

AROUND *the* HOUSES

From a Banksy screenprint, to the late Queen's provisional driving licence, the UK's salerooms surpassed themselves in recent sales



The Qianlong reign censer sparked a nine-way bidding war

Tennants, Leyburn

A Chinese porcelain censer, expected to make £1,000-£1,500, sparked a bidding war between an online bidder and eight telephone lines at the North Yorkshire saleroom's November 12 sale before selling for £130,000.

The censer, which bears the Qianlong reign mark (1644-1911) and was decorated with a fish, endless knot, heel of law and conch shell, was consigned by a local vendor, and by repute had been in the same family for three generations.

Once part of an altar garniture, the censer is decorated in the *doucai* style, where the design is painted in blue underglaze before glazing and firing, with coloured overglaze enamels used for the rest of the decoration.

At the same sale an unusually large 19th-century, stained wood artist's lay figure doubled its pre-sale estimate when it sold for £6,500.



Artists' lay figures are highly sought after by collectors

The rare 16th or 17th-century 'toadstone' ring was found in a box of mixed jewellery



Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet

A 'toadstone' ring, dated to the 16th or 17th century, sold for £12,500, against an estimate of £3,000-£4,000 at the Essex auctioneer's sale on November 23.

From the Middle Ages to the 18th century, 'toadstones' were thought to come from the heads of live toads and were highly prized for their supposed magical properties, in particular as an antidote to poison.

In reality they are the teeth of lepidotes, an extinct genus of ray-finned fish from the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Shakespeare references them in *As You Like It*, writing: "Sweet are the uses of adversity, Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

Gildings Auctioneers, Market Harborough

A collection of Jack Daniel's Tennessee whiskey collected over a decade sold for £6,250 at the Leicestershire auction house's recent wine and whisky sale.

The standout lot was a set of three Scenes from Lynchburg bottlings, which sold for £1,488 against an estimate of £500-£800, while three identical Master Distiller collection bottles in individual presentation tins also exceeded expectations by selling for £806 against an estimate of £150-£200.

Gildings' director, Will Gilding, said: "The prices are striking considering the contents of most limited-edition bottles are the standard Jack Daniel's Old No. 7, which you can pick up for under £30 in any UK supermarket."

Jack Daniel's is popular among collectors and the oldest distillery in Lynchburg, Tennessee.

Three bottles labelled Scenes from Lynchburg sold for £1,488



Three identical Master Distiller collection bottles sold for £806

