

Silver Hallmarks

Identifying and authenticating antique and period jewelry is based on experience and knowledge. Hallmarking was legally established in England in 1300 under the reign of King Edward I. He ordered that all gold and silver items must undergo a test called an “assay” that would certify its fineness. His decree stated that all silver crafts must be made from .925 silver or “sterling silver” at least.

These tests were conducted by governing bodies of craftsmen and silversmiths called guilds. During the reign of King Edward III, he granted a charter to the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths (aka Goldsmith Company). This guild of goldsmiths had a guild hall in London called Goldsmith’s Hall where they engraved the markings on the assayed items. From this process, where the guilds stamped the mark of quality within their guild hall, the term hallmark was coined.

The most accurate definition of a hallmark is the mark or marks stamped, impressed, or struck on gold, silver, or platinum which indicate fineness or karat (also called quality or purity marks). Depending on country of origin, hallmarks can also include symbols for place of assay, date of assay (in the form of a letter or a letter and a number), maker’s mark, importation or exportation mark if applicable, and tax or duty mark.

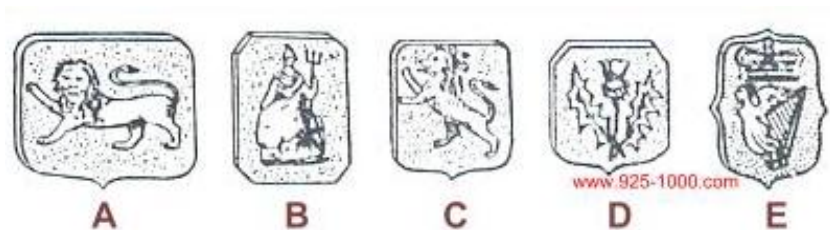


This set of marks indicates the piece was made of sterling, in the city of London, in 1789, during the reign of King George III, by Thomas Wallis.

The British system of hallmarking is somewhat complex, but relatively easy to follow once the system is deciphered. British hallmarks include a fineness or purity mark, an assay office mark, a date letter, and usually but not always, a maker’s mark. A royal duty mark was added from 1784 to 1890 (not always found on jewelry of this period). The sequence of marks on a piece is arbitrary.

Silver Standard Marks

The Standard mark indicates the purity of silver.



A = Sterling .925

B = Britannia .958, used from 1697-1720

C = Sterling .925 for Glasgow

D = Sterling .925 for Edinburgh
E = Sterling .925 for Dublin

City Mark

For the sake of space, let's look just at Edinburgh



Edinburgh, Scotland (1681 – 1974)

From 1975 to the present, a lion rampant has replaced the Thistle (the same as Glasgow's see above)

Date Mark



The date letter system was introduced in London in 1478. It indicates the date the piece was presented for assaying or testing for silver content. Here is an example of Edinburgh's date marks for 1861-1931.

