

Two IJL Jules Awards go to Birmingham designers

Two of the winners of the 2004 IJL Jules Awards which were announced at a party, sponsored by 'The Jeweller' magazine and held recently at London's Kensington Roof Gardens came from the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter. The five categories were judged by a panel consisting of jewellery designer Jennifer Bloy, freelance journalist Lucy Reiter, Judy Deuchar, Merchandise Director of QVC and Suzanne King, Director of Reed Exhibitions UK.

The 5 categories and winners were:

Best Jewellery Design -

Antonio Bernado

Best Jewellery Collection -

Maria Frantzi

Best Product -

Anna Lorenz

Best Product Collection -

Vanessa Johnson

Best Presentation -

Carrick

Winner of the 'Best Product' Award was Anna Lorenz.

Anna Lorenz

Anna, who was born in Germany is currently a designer at Regent Silversmiths in the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter. She originally served an apprenticeship with Joseph Rieger in Regensburg Germany from 1996 -1999.

She achieved a B.A. (Hons), First Class Degree in Jewellery Design and Silversmithing, UCE, School of Jewellery Birmingham.

She has received many awards for her work including the Louisa Ann Rylan Scholarship - 1st prize, and a Precious Metal Bursary from the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in London. She has had exhibitions in Oslo, Leipzig, Amsterdam and several throughout the UK. She will be at the Chelsea Craft Fair, 12-17 October.



Anna's 'Best Product' fruit bowl

Anna has been appointed as a part-time lecturer at the School of Jewellery in Birmingham.

The 'Best Product Collection' award went to Vanessa Johnson.

Vanessa Johnson

Between 1997 and 2004 Vanessa has received 10 awards at Exhibitions throughout the UK culminating in the latest 'Best Product Collection' for the 'Jules' Award.

Since leaving University College, Suffolk in 1996 with a B.A. (Hons) 1st Class Art and Design she has also studied at the Glasgow School of Art where she received a Master of Design.

The objective of Vanessa's work is combining both 'decorative' and 'functional' qualities with enjoyment and pleasure through use. With these qualities Vanessa aims to offer a unique and one-to-one service, designing and realising to individual tastes.

This ambition was borne out in the articles which won her 'Best Product Collection' Award. It was a range of Bookmarks each of which was designed with a specific recipient in mind. For instance, bookmarks to suit the particular field of the book concerned - romance, horror, crime and murder, and science fantasy.

Other styles incorporate wedding functions and are designed to appeal to Bride, Bridegroom, Bridesmaid & Best Man to remind them of the special occasion and to remember the part they played.

All Vanessa's hallmarked bookmarks are produced in sterling silver and, in certain cases, with the addition of a small amount of 18 carat (750) gold - in, for instance, the bow-tie of the bridegroom and a flower in the hair of the bride.

Vanessa operates from 71, Vyse Street.



Vanessa and her award winning bookmarks.

SafeGuard Valuations hit Prime Time TV

SafeGuard hit the headlines when they appeared on prime time TV in September. We were asked to participate in an investigation by the BBC's 'Watchdog' programme and were pleased to help to expose malpractices which have been conning the public and aggravating retail jewellers for some time.

The investigators at Watchdog asked SafeGuard for an expert opinion and retail valuations on items which had been purchased from the Satellite TV Shopping Channel 'Auction World' after they received 350 complaints about the channel. Trading Standards Authorities around the country have been referring similar complaints to SafeGuard on a weekly basis and we had encountered some very disappointed

customers, so we were already well aware of the problem and pleased to make a contribution to the investigation.

Consumers bidding for items on Auction World were misled by highly inflated "Guide" Prices for watches and diamond rings. An Aston Gerrard watch with a guide price of £16,500 was valued by SafeGuard at £1,650 and diamond rings with guide prices of around £4,000 were valued at between £895 and £1100, much to the customers' disappointment. The items were also of inferior quality; watches were reported to be tarnished with peeling gold plating even when they were first received by the customer, and the diamonds were of very poor colour and clarity. Interviewed on watchdog, Managing Director of Auction World, George Spitaliotis was unrepentant and claimed the Guide price had been "suggested" by the manufacturer. Nicky Campbell pointed out that this contravened the Consumer Protection Act, but Spitaliotis

refused to accept any blame, claiming he was merely a reseller.

During the show it was revealed that Ofcom had also received 440 complaints and that figure is still rising.

