

By Robert Organ

In 2009 the Hallmarking Act was amended to include palladium

Activity

It was a particularly notable year for hallmarking because in 2009 the Hallmarking Act was amended to include palladium in the list of those alloys that require compulsory hallmarking. It is only the fourth time in the 700 year history of hallmarking in the UK that alloys from a new metal have been introduced, the last being alloys of platinum in 1975. The palladium hallmark became available in the summer for the compulsory launch date of 1 January 2010. Uptake during this period was encouraging, and 17,777 of the 45,304 articles received by all UK offices were marked in London.

The total number of articles hallmarked dropped from 18.9 million in 2008 to 16.2 million in 2009. A continued fall of 30.8% in gold demand between the two years was the main factor in this decrease. In contrast, demand for silver increased by 5.5% over the same period and, for the first time for many years, more silver articles were hallmarked than gold. Platinum showed a small decrease of 4.5%.

A selection of hallmarking support tools for rings



Alison Nye

Dave Merry with a hoard of counterfeit jewellery, seized in partnership with Trading Standards



Tom Raymond

International Convention on Hallmarks and International Association of Assay Offices (IAAO)

Life on the international hallmarking front became more settled over the past year as the key issues relating to the EU Mutual Recognition Regulation and Services Directive were resolved with only a small impact on existing hallmarking arrangements.

Lithuania finally completed ratification of the 2001 amendment of the Hallmarking Convention. One impact of this is that there will now be a palladium Convention mark. No new countries acceded to the Hallmarking Convention.

The IAAO goes from strength to strength and Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Memorandum of Understanding.

Changes to the Hallmarking Act

The Hallmarking Council and National Measurement Office are liaising with the Government to amend the Hallmarking Act to allow UK offices to apply a UK hallmark off-shore. This will allow UK assay offices to compete with countries, such as the Netherlands, which already have such legislation in place. A Legislative Reform Order (LRO) will be used to progress the matter and the amendments are expected to be completed by the middle of next year.

Staff

Brent Jones and Chris Walne received their long service awards.

A consequence of the downturn in business was that ten redundancies had to be made during the year. This was a particularly painful experience.

The wearing of pink and a spate of cross-dressing broke out again as £200 was collected for Breast Cancer Research. John Love was first into his frock.



David Archer with Summer School students during a visit to the Assay Office

Alison Nye