



Recording Hallmarks - A Step by Step Guide

Identifying precious and semi-precious metal objects used in liturgical ceremonies can be quite confusing so the aim here is to provide clear guidelines so that, armed with a magnifying glass and a Pocket Edition of Jackson's Hallmarks, you can enjoy reading the marks, slotting the information into the 1-10 format and sorting the various items into the right order in the section, both according to the level of "preciousness" of the material and chronologically within each group.

Base metals such as brass, steel and wrought iron will not be covered. Remember that 'culn' sometimes found on brass tablets, is **not** a maker but another word for brass ('culn' being a corruption of 'Cologne', the area where a lot of brass used to be sourced).

Objects made of gold and Britannia silver are also assayed and hallmarks applied but this exercise will be concerned mainly with sterling silver as that will cover most hallmarked items in churches.

Identifying Church Plate - Some terminology

- **Church plate** is a collective term for all liturgical objects - chalices, communion cups, patens, dishes, flagons, ciboria, sanctuary lamps, aumbries, crosses, crucifixes, candlesticks, alms dishes.
- so not specifically 'plates'
- nor does it mean 'plated' items which have a thin coating of gold over silver (so 'gilded' or 'parcel (partially) gilt'), or of silver or brass, usually over a base metal (so 'silver plated' or 'brass plated'). If the underlying metal is sterling silver, the object will be assayed and hallmarked as sterling silver.

Photographing Church Plate

The best results will be achieved using a light tent to minimise reflections. As well as photographs of the whole item, a detail of the hallmark will be scanned into the text.

Recording the Hallmarks

The sections of the format into which the hallmark information will be entered are:

100	OBJECT	No Location if gold or silver
1	The description of the object followed by the location on the object of the hallmark and its description	
2	Material	
3	Date and assay office	
5-6	Artist / Maker (often the same)	
7-8	As format	
10	References	



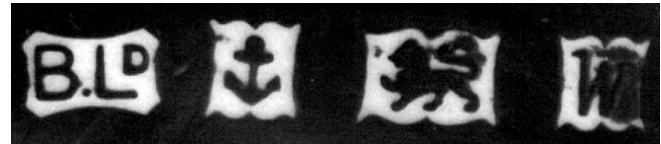
Identifying Sterling Silver. Some simple examples of hallmarks for sterling silver:

(1)



Maker Lion Passant Assay Office Date Letter

(2)



Maker Assay Office Lion Passant Date Letter

(3)



Maker Fineness Mark Assay Office Lion Passant Date Letter

All have one thing in common - the heraldic 'lion passant' (or 'lion rampant' in Scotland) - which tells you that these items are all sterling silver – if no 'lion', not sterling silver.

So at 2 enter Sterling silver or Sterling silver, parcel gilt or Sterling silver gilded overall, not just 'silver'.

Looking at the range of marks above you will see four essential marks, plus, in one case, the 925 fineness mark added in 1999 to comply with International Hallmarking Convention. You must list them in order, as they appear on the object, reading from left to right, as above: maker, lion passant, leopard's head, date letter.

Look next at the Assay Office Mark. The marks shown here are a Leopard's Head for London, an Anchor for Birmingham, and a Rose for Sheffield (which replaced the Crown used there until 1975). See Jackson's for more detail.

Position of the marks on the object

This should be noted in the text. Sometimes they are hard to find, obscured by engraving like this:



All secondary parts like handles or lids made separately will also have a partial mark which always includes the lion passant. At this point your recording, using example (1) above, might look like this:

100 OBJECT Ph

No Location if gold or silver

- 1 The description of the object.....
The hallmarks are set 1cm below the rim: maker, lion passant, leopard's head, date letter. On the rim of the lid are the lion passant and date letter as above.
- 2 Sterling silver.
- 3 London.
- 4-10 As format



Now look at the date letter together with its shield. Here is the greatest possibility for mistakes to be made. The 25 letters of the alphabet (omitting 'j') come round 4 times each century. When checking date letters in your Pocket Jackson, be sure that you are looking **at the cycles for the right Assay Office.**

The shield should match the shield of the lion and the assay city mark, most clearly seen with the open book shield in the Birmingham example (2) above, but this is not necessarily the case in the distant past. **Here are some more examples:**



Careful here! The leopard's head (crowned pre-1821) is tilted down to the right and the gothic l/c 'g' tilted back to the left with the shield point at the base.

