



Wednesday 6 May 2009

Landmark exhibition tells the story of Scotch

Over five hundred years of Scotland's national drink will be brought alive this May and June with a landmark exhibition telling the story of Scotch Whisky through archive treasures held in the vaults of both the National Archives of Scotland and private industry collections.

For the first time in many years, the earliest written record of whisky distilling in Scotland will be on public display. The famous 515 year old Exchequer Roll is considered to be the industry's 'founding document' and records King James IV granting Friar John Cor of Lindores Abbey 'eight bolls of malt wherewith to make acqua vitae'.

The free exhibition - 'From the Vaults: Whisky and the Scots' – runs through May and June, during the Homecoming Scotland 'Whisky Month' celebrations, in Edinburgh. The exhibition is a collaboration between the National Archives of Scotland, John Dewar & Sons Ltd, Diageo plc, and the SWA.

Specially loaned objects from the exhibition's two co-sponsors, include an original 1857 stock book from the John Walker & Sons grocery shop in Kilmarnock and Dewar's oldest known bottle of whisky, dating to the 1890s. Rare exhibits from the National Archives also show the close links between Robert Burns, poet and exciseman, and whisky, a relationship that sparked much of his finest work.

Gavin Hewitt, SWA Chief Executive, said:

"The Exchequer Roll of 1494 is Scotch Whisky's founding document and this exciting collaboration with the National Archives gives the public a chance to learn how over the last five centuries whisky has become inextricably linked to Scotland's culture, history and economy."

George McKenzie, Keeper of the Records of Scotland, said:

"The National Archives of Scotland holds many important documents concerning the history of Scotland's national drink, starting with the first recorded mention of whisky in 1494. We're delighted to be able to mark 'Whisky Month' by displaying some of our treasures, and are grateful for the support of the whisky industry in mounting this exhibition."



Christine McCafferty, Diageo's Archive Manager, said:

"As this is the first time the National Archives of Scotland have collaborated with business archives within the spirits industry, Diageo is really excited to be involved in the exhibition. It's a great opportunity for us to share some of the gems from our brand collections. One of my favourite items is the stock book of John Walker's original shop in Kilmarnock dating from 1857. This records John Walker selling whiskies from his grocery store and shows the origins of what has gone on to become the world's leading Scotch Whisky brand."

Jacqui Seargeant, Global Archive Manager for John Dewar & Sons Ltd, said:

"John Dewar & Sons and the National Archives share a passion for our heritage which is evident in this exciting exhibition. The biggest challenge has been narrowing down the selection to fit the space. Of particular note is the letter from the Inland Revenue approving production to start at Aberfeldy Distillery in 1899, a great milestone in our company's history. The fact that this same Single Malt whisky is still the focus for all our blending today is quite astonishing."

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Note to Editors:

1. Images of the Exchequer Roll, and other selected exhibits, are available by contacting the SWA. The free exhibition will run at West Register House, Charlotte Square, in Edinburgh from 7 May-26 June 2009.
2. Full details of the Homecoming 'Whisky Month' programme can be found at: http://www.homecomingscotland2009.com/whats-on/whisky_month.html.
3. For further information please contact David Williamson at the SWA on 0131 222 9230 or 07730 496 151.