

HALLMARKS
Simpson et al

End 13 th C 1 Mark	Start of a marking system. Leopard's Head on gold and silver countrywide. Silver was 92.5% silver and this same composition applied to coinage. It allowed interchange with coinage being melted down to make silver vessels as the economic situation required.
1363 2 Marks	Every maker now had to make his symbol on silver he made. (Letters replaced symbols late 15 th C as literacy spread.)
1478 3 Marks	'Touch' wardens had marked silver at makers' premises; such an arrangement could result in wardens passing sub standard silver. From this date silver was marked at Goldsmiths' Hall (hence Hallmark). The Assay Master now had to add his own mark - a letter, which changed from year to year.
1544 4 Marks	Lion Passant added to indicate Assay Office under Royal Control
1697 4 Marks but change	To protect the coinage a new standard for silver was introduced at 95.84%. In order to indicate this new standard the Leopards' Head was dropped from the mark and replaced by Britannia; the new standard was and still is known as Britannia Standard. At the same time the Lion Passant was replaced by a Lion Erased.
1701 4 or 5 Marks	Until this date, only London officially marked silver; a new Act at this date introduced marking for other silver manufacturing centres. Centres other than London had to introduce a 5th mark to indicate the centre whilst London maintained the original 4 marks. Some Centres never used or rarely used the Leopard's Head.
1720 4 or 5 Marks	The Sterling Standard at 92.5% re-introduced with the Leopard's Head and Lion Passant replacing Britannia and Lion Erased for the Sterling Standard. The Britannia Standard remains in force today with the same marks as previously.
1784 5 or 6 Marks	A further Mark was added to show duty had been paid, the money raised being required to help pay for the American War of Independence.

<p>1890 4 or 5 Marks</p>	<p>Monarch's Head no longer used except to mark special years.</p> <p>1934 - 35 George V Silver Jubilee</p> <p>1952 – 53 Queen Elizabeth Coronation</p> <p>1977 Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee</p>
<p>1975</p>	<p>When any Britannia Standard is marked, the Lion Erased is no longer used. As from that date all Assay Offices used the same year letter, which had not previously been the case.</p>

There are now only three Assay Offices in England - London, Sheffield and Birmingham. Sheffield changed its town mark to a rose in 1975.

The Sheffield Assay Office is under the control of 30 Guardians, of which only 10 are manufacturers who advise on the actual marking, the remainder being drawn from various trades.

Hallmarking must have been the earliest consumer protection.