

# Royal Mint Advisory Committee

---

The Committee, which operates independently of The Royal Mint Limited and whose full title is The Royal Mint Advisory Committee on the Design of Coins, Medals, Seals and Decorations, was established in 1922 with the personal approval of King George V.

Its original purpose was to raise the standard of numismatic art and that remains its primary concern, being charged on behalf of HM Treasury and other government departments with the recommendation of new designs for United Kingdom coins, official medals and seals. The Committee is designated a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and its membership is regulated by the Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments (OCA).

There were four meetings during the year, all taking place in London, one at Buckingham Palace, one at the Apothecaries' Hall, one at Cutlers' Hall and one at Coutts. In addition, there were two meetings of the Sub-Committee on the selection of themes for new United Kingdom coins.

## New One Pound Coin

The most high-profile subject discussed by the Committee during the year was the design of the new one pound coin. Its planned issue date is not until 2017 but, as a replacement for the existing coin and being produced to a much higher specification, a reasonable lead-time is required. As has been the case on several occasions in the past with other major changes to the coinage, a public design competition was organised, the very real challenge for those taking part being to find a solution within the frame of a twelve-sided shape and a bi-colour composition. The Chancellor launched the competition in September and it ran through until the end of October. Just over 6,000 designs were submitted, every one of which was examined by members of the Committee, and over the course of three meetings held during the autumn a winning design was selected allowing a recommendation to be made to the Chancellor in January 2015.

What emerged was a design by schoolboy David Pearce, which was adapted by professional illustrator David Lawrence, based on the floral emblems of the United Kingdom woven together and rising through the centre of a crown. It has a resonance with the thrift on the twelve-sided three pence of pre-decimal times and, in symbolising unity through the joining of national emblems, also calls to mind pattern coins of Queen Anne from the early eighteenth century, the union between England and Scotland then being represented by a rose and thistle growing

from the same stem. The Chancellor announced the winning design as part of his Budget speech in March, a clear indication of the importance he attaches to the role and appearance of the nation's currency.

## Portrait of The Queen

The length of The Queen's reign, as with Queen Victoria and King George III, has required questions to be asked about how the image of the monarch ought, from time to time, to be updated. On the coinage the portrait of The Queen has tended to be changed every 15 years or so and it was determined that the time had now come to commission a new effigy. During the summer and autumn the Committee examined submissions from several of the country's most talented portrait sculptors and through its usual anonymous judging process a portrait by young engraver Jody Clark, realised digitally, rather than through the traditional media of clay or plaster modelling, was selected. Digital design technology has made significant advances in recent years and while Mr Clark's achievement is important for him personally it also indicates the direction in which three-dimensional modelling will be heading in the years ahead.

## Britannia

When new designs for the circulating coinage were introduced in 2008 they did not readily admit of a place for Britannia and so for the first time in over 300 years she was to be absent from the range of coins struck for everyday use. Production of bullion and commemorative coins in the Britannia range meant she was very much still part of the numismatic landscape of Britain but, with the definitive reverse design of the two-pound coin by Bruce Rushin having been in use since the late 1990s, its replacement was judged to be an opportunity to restore Britannia to new coins struck for circulation. The design finally recommended was by sculptor Antony Dufort, who has created a powerfully realised figure of Britannia, traditional in form but modern in treatment.

## First World War

A number of prominent national events during the summer and autumn of 2014 were organised to mark the centenary of the First World War. The Royal Mint Limited initiated its own programme of coins with the intention of honouring the service men and women who lost their lives during the conflict but also to acknowledge the wider impact of the war on society, technology and culture. It was with reference to this latter aspect of the programme that the Committee's attention was occupied during the year. A crown piece series has been

devised which will create a narrative of the war through the themes of People, Armed Forces and Support Services, Social and Cultural Impact, Battles and Technology. Extending over the five years of commemoration, the series will run through to the end of 2018 and work was examined by the Committee in connection with coins to be issued towards the end of the programme.

An aspect that has occupied a considerable amount of the Committee's attention in previous years has been the wish to acknowledge the language and poetry of the war. Making use of the inscriptions that will appear on edge of coins in the crown piece series was determined as one of the chief ways in which this could be achieved and the assistance of respected poet Christopher Reid has been invaluable in arriving at a balance across time, politics and poets.

One five-ounce coin will be issued each year over the course of the five-year centenary programme. Through a direct commission which recognised his intimacy with the subject matter, the distinguished sculptor James Butler RA provided a haunting design for the 2015 coin. Professor Sir Hew Strachan has continued to give of his time generously in advising on the content of the programme and also the detail of the designs presented.

