**THE HISTORY OF PAWNBROKING:**

**Origins**

**The origins of pawnbroking can be traced back over 3,000 years to the Chinese and it is pawnbroking we have to thank for the discovery of the Americas - Christopher Columbus' voyage was funded largely by the proceeds from pawning Queen Isabella of Spain's jewels! The industry as we know it today, however, can be traced back to fifteenth century Italy when the noble Medici family was a dominant financial power.**

When the family was split in two, one half of the family became bankers and the other, pawnbrokers. The pawnbroking side of the family took with it half of the family crest, which incorporated the now instantly recognisable sign of the pawnbroker, the famous three gold balls. It should come as no surprise that the origins of banking and pawnbroking are so closely entwined - pawnbroking is, after all, simply another form of banking.

In Britain in the latter stages of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century there were nearly as many pawnbrokers as public houses, lending money on anything from bed linen and cutlery to the most famous of all father's 'Sunday best' suit. If pawnbroking had earned itself an unfair reputation in the past, there is no doubt that its image has changed enormously over the past twenty years or so. The recent upsurge in the industry's fortunes came during the 1980's credit boom and has continued through to today with customers now preferring this convenient form of High Street borrowing - customers that many banks turned their backs on during the hardships brought on by recession.

**Notes for Editors**

Interesting Pawnbroking facts:

* The UK pawnbroking industry is growing at more than 10% each year, creating hundreds of new jobs across the country.
* The average loan from a pawnbroker is under £100.
* 85% of loans from pawnbrokers are redeemed.
* 95% of pawnbroking customers say they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received.

Source – Bristol University Research 2011

The National Pawnbrokers Association was founded in 1892 and represents retailers in a £500m loan market comprising 1,800 retail outlets growing at more than 10% each year. It is the only trade association which specifically represents the interests of pawnbrokers in the UK. Pawnbroking is part of the credit industry and is regulated alongside banks and other lenders by the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Website: <http://www.thenpa.com/>