In every case cited by 'Watchdog' the customer had paid less than the retail valuation quoted by SafeGuard, but they had placed their bid believing they were getting a fantastic bargain. Paperwork sent out with each purchase actually shows the highly inflated guide price, the price paid by the customer and the alleged "saving" which was, in all cases shown, completely unsubstantiated.

Assay Master Michael Allchin was delighted with the opportunity the programme presented for SafeGuard to set the record straight on behalf of the retail jewellery trade. After the broadcast he said "This kind of malpractice is extremely detrimental to the reputation of the

jewellery trade. Inflated "guide" prices seriously complicate the task for our valuers; the consumer expectation is so high and people assume that if the price is shown on television it must be realistic. With Auction World products we have had SafeGuard customers phoning us thinking we have left a nought off their valuation - it's very difficult for us to explain to them how badly they have been misled. Consumer confidence is crucial to the jewellery trade as a whole and particularly to the professionally run shopping channels and we are extremely glad that this scam has been exposed."

Since the programme was broadcast on Tuesday 14th September SafeGuard have received many more calls from people who saw the programme and who have been deceived by Auction World. SafeGuard have played an important role in alerting the public to the problem and helping to stop this practice.

Budding designers get Assay Office guidance

In a scheme involved with addressing the declining numbers of young people taking up science and technical subjects as a career, the Assay Office is playing an important role. Ian Bayley, our Quality Manager, helped to organise a project in which 12-year-old pupils from the Windsor High School, Halesowen in the West Midlands took part in the design and fabrication of items of silver jewellery.



The Jewellery Design Project team at Windsor High School, Halesowen.

16 Year Eight pupils were involved and designed and produced silver bangles and bracelets when the event was recently held at Windsor High School, Halesowen.

From the items designed, the five best were selected and were taken to the Birmingham Assay Office for testing and marking.



The five best designs chosen to be exhibited at Millennium Point.

The silver for the project was kindly donated by Andrew Mayor of Mayhan & Co, based in the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter.

The 5 designs were then exhibited at the West Midlands Celebration of Engineering and Science which was held at the Millennium Point in Birmingham in July.

The head of design and technology at Windsor High School, Jeremy Harris, said, "It is a wonderful way of getting girls interested in engineering and design, which

is traditionally a male-dominated area. We are hoping that from a young age they will become interested in GCSE courses in metalwork and woodwork and we are most grateful to the Birmingham Assay Office for their assistance in this project".

Michael Allchin, Assay Master, said "We are proud to be helping with this very worthwhile project - the more we can interest young people in manufacturing the better for the country as a whole."



Pupil Alexa Martin, aged 12, making her bracelet, watched by fellow pupils.



The initial designs from which the items were made, with the five winners, Victoria Belfort, Kiera Burt, Alex Kennedy Hanson, Holly Jackson and Annabelle Cooper.

UK made Carriage Clock



The Hardwicke Collection, who make this clock, believe it to be the only UK made sterling silver Carriage Clock.

The eight day movement has a Swiss escapement with eleven jewels, making it a very desirable time-piece. The clock case is made entirely from hallmarked sterling silver, even the screws are silver. This unique clock

will give years of pleasure and will become an heirloom for future generations. It retails in the region of £1,700.00. It was launched at the Spring Fair in 2004 and results, particularly from the Middle East, have been excellent.

David and Pennie Bradley launched The Hardwicke Collection in September 1991, to manufacture high quality, exclusive designs of sterling silver and silver plated giftware. David had more than a quarter of a century of experience in the silver industry and he felt that there was a big gap in the marketplace for top quality, English made gifts. Their factory is located in Birmingham, on the outskirts of the world famous Jewellery Quarter.

The success of this original premise has led to the expansion into gifts made from pewter, crystal, glassware, mahogany and, for 2004, bronze and gold. As one of the few remaining British manufacturers of silverware in the UK, The Hardwicke Collection specialises in personal gifts, desk accessories, children's and Christening gifts and exclusive photograph frames.

Corporate gifts, both from the normal range and, also, specifically designed for clients' requirements, form a large part of the business.

CBI Chief visits Birmingham Assay Office

The Director General of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Digby Jones, was given a guided tour of Birmingham Assay Office by Michael Allchin on 9th July 2004.



Digby tries his hand at marking process.

Digby was fascinated by the process involved in the assaying and hallmarking of precious metals and was impressed by the intricate process to which over 13 million articles a year are subjected to ensure accuracy in determining their precious metal content.

