

AUTUMN 2008

AN ETHICALLY RESPONSIBLE SUPPLY CHAIN

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AT THE GREAT DEBATE

At International Jewellery London, The Birmingham Assay Office once again hosted The Great Debate, in partnership with Reed Exhibitions. The debate was chaired by Digby, Lord Jones of Birmingham, Minister for Trade & Investment who brought his usual blend of controversy, common sense and humour to the event.

The motion, "This house believes that the global jewellery industry will deliver an ethically responsible supply chain in line with consumer demand" proposed by Michael Rae, CEO of the Council for Responsible Jewellery Practices was carried by a large majority despite heated opposition from Gordon Hamme, editor of "The Goldsmith" magazine. This was an encouraging outcome for the industry which has accepted that difficult challenges must be confronted.

The debate was an opportunity for those focused on ethical issues to meet. Delegate Anel Laas, is Fair Trade & Marketing Manager, for Vukani-Ubuntu, a Community Development Organisation that endeavours to give underprivileged young



people in South Africa the opportunity to learn the jewellery manufacturing trade, free of charge. The charity is one of the pioneers in ethical jewellery manufacturing and are in the process of building their own ethical supply chain.



L-R Michael Rae, Digby, Lord Jones of Birmingham, Gordon Hamme, Michael Allchin, John Hall, Andrew Hinds, Jenny Dawkins, Sonya Maldar

Anel writes "It was great to meet likeminded people. As a result of the 2007 & 2008 Great Debate, Vukani-Ubuntu has met new clients to manufacture for but also new colleagues to support Vukani in building & developing our ethical supply chain. For the first time the group of jewellers are open and eager to share their information to fellow pioneers and it is heart warming to see growth even in the "credit crunch" period. Time for talk has passed!

We are already practically doing things to bring change to the issues, so lets celebrate that! To create an ethical supply chain is not going to happen over night but it will also not happen by itself!". ■

CHANGING SHOPPING HABITS WILL AFFECT CHRISTMAS SPEND

Economic conditions remain uncertain and precious metal prices are still volatile, making Christmas trading impossible to forecast. However, changing shopping habits will definitely affect Christmas spending and if the jewellery and watch industry are to retain their share of Christmas spending they need to respond.

Internet shopping is up 30% year to date, driven by convenience, easy price and product comparisons, and high motoring costs. "Multi channel" shopping, where a consumer researches online but visits a shop to make the purchase is also growing.

Decisions are likely to be made earlier and the big weekend for online sales is predicted to be 6th/7th December. By this date consumers will have chosen their most important gifts and retailers who do not market themselves via the internet will miss out. For the 'bricks and mortar' retailer the traditional six week build up to Christmas is no more. 2007 saw only two peak pre-Christmas weekends and 27th December was the busiest day. This year Saturday 27th December is expected to be huge although it will have to compete with the new phenomenon of "January Sales" starting online on Christmas Day. ■



ADVICE FOR BIRMINGHAM CONSUMERS

At the invitation of Birmingham Trading Standards, The Birmingham Assay Office will provide a shop front window display in the Birmingham Consumer Centre during the run up to Christmas.



The display will explain to Birmingham Shoppers what to look for when making a purchase of precious metal jewellery. The Birmingham Assay Office is more than delighted to oblige and will set up an easy to read and understand illuminated graphics display highlighting the role of the hallmark as a

form of consumer protection as well as explaining the compulsory and optional marks that can be found on gold, silver and platinum pieces. Birmingham Consumer Centre is a working partnership between Trading Standards and the Citizens Advice Bureau, providing advice and assistance to Birmingham residents and traders.

The Consumer Centre gives free help and assistance to members of the public with consumer related enquiries, advising on consumer rights and what action can be taken if a dispute remains unresolved. The Centre provides access to Trading Standards services if it appears that Trading Standards laws may have been broken.



