

## NAJ Chairman's annual report – 2015.

2015 has been a significant year as we finally got agreement from the members of the BJA and N.A.G. to unify the two associations into the National Association of Jewellers.

The bringing together of two organisations has had its challenges and I am particularly grateful to the staff for working so hard to undertake the huge amount of background work required to bring this unification into effect. I would also like to comment on the professional way in which everyone has handled themselves in their thinking and approach to become integrated into the new organisation putting aside all allegiances.

The new association is now the single leading trade body for the jewellery trade with over 2,000 members and over 3,000 retail outlets. It is our intention to grow the membership to encompass professional jewellery businesses who want to stand out. Adherence to our code of conduct is going to be a mark of quality and professionalism and the Coat of Arms will be the distinguishing sign.

The NAJ will be building on a combined heritage of over 250 years of representing the jewellery trade. The JET education courses have been a leading part of the support for retail jewellers under the N.A.G. and we will be looking to see how these can be updated and enhanced to help designer makers and any other business that interacts with consumers. Potentially other BATF associations might be able to utilise some or all of the online teaching modules which would be a fantastic opportunity.

In 2015 we ran our summer congress in Oxford for our Executive development forum members. We have exciting plans to take this support stream forward in 2016 as we create groups for manufacturers and designer makers to add to the retailer stream. Once we have these new groups established we will be looking to join events where common issues can be discussed as well as looking at how we can push the industry forward with consumers and regain their passion for owning and wearing jewellery.

In July we said good bye to Simon Rainer and I would like to thank him for all he did during his tenure as CEO of the BJA. I believe he left the organisation stronger and more proactive than when he joined. His work on corporate social responsibility and diamond grading standards were both key areas of concern to us all and I am sure that the current leadership will continue to drive these projects forward.

The new association will continue to support members by negotiating excellent rates at our two major trade events, International Jewellery London and Jewellery and Watch Birmingham. The Association also has a major presence at the shows to support both exhibiting trade members and through the provision of our stand for retail and other day visitors. Members are also helped to attend other shows both in the UK and overseas and where appropriate UKTI funding and support is added as well through the BATF export department.

The market in 2015 has been particularly tough as we have seen demonstrated through the hallmarking figures and the depressed state of polished diamonds. As we start 2016 there are some signs of improvement but trading conditions will remain challenging. Brands continue to make progress and we will be looking to see how we can support the most important brand for each of our members – their own name above their door, supported through membership of The National Association of Jewellers' – The Mark of Quality.

Gary Wroe

BJA Chairman Joint NAJ Chairman