Digby was accompanied by the West Midlands Regional Director of the CBI, Chris Clifford.



Checking in the sampling department.

A visitor from Japan

Baron Yoshihiko Okabe, who writes on economics and marketing in the 18th century, recently visited the Assay Office in the course of his research on Matthew Boulton.



Photograph shows the Baron with Phyllis Benedikz, curator at the Assay Office.

News From New York



A happy second birthday!

The American Assay & Gemological Office turned two this past summer. Still in their infancy, the USA wholly owned subsidiary of the Birmingham Assay Office has made great strides in these last two years to advance to their current position as an independent service which prides itself on integrity and can now be counted amongst the most reputable Analytical & Gemological Certification facilities in the United States.

Respect for Analytical Services

The Analytical Department under Nick Savarese has continued to flourish and its Assaying, Precious Metal Testing, Nickel Testing, ISO 9001:2000 consultation and a host of other new testing services, continue to cast AA&GO out into the national spotlight. Savarese commented, "Not only are we utilized for our services and the resulting certification, but also as an invaluable resource for the many questions we receive and answer together in collaboration with BAO Technical Services, U.K.". Together with his Assistant Analytical Chemist, Melissa Santelices, they provide crucial corporate quality control services

for amongst others, Tiffany & Co., Sterling Jewelry, QVC, Helzberg Diamond and several other Retail Jewelry organizations and major consumer product firms.

Diamond Certification – New Gemologist

The latest recruit to the AnchorCert Diamond Certification team is Donna Beaton, G.G.. Donna joins the staff after many successful years with the American Gem Trade Association's Gem Testing Laboratory. In addition to Diamonds, her background and experience includes Colored Gemstones and Pearls. In her new position as Senior Gemologist and Manager of Laboratory Services, Donna will be responsible for advancing AnchorCert Diamond Identification Services in the USA. Donna has recently spent time in Birmingham and London working with all her UK colleagues and exchanging expert opinions with them. She is looking forward to working with the newest kit now installed in our New York office including the DiamondSure, DiamondView and Labram Raman Spectrophotometer.

Trade press visit

The New York Office flung open its doors to welcome members of the Trade Press to view the new equipment now installed in our Gemological Department and to meet Eric Emms who was visiting New York to attend the Rapaport Diamond Conference. The arrival of our Diamond Sure and Raman Spectrophotometer along with the experience and skills of senior gemologist Donna Beaton, sets the American Assay & Gemological Office apart from other diamond grading facilities in the USA. We can now identify synthetic and HPHT treated diamonds with complete confidence.



Gemologists Donna Beaton and Eric Emms examine diamonds on the DiamondView



Tiffany Metti, Helen Krodel, Eric Emms, Beth Braverman (National Jeweler), Amanda Gizzi, Tiffany. Helen and Amanda all work for the Jewelry Information Center.



Hedda Schupak (Editor in Chief, JCK), Cheryl Kremkow (Editor in Chief, Modern Jeweler), and Eileen Farrell (Marketing Director, Rapaport Diamond Report).

Boulton Silver on display in Lichfield's Celebr18th

Birmingham Assay Office was delighted to have supported Celebr18th and its exhibition in the Heritage Centre at St Mary's Church, Lichfield, and showed some of Boulton's tablewares from the Assay Office's unique collection of historic silver.

C18th The showcase contained items made at Matthew Boulton's Soho Manufactory in the last quarter of the 18th Century, and hallmarked at the Birmingham Assay Office. Boulton was fortunate in working at a time when the over-elaborate decoration of the rococo period had given way to a simpler elegance, which appears more attractive to many people today.

Some fine examples of Boulton's work were on display at the Heritage Centre.



The Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Gwyneth Boyle, is seen admiring the Assay Office exhibition with the Treasurer of the Heritage Centre, George Kemp (centre) and the Celebr18th Festival Artistic Director Jeremy Barlow.

Birmingham Assay Office - The Lichfield Connection

The hallmarking system in England dates back to a statute of Edward I in 1300. The initial purpose of the system was the same as it is today; the protection of the public against fraud and the trader against unfair competition. It gives the consumer solid assurance that the article they are buying has been independently tested by an Assay Office and guarantees that the article conforms to a specified legal standard of purity. Hallmarking is in fact one of the earliest forms of consumer protection.

