

The Royal Mint Advisory Committee 2010-11

The Committee, which operates independently of the Royal Mint 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 this remains its primary concern, being charged, on behalf of HM Treasury and other government departments, with the recommendation of all new designs for UK coins and official medals. The Committee is designated a Non-Departmental Public Body and its membership is regulated by the Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments (OCPA).

There were five meetings of the Committee in the last year all taking place in London, three at Cutlers' Hall, one at Buckingham Palace and one at the Gore Hotel. In addition, there were five meetings of the working group on the design of coins and medals for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Programme for London 2012

Work continued during the year on completing the designs for the Gold Series of coins to be issued under the theme of Faster, Higher, Stronger. The first set of three coins by John Bergdahl was released in the spring of 2010 and the challenge for the artist was to explore the same approach for the remaining two sets of three coins to be issued in 2011 and 2012.

Having worked on the designs for some months, Mr Bergdahl was successful in resolving a coherent series of nine coins, all centred on the theme of ancient gods and goddesses combined with depictions of modern sports. Unlike other coins in the programme, the gold coins of this series will carry the Olympic Rings, rather than the London 2012 logo, and the design solution, with its clear link to the classical origins of the Games, seemed entirely appropriate. The working group's recommendations were endorsed by the Advisory Committee.

The programme of coins for London 2012 has deliberately embraced many artistic styles and design treatments in an effort to involve a wide range of people, creating a programme that works on a number of levels. Very much with that approach in mind, a competition was initiated in the autumn of 2010 for all students currently studying art and design in Britain to submit designs for the Olympiad and Paralympiad coins to be issued in 2012. The coins will be prominent elements of the programme, seeking to capture defining images of the Games and the very positive response is still being debated by the working group.

United Kingdom Commemorative Coins

For the regular programme of United Kingdom coins to be issued in 2011 a design for the 50th anniversary of the WWF by Matthew Dent was selected at the Committee meeting in May 2010. Having won the national competition to design the definitive coinage, unveiled in April 2008, this was the first time Mr Dent had been commissioned as part of a limited competition. Here he has created an intelligent and beautiful design made up of 50 icons of conservation to represent 50 years of the organisation's history.

Graphic designers Paul Stafford and Ben Wright were behind the two-pound coin to mark the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. Their response to the brief was to focus on the printed word and the importance of the anniversary as a seminal moment in the history of how the Bible has been communicated, conveyed through a quotation from John's Gospel IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD. Another two-pound coin came before the Committee during the year to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the maiden voyage of the Mary Rose, and a design by John Bergdahl was selected. His exquisitely detailed depiction of the ship, surrounded by a cartouche bearing an inscription in the Lombardic lettering used on coins of Henry VIII, was judged to capture beautifully a popular image of how the ship would have looked at the time. It has since proved to be a design strongly supported by the Mary Rose Trust.

A further UK coin design recommended by the Committee was for a crown piece to celebrate the 90th birthday of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh. Quite apart from the immense contribution he has made to national life in Britain and the unstinting support he has given Her Majesty The Queen, it is particularly appropriate that the life of Prince Philip should be honoured with the issue of a United Kingdom coin in view of his long years of service as President of the Advisory Committee. The portrait sculptor Mark Richards FRBS generated an arresting likeness conveying the character and bearing of the man.

Mr Richards also designed what was to become one of the most high-profile United Kingdom coins issued in the last 12 months, the crown piece commemorating the wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton. With very little time to complete the work, Mr Richards succeeded in creating an intimate composition showing the couple in profile facing each other.

The Committee examined designs for a number of official medals, details of which will be released through the sponsoring government departments in due course.

The 90th birthday of His Royal Highness
The Duke of Edinburgh was commemorated
with a coin designed by Mark Richards FRBS.



Sub-Committee on the selection of themes

In line with changes to the Committee's terms of reference, agreed in the summer of 2009, there was one meeting of the Sub-Committee on the Selection of Themes for United Kingdom Coins. At the meeting themes for new coins to be issued in 2012, with their associated denominations, were agreed and have subsequently received ministerial and royal approval.

Membership

The retirement from the Committee of Peter Gwynn-Jones, former Garter King of Arms, was reported in last year's Annual Report. It is with great sadness that mention has to be made this year of the untimely death of Mr Gwynn-Jones in August 2010. His memorial service, held at the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, was attended by a number of current members of the Committee and the breadth of his interests, as well as his sensitivity, were revealed through moving tributes from friends.

The most significant development with respect to the Committee's membership was the retirement in January 2011 of the Chairman, Sir Christopher Frayling. He has served as Chairman for a decade and, under the terms governing appointments to public bodies regulated by OCPA, ten years is the maximum allowable period. The deep respect in which he is held by other members was apparent at every meeting he chaired, managing the Committee's deliberations with imagination and authority, and succeeding in balancing the often complex web of interests involved in securing designs for the nation's coins and medals.

