

WINTER 2010/2011

NEW CHALLENGES FOR AN EVER CHANGING MARKET

In the last five years the UK jewellery industry has seen unprecedented and unpredictable changes.

These have prompted a new approach and new expectations as "The New Reality" dawns. Thankfully there have been new opportunities to replace established markets and those who have been innovative and responsive have survived and will continue to succeed in an ever shifting market.

Much of the change has been driven by the soaring price of precious metal, particularly Gold, always a secure target for investors in uncertain economic times, which finished the year at an unprecedented £912 per oz.



The UK Hallmarking volumes record only 5.9 million gold articles hallmarked in 2010, the least since the advent of the Hallmarking Act in 1973, whereas 8.6 million silver articles, mainly jewellery, were hallmarked, and millions more lightweight silver items sold without requiring hallmarks. Meanwhile the number of pawnbroker outlets increased by 44%, with 212 new outlets opening in two years as the public exchanged their old jewellery for cash.

Shopping habits are changing too; retail footfall declined in the last quarter, while a record 31 million UK residents spent over £50 billion online during the year with 26th and 27th December the biggest online shopping days. The Christmas Eve frenzy seems to be a thing of the past.



Accurate predictions for 2011 are difficult but innovation, product differentiation and accessing new multi channels ways of selling and communicating will be important. Members of the UK Jewellery Industry need to continue to work together to maintain the integrity and reputation of the trade for both customers and employees.

This is already being addressed in many ways including training and apprenticeships to create jewellery "professionals", the NAG's SafeGems programme and the Responsible Jewellery Council's ethical accreditation. It is essential the trade continues to support these initiatives as quality, value and customer confidence will remain paramount in 2011.

FREE SEMINAR AT THE JEWELLERY SHOW

Appreciating the rapid changes the industry is experiencing and understanding the implications for jewellery businesses can be very helpful to future planning.

As part of the Seminar programme at the Jewellery Show, Michael Allchin, Chief Executive and Assay Master of The Birmingham Assay Office will present a wide ranging review of the UK Jewellery Market in 2010 and his interpretation of what this means for the industry.

The seminar is on Tuesday 8th February at 11.00am. There is no need to register – but do put it in your diary.



HALLMARKING



JONATHAN OLLIFFE WINS NATIONAL COMPETITION

Jonathan Olliffe, a BA and MA graduate from the Birmingham School of Jewellery, has won a national competition to design a commemorative coin to celebrate the 2012 Olympics.

Twenty five year old Jonathan, who was awarded The Birmingham Assay Office Bursary to support him through his MA studies in 2007/08, designed two out of the 29 winning designs. The challenge which was set by the Royal Mint, was to design new 50 pence coins to commemorate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Jonathan's designs were picked from nearly 30,000 entries.

Jonathan said "to think how many people entered the national competition and to have my designs made and circulated around the nation is very exciting."



2011 DATE LETTER

The date letter for 2011, which came into use on 1st January is the letter 'M' and is illustrated here. The date letter is an optional mark which customers can choose to have struck or laser marked alongside the three compulsory symbols of the UK hallmark.



2012 SET TO BE AN EXCITING YEAR...

COMMEMORATIVE HALLMARK FOR THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE IN 2012

Alongside nationwide celebrations, which are being planned to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the British Hallmarking Council has now agreed the design of the Commemorative Hallmark in 2012 which will celebrate this historic occasion as The Queen reaches 60 years as Britain's ruling Monarch. The special Commemorative Hallmark, illustrated here, will be available to be struck or lasered as an

optional mark alongside the compulsory hallmark on all precious metals submitted to a UK Assay Office for hallmarking during the course of 2012. Minimum size will be 0.5mm.

With Queen Victoria being the only previous British monarch to have reigned for 60 years, 2012 is set to be a landmark year for Britain. The Royal Wedding in 2011 is already creating additional business for laser marking items aside from hallmarking and this is expected to continue throughout 2012.



NEW DEALERS' NOTICE NOW COMPULSORY

The revised Hallmarking Dealers' Notice has been available to traders since the start of 2010 but from the 1st January 2011 it became compulsory to display the updated Dealers Notice which has a contemporary layout and features strongly an image of a UK hallmark including the three compulsory symbols.

If you haven't obtained your copy of the new Dealers Notice please contact The Birmingham Assay Office as soon as possible. Tel: 0871 871 6020 or email gem@theassayoffice.co.uk

The Hallmarking Dealers notice which has been issued by The British Hallmarking Council costs £10+ postage at prevailing rates.

The illustration here shows how one high street retailer has incorporated their own brand with the Dealers Notice whilst keeping in line with the prescribed proportions and size.



ON-LINE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY ON ITS WAY.....

The Birmingham Assay Office continually strives to improve its services. As part of its commitment to customers, it is constantly measuring performance to identify areas where improvements can be made.

Customer feedback on service is a crucial part of this exercise which this year will be carried out via an on-line survey.

The questionnaire will be emailed to customers via a web link in February 2011.

As an incentive, all replies received by 31st March will automatically be entered into a prize draw to win a bottle of Champagne!



SPOTLIGHT ON A WARDLE & COMPANY

Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter is home to many skilled craft businesses and amongst them, tucked away in Albion Street, is a small family run business offering a specialist casting service to jewellery retailers, designers and manufacturers.

A Wardle & Company, which was founded in 1958 by Arthur Wardle, has been providing casting services to the trade for over 50 years.

The business has passed through the generations and is currently run by Arthur's two grandsons Nick and Alex. The two brothers are developing and growing the business into a diverse and wide ranging manufacturing base, which still very much includes specialist casting services for high to low volumes in all precious and base metals.



Nick and Alex Wardle

Alex Wardle says "The future is all about diversifying our product offering which makes life more interesting and drives us forward both technologically and as a business. We cast anything from fine jewellery to intricate replica door furniture for stately homes and animal statues!"

HELPING YOU TO SELL MORE...



VISIT US ON STAND K49 IN HALL 18 OF THE JEWELLERY SHOW 6TH - 10TH FEB 2011

The Birmingham Assay Office offers many services targeted to help the jewellery industry in challenging times.

SafeGuard jewellery valuations bring business and add credibility and specialist status to jewellery retailers and AnchorCert gemstone certification adds independent authentication and reassurance. The many services available from The Laboratory offer product safety testing with regard to nickel, lead, cadmium and other toxic elements and the melt and assay service converts scrap into a saleable bar with a respected independent assay report, enabling those buying scrap gold to sell at the highest possible price.

The Hallmarking division has recently advised several jewellers investigating the legalities of mixing base or precious metals in hallmarked articles in an effort to create commercially viable products incorporating high value metals. The Assay Office also believes that staff knowledge and awareness is crucially important and is running an increasing number

of training and educational courses and half day seminars to deliver this.

More details of all these services, plus a sneak preview of the new optional hallmark for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 and the new contemporary AnchorCert Mini Max report will be available on Stand K49 in Hall 18 of The Jewellery Show from 6th - 10th February 2011.



An established vital part of the Spring Fair at Birmingham's NEC, The Jewellery Show promises many new features for 2011 including regular cat walk shows and seminars.

Visit www.theassayoffice.co.uk for a quick, easy registration process to save time and money.

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 3 ANCHORCERT NEW MINI MAX REPORT

PAGE 5 THE LABORATORY A RECORD CHRISTMAS

PAGE 8 INDUSTRY NEWS MORE APPRENTICESHIPS