Birmingham Assay Office has been responsible for testing and hallmarking precious metals since 1773. It is now the largest Assay Office in the UK and in 2003 alone over 13 million articles were hallmarked in Birmingham.

It was as a result of the efforts of Matthew Boulton that Birmingham Assay Office was established. Boulton inherited his father's toymaking business in Snow Hill ('toys' meaning small personal and domestic objects such as buttons, buckles, spoons etc) and, determined to expand his range and compete successfully with the major London silversmiths, he decided to develop the business by building a large factory at Soho near Birmingham for the production of silver of fine quality. He acquired a number of clients among the nobility and gentry, but was hampered by the need to send his silver to Chester for

hallmarking - a distance of over 70 miles, which meant delays, and damaged work if the goods were inadequately packed for the return journey. A delayed and damaged order for the Earl of Shelburne at Christmas 1770 proved the last straw, and Boulton set to work to obtain an Act of Parliament to open an Assay Office in Birmingham.

Despite opposition in London, the Act was passed in May 1773, and the Birmingham Assay Office opened on 31st August. It made a modest beginning leasing three rooms at the King's Head in New Street. Boulton himself was the first customer.

Boulton was a man of many interests, among which his partnership with James Watt, set up to improve the design of steam engines, was a major factor in the development of the Industrial Revolution. His friends included leaders of science, industry, literature and philosophy, many of them members of the Lunar Society, which met at his house. Among them was Dr Erasmus Darwin of Lichfield, one of the original Lunar men. Boulton was also connected with Lichfield through his marriage to Mary Robinson, daughter of Luke Robinson, a wealthy mercer of the city and a patient of Darwin. The marriage took place at St Mary's Church. Following Mary's death, Boulton married her sister Anne, in defiance of Church (though not civil) law, which frowned on marriage with a deceased wife's sister.

New Operations & Production Manager

Alwyn Griffiths, who joined the Assay Office in 1974 will be retiring at December 30th this year and will be replaced by Les Helyer.

Alwyn trained as an engineer. After spells with H.D.A. and Honeywell, where he held a variety of Engineering and Production Management positions, he joined the Assay Office as Assistant to the General Manager and was appointed Works Manager in 1974.

His friendly efficiency has been a special feature with all who have had dealings with him.

He will leave a fine legacy for his successor, Les Helyer who joined the Office in July this year. Les will take over Alwyn's role on 1st January.

Les was born in Middlesbrough and is married to Lesley (20 years in March) and has 3 children, Rosie (15), Eve (11) and Robert (4). Although Yorkshire born (just) he was brought up in Teeside and County Durham.

Graduating from college with a BSc Degree in Engineering and Business Studies, Les has always been involved on

the Production and Distribution side of service industries. He has held several management positions and looks forward to joining the happy team which Alwyn has gathered around him.



Les and Alwyn ready for action

Packaging Testing Delivers Benefits

There has been a very positive reaction to the range of Tarnish Related Tests launched by the Technical Services Department in July 2004. The test which has brought the most immediate benefits to our customers is the Packaging Test, which identifies components within a piece of packaging which could accelerate tarnishing. Several customers have had long term problems explained as our tests have revealed that certain adhesives, spray flock and sticky labels etc. can cause tarnishing which could result in hundreds of pieces of stock deteriorating during transit and whilst on display. If these components release high levels of sulphur then they can create major problems.

Dippal Manchanda, Chief Assayer, is not surprised by the response to the tests. "The jewellery trade has been trying to pinpoint

the cause of tarnishing on specific items for years" he said. "In the UK, the average level of sulphur in the atmosphere is only a few parts per billion and this is not sufficient in itself to cause rapid tarnishing. However, when an item is packaged in a small sealed environment with sulphur releasing agents such as sulphurous adhesives, the levels of sulphur can become concentrated, especially in warm humid conditions. As we have seen from the tests we have carried out so far, one small sticky label can have drastic effects."

The answer is evidently to identify, and thus enable the customer to remove the sulphur releasing components and we are pleased to be able to help our customers to do that.

Beware all budding Jamie Olivers though. The amount of sulphur released when frying quantities of sulphurous vegetables such as onions and garlic could be extremely high. Take off that silver bracelet before you start!

Obituary

Ted Justa 1951 - 20/04

Ted Justa, Laboratory Technician, joined the Assay Office on 27 June 1977. His real interests was people and helping them to solve their problems.

