



WHISKY.AUCTION UNEARTHES COUNTERFEIT RARE SPIRITS OPERATION

LONDON, 28 February 2017: Leading online auctioneer Whisky.Auction has uncovered a large-scale fraudulent operation involving the refilling of hundreds of old bottles of whisky, rum and other spirits with cheaper, younger liquids.

Suspicious were raised during authenticity checks by the Whisky.Auction team on bottles submitted by one seller for auction, and as a result a visit was made to the seller's private residence. It was found that the individual in question was counterfeiting bottles to sell throughout the whisky- and spirits-collecting community alongside his genuine collection, with a level of sophistication never before seen in fraudulent spirits production.

Based on information provided by Whisky.Auction, the man was arrested by the Metropolitan Police on suspicion of fraud by false representation and has been bailed pending further investigation. In the meantime, and with the help of the Whisky.Auction team, potential evidence has been removed and the accused has been prohibited from selling any further product.

The extent of the operation is unknown at this stage but Whisky.Auction director Isabel Graham-Yooll estimates the resale value of the counterfeit bottles that have been prevented from making their way to market could have run into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

She explains: 'What we saw at the property was a significant collection, hundreds of bottles, of supposedly valuable liquids that if genuine were unlikely to be available on such a scale. This was an immediate red flag and our doubts were justified when we began scrutinising individual bottles.'

The issue of fraudulent whisky production, although relatively rare in large volume, is not new but with an increase in the popularity of old and rare whiskies, the potential rewards for fraudsters are growing and techniques are becoming more sophisticated.

'Unfortunately the level of attention to detail we have seen in this counterfeiting operation has never been seen on such a scale before,' explains Graham-Yooll. 'We pride ourselves on our very stringent procedures when it comes to assessing authenticity and provenance of a bottle and we're thankful that the Metropolitan Police have taken this issue seriously and stopped the accused from making further bottles available to market.'

For further information, images or to request an interview with Isabel Graham-Yooll, please contact Liz Lock on: liz@liz-lock.com and 07961 445066.