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London silver hallmarks guide

The hallmarking of British sterling silver is a complex system that identifies the origin and age of each piece through a combination of marks. This system includes the Town mark, Lion passant guardant or Britannia, Maker's mark, Date letter, and sometimes a Sovereign head ('duty mark'). Unable to identify the Assay Office mark on your imported silver? You might have a piece of high-value metal. Since 1904, import marks for silver have varied from traditional marks. Visit our Import Marks page for illustrations. Since January 1, 1999, some hallmark components are optional. The compulsory parts include the Assay Office mark, numerical fineness mark, and maker's or sponsor's mark. Silver hallmarks were introduced in 1300 by Edward I's Statute, requiring a marking system to prevent unscrupulous silversmiths from passing off cheap materials as valuable ones. The hallmarking system ensures the purity of silver and prevents counterfeiting. The Standard Mark features an English lion passant gardant standard mark, representing almost all English silver. Other marks include the Britannia Standard (95.84% silver) and the City Mark, which varies by location. Each city with its own assay office has a unique mark to identify where the silver was produced. Examples include: - London: Lion's head - Birmingham: Anchor mark - Chester: Shield with wheatsheafs and lions passant - Dublin: Harp The City Mark is just one part of the hallmarking system, ensuring the quality and authenticity of English silver. English Silver Hallmarks: A Brief History The Edinburgh hallmark features a 3-towered castle, accompanied by the Scottish thistle since 1759 and replaced with the lion rampant in 1975. Exeter used the same mark from 1701 to 1882, previously featuring an X in a shield surmounted by a crown. Glasgow's hallmark is based on the city's Arms, consisting of a Tree, Bird, Bell, and Ring, dating back to the late 17th century. Newcastle operated from 1702 until 1884, Sheffield from 1773 until replacing the Crown with a Rose in 1974. The office remains open today. Interestingly, Sheffield and Birmingham hallmarks were derived from their partitioning for respective assay offices after being omitted by accident from official documents. They met at the Crown & Anchor pub during this time. York's hallmark existed as a leopard's head, then half rose, until it was used from 1701 to 1856. Date letters are crucial in determining when English silver was made. For these hallmarks, we recommend buying a silver hallmarks book for more information. Duty marks were added in 1784 as a tax to pay for the war with America and lasted until 1890. The duty marks used during the following dates: Mark a (Kings head facing left) from 1784-85, Mark b from 1786-1821, Mark c from 1822-1833, Mark d from 1834-1837, and Mark e (Queens head) from 1838-1890.

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