The Birmingham Consumer Centre is situated at 155/157 Corporation Street, Birmingham, B4 6PH. The Trading Standards Advice Line number is: 0121 303 6031 or email: tradingstandards@birmingham.gov.uk ■

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Cobalt Coated Tanzanite beginning to appear in volume



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THE LABORATORY

New website www.thelaboratory.co.uk



HALLMARKING

A FOUNDRY FOR TOP ARTISTS

Set in the beautiful surroundings of Gloucestershire's Chalford Valley is Pangolin Editions, one of Britain's leading sculpture foundries, which casts an amazing range of objects in silver and bronze.

Pangolin Editions casts for an international clientele to any scale including artists such as Damien Hirst, Anthony Abrahams, Jon Buck, Lynn Chadwick's Estate, Terence Coventry, Abigail Fallis, David Mach, Anita Mandl, all of whom have had pieces cast in silver - tested and hallmarked at The Birmingham Assay Office.

Pangolin is one of the few foundries still practising the traditional skills of 'lost wax block investment casting', but also operates a 3,000

square metre unit offering a sand moulding process where the largest of monuments can be produced. The range of objects which are presented by Pangolin to The Birmingham Assay Office for hallmarking never fails to interest our hand marker, Julie Burns. She is responsible for skillfully applying the hallmark by hand after objects have been tested for verification of the precious metal content.

Pangolin London, an impressive new gallery at Kings Place will open in October 2008. It will house a changing programme of exhibitions showing the best of contemporary sculpture in silver, bronze and other materials and aims to showcase up and coming artists alongside established international names.



"It Takes Two" by artist David Mach. Sterling Silver.

For more information about the new gallery visit www.pangolinlondon.com ■

THE BIRMINGHAM ASSAY OFFICE SPONSORS CENTREPIECE 2008

The Birmingham Assay Office is pleased to once again be at the heart of Centrepiece 2008.

Contemporary jewellery designers, makers and silversmiths based in Birmingham, whose work sells nationally and internationally, will be exhibiting and selling their work from two locations this year – Symphony Hall and Birmingham Town Hall from Tuesday 11th November to Tuesday 23rd December.

Centrepiece offers a fantastic opportunity to buy original work directly from the designers. It is a



Christmas shopping haven where you can even commission your own pieces for special gifts whilst, at the same time, supporting British designers. The choice will be wide - from delicate jewellery in precious metals to funky fashion pieces to wear long after the festivities are over. A special leaflet explaining the sterling silver hallmarks will be supplied by



The Birmingham Assay Office and will be included with every purchase made throughout the exhibition. A private view and fashion show supported by The Birmingham Assay Office will take place at Symphony Hall on Thursday 13th November. For more information visit www.centrepiece-jewellery.co.uk ■

HALLMARKING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The results of our recent Hallmarking Customer Satisfaction Survey show an overall improvement in the level of satisfaction amongst our hallmarking customers.

The survey is a valuable exercise and helps us to identify ways in which to continuously improve the services we offer.

Thank you to all those customers who took the time to complete the survey and

congratulations to Karen Murphy of Jewelcast, who was our prize draw winner.

Karen is seen here receiving her prize of a bottle of champagne from Marie Brennan, Business Relations Manager.



SIMON GETS BURSARY AWARD



The Birmingham Assay Office continues to support the work of Birmingham City University's School of Jewellery by providing an annual Bursary for a student, or students, undertaking an MA in Jewellery and Silversmithing.

This year's Bursary, worth £5,000, has been awarded to Simon Pattison who has recently commenced his MA course at the School having spent the past nine years working for Denby Pottery where he was responsible for the design and development of products in ceramic, wood and glass. Simon is transferring his design skills to the jewellery and silversmithing industry, where he plans to pursue his career.

The Bursary helps towards tuition fees and other costs associated with the year long course. Simon said: "I am delighted and privileged to have been selected by The Birmingham Assay Office to receive this award. It will go a long way in helping me during my MA course, which I am looking forward to with great enthusiasm."

Simon is pictured above receiving his Bursary from Marie Brennan, Business Relations Manager. ■



COBALT COATED TANZANITES BEGINNING TO APPEAR IN VOLUME

AnchorCert gemmologists assess many Tanzanites, grading them according to the AnchorCert Tanzanite system which offers simple consumer friendly classifications for clarity and intensity of colour.