### Commemorative coins

Designs for several of the main commemorative coins for 2015 had already been determined prior to the Committee's first meeting of the year in June but there were yet one or two projects relating to 2015, not the least being a design for the existing specification of one pound coins. Herald painter Timothy Noad has designed several United Kingdom coins and officials medals and through a limited competition his work was again selected. Achievements of the Royal Arms are the very stuff of the British coinage but in this design Mr Noad has shown the lion and unicorn supporters in a manner not unlike the traditional masthead of The Times, a particular treatment very seldom encountered on the coinage.

The announcement that the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were to have a second child led to work being initiated on a coin to celebrate the birth. A small number of experienced artists were commissioned and a design by prolific numismatic artist John Bergdahl was regarded as the most dignified and celebratory in tone.

Much of the rest of the attention of the Committee was taken up with deliberations connected with the programme of coins to be issued in 2016, further details of which will be in the public domain towards the end of 2015. The increased number of projects that have come before the Committee have been handled with the same degree of care and attention to detail as ever.

### Medals

The remit of the Committee includes making recommendations to a range of government departments on the design of official medals and seals. Projects arise with less frequency than for the coinage but are nonetheless a fairly regular element of the Committee's work. Designs for a new medal for those serving in West Africa to fight the Ebola epidemic came before the Committee in March, as did ideas for a new General Service Medal, details of which will be released in due course.

### Sub-Committee on the Selection of Themes

The Sub-Committee examines proposals for the programme of commemorative coins to be issued in forthcoming years, making recommendations through the main Committee to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. During the year there were two meetings of the Sub-Committee, the focus of attention being the programme for 2017 but consideration was also given to themes stretching out several years from now.

### Membership

This year saw the retirement of three members, who had each reached the maximum ten years' service permitted, and had become influential voices in matters relating to the design of the nation's coins and medals. Having access to a knowledgeable historian is invaluable and Professor Sir David Cannadine has fulfilled that role above and beyond the call of duty. Quite apart from his regular attendance at meetings, fitted into his teaching commitments at Princeton, he served on the Sub-Committee for the selection of themes and played a central role in advising on the programme of coins for the First World War. His presence will be missed, not least for his ability to suggest just the right form of words when an edge inscription was required. As a result of a recruitment process he has been replaced by Professor Jane Ridley, of the University of Buckingham, who comes with her own impressive reputation.

Artist members of the Committee provide an important aesthetic input and, on occasion, remind all concerned of the designer's perspective. John Maine RA has been a champion of stretching the bounds of the possible within numismatic art. Learned and erudite, he brought to bear a penetrating eye for the right balance within a composition and was an endlessly useful source of advice for new artists. His seat on the Committee has gone to the painter Hughie O'Donoghue RA who has an abiding interest in the subject matter of coinage design and direct experience of the challenges artists face in responding to themes of national commemoration.

The lettering artist Stephen Raw has also retired from the Committee. His contributions at meetings have revealed time and time again how a design can be transformed with the intelligent application of the right font at the right size or, crucially, how letters can be made to work in the circular form of a traditional coinage inscription. Between meetings Mr Raw was always ready to offer help with layouts and several coinage designers over the last decade owe a debt of gratitude to him for the subtle way in which he has nudged a design to a higher standard. He always expressed pride in standing in a succession of lettering artists who have served the Committee, including Milner Gray and Michael Harvey, and the dynasty of like contributions will continue once the recruitment process for his successor is resolved.

Members give their time freely and, for HM Treasury and other government departments who draw upon the Committee's advice, there is a deep sense of gratitude for the care and expertise they devote to their deliberations. The commitment in time and energy that the Chairman, in particular, has been able to give to the work of the Committee has not gone unrecognised.

## Membership of the Committee at 31 March 2015 (with dates of appointment)

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill  
Chairman  
(January 2011)

Mrs Blondel Cluff  
Chair, Heritage Lottery Fund London  
(March 2014)

The Rt Hon The Earl Peel GCVO DL  
Lord Chamberlain  
(March 2007)

Mr Tim Knox  
Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum  
(February 2008, re-appointed February 2013)

Mr Hughie O'Donoghue RA  
Painter  
(September 2014)

Professor Jane Ridley  
Historian  
(September 2014)

Mr Edmund de Waal OBE  
Ceramic artist and writer  
(April 2012)

Mr Thomas Woodcock CVO DL  
Garter King of Arms  
(January 2010)

Lieutenant Colonel Mike Vernon  
Secretary, Central Chancery of the Orders of  
Knighthood  
(September 2014)

Professor Nick Mayhew  
Numismatic Consultant to the Committee  
(January 2010)

Mr Adam Lawrence  
Chief Executive of The Royal Mint Limited

Dr Kevin Clancy  
Secretary to the Committee

Mr Gordon Summers  
Technical Adviser to the Committee