

# ASSAY OFFICE report

David Evans

## ACTIVITY

The downward trend in the market experienced in 2004 continued in 2005. Gold throughput decreased by 20%, silver by 16%, and platinum by 7%. Overall the level of activity has returned to that of 1997. Imports exceeded domestic products in both gold and silver, although this is not the case in platinum despite imports increasing by 65%. Usually temporary staff are employed during the last four months of the year to deal with the pre-Christmas demand, but the decline in activity in 2005 did not warrant additional staff.

## ANTIQUe PLATE COMMITTEE

In total, 98 pieces were examined, of which 39 conformed to the Hallmarking Act. The remainder comprised 16 pieces with alterations and additions, 5 with transposed marks and 38 with counterfeit marks. A total of 25 pieces are now held pending investigation by the Metropolitan Police. The 'black museum of fakes' is no longer black. All 601 pieces have been cleaned, photographed and catalogued, and the intention now is to dispose of those pieces which are not of particular interest.

Right and below:  
Birds of several  
feathers pass through  
the Assay Office



ASSAY OFFICE LONDON

## SUSPECTED OFFENCES

There were 16 suspected offences against the Hallmarking Act reported to the Office by Local Authority Trading Standards Officers, with no resulting prosecutions. A team of Trading Standards Officers from Newham visited the Office. A joint project with seven London boroughs is at the final planning stage.

## STANDARDS COMMITTEES

There have been no meetings of the International Standards Committee TC 174 or the European Standards Committee TC 283. Nevertheless the European Standards on nickel testing have been amended, the new standard being BS EN 12472:2005. A set of guidelines has been issued on the whiteness of white gold. It is an adaptation of the colour indices used for plastics. The Assay Office now has a spectrometer which can test the whiteness according to the guidelines.

## INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Hungary, Israel, Poland, and Ukraine have all ratified accession to the Convention. An inspection of the assay offices in Slovakia was completed successfully, and therefore Slovakia has been invited to accede. Five countries have yet to ratify amendments to the Articles and Annexes of the Convention. The amendments provide the Standing Committee with a less bureaucratic

WORK DEALT WITH BY THE LONDON ASSAY OFFICE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 2005  
NUMBER OF ARTICLES

	GOLD							SILVER					PLATINUM				
	999	990	916 22 carat	750 18 carat	585 14 carat	375 9 carat	TOTAL	999	958 Britannia	925 sterling	800	TOTAL	999	950	900	850	TOTAL
BRITISH	293	11	192,775	433,760	18,092	1,077,187	1,722,118	2,133	3,980	515,702	1,104	522,919	168	111,860	108	21	112,157
FOREIGN	167	24	152,415	360,205	24,634	1,333,014	1,870,459	914	256	797,997	1,131	800,298	0	32,846	132	16	32,994
TOTAL	460	35	345,190	793,965	42,726	2,410,201	3,592,577	3,047	4,236	1,313,699	2,235	1,323,217	168	144,706	240	37	145,151

WORK DEALT WITH BY THE LONDON ASSAY OFFICE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 2005  
WEIGHT OF ARTICLES

	GOLD (grams)							SILVER (kilograms)					PLATINUM (grams)				
	999	990	916 22 carat	750 18 carat	585 14 carat	375 9 carat	TOTAL	999	958 Britannia	925 sterling	800	TOTAL	999	950	900	850	TOTAL
BRITISH	3,991	35	1,659,483	2,306,023	169,796	4,967,060	9,106,388	240	356	14,071	12	14,679	7,400	779,570	860	341	788,171
FOREIGN	2,282	405	1,491,427	1,812,452	256,780	5,853,146	9,416,492	20	22	26,447	13	26,502	0	222,483	1,246	426	224,155
TOTAL	6,273	440	3,150,910	4,118,475	426,576	10,820,206	18,522,880	260	378	40,518	25	41,181	7,400	1,002,053	2,106	767	1,012,326

method of amending the technical aspects of the Convention. The Secretariat has moved to new offices in Geneva. Slovenia has indicated that it is preparing to accede. France, Spain and Estonia are the remaining EU hallmarking countries yet to accede. Further afield, representatives from Bahrain, China, Dubai, India, Malaya, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan have been attending the Standing Committee.

## ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN ASSAY OFFICES

In the UK, enforcement of the Act usually consists of a visit to retailers by Trading Standards Officers. In voluntary hallmarking countries, visits are also made to manufacturers. Mrs P Ruotsalainen of Finland conducted a survey of the market surveillance system operating in the EU hallmarking countries. The annual fee payable has built up a fund sufficient to finance a number of round robins each year. This is a vital part of retaining accreditation of laboratories to ISO 17025, the results being tabulated and collated by Ms Isabel Morais of Portugal.

## STAFF

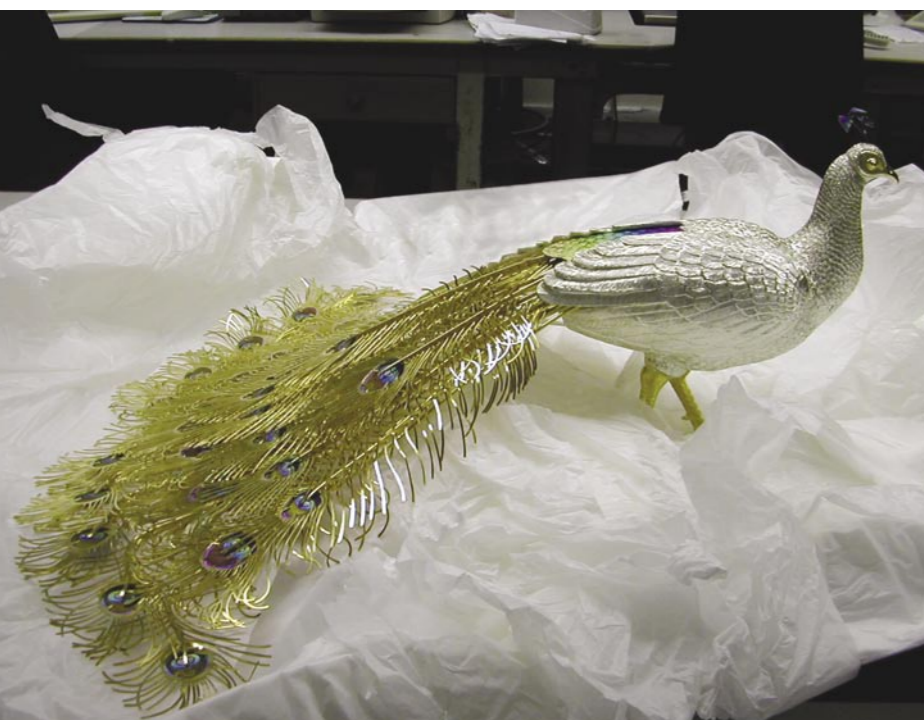
Margaret Hudson and Kay Tyrrell both retired at the end of the year. At the staff Christmas disco *In the Navy* has replaced *JMCA* as the 'must have' tune.



Above:  
Paul and Marion  
Johnson, Kay Tyrrell  
and David Evans



Left:  
Margaret Hudson  
with her family



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