

The 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 George V.

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

During the year there were four meetings, three taking place in London and one at The Royal Mint in Llantrisant. In addition, there were two meetings of the Sub-Committee on the selection of themes for new United Kingdom coins, both of which were held in London.

A Multi-Coin Series

Each year the Committee reviews designs that enter general circulation and those that are struck for collectors and the bullion market. It is well understood by members of the Committee that different considerations apply depending on the intended usage and when multi-coin series are being discussed an additional set of judgements needs to be taken into account.

A case in point is The Queen's Beasts Collection which has proven to be one of the most successful programmes of recent years and has attracted fulsome praise from the Committee. The series is the work of Jody Clark, a member of The Royal Mint's Coin Design team, who has the distinction of having created the current standard coinage portrait of Her Majesty The Queen. When embarking upon reviewing the initial submissions for the project, the Committee soon came to the conclusion that the series would look more coherent if designed by the same artist and also if a design template was employed.

Such an approach is by no means slavishly applied but in this instance it has worked particularly well because Mr Clark has devised characterful depictions of heraldic beasts that inhabit the parameters template in a fresh and vigorous way. There are a few more for the Committee to consider in the years ahead but members have gone out of their way to compliment Mr Clark on the quality of his heraldic imagination.

Remembrance Day

A series of collector coins of an entirely different nature is that relating to the national commemoration of Remembrance Day. It has been part of the British calendar of state occasions since it was inaugurated in 1919 by George V. Being the 100th anniversary this year, there has been more than the usual weight of significance attached to securing a design that would give due dignity to the event. It is an ongoing series but in this instance the Committee consciously sought out designs by different artists. This has been driven by the desire to present distinctive responses to the subject matter so that the act of commemoration can be supported by contemporary designs sympathetic to the established language of remembrance but without replaying commonplace approaches.

The Mayflower

The nature of how coinage designs are conceived, developed and approved, combined with the production schedules of The Royal Mint, means that much of the work of the Committee in any one given year is destined for release a year or more ahead. However, one 2020 theme that has already entered the public arena is the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the *Mayflower* from England to America. In part the early notice is because The Royal Mint has been in dialogue with the United States Mint with a view to issuing coins that tell the two sides of the story.

From the British point of view, the narrative is very much focused on the departure of the ship and its journey across the Atlantic, while for the United States it is about the early pilgrim settlement. Both countries have been working on designs for what will be complementary issues and by developing the coins in parallel, it has been possible for a more complete history to be told.

Professor Stephen Hawking

While plans are considered many years in advance, sometimes it is also appropriate to respond to events as they happen when they are judged sufficiently significant. One such instance arose during the year in the form of the death of the distinguished theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking. The Royal Mint had already set in place the foundations of a series on British scientific achievements and the passing of Professor Hawking was rightly judged to be worthy of inclusion and therefore for his immense contribution to be honoured by a United Kingdom coin.

The release date was timed to coincide with the one-year anniversary of his death and the public response to the coin was remarkable. This was almost certainly influenced by the respect in which Professor Hawking was held but also by the design, prepared by Edwina Ellis, which captures his work succinctly yet with a depth of meaning.

Medals

The remit of the Committee includes making recommendations to a range of government departments on the design of official medals and seals. One such project came before the Committee during the year through a requirement for a new medal to be known as the Wider Service Medal, which is being introduced to acknowledge the role played by a range of service personnel engaged in stressful duties although not necessarily in an open theatre of conflict. Further announcements about the medal will be made by the Ministry of Defence 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 2020 through to 2022.

Membership

The variety and number of projects that have come before the Committee have been handled with the same degree of care and attention to detail as ever. A debt of gratitude is owed to the Chairman, Lord Waldegrave of North Hill, for presiding over the Committee's complex and sensitive deliberations with diplomacy and clear leadership. To members of the Committee, also, who give of their time freely, a deserved note of appreciation is due for the professionalism and imagination they bring to the table.

Membership of the Committee at 31 March 2019 (with dates of appointment)

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill
Chairman
(January 2011, re-appointed January 2016)

Professor Phil Baines
Lettering and graphic designer
(May 2016)

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

Dr Nicholas Cullinan
Director, National Portrait Gallery
(June 2016)

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

Mr Hughie O'Donoghue RA
Painter
(January 2015)

Professor Jane Ridley
Historian
(January 2015)

Mr Edmund de Waal OBE
Ceramic artist and writer
(April 2012, re-appointed April 2017)

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

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

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

Mrs Anne Jessopp
**Chief Executive Officer of The Royal
Mint Limited**

Dr Kevin Clancy
Secretary to the Committee

Mr Lee Jones
Technical Adviser to the Committee