Recently, AnchorCert has detected its first examples of tanzanites which had been enhanced by the latest process – cobalt coating. The treatment takes the form of a surface coating which can improve the apparent colour of the tanzanite by as much as two grades, ie from A or AA to AAA or AAAA.

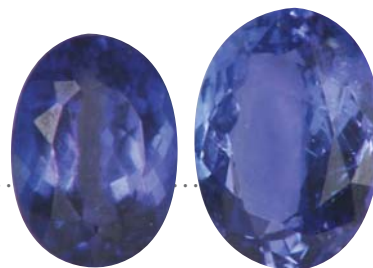
The colour enhancement makes the stone apparently better quality, and therefore more valuable, than it was originally. However, the cobalt can be polished off and the treatment should definitely be disclosed by the seller.

The treated stones received were between 30 points and one carat and the supplier knew that the stones would be submitted for certification.



This suggests that some of the supply chain is buying and selling in good faith and is not yet aware of the new treatment, which only became available commercially within the last 12 months.

The cobalt treatment is sometimes quite hard to identify with a 10x loupe, but under higher magnification, using a gemmological microscope



there are give away signs. AnchorCert gemmologists automatically look for the signs and if the coating is in any way imperfect they are easy to spot.

Senior Gemmologist Anu Manchanda explains: "On a perfect example the only way we can tell with the naked eye is by the colour, which just doesn't look right. When we check with a loupe we'll see that the colour is patchy, particularly when viewed from the crown, and when we put the tanzanite under X-Ray Fluorescence it will show relatively high levels of cobalt. It is in circumstances like this that the wide range of expertise and equipment that we have at AnchorCert really comes into its own." ■

ANCHORCERT GROWS FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Despite the current economic doom and gloom the AnchorCert independent diamond certification service is growing from strength to strength. Sales and Marketing Director Marion Wilson is not surprised: "All the statistics show that, while volumes are down, value is up and expensive jewellery is inevitably a considered purchase.

"When people have less money to spend they want to be sure they know what they are buying, and an AnchorCert certificate gives them the reassurance they are looking for." Consolidating all of AnchorCert's expertise and equipment into Birmingham has proved very beneficial and the team of gemmologists is increasingly proud of the service they can offer.

Customers from throughout the UK regularly send in diamonds for Full Certificates and Mini Reports, (which can also be provided for mounted stones).

The AnchorCert team anticipates being very busy in the run up to Christmas and expects increased demand for its "Same Day" and "Next Day" services as the uncertain financial climate encourages retailers to buy to order. ■

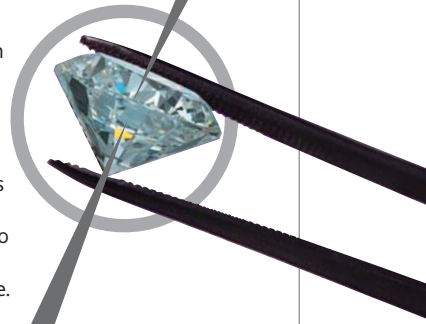


DEMAND FOR DIAMOND INSCRIPTION GROWS

Diamond laser inscription is becoming more and more popular as customers appreciate the benefits of having certificate numbers inscribed onto the girdle of each stone.

This inscription adds credibility to the certificate and, in practical terms, is the only certain way to avoid certificates and diamonds becoming mixed up. The laser machine at The Birmingham Assay Office is also in regular use adding weights, personal messages and logos to differentiate products and add value.

Diamonds can be inscribed when they are loose or mounted, just so long as there is space for the laser to make contact with the girdle.



MEET KITIYA ANDREWS, GEMMOLOGIST BA, FGA, DGA

Kitiya has been part of the Diamond grading team since 2006 when she joined AnchorCert after a break from work to have her children.

She graduated from the School of Jewellery in 2000 with a degree in Jewellery and Silversmithing Design and immediately used her new found skills to design and make her own line of jewellery.