Ted was a rock to many of his colleagues. His optimism, support and that unique sense of humour that we all loved knew no boundaries. There was never a dull moment when he was around; as far as Ted was concerned, life was too short to worry about things that may never happen.

He had the ability to make us believe in ourselves and to be proud of who we were. He was a unique man, sincere and compassionate to those who knew him. Ted gave something special to us all, and that compelled us to trust and love him.

We are all privileged to have known Ted. His tremendous contribution will be remembered by everyone at the Assay Office. To us all Ted will be irreplaceable.

Len Roper 1927 - 20/04

Len started at the Assay Office on May 18th 1970. During his employment he worked in the Sampling Department.

Len always had time for everyone. One of his favourite subjects being the weather. He regularly gave a report, whether you wanted one or not! He had many stories he could tell from the books he had read, and his own personal experiences, both in and out of the Office.

After his retirement on March 20th 1992, he continued on a part time basis carrying out small but essential duties, which helped the Office a great deal.

So the Assay Office would like to say farewell to one of life's characters, and someone who will be remembered for being a gentleman.

Ruby Brunhall

Ruby was the Gold Supervisor for several years then moved on to Punch Control where she finished her days at Birmingham Assay Office

Ruby was one of 4 sisters - all working at the Assay Office. Her sister Mary worked as the Silver Section Supervisor - joined at a later date by her sister Irene as a hallmarker with 4th sister Nelly joining the office as a kitchen worker.

Ruby died recently in her mid eighties.

ANCHORCERT® NEWS

The AnchorCert Diamond Certification Service had a very successful show at Earls Court in September. The official Champagne Launch of our London office was well attended and we were pleased to welcome many customers and long time friends, acquaintances and colleagues onto our stand.

It was a great opportunity to introduce Eric Emms and Ana Castro to our customers and we were pleased to

meet some of their long standing clients. Our visitors welcomed the wider portfolio of services which AnchorCert can now offer, including Coloured Stone and Pearl Identification.

Plans are now well ahead for our move to larger premises in Hatton Garden, which will then enable us to offer AnchorCert Mini Reports direct from London.

More news in the New Year. Watch this space.....

Third quarter of 2004 shows slight slowdown

Figures for hallmarking totals just released by the 4 Assay Offices of Great Britain show a slight down trend compared with 2004.

The total number of articles marked was 9,102,819 against 9,606,071 - a

reduction overall of 5.2 per cent.

However it must be borne in mind that 2003 turned out to be an all-time record year with over 35 million articles marked.

In the third quarter of 2004 Gold was 2.0 per cent down with 6,119,152 articles.

It was 9 carat (375) which bore the brunt of the down turn, dropping 3.2 percent at 5,231,738 articles. Both 18 carat (750) and 14 carat (585) returned figures which were up on 2003. (18 carat - up 20.8 per cent - 14 carat - up 22.8 per cent).

Silver was surprisingly down (11.8 per cent at 2,882,985 articles) especially in view of the fact that for several quarters the figures had been most encouraging.

Platinum continued to return good figures - up 11 per cent at 95,682 articles.

Number of articles

GOLD							SILVER					PLATINUM				
375 9 carat	585 14 carat	750 18 carat	916 22 carat	990	999	TOTAL	800	925 Sterling	958 Britannia	999	TOTAL	850	900	950	999	TOTAL
5,231,738	75,346	642,428	236,845	5	86	6,119,152	1,612	2,881,583	2,138	2,652	2,887,985	3	339	104,634	75	95,682
-3.2%	22.8%	20.8%	-4.8%	-99.2%	-16.5%	-2.0%	28.4%	-11.9%	6.7%	223.4%	-11.8%	0.0%	0.6%	21.9%	294.7%	11.0%

Weight of articles

GOLD (Grams)							SILVER (Kilograms)					PLATINUM (Grams)				
375 9 carat	585 14 carat	750 18 carat	916 22 carat	990	999	TOTAL	800	925 Sterling	958 Britannia	999	TOTAL	850	900	950	999	TOTAL
21,735,595	333,775	3,250,368	2,112,454	48	3,590	27,435,830	34	50,390	152	99	50,674	11	1,784	760,334	279	762,408
-6.3%	9.7%	21.8%	-7.4%	-99.29%	-13.95%	-3.6%	6.3%	-7.2%	-11.5%	191.3%	-7.1%	-68.6%	38.1%	2.6%	37.4%	2.7%

Percentage figures show an increase or decrease (-) compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.