

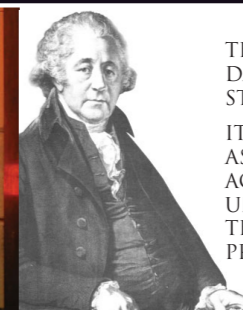
# THE PROCESS ASSAYING & HALLMARKING



# PROTECTING CONSUMERS & TRADERS



Matthew Boulton Spoon (1774)



THE HISTORY OF UK HALLMARKING DATES BACK OVER 700 YEARS TO A STATUTE INSTITUTED BY EDWARD I.

ITS PURPOSE THEN WAS THE SAME AS IT IS TODAY – TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC AGAINST FRAUD AND THE TRADER FROM UNFAIR COMPETITION. IT IS, IN FACT, THE EARLIEST FORM OF CONSUMER PROTECTION.

MATTHEW BOULTON, FOUNDER OF THE BIRMINGHAM ASSAY OFFICE

## ASSAYING

The assaying and hallmarking process starts with testing. Samples are selected from each batch and tested.

Using X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrometry Analysis (XRF) the precious metal content of the piece is determined.

The traditional methods of assaying i.e. cupellation for gold and potentiometric titration for silver are still used when necessary but the vast majority of product received into The Birmingham Assay Office is now tested by the XRF method.

## HALLMARKING

Hallmarks can be applied in one of three ways. The traditional methods of marking by hand punches or hydraulic press are widely used but in the 21st Century marking by laser is also an option, utilising the latest technology to mark hollow, highly finished or intricate items of jewellery, or watches.



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## HALLMARKING

THE EARLIEST FORM OF CONSUMER PROTECTION & STILL PLAYING A VITAL ROLE IN THE MODERN WORLD

Gold, silver, platinum and palladium are always used as an alloy in the manufacture of precious metal jewellery, watches and silverware.

The precious metal is mixed with other elements to give it the properties, such as flexibility and durability, needed to produce a desirable article.

Even the most experienced jeweller or chemist cannot tell, just by looking at it, how much precious metal there is in the alloy or whether a thick plating of precious metal is masking a base metal core. This offers the unscrupulous a huge opportunity for fraud and there is a need to protect the public and honest suppliers.

Therefore all items, over the minimum specified weight, being sold as gold, silver, platinum or palladium in the UK

must be hallmarked to confirm that they meet the legal standards of the Hallmarking Act, 1973.

Hallmarking must be carried out by a UK Assay Office or an Assay Office belonging to the International Convention.

The Birmingham Assay Office was founded in 1773. For more than 235 years it has built an outstanding worldwide reputation based on its established expertise and its total integrity and independence.

The Birmingham Assay Office, having embraced the latest technological developments, is now the largest assay office in the world and the leading UK provider of a range of services to the UK jewellery industry.



# LOOK FOR THE HALLMARK

# IT'S YOUR GUARANTEE

IN THE UK IT IS ILLEGAL TO SELL OR DESCRIBE ANY ITEM AS GOLD, SILVER, PLATINUM OR PALLADIUM UNLESS IT IS HALLMARKED\*.

THE HALLMARK GUARANTEES THE PRECIOUS METAL CONTENT OF THE ITEM YOU ARE BUYING, GIVING YOU COMPLETE REASSURANCE.



THE ANCHOR IS THE SYMBOL OF THE BIRMINGHAM ASSAY OFFICE. WHEN YOU SEE THE ANCHOR ON ANY ITEM MADE FROM A PRECIOUS METAL, YOU KNOW IT HAS BEEN TESTED AT THE WORLD'S LARGEST ASSAY OFFICE.

\*GOLD AND PALLADIUM ARTICLES WEIGHING LESS THAN 1g, SILVER ARTICLES WEIGHING LESS THAN 7.78g AND PLATINUM ARTICLES WEIGHING LESS THAN 0.5g, ARE EXEMPT FROM HALLMARKING.



## COMPULSORY MARKS

### THE SPONSOR'S MARK

This is the unique mark of the company or person responsible for sending the article for hallmarking.



The sponsor may be the manufacturer, importer, wholesaler, retailer or an individual. To obtain a Sponsor's Mark you must register with an Assay Office.

### THE STANDARD MARK

This shows the standard of fineness – ie purity of the precious metal content in parts per 1000 (eg - for 18 carat gold this is 750 parts per 1000 by weight).

## STANDARD MARKS

### GOLD



### SILVER



### PLATINUM



### PALLADIUM



## THE ASSAY OFFICE MARK

This symbol shows which Assay Office tested and marked the item. The Anchor is the symbol of The Birmingham Assay Office.



## OPTIONAL MARKS

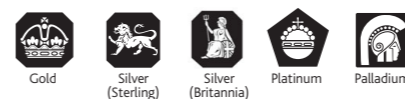
### DATE LETTER

Shows the year in which the article was hallmarked.



### TRADITIONAL MARKS

These are traditional standard marks that can still be used today.



## COMMEMORATIVE MARKS

Special hallmarks which celebrate major events.



## INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION MARKS

Since 1972 the UK has been a signatory to the International Convention on Hallmarks. This means that UK Assay Offices can apply the Common Control Mark which will then be recognised by all member countries in the Convention. Conversely, Convention Hallmarks that have been applied in other member countries are recognised in the UK.

