

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 Baroness Gisela Stuart.

During the year there were five meetings, all of which took place as conference calls because of the travel restrictions imposed in connection with the coronavirus 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 as conference calls.

COMMEMORATIVE COINS AND SERIES

There has been a tradition for a number of years for significant birthdays of members of the Royal Family to be commemorated on the coinage. The first of these dates back to 1980 and the issue of a crown piece to mark the 80th birthday of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. In 2021, The Queen celebrated her 95th birthday and to honour the occasion two designs were commissioned. For the five-pound crown piece a design by herald painter Timothy Noad was selected with the royal cypher at the centre surrounded by floral emblems representing the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. An equally important element of most coin designs is the inscription and the task for the designer to resolve how best to balance a circumferential legend with the main motifs. There is also a requirement to choose the right words and in this instance MY HEART AND MY DEVOTION were preferred, referencing a promise made by The Queen in her 1957 Christmas speech. For larger-value coins, including five ounces and a kilo, a design by sculptor Gary Breeze was chosen. He also made prominent use of the royal cypher set on the background of a finely interwoven floral array, the intricacy of which was judged by the Committee to be more suitable for the larger canvas of such pieces. The move to larger collector coins has been a significant trend in recent years and design decisions have consciously taken account of the opportunity this provides for more detailed artwork.

Another subject with a strongly royal dimension has been The Queen's Beasts series. Inspired by the ten statues of heraldic beasts that lined the entrance to Westminster Abbey for The Queen's Coronation in June 1953, a series of coins has been developed over the last few years and, to bring it to a close, a single coin depicting all the beasts arranged in a circle was chosen by the Committee. It was a singularly spectacular design and again bears testimony to the extraordinary level of detail it is possible to reproduce on the relatively small surface of a coin.

COINS FOR CIRCULATION

Each year the Committee reviews designs that enter general circulation as well as 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, both in relation to the selection of themes and designs. This year, for the first time, a coin was issued that focused exclusively on celebrating the diversity of Britain as a way of drawing attention to the contribution many and varied communities have made to the shared history of the country. Royal Mint designer Dominique Evans worked with the Committee to arrive at a design that conveyed a message of recognition and hope through the central inscription, DIVERSITY BUILT BRITAIN, set on a background symbolising bonds and connections between communities. The coin, which was personally supported by the Chancellor, was issued in October 2020 to coincide with Black History Month and was accompanied by an education pack, developed in partnership with the West India Committee, that was sent to primary schools throughout England and Wales.

MODERN BRITISH CULTURE

There has been a concerted focus in recent years to celebrate aspects of modern British culture on the coinage, and children's literature has formed part of this initiative, which has included an extensive and extremely popular series based on characters from the works of Beatrix Potter. The 50th anniversary of the publication of the first Mr Men book by Roger Hargreaves fell in 2021 and the Committee examined designs by his son Adam to commemorate the occasion. The use of colour on some versions of the coins was a consideration for the Committee and the positive reception the coins received reflects a conscious effort to celebrate subjects that will have an appeal across a range of age groups.

Over the course of the reporting year the Committee has looked at designs for 25 themes, some of which have required the selection of more than one design. 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 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. Two such projects came before the Committee during the year, one of which arose through a requirement for a new medal, to be known as the Border Force and Immigration Enforcement Service Medal. Further announcements about the medal will be made in due course by the departments concerned.

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 2022 through to 2023.

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 former Chairman, Lord Waldegrave of North Hill, for presiding over the Committee's complex and sensitive deliberations with diplomacy and clear leadership. During the year he came to the end of his ten-year term as Chairman and his service to the Committee was warmly acknowledged by members at his final meeting in December 2020. A recruitment process was initiated during the autumn of 2020 and resulted in Baroness Gisela Stuart being appointed as the new Chair. She presided over her first meeting in March 2021.

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 2021

(with dates of appointment and re-appointment)

Baroness Gisela Stuart

CHAIR

(March 2021)

Professor Phil Baines

LETTERING AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER

(May 2016, re-appointed March 2021)

Mrs Blondel Cluff CBE,

CHAIR, NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND ENGLAND, LONDON & SOUTH

(March 2014, re-appointed March 2019)

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, re-appointed March 2021)

Professor Jane Ridley

HISTORIAN

(January 2015, re-appointed March 2021)

Mr Edmund de Waal OBE

CERAMIC ARTIST AND WRITER

(April 2012, re-appointed April 2017)

Mr Thomas Woodcock CVO DL

GARTER PRINCIPAL KING OF ARMS

(January 2010)

Lieutenant Colonel Mike Vernon

COMPTROLLER OF THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S DEPARTMENT

(September 2014)

Professor Nicholas Mayhew

NUMISMATIC CONSULTANT TO THE COMMITTEE

(January 2010)

Mrs Anne Jessopp

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE ROYAL MINT LIMITED

Ms Nicola Howell

CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER OF THE ROYAL MINT LIMITED

Dr Kevin Clancy

SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE

Mr Lee Jones

TECHNICAL ADVISER TO THE COMMITTEE