Kitiya is now an experienced gemmologist and diamond grader but still finds time to do some jewellery design in between her work and family commitments. ■





INSTITUTE OF REGISTERED VALUERS LAUNCHED BY NAG



The National Association of Goldsmiths
Representing Jewellery Retailers since 1894

The NAG welcomed a record 180 delegates to its Annual Conference for Valuers and Jewellers in September.

The Birmingham Assay Office was pleased to be the principal financial sponsor of the three day event and also supported the NAG by providing four workshop sessions on the Arts & Crafts movement and participating in the Debate

The Conference saw the launch of the Institute of Registered Valuers, a new body which replaces the previous Registered Valuer system. The Institute is a response to the changing environment in which NAG Valuers are operating and is described by NAG Valuations Committee Chairman Jonathan Lambert as "the most progressive step made to date to unify the whole industry towards one goal – 'valuing excellence and professionalism'," SafeGuard welcomes the change which will now enable SafeGuard Registered Valuers to apply this status to all the documents which they produce, adding to their authority and validity.

The new arrangements under the constitution of the Institute also mean that the highly regarded Registered Valuer status will be subject to continual professional development and monitoring, adding to the recognition of the qualification. The Institute will also have two tier membership with long established practicing members designated as "Fellows" to demarcate their additional experience.

Michael Allchin participated in the Conference debate where John Henn proposed the motion: "This house believes that TV and online jewellery sales are damaging the specialist High Street Jeweller." Both speakers referred to the massive increase in online sales, which

doubled overall in 2007 versus 2006, and presented some statistics about sales through TV shopping channels. However, Michael also produced convincing evidence from Mintel research which shows that, while the value of all jewellery sales rose by 6.8% from 2003 to 2007, independents enjoyed a 9.8% increase. This increased their market share to 27% while multiple jewellers were nearer to the average with a 5.6% increase in value and a 1% drop in market share to 41%. The motion was defeated by a very large margin. ■



l-r Jonathan Lambert, Michael Floare, John Henn, Brian Dunn, Frank Wood, Sandra Page

QUEST FOR AMBER

Safeguard Valuer Vanessa Paterson, G.G., F.G.A (GIA) Pearl Graduate, is giving a talk on amber at the Gem-A Conference to be held on the 28th and 29th of November at the Menzies Strathallan Hotel, Birmingham.

Vanessa has studied and researched amber over the last 25 years. Her passion for amber stems from her mother, who collected amber beads and would take Vanessa to antique markets and shows looking for this elusive jewel.

What they often found were lots of so-called 'cherry red faceted amber beads' which turned out to be cast phenolic resin ('Bakelite') and yet it was being sold as rare red amber from Burma. Finding the yellow 'butterscotch' coloured amber beads that her mother really wanted proved much more difficult. Her quest for knowledge about amber took

Vanessa to London's Natural History Museum, and to Sac Frères the amber shop which was on Bond Street, and was world famous for having rare ambers. Vanessa's talk will provide an insight into natural amber and its origins. She will also advise on how to tell plastic from polyburn, and discuss pressed, sieved and fake inclusions set in amber, copal and plastic. ■



WORKING WITH THE ANTIQUES TRADE

SafeGuard Jewellery Valuation Service is being asked to value an increasing amount of antique jewellery and has now launched an advertising campaign to let the antiques trade and consumers know that SafeGuard Valuers are qualified to assess this type of object.

By combining the experience of its valuers plus the exceptional resources available in the reference library at The Birmingham Assay Office, SafeGuard is well equipped to provide an excellent

service to antique dealers and members of the public alike.

Safeguard's new Jewellery Assessment report is also proving popular with those who require an independent authentication of an item pre-sale, but where a standard valuation would not be appropriate. ■



POSITIVE VIBES FOR THE NPA CONFERENCE

The Birmingham Assay Office is pleased to once again support the National Pawnbrokers Association at its Annual Conference on 10th October.



Representatives from the Hallmarking operation, AnchorCert and SafeGuard welcome this opportunity to meet customers face to face and get their feedback. AnchorCert and SafeGuard Operations Director Carla Goodfellow says:

"We are working with an increasing number of pawnbrokers, they appreciate our range of services and the added reassurance that products such as our Jewellery Assessment Report bring to their business. "This is a sector of the trade that is flourishing this year and we look forward to a lively and positive day."

