

# ASSAY OFFICE report

David Evans

## ACTIVITY

The number of gold articles processed was the same as the previous year, and constituted 74% of the total. Platinum articles, although small by comparison (2%) showed a 24% increase. Silver articles decreased by 8%. Both gold and silver totals showed a decline in British manufacture and an increase in imported articles. Of the annual total 35% was received in the last quarter of the year and the flexible response of the staff enabled the established level of service and quality to be maintained.

## REGISTRATIONS

During the year, 382 new registrations resulted from 571 enquiries. This figure was consistent with previous years and yet the number of articles continues at the same level. Either smaller niche markets are increasing or new traders are merely replacing older ones.

## ANTIQUÉ PLATE COMMITTEE

A total of 56 pieces were examined, of which 32 conformed to the Hallmarking Act. Of the remaining 24 illegal alterations and additions, 11 were

transposed marks, 10 were counterfeit marks and 3 were held. The Committee and the antique trade are concerned at the apparent increase in fake pieces, and the Art & Antiques Unit of the Metropolitan Police has seized a number of pieces as evidence. Despite this concern the number of pieces examined was similar to that for recent years.

## SUSPECTED OFFENCES

Apart from the above, a total of 28 suspected offences against the Hallmarking Act were reported to the Office by Local Authority Trading Standards Offices. Twenty-three witness statements were issued after examining articles.

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

There have been no meetings of the International Standards Organisation or the CEN Technical Committees for Jewellery. The BSI Technical Committee met, the principal topics being watches and the wear test for nickel release.

## INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Successful inspections were made of the Assay Offices in Latvia, Israel and Cyprus. All three



| WORK DEALT WITH BY THE LONDON ASSAY OFFICE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 2005 |       |     |                 |                 |                 |                |           |        |                 |            |       |           |     |     |         |     |         |
|--|-------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|--------|-----------------|------------|-------|-----------|-----|-----|---------|-----|---------|
| NUMBER OF ARTICLES   |       |     |                 |                 |                 |                |           |        |                 |            |       |           |     |     |         |     |         |
|  | GOLD  |     |                 |                 |                 |                |           | SILVER |                 |            |       | PLATINUM  |     |     |         |     |         |
|  | 999   | 995 | 916<br>22 carat | 750<br>18 carat | 585<br>14 carat | 276<br>7 carat | TOTAL     | 800    | 925<br>sterling | 959<br>950 | 999   | TOTAL     | 950 | 950 | 950     | 999 | TOTAL   |
| BRITISH  | 1,563 | 7   | 247,654         | 634,591         | 42,583          | 1,991,316      | 3,213,053 | 1,152  | 693,242         | 3,647      | 3,735 | 366,756   | 0   | 407 | 115,473 | 84  | 117,042 |
| FOREIGN  | 144   | 946 | 118,024         | 243,137         | 15,587          | 1,535,215      | 1,919,107 | 1,076  | 714,839         | 1,284      | 760   | 717,795   | 0   | 71  | 19,823  | 0   | 19,894  |
| TOTAL  | 1,707 | 953 | 465,678         | 877,728         | 58,170          | 3,526,531      | 5,132,160 | 2,228  | 1,408,081       | 4,931      | 4,505 | 1,084,551 | 0   | 478 | 135,296 | 84  | 136,183 |

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|--|--------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------|-----|------------------|-----|-------|---------|-----|---------|
| WEIGHT OF ARTICLES   |              |       |                 |                 |                 |                |            |                    |                 |            |     |                  |     |       |         |     |         |
|  | GOLD (grams) |       |                 |                 |                 |                |            | SILVER (kilograms) |                 |            |     | PLATINUM (grams) |     |       |         |     |         |
|  | 999          | 995   | 916<br>22 carat | 750<br>18 carat | 585<br>14 carat | 276<br>7 carat | TOTAL      | 800                | 925<br>sterling | 959<br>950 | 999 | TOTAL            | 950 | 950   | 950     | 999 | TOTAL   |
| BRITISH  | 15,523       | 64    | 2,365,890       | 3,227,689       | 173,665         | 9,235,292      | 15,931,963 | 17                 | 29,926          | 439        | 334 | 21,316           | 67  | 5,525 | 594,639 | 575 | 616,151 |
| FOREIGN  | 1,293        | 5,630 | 1,199,526       | 1,447,242       | 164,808         | 1,231,812      | 9,542,239  | 75                 | 16,964          | 45         | 73  | 18,767           | 0   | 495   | 115,466 | 0   | 115,961 |
| TOTAL  | 16,816       | 7,024 | 3,565,416       | 4,674,931       | 338,473         | 10,467,104     | 25,474,202 | 92                 | 46,890          | 484        | 407 | 40,083           | 67  | 6,020 | 710,105 | 575 | 732,112 |

states are at various stages of the accession procedure. Slovakia, Hungary and Bahrain have expressed in principle their intention to join the Convention. At the last meeting, representatives from India were present.

## ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN ASSAY OFFICES

Formed in October 1991 when the draft directive first appeared, membership was confined to EU States (at the time, Sweden, Finland, Austria were in the Convention but not in the EU). Countries across Western, Central and Eastern Europe now constitute the membership and countries in the Middle and Far East have observer status. A round robin was organised on platinum alloy, and the Association is indebted to Mr. T. Brodmann of the Swiss Assay Office for organising it and analysing the results. Reference samples have been purchased from the Polish Mint for a round robin by X-Ray Fluorescence spectrometry in many of the member countries. Hopefully, this background information will be used in devising an XRF sampling plan for use by Convention countries.

## STAFF

John Ryder of the Silver Department retired after over 32 years' service. Whilst he may not wish to see another armada dish for the rest of his life, it does seem odd to see someone else marking them. Jan Sachs retired from the Gold Department after 17 years' service and she will be much missed by staff and customers. ■



Michael Feeney helps David Booker with a fireman's helmet, is assisted by Adam Phillips marking a rugby trophy, and is ready for lunch

John Ryder in discussion with David Evans, the Deputy Warden