Through the many and varied projects that arose during his time he never lost sight of the founding principle – to raise the standard of numismatic art in Britain – being prepared to fight for the cause of good design and being an inspired source of ideas for new artists. His commitment to public service, demonstrated through his many other roles, has been remarkable and his ten years as Chairman of the Committee has been no less impressive.

At the lunch to mark Sir Christopher's retirement, held following the meeting in December, it was a fitting tribute for him to be given a medal specially designed for the occasion by Matt Bonaccorsi, Head of Design at the Royal Mint, a beautifully painted card by Committee member Stephen Raw and for the occasion to be attended by Prince Philip.

After a recruitment process, initiated during the autumn of 2010, it was with considerable pleasure that his successor was announced in January 2011 as Lord Waldegrave, a man no less steeped in a deep commitment to public life. Up to 1997 he served as a Cabinet Minister for several years in successive Conservative governments and he has more recently been held in high regard as Chairman of the Trustees of the Science Museum. He is currently Provost of Eton College and, having chaired his first meeting of the Committee in March 2011, he is looking forward to working with other members in the years to come.

Members give of their time freely and, for HM Treasury and the other government departments who draw upon the Committee's advice, there is a deep sense of gratitude for the care and expertise they devote in discharging their duties.

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50th anniversary of the WWF 50p coin
designed by Matthew Dent.



Members of the Committee
At 31 March 2011
(with dates of appointments)

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill
Chairman (January 2011)

Miss MaryAnne Stevens
Director for Academic Affairs, Royal Academy
(April 2001, re-appointed April 2008)

Professor Sir David Cannadine
Institute of Historical Research
(September 2004)

Mr John Maine RA
Sculptor (September 2004)

Mr Stephen Raw
Lettering artist (January 2005)

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

Mrs Jana Khayat
Former Chairman of Fortnum and Mason
(February 2008)

Mr Tim Knox
Director of Sir John Soane's Museum
(February 2008)

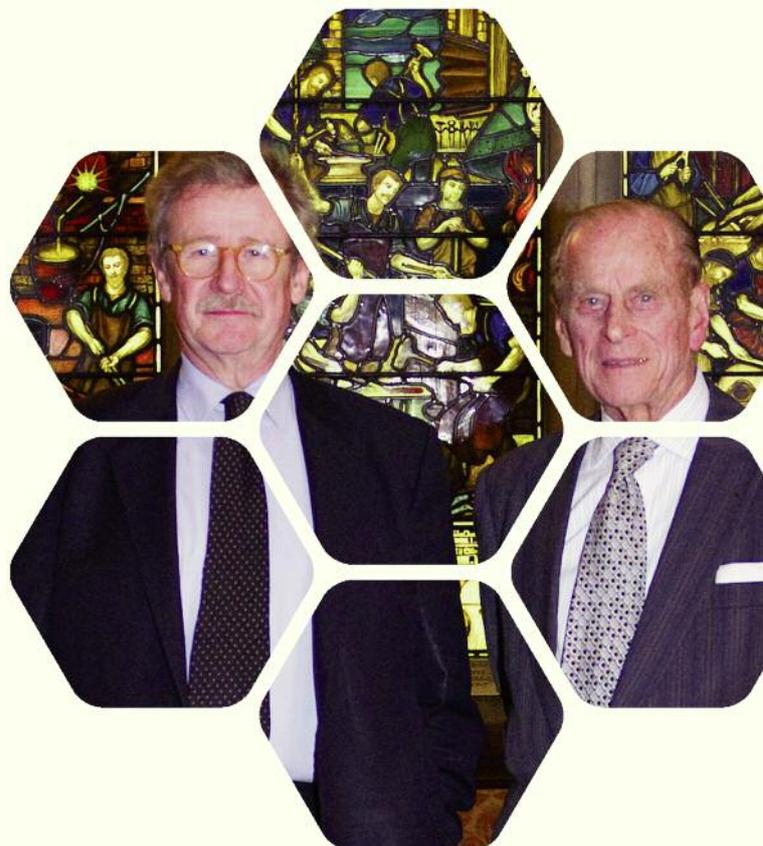
Mr Thomas Woodcock LVO DL
Garter King of Arms (January 2010)

Professor Nick Mayhew
Numismatic Consultant to the Committee

Mr Adam Lawrence
Chief Executive of the Royal Mint Limited

Dr Kevin Clancy
Secretary to the Committee

Mr Matthew Bonaccorsi
Technical Adviser to the Committee



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Prince Philip, having long years of service as President of the Advisory Committee, attended the lunch to mark Sir Christopher Frayling's retirement.