

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). It is chaired by Lord Waldegrave of North Hill.

During the year there were four meetings, three taking place in London and one held as a conference call because of the travel restrictions imposed in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic. 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.

MAJOR EVENTS AND ANNIVERSARIES

A major British and world anniversary occupied the attention of the Committee across a number of meetings through discussions surrounding the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The challenge facing the selection of an appropriate design was to capture the sense of jubilation at the end of the long years of war yet doing so in a dignified way. Royal Mint designer Dominique Evans seized upon a well-known image from the time of a woman waving a newspaper over her head surrounded by cheering crowds with the word VICTORY in the background.

Finding appropriate ways in which to represent such historic events is a difficult design challenge but this can be even more acute in relation to events from our own time. In the autumn of 2019 the Committee was asked to provide a design to mark Britain's exit from the European Union, a moment of profound importance for the country. Having considered a number of options, the use of words seemed the most appropriate approach and a statement was chosen, ultimately inspired by United States' President Benjamin Franklin, PEACE, PROSPERITY AND FRIENDSHIP WITH ALL NATIONS. It proved to be one of the most popular coins issued by the Royal Mint in recent times.

COMMEMORATIVE COINS AND SERIES

William Wordsworth is one of Britain's most celebrated poets and marking the 250th anniversary of his birth was approved as a theme by the Committee as part of a long-standing aim to honour British literature

on the coinage. He is intimately associated with the Lake District and the selected design includes a depiction of a typical Cumbrian scene. Nevertheless, the Committee felt strongly that the breadth of Wordsworth's poetry should be acknowledged and illustrator David Lawrence accordingly employed an extract from the poem 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', NATURE NEVER DID BETRAY THE HEART THAT LOVED HER.

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. An example of this involved the Committee's discussions on a series themed around the discovery of Dinosaurs in Britain, with the thought in mind that it would appeal to a younger audience of collectors. As a series there was the requirement for the inclusion of motifs and a template that would help connect the individual designs. The specialist illustrator in the field, Robert Nicholls, created artwork with a sense of movement and life that strongly appealed to the Committee and advice from the Natural History Museum ensured accuracy of detail.

MODERN BRITISH CULTURE

There has been a concerted focus in recent years to celebrate aspects of modern British culture on the coinage and as part of this a series on British Music Legends was initiated during the year starting with the band Queen. Members of the band were involved with the process and the design finally selected was directed at embracing the group as a whole.

Another aspect of modern British culture looked at by the Committee this year was James Bond. The character is immediately associated with action and gadgets, style and quality, and the challenge for the Committee was to secure a series of designs that would encapsulate a sense of James Bond rather than the specifics of a particular story. For the larger denomination coins, a design focusing on the classic Aston Martin BD5 was created by Laura Clancy and for the three-coin series graphic designer Matthew Dent conceived a linked design with the names of the all the films overlaid as a background in micro-text.

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 year is destined for release a year or more ahead. A report on these projects, not yet in the public domain, will therefore be covered in the future.

OFFICIAL 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 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 2021 through to 2022.

MEMBERSHIP

The variety and number of projects placed 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. Members of the Committee give of their time freely and a deserved note of appreciation is due to them for the professionalism and imagination they bring to the Committee's work.

Membership of the Committee at 31 March 2020 (with dates of appointment)

CHAIRMAN

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

LETTERING AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Professor Phil Baines
(May 2016)

NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND ENGLAND, LONDON & SOUTH

Mrs Blondel Cluff CBE, Chair
(March 2014, re-appointed March 2019)

DIRECTOR

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY
Dr Nicholas Cullinan
(June 2016)

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

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

PAINTER

Mr Hughie O'Donoghue RA
(January 2015)

HISTORIAN

Professor Jane Ridley
(January 2015)

CERAMIC ARTIST AND WRITER

Mr Edmund de Waal OBE
(April 2012, re-appointed April 2017)

GARTER PRINCIPAL KING OF ARMS

Mr Thomas Woodcock CVO DL
(January 2010)

COMPTROLLER OF THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S DEPARTMENT

Lieutenant Colonel Mike Vernon
(September 2014)

NUMISMATIC CONSULTANT TO THE COMMITTEE

Professor Nicholas Mayhew
(January 2010)

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE ROYAL MINT LIMITED

Mrs Anne Jessopp

CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER OF THE ROYAL MINT LIMITED

Ms Nicola Howell

SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE

Dr Kevin Clancy

TECHNICAL ADVISER TO THE COMMITTEE

Mr Lee Jones