

<https://www.jewelleryfocus.co.uk/26854-15-minutes-with-scott-walter>

© Jewellery Focus

Home > Features > Q&A Sessions

# 15 Minutes with Scott Walter

Scott Walter, the Edinburgh Assay Office's chief executive and master, recently revealed his appointment as chairman of the Convention on the Control and Marking of Articles of Precious Metals (CCMAPM). Jewellery Focus sat down with Walter to find out to find out more about the appointment, and what he expects from the role when he starts in November



by **ALESSANDRO CARRARA** — November 12, 2019 in *Features, Q&A Sessions* 4 min read



## **Tell me about your appointment as chairman of the Convention on the Control & Marking of Articles of Precious Metals?**

On 1 November I will take up the Chair of the Convention. The Convention is an international treaty between contracting states. Its purpose is to create a mechanism for cross border trade of precious metal articles.

It achieves this through a single set of technical rules for testing and marking and a common control mark applied alongside national mark symbols. The mark is applied to signify that an item has been tested and marked according to the Conventions technical requirements.

My role as Chairman is to work with the Convention's professional secretariat service to chair standing committee meetings twice a year. The standing committee is made up of ministry representatives from each contracting state. Assay Office representatives are also in attendance.

## **How did your appointment come about? Was it a role you expressed an interest in filling?**

I had just finished five years as Chairman of the International Association of Assay offices and I had served on the standing technical group and the vision and strategy working group of the Convention. I was nominated by standing committee members when the outgoing chairperson announced her retirement from the role. As IAAO chairman I had worked with the outgoing convention chairman to combine the IAAO and the Convention.



## **What do you hope to achieve in this position?**

As a member of the strategy and vision group I worked with my international colleagues to prepare a vision and strategy for the future of the Convention. I hope that my role as chairman will be to continue that work see as much of that vision through to completion. At the heart of that work is to maintain the highest technical standards for the convention while examining ways in which hallmarking and precious metal controls can evolve to meet the changing nature of the trade internationally.

## **Tell me about your career up until this point? What have been some of the highlights and challenges?**

I was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time. I was a young jeweller who had been a customer of the Assay Office for a number of years. I always thought the job could be done better. I got an opportunity to put my money where my mouth was when they recruited me to help improve their service. I was privileged to have been appointed as Assay Master at just 28.

I was the youngest Assay Master in history. It was a very steep learning curve but it has been a rewarding career. My role as Assay Master has also spanned one of the most prolific periods of change for the industry and that has brought numerous challenges.

As the industry continues to change those challenges keep coming but I like to think that our role as protectors of consumers, a catalyst for quality and a mechanism to build trust between consumers and retailers remains as important today as it ever has been. Despite this, if we want it to remain relevant we have to keep challenging ourselves on the way in which we provide our services to ensure they still add value

## **Tell me about your time as chairman of the International Association of Assay Offices?**

The Association was a forum for technical cooperation between state authorised Assay offices. Hallmarking can be a lonely job. Being an independent and arm's length regulator can mean that an organisation can feel isolated. Having an international forum of 37 other organisations doing the same job meant that members could ask technical questions, seek opinion and make better sense of what was happening internationally.

They could use that knowledge to inform their own domestic decisions. As chairman I introduced a technical presentation programme from outside guest speakers. Latterly I helped fold the Association into the Convention to strengthen both organisations and create a more efficient and inclusive single organisation.

What are your thoughts on the hallmarking convention post-Brexit or in the event of no-deal?

Without the mutual recognition between the UK and the EU that has developed through European Court of Justice case law, the Convention mark will become the UK's sole vehicle for moving goods in and out of the EU without the need for re-hallmarking. Imagine how complicated things could have become without it.



## **What are your thoughts on the jewellery industry at this current time?**

The industry I grew up in has changed beyond belief. It's shrinking. Despite the fact that it's getting smaller there are now multiple channels through which consumers can buy jewellery. Not all of those channels are regulated as well as they should be and that creates opportunity for consumers to be miss sold and, in my view, puts hard working honest jewellery retailers at a disadvantage. I will continue to advocate the need to level the playing through clear quality standards and good regulatory enforcement.

I strongly believe that the most effective way to raise consumer awareness of their vulnerability when buying jewellery is through point of sale promotion. If quality retailers don't clearly articulate what makes them a quality retailer consumers find it easier to commoditise the product and look solely at price. Whenever the Assay Office talks to a group of consumers and explains what a hallmark is, they clearly value it but I don't see enough emphasis on it at point of sale, in shops or online. Retail is detail.

## **What are your goals for the next year? Next five years?**

I want to continue to develop a range of value add services around our core hallmarking offering. I want to build on our success of providing provenance systems beyond just precious metal content. I would like to do all that I can to see more effective regulation of standards across the whole industry and not just the long suffering brick and mortar retailers.