Still using (1) above you can now add some more details as shown here in bold:

- 100 OBJECT No Location if gold or silver**
- 1 The description of the object..... then, using the R.E.S. example 1 above:
The hallmarks are set 1cm below the rim: maker, lion passant, leopard's head, date letter **(l/c italic b in a square shield with bevelled corners)**
On the rim of the lid are the lion passant and date letter as above.
 - 2 Sterling silver.
 - 3 **1957-58. Date letter b.** London. **(ref a)**
 - 4-9 As format
 - 10 **a) Jackson, p 41.**

Now look at the Maker's Mark. Makers' marks are usually a combination of initials in different styles set in one of a whole range of shields so that the mark is unique. First check the Silver Makers' Marks list in this Section which shows you the ones found most often. Some are also reproduced in the Pocket Jackson, the big Jackson, and the books by Grimwade, Cripps and Fallon. And many are listed online at <http://www.silvermakersmarks.co.uk/>. *The Silver Makers' Marks – London Assay Office* is reliable, but some of the websites should be treated with caution. The shapes of the shields, the style of lettering and any stops etc are clearly shown but if you still have problems identifying a maker, please consult the Help Desk. Before your Record is completed, your hallmarks should be double-checked by the Help Desk, just to be sure mistakes have not been missed.

Next, in bold, are the final details of the hallmarks which you can now add, together with the **photograph** of the hallmark itself.



100 OBJECT Ph

No Location if gold or silver

1 The description of the object.....

The hallmarks are set 1cm below the rim: maker (**R.E.S in sans serif caps in a rectangle with concave corners**), lion passant, leopard's head, date letter (l/c italic **b** in a square shield with bevelled corners).

On the rim of the lid: the lion passant and date letter as above.

2 Sterling silver.

3 1957-58. Date letter **b**. London. (ref a)

4 As format



5-6 **R.E.S for Robert Edgar Stone.** (ref b)

7 **R E Stone worked between 1935 and 1961 in London and Scotland.** (ref b)

8-9 As format

10 a) Jackson, p 41. **b) London Silvermakers' marks on-line.**

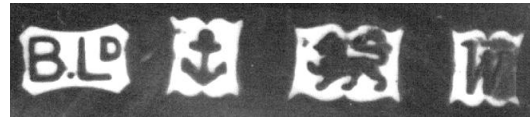
Some other examples of wording for 1-6:

A1 Maker (**B.L^D** in sans serif caps in a reel-shaped shield), anchor, lion passant, date letter (cap italic **W** in an 'open book' shield).

2 Sterling silver.

3 1971-72. Date letter **W**. Birmingham. (ref a)

4 As format



5-6 **B.L^D** for Bishtons Ltd. (ref b)

B1 The hallmarks are below the rim: leopard's head crowned, date letter (roman l/c **q** in a baroque shield), maker (**J·P** in copperplate caps in a scalloped rectangle), lion passant.

2 Sterling silver, gilded overall.

3 1751-52. Date letter **q**. London.(ref a)

4 As format



5-6 **J·P** for John Payne. (ref b)

C1 The hallmarks are under the foot: maker (**FO** above **C^o L^{TD}** in Art Deco-style caps in a square shield), lion passant, leopard's head, date letter (gothic l/c **u** in a square shield with a scalloped lower edge), and the sovereigns' heads (jubilee mark). The name of the maker is also given in sans serif caps.

2 Sterling silver

3 1935-36. Date letter **u**. London. (ref a)

4 As format



5-6 **FO** above **C^o L^D** for F. Osborne & Co Ltd, London, specialists in ecclesiastical silver.

Additional mark: Between 1784 and 1890 a sovereign's head **duty mark** was struck after the date letter.

(The duty was to pay for the American War of Independence)