1681	A	1705	A	1730	A	1755	A	1780	A	1806	a	2	A	7	A	2	a	7	A
2	B	6	B	1	B	6	B	1	B	7	b	3	B	8	B	3	b	8	B
3	C	7	C	2	C	7	C	2	C	8	c	4	C	9	C	4	c	9	C
4	D	8	D	3	D	8	D	3	D	9	d	1835	D	1860	D	1885	d	1910	D
1685	E	9	E	4	E	9	E	4	E	1810	e	6	E	1	E	6	e	1	E
6	F	1710	F	6	F	1760	F	6 7	F	1	f	7	F	2	F	7	f	2	F
7	G	1	G	7	G	1	G	8	G	2	g	8	G	3	G	8	g	3	G
8	H	2	H	8	H	2	H	9	H	3	h	9	H	4	H	9	h	4	H
9	I	3	I	9	I	3	I	1790	I	4	i	1840	I	1865	I	1890	i	1915	I
1690	K	4	K	1740	K	4	K	1	K	1815	k	1	K	6	K	1	k	6	K
1	L	1715	L	1	L	1765	L	2	L	6	l	2	L	7	L	2	l	7	L
2	M	6	M	2	M	7	M	3	M	7	m	3	M	8	M	3	m	8	M
3	N	7	N	3	N	8	N	4	N	8	n	4	N	9	N	4	n	9	N
4	O	8	O	4	O	9	O	1795	O	1820	o	1845	O	1870	O	1895	o	1920	O
1695	P	9	P	1745	P	9	P	6	P	1	p	6	P	1	P	6	p	1	P
6	Q	1720	Q	6	Q	1	Q	7	Q	2	q	7	Q	2	Q	7	q	2	Q
7	R	1	R	7	R	2	R	8	R	3	r	8	R	3	R	8	r	3	R
8	S	2	S	8	S	3	S	9	S	4	s	9	S	4	S	9	s	4	S
9	T	3	T	9	T	4	T	1800	T	1825	t	1850	T	1875	T	1900	t	1925	T
1700	U	4	U	1750	U	4	U	1	U	6	u	1	U	6	U	1	u	6	U
1	V	1725	V	1	V	6	V	2	V	7	v	2	V	7	V	2	v	7	V
2	W	6	W	2	W	7	W	3	W	8	w	3	W	8	W	3	w	8	W
3	X	7	X	3	X	8	X	4	X	9	x	4	X	9	X	4	x	9	X
4	Y	8	Y	4	Y	9	Y	1830	Y	1855	y	1880	Y	1905	Y	1930	y	1	Y
	Z	9	Z		Z		Z	5	Z	1	z	6	Z	1	Z	6	z		Z

And here are the Marks from Glasgow

Glasgow Hallmarks 1819 to 1963									
1819 A	1837 S	1853 R	1871 A	1897 H	1914 X	1930 h	1945 W	1958 l	
1820 B	1838 T	1854 Q	1872 B	1898 G	1915 Y	1931 i	1946 X	1959 m	
1821 C	1839 U	1855 P	1873 C	1899 C	1916 Z	1932 j	1947 Y	1960 n	
1822 D	1840 V	1856 Q	1874 D	1900 D	1917 A	1933 k	1948 Z	1961 o	
1823 E	1841 W	1857 R	1875 E	1901 E	1918 B	1934 l		1962 p	
1824 F	1842 X	1858 S	1876 F	1902 F	1919 C	1935 m	1949 A	1963 r	1st July, 1963 to 31st March, 1964
1825 G	1843 Y	1859 T	1877 G	1903 G	1920 D	1936 n	1950 B		The Glasgow Assay Office closed 31st March 1964
1826 H	1844 Z	1860 U	1878 H	1904 H	1921 E	1937 o	1951 C		
1827 I		1861 V	1879 I	1905 I	1922 F	1938 p	1952 d		
1828 J		1862 W	1880 J	1906 J	1923 G	1939 q	1953 e		
1829 K	1845 A	1863 X	1881 K	1907 K	1924 h	1940 r	1954 f		
1830 L	1846 B	1864 Y	1882 L	1908 L	1925 i	1941 s	1955 g		
1831 M	1847 C	1865 Z	1883 M	1909 M	1926 j	1942 t	1956 h		
1832 N	1848 D	1866 A	1884 N	1910 N	1927 k	1943 u	1957 i		
1833 O	1849 E	1867 B	1885 O	1911 O	1928 l	1944 v			
1834 P	1850 F	1868 C	1886 P	1912 P	1929 m				
1835 Q	1851 G	1869 D	1887 Q	1913 Q					
1836 R	1852 H	1870 E	1888 R						

Duty Mark

In 1784 the Duty Mark was created to indicate a tax had been paid to the crown. The mark used the profile of the head of the reigning monarch. The duty mark was eliminated in 1890.

Makers Mark

The Makers Mark was instituted in London in 1363 to prevent forgeries. Originally the marks were pictograms but by the 17th century it became common to use the silversmith's initials.

Putting it all together...in this example from silversmith Norman Grant, the piece is Sterling .925, from Edinburgh, dating 1973-1974



For additional information check out: http://www.925-1000.com/british_marks.html.