The Birmingham Assay Office has also sponsored the Employer of the Year Award which will be presented at the Conference Dinner. ■

THE LABORATORY



SUCCESSFUL DEBUT AT AUTUMN FAIR

Members of The Laboratory team were not quite sure what to expect from their first stand-alone exhibition but when they exhibited at Autumn Fair for the first time they had a great response from visitors and fellow exhibitors.

"This is a busy show and the visitors are definitely here to spend" says Marion Wilson, Sales and Marketing Director.



"It is targeted at the fashion jewellery and accessory industry and attracts a completely different type of visitor to IJL (International Jewellery London) which focuses on specialist fine jewellery.



"It's always good to be able to talk to people about our services face to face and Autumn Fair gave us the chance to do just that. We met a lot of new people here."

The team from The Laboratory found that there was interest in hallmarking as well as in nickel and lead testing and other unique services such as tarnishing testing. "There is still confusion and concern about all these issues, particularly those that affect product safety and many people really appreciated the fact that The Birmingham Assay Office was there to answer their questions," said Marion. ■



Tim Smith, Lisa Johnson and Kelly Fisher on The Laboratory Stand at Autumn Fair

CORROSION RESISTANCE TEST NOW AVAILABLE

The latest new test to be offered by The Laboratory is a corrosion resistance test appropriate for accessories such as buckles, buttons, rivets and eyelets.

ISO 22775 includes two methods - one to assess susceptibility to sulphide tarnishing and the other to determine the resistance of articles to prolonged contact with salt water.

Fashion retailers have requested this test as part of their overall quality control procedures to ensure that the surface appearance of components of accessories will not deteriorate during wear.

In the test, the item is exposed to either hydrogen sulphide or salt water under controlled conditions. Any changes to the surface are examined using both visual and spectrophotometric measurement. Changes may take the form of staining, corrosion or alternation of colour.

High quality colour photographs are used to record the changes, aid judgement and complete the report to the customer. This is the latest test in the rapidly expanding portfolio of Quality Assurance procedures for the fashion industry offered by The Laboratory which includes tests for tarnishing, plating thickness, colour measurement and important safety issues such as the release of toxic elements, including lead, and allergens such as nickel.

A MINE OF INFORMATION www.THELABORATORY.CO.UK

The services available from The Laboratory at The Birmingham Assay Office have expanded far beyond its original assaying capability and now include a wide range of tests applicable to the jewellery industry and to other sectors such as packaging, pharmaceutical and automotive products.

Many tests have been developed in direct response to customer requirements and this innovative approach, backed by a huge amount of research, has resulted in a wide portfolio of UKAS accredited tests.

The range of activities is now so wide that a brand new website has been launched to give customers more information about what is on offer.

www.thelaboratory.co.uk is easy to navigate and contains a huge amount of helpful information as well as detailing the independent UKAS accredited services available. ■



NEW STAFF FOR THE LABORATORY

The Laboratory prides itself on offering excellent service and has expanded its team significantly during the past year to cope with the growth in business.

Six additional staff have joined the team to ensure that customers receive the high standard of service they require.

Dippal Manchanda, Technical Director, has great confidence in his team "Our staff have an impressive mix of skills and experience. We are committed to offering our customers the services they need and being able to resolve any technical problems they have. "We have a strong and competent team and are ready to cope with the busy pre-Christmas period." ■



Dippal Manchanda with some of the new laboratory staff team

MEET THE TEAM



LISA JOINS SAFEGUARD

SAFEGUARD'S LATEST RECRUIT IS SALES MANAGER LISA JOHNSON

Lisa graduated from Birmingham City University with a HND in Gemmology in 2004 and started her career working in jewellery retail in Worcester.

Until recently she was a valuer with Fellows and Sons Auctioneers in Birmingham but wanted to continue to progress her career and has now opted for a life on the road.

