



THE GOLDSMITHS' COMPANY
ASSAY OFFICE
L O N D O N
YOUR CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE

NOTICE OF PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH GOLD OR SILVER ARTICLES SUBMITTED TO THE GOLDSMITHS' COMPANY, ASSAY OFFICE LONDON, FOR EXAMINATION BY THE ANTIQUE PLATE COMMITTEE

The following notes are issued for the guidance and assistance of all who co-operate with the Wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company in carrying out their duties relative to the hallmarking of gold or silver articles. If the Wardens suspect deliberate evasion of the law they reserve the right to use their full legal powers.

The law applicable after 1st January 1975 is set out in the Hallmarking Act 1973, hereinafter referred to as "the Act", which expression includes any modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force. The law is not set out in detail in this notice and for an answer to any individual problem the Act itself should be consulted.

When an article is submitted for examination the Antique Plate Committee first decides whether the article complies with the law. If it complies it is returned to the person submitting it as soon as possible after it has been examined. If it does not comply with the law the wardens decide how it offends and deal with it as follows :-

A. Forged, Counterfeit or Transposed Hallmarks and Sponsor's Marks

1. If an article bears forged, counterfeit or transposed marks, they are either cancelled or obliterated. Any such mark which, in the opinion of the Committee, was struck upon the article or transposed into it before 22nd December 1854 is cancelled but not obliterated; other such marks are obliterated.
2. If the marks have been cancelled the article is returned to the owner. If the marks have been obliterated the owner is asked whether he wishes
 - (a) to have it returned to him with a warning that Section 1 of the Act applies (see Note I), or
 - (b) to have it assayed and, if up to standard, hallmarked as a new article (see Note II 1.).

B. Improper Alterations

1. Sometimes in the case of an improper alteration (see Note III) an article can be regularised without defacing the old marks e.g.
 - (a) if the article can be restored to its original state by removal of unauthorised additions, or
 - (b) if the character of the article is essentially unchanged by the alteration and any unauthorised additions can be approved and (if found on assay to be up to standard) hallmarked with the “additions hallmark”.
2. Otherwise the marks on the article are obliterated and the owner is asked whether he wishes
 - (a) to have the article returned to him with a warning that Section 1 of the Act applies (see Note I) or
 - (b) to have it assayed and, if up to standard, hallmarked as a new article.

Articles Submitted for Assay

1. If in accordance with paragraph A 2. (b) or B 2. (b) above, the owner elects to have the article assayed after obliteration of the marks and it is found not to be up to standard, the article is normally returned to him unhallmarked with a warning that Section 1 of the Act applies, but the Wardens reserve the right to exercise the power to break set out in Schedule 5 para.2 sub para. (4) (a) of the Act.
2. If unauthorised additions are found on assay not to be up to standard (see paragraph B 1. (b) above and Note II 2.) the owner will normally be given the opportunity of replacing them with gold or silver of the required standard. If the owner does not wish to have sub-standard additions replaced, the old marks are obliterated and the article returned to him with a warning that section 1 of the Act applies, but the Wardens reserve the right to exercise the power to break set out in Schedule 5 para..2 sub para. (4) (a) of the Act.
3. An article which has been found not to be up to standard can, by arrangement, be sent to a refiner in which case the owner will recover the value of the precious metal content.

NOTES

I UNHALLMARKED ARTICLES

1. Section 1 (1) of the Act states:-

Subject to the provisions of this Act, any person who, in the course of trade or business:-

- (a) applies to an unhallmarked article a description indicating that it is wholly or partly made of gold, silver or platinum,
- (b) supplies, or offers to supply, an unhallmarked article to which such a description is applied, shall be guilty of an offence.

2. There are certain exemptions to these requirements which are listed in Schedule 1 of the Act, and include the following :-

Any article :-

- (a) which is of gold assaying in all its gold parts not less than 375 parts per thousand, or
- (b) which is of silver assaying in all its silver parts not less than 800 parts per thousand,

and which in either case was manufactured before the year 1920 and has not since the beginning of the year 1920 been the subject of any alteration which would be an improper alteration if it had previously borne approved hallmarks.

(Schedule 1 paragraph 10)

Where an exemption depends on the date of manufacture or the date of any alteration, the manufacture or alteration is presumed to be after the date until the contrary is proved.

(Schedule 1 paragraph 18)

II STANDARD

- 1. The expression “up to standard” applied to the whole of an article means that the article concerned is of at least the “minimum fineness” defined in the Act as the lowest standard of fineness prescribed for the precious metal concerned, namely for gold 375 parts by weight of fine gold in one thousand parts by weight of alloy and for silver 925 parts by weight of fine silver in one thousand parts by weight of alloy.
- 2. The expression “up to standard” applied to additions to an article means that the additions are of at least the same standard of fineness as the remainder of the article (Section 22 (1) of the Act and Schedule 2 refer).

III IMPROPER ALTERATIONS

An “improper alteration” is defined in the Act as meaning an addition, repair or alteration to a hallmarked article without the consent of an assay office. (Section 2 (5) refers). However, some small additions are expressly authorised by Section 5 (4).

ARTICLES ARE ACCEPTED FOR EXAMINATION AT “OWNER’S RISK”. WHILE ALL REASONABLE PRECAUTIONS WILL BE TAKEN, THE GOLDSMITHS’ COMPANY ACCEPTS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSS OR DAMAGE, AND OWNERS ARE ADVISED TO ARRANGE ANY INSURANCE REQUIRED.

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