. Restrained yet rich, silky textured, sweet, plush, and graceful; long and complex, refined and perfumed, gently mouth-coating, with a lovely blackberry and damson flavor, great finesse, and a long, sweet, perfumed finish. A particularly polished Vesuvio, a combination of class, scope, refinement, delicacy, and yet hidden power. Another lovely wine. 2020–40. **17/17.5**

**2005 Vesuvio** (1,250 cases)

Inky purple; dense but closed on the nose, though a fine fruit and minerality clearly there. Rich, refined middleweight, with a firm but very fine tannin; very sweet to taste, and also particularly scented; delicate, persistent, and refined, with a prolonged, fruit-sweet and fragrant finish. A very stylish Vesuvio, fine and delicious, if without the intensity of an absolutely top vintage. Somewhat similar in style to the lovely 1996, but richer and firmer, meaning it will take longer to come round. 2022–40+. **17.5+**

\* These figures are for a case of 12 bottles. In practice, Vesuvio is sold in handsome, brass-handled wooden cases containing six tissue-wrapped bottles, a china “bin label” of the year, and a full-color sheet with the details of the vintage in question, as well as of the property.