Lisa will be travelling the country for SafeGuard, visiting many of the 1200 retail outlets who offer the SafeGuard Jewellery Valuation Service and encouraging more to try it. She will also provide staff training and help retailers to gain the most benefit from their Safeguard Jewellery Valuation Event Days. Lisa will be supported by Kelly Fisher, SafeGuard Marketing Coordinator and Account Manager Marie Chalmers who



returns to part time work after her maternity leave in early November. ■

FUNDRAISING UPDATE THE ASSAY OFFICE CHALLENGE WALK



This year's particularly challenging walk, undertaken by intrepid Birmingham Assay Office staff following the coastal path for over 26 miles from Lynmouth Harbour to Woolacombe has raised a total of £2,258 which will be donated to MacMillan Nurses and the Make A Wish Foundation.

Many, many thanks to all those staff, customers and supporters of The Birmingham Assay Office who have contributed to such a magnificent total. ■

OLIVIA TURNER MARKETING ASSISTANT

"I have joined the Sales & Marketing team as the new Marketing Assistant, I will be here for a year on work placement from Birmingham City University where I am in my third year of a Marketing Degree.

I'm originally from Hull, but have lived in Birmingham since I started university in 2006 however before that I lived and finished school in Dubai where I was able to see some of the most (in my opinion) amazing jewellery!

I have always had an interest in jewellery and spent some time working in a shop specialising in Simulated Diamonds. Needless to say, the chance of seeing more things that 'sparkle' really attracted me to this position.

Whilst I'm here at The Birmingham Assay Office you will see me doing many different jobs from delivering the Anchor newsletter around the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter to setting up exhibitions.

I have already done so much in the short time I have been here and I'm really looking forward to the next 12 months, the challenges I will face and the people I will meet and I hope the experience will stay with me forever." ■



MEET TONY JENKINS

Tony Jenkins joined The Birmingham Assay Office 37 years ago at the tender age of 22. 37 years later Tony is still enjoying the diversity of his role within the Hallmarking Department.

He has extensive experience in applying hallmarks to a wide range of precious metal articles by hand, press and hydraulics. Marking the The F.A. Cup was a highlight for Tony but he has also marked numerous other prestigious chains and badges of office.



Over the years Tony has created his own Work Book illustrating some very special items which he has marked over the past 37 years. It records specific hallmarking instructions from the manufacturers of the pieces, including R. Platnaeur whom we are still proud to be working with today. Tony said: "Every day in the Marking Department presents new challenges because there are so many different and interesting pieces presented to us for hallmarking." ■



SANDRA'S SPECIAL CELEBRATION

Dave Logan, who is Preparation & Despatch Manager at The Birmingham Assay Office, his wife Sandra and their family have had cause for celebration recently. This October marks 5 years since Sandra underwent surgery and subsequent treatment for breast cancer. With the support of her family and her own fighting spirit, Sandra has successfully beaten the illness.



To celebrate, a "5 year "One Boob" Party" was organised to mark this important milestone and the event was used to raise much needed funds for Cancer Research. Our good wishes for continued health and happiness go to Sandra who is pictured here, looking fit and healthy, with her 5 year celebration cake. If you would like to make a donation to



Sandra, Dave, Louise, Neil and Joanne Logan

the Logan's fund raising efforts, please email Dave at dave.logan@theassayoffice.co.uk ■

HISTORY & HERITAGE



ARTS & CRAFTS AT THE NAG

Curator, Dr. Sally Baggott and SafeGuard Valuer, Craig O'Donnell ran workshops on the Arts and Crafts movement in Birmingham at the recent NAG Valuers Conference, which was sponsored by The Birmingham Assay Office.

Those attending the workshops had the opportunity to get 'up close and personal' with silver and jewellery made in Birmingham during



Fiammetta portrait of Georgie Gaskin by Arthur Gaskin, 1898

the Arts and Crafts period, to benefit from Craig's knowledge and valuing expertise in this area, and to hear Sally put the movement in historical context. The workshops focussed on three Birmingham companies which exemplify the Arts and Crafts movement including the Birmingham Guild of Handicrafts, A. Edward Jones and Arthur and Georgie Gaskin.

Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery generously loaned two exquisite necklaces by the Gaskins from their jewellery collections for the workshops. Sally and Craig played to a full house at each of the five sessions they ran.

Attendees included Frank Wood, the President of the NAG, and Michael Norman, Chairman of the Guild of Valuers and Jewellers. Sally said: 'We were grateful to BMAG.



Far Right Frank Wood, President of NAG, Back Craig O'Donnell

The Gaskin pieces were fantastic; really beautiful; and they certainly caused a stir. Craig and I received excellent feedback about the workshops, and we will definitely be going back next year.' ■



Necklace by Arthur and Georgie Gaskin, sterling silver and opals, c. 1918

SILVER TO COMMEMORATE MATTHEW BOULTON'S BICENTENARY

The Birmingham Assay Office has commissioned a piece of silver to commemorate next year's bicentenary of Matthew Boulton's death.



Winning design by Shona Marsh

Several recent graduates from the School of Jewellery were invited to submit designs in silver and these were judged by a committee of the Wardens of The Birmingham Assay Office. The winning design for a candelabrum is by Shona Marsh who says she is thrilled to have won. Candlesticks and candelabra proved a popular line at the Boulton's Soho Manufactory, and Boulton would undoubtedly have approved of Shona's design! Shona worked with the copies of the Boulton pattern books in the Library at The Birmingham Assay Office, and visited Soho House for inspiration. The finished piece will be unveiled at the Spring Fair in February next year. It will then go on display at the new gallery at the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter in March. The bicentenary is fast approaching, and plans for celebrations next year will raise the profile of Boulton and his home city. There will be a short exhibition at Christie's in London; the Victoria and Albert Museum will be staging an event; and several National Trust houses that have Boulton pieces in their collections have agreed to join in the celebrations.

For updates on events please go to our website at www.theassayoffice.co.uk or to www.matthewboulton2009.org ■

SIGMUND'S WALKING STICKS TURN UP

As children, sisters Helen King and Janet Wood lived in the house that belonged to Sigmund Freud's niece, and they remember their mother referring to 'Sigmund's sticks'. Recently they brought the two walking sticks to The Birmingham Assay Office to have the hallmarks identified.

One stick was 800 grade silver with an Austrian mark c. 1910, but the other was sterling silver, assayed and marked at Birmingham in 1893 with the sponsor's mark of Thomas Davis Jnr., stick maker of Hoxton, London.



Sigmund Freud with walking stick

Freud, who is often called 'the father of psychoanalysis', was undoubtedly one of the great thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Sisters Helen King and Janet Wood

SafeGuard Valuer, Craig O'Donnell was fascinated to see these pieces; "they came with an excellent provenance" says Craig, "and it was a strange experience to handle them knowing that they had belonged to Freud himself." ■

THE ONE SHOW COMES TO TOWN

In July, 'The One Show' came to film at The Birmingham Assay Office.

Presenter Neil Oliver visited with a crew to film pieces of Matthew Boulton silver in the Collection as part of a story about the recent purchase of the J.W. Evans factory in Albion Street by English Heritage.

The production team thought it would add interest to the programme if they could include footage of large silverware of the kind that was manufactured at J. W. Evans. The Birmingham Assay Office was pleased to step in and welcome the BBC.

Curator, Dr. Sally Baggott said: "It is always great when anyone shows an interest in our Collections, but it was special to have the BBC here because the One Show is broadcast nationally." The programme is scheduled to be broadcast on Friday October 3rd, 7.00pm, BBC 1. ■



Dr Sally Baggott with One Show Presenter Neil Oliver

INDUSTRY NEWS

IJL SEMINARS A SUCCESS

The Birmingham Assay Office was pleased to contribute to the comprehensive programme of free seminars at International Jewellery London.

This year, Michael Allchin focused on the changing shopping habits which have developed over the past few years and investigated the impact they could have on the retail jewellery industry this Christmas.

In his seminar, provocatively titled "Christmas Eve is no longer 24th December", Michael presented evidence of the continuing shift of the long established Christmas shopping peak. This is being driven by "multi channel shopping" as more and more consumers use a

combination of online and 'bricks and mortar' outlets. Michael also spoke in his capacity as President of the CIBJO's Precious Metals Commission, giving a background to the well established "Blue Books" which set a respected international reference standard for Diamonds, Coloured Gemstones and Pearls.

He explained the content of the new Precious Metals Blue Book, which he had been instrumental in compiling with the support of an international working group.



The Precious Metals Blue Book was adopted by CIBJO at this Year's CIBJO congress and its content can be found on The Birmingham Assay Office website at www.theassayoffice.co.uk and the CIBJO website www.cibjo.org ■



HAVING A BALL

The Jewellery and Giftware Ball, in aid of the British Jewellery Giftware and Finishing Federation Benevolent Society, is set to take place on Thursday 20th November at The Birmingham Botanical Gardens.



Birmingham Assay Office Girls Partying hard at last year's ball

Lynn Snead who organises the event for the Charity said: "Guests will enjoy a champagne reception followed by four course dinner and entertainment by live band 'Breeze'."

Demand for tickets is expected to be high so you are urged to reserve yours now by calling Gill Price on 0121 237 1138 or via the website: www.bjgf.org.uk/events.asp



British Jewellery Giftware & Finishing Federation
Benevolent Society

GEOFF & MAGGIE TO TIE THE KNOT

Warmest congratulations from everyone at The Birmingham Assay Office to Geoff Field, Chief Executive of the BJA (British Jewellers' Association) and Maggie Nichols, Managing Director of Suttons Tools on the recent announcement of their engagement.

Geoff and Maggie have set a date for their big day in May 2009 providing a double celebration for Maggie as her business, which supplies tools and equipment to the jewellery trade, celebrates its 125th Anniversary in 2009. We wish Geoff and Maggie all the very best for the future. ■



TOP TED

As with all divisions of The Birmingham Assay Office, the SafeGuard Jewellery Valuation Service prides itself on the expertise and professionalism of a top class team.

All SafeGuard Valuations are carried out by experienced valuers who only work for SafeGuard and the team are fiercely proud of the high standards they set themselves. Latest recruit Top Ted is still in training – it could be a while before he joins the new Institute of Registered Valuers. ■

HALLMARKING DECLINE CONTINUES

The decline in the number of articles hallmarked by the four UK Assay Offices accelerated in the third quarter of the calendar year with a total of 4.86 million articles hallmarked, a drop of 23% against last year. The total number of articles marked during 2008 to date now stands

at 13.2 million, 3.4 million articles less than in the same period in 2007.

In the third quarter, gold continued to be the area which showed the biggest drop, but even silver, which has held up well throughout the year was

down by 10%. The hallmarking figures reflect lower consumer spending, retailer destocking and cautious buying as precious metal prices continue to be volatile and the worsening economic situation makes the whole industry more apprehensive. ■

Work dealt with by the Assay Offices of Great Britain, for the Quarter July - Sept 08	GOLD							SILVER				PLATINUM					
	375 9 carat	585 14 carat	750 18 carat	916 22 carat	990	999	TOTAL	800	925 Sterling	958 Britannia	999	TOTAL	850	900	950	999	TOTAL
NUMBER OF ARTICLES	2,117,832 -32.8%	34,653 -20.6%	357,511 -22.2%	105,739 -32.3%	2 -98.4%	245 109.4%	2,615,982 -31.4%	413 69.3%	2,164,572 -10.5%	3,970 114.7%	2,030 -0.4%	2,170,985 -10.4%	0 -100%	165 -56.2%	70,255 -16.6%	26 -58.1%	70,446 -16.9%
WEIGHT OF ARTICLES Gold & Platinum (g) Silver (kg)	7,881,406 -32.1%	182,301 -67.6%	2,193,447 -27.7%	975,544 -32.3%	2,306 533.5%	2,737 -4.2%	11,237,741 -32.5%	4 -97.4%	35,943 -11.5%	255 63.5%	345 -77.5%	36,547 -13.9%	0 -100%	1,114 -55.9%	594,165 -15.4%	162 0%	